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Søren Kierkegaard

Collected Works

Series Fourteen

The Collected Works of

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

(1813-1855)

Contents

The Books

Either/Or (1843)
Fear and Trembling (1843)
Repetition (1843)
Upbuilding Discourses (1844)
Philosophical Fragments (1844)
The Concept of Dread (1844)
Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions (1845)
Stages on Life's Way (1845)
Works of Love (1847)
Christian Discourses (1848)
The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air (1849)
Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays (1849)
The Sickness unto Death (1849)
Selections from the Writings of Kierkegaard (1923)

The Autobiography

The Point of View for my Work as an Author (1851)

The Biography

Introduction to Kierkegaard (1923) by Lee M. Hollander

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

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Version 1

DELPHI CLASSICS

The Collected Works of

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

By Delphi Classics, 2023

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Collected Works of Søren Kierkegaard

First published in the United Kingdom in 2023 by Delphi Classics.

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ISBN: 978 1 80170 149 5

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd
Hastings, East Sussex
United Kingdom
Contact: sales@delphiclassics.com

DELPHI CLASSICS

www.delphiclassics.com

The Books

View of Copenhagen, 1808 — Kierkegaard's birthplace

Nytorv 2, Copenhagen, c. 1890 — Kierkegaard's birthplace and family home was the property on the far right.

Today, the site of the birthplace serves as a Danske Bank branch.

Unfinished sketch of Kierkegaard by his cousin Niels Christian Kierkegaard, Royal Library, Copenhagen, c. 1840

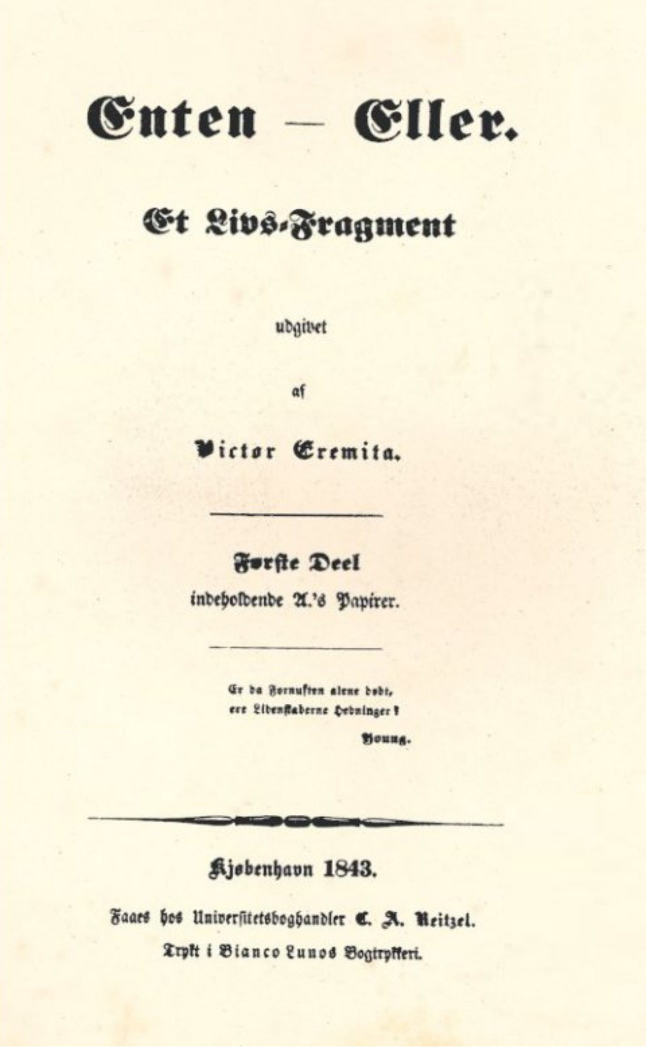
Either/Or (1843)

Translated by David F. Swenson, Lillian Marvin Swenson (Volume I) and Walter Lowrie (Volume II), 1941

Søren Kierkegaard's first published work, *Either/Or* appeared in two volumes in 1843 under the pseudonymous editorship of Victor Eremita (Latin for "victorious hermit"). The book outlines a theory of human existence, marked by the distinction between an essentially hedonistic, aesthetic mode of life and the ethical life, which is predicated upon commitment. The treatise portrays two life views, each written and represented by a fictional author, with the prose reflecting and depending on the view. The aesthetic life view is written in short essay form, with poetic imagery and allusions, discussing aesthetic topics such as music, seduction, drama and beauty. The ethical life view is structured as two long letters, with a more argumentative and restrained prose, discussing moral responsibility, critical reflection and marriage. The views are expressed as 'lived' experiences embodied by the "authors". The book's central concern is Aristotle's primal question, "How should we live?" His motto comes from Plutarch, "The deceived is wiser than one not deceived."

Kierkegaard argues that the aesthetic is the personal, subjective realm of existence, where an individual lives and extracts pleasure from life for its own sake. This realm offers the possibility of both the highest and lowest experiences. The ethical, on the other hand, is the civic realm of existence, wherein value and identity are judged and at times superseded by the objective world. The choice is whether to remain oblivious to the outside world or to become involved. More specifically, the ethical realm starts with a conscious effort to choose one's life. Either way, it is possible to go

too far in one direction and lose sight of the self. Only faith can rescue the individual from these opposing realms. The treatise concludes with a brief sermon, hinting at the religious sphere of existence, which had occupied most of Kierkegaard's publishing career. Ultimately, his challenge is for the reader to "discover a second face hidden behind the one you see" internally, and then in others.


Enten – Eller.

Et Livs-Fragment

udgivet

af

Victor Eremita.

Første Deel

indeholdende A.'s Papirer.

Er da Fornuften alene døbt,
ere Lidenskaberne Hedninger?

Young.

Kjøbenhavn 1843.

Faaes hos Universitetsboghandler C. A. Reitzel.
Trykt i Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri.

Title page of the original Danish edition from 1843

CONTENTS

VOLUME I.

PREFACE BY VICTOR EREMITA
DIAPSALMATA
EITHER/OR
THE IMMEDIATE STAGES OF THE EROTIC; OR THE MUSICAL EROTIC
THE ANCIENT TRAGICAL MOTIF AS REFLECTED IN THE MODERN
SHADOWGRAPHS
THE UNHAPPIEST MAN
THE FIRST LOVE
THE ROTATION METHOD
DIARY OF THE SEDUCER

VOLUME II.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE
INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR
AESTHETIC VALIDITY OF MARRIAGE
EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN THE AESTHETICAL AND THE ETHICAL IN THE COMPOSITION OF PERSONALITY
ULTIMATUM
THE EDIFICATION IMPLIED IN THE THOUGHT THAT AS AGAINST GOD WE ARE ALWAYS IN THE WRONG

Kierkegaard became a student at the Borgerdydskolen high school in Copenhagen in 1830.

Like his older brother, P.C. Kierkegaard, he studied theology at the University of Copenhagen.

VOLUME I.

PREFACE BY VICTOR EREMITA

DEAR READER: I wonder if you may not sometimes have felt inclined to doubt a little the correctness of the familiar philosophic maxim that the external is the internal, and the internal the external. Perhaps you have cherished in your heart a secret which you felt in all its joy or pain was too precious for you to share with another. Perhaps your life has brought you in contact with some person of whom you suspected something of the kind was true, although you were never able to wrest his secret from him either by force or cunning. Perhaps neither of these presuppositions applies to you and your life, and yet you are not a stranger to this doubt; it flits across your mind now and then like a passing shadow. Such a doubt comes and goes, and no one knows whence it comes, nor whither it goes. For my part I have always been heretically-minded on this point in philosophy, and have therefore early accustomed myself, as far as possible, to institute observations and inquiries concerning it. I have sought guidance from those authors whose views I shared on this matter; in short, I have done everything in my power to remedy the deficiency in the philosophical works.

Gradually the sense of hearing came to be my favorite sense; for just as the voice is the revelation of an inwardness incommensurable with the outer, so the ear is the instrument by which this inwardness is apprehended, hearing the sense by which it is appropriated. Whenever, then, I found a contradiction between what I saw and what I heard, then I found my doubt confirmed, and my enthusiasm for the investigation stimulated. In the confessional the priest is separated from the penitent by a screen; he does not see, he only hears. Gradually as he listens, he constructs an outward appearance which corresponds to the voice he hears. Consequently, he

experiences no contradiction. It is otherwise, however, when you hear and see at the same time, and yet perceive a screen between yourself and the speaker. My researches in this direction have met with varying degrees of success. Sometimes I have been favored by fortune, sometimes not, and one needs good fortune to win results along this road. However, I have never lost my desire to continue my investigations. Whenever I have been at the point of regretting my perseverance, an unexpected success has crowned my efforts. It was such an unexpected bit of luck which in a very curious manner put me in possession of the papers which I now have the honor of offering to the reading public. These papers have afforded me an insight into the lives of two men, which has confirmed my hunch that the external is not the internal. This was especially true about one of them. His external mode of life has been in complete contradiction to his inner life. The same was true to a certain extent with the other also, inasmuch as he concealed a more significant inwardness under a somewhat commonplace exterior.

Still, I had best proceed in order and explain how I came into possession of these papers. It is now about seven years since I first noticed at a merchant's shop here in town a secretary which from the very first moment I saw it attracted my attention. It was not of modern workmanship, had been used a good deal, and yet it fascinated me. It is impossible for me to explain the reason for this impression, but most people in the course of their lives have had some similar experience. My daily path took me by this shop, and I never failed a single day to pause and feast my eyes upon it. I gradually made up a history about it; it became a daily necessity for me to see it, and so I did not hesitate to go out of my way for the sake of seeing it, when an unaccustomed route made this necessary. And the more I looked at it, the more I wanted to own it. I realized very well that it was a peculiar desire, since I had no use for such a piece of furniture, and it would be an extravagance for me to buy it. But desire is a very sophisticated passion. I

made an excuse for going into the shop, asked about other things, and as I was leaving, I casually made the shopkeeper a very low offer for the secretary. I thought possibly he might accept it; then chance would have played into my hands. It was certainly not for the sake of the money I behaved thus, but to salve my conscience. The plan miscarried, the dealer was uncommonly firm. I continued to pass the place daily, and to look at the secretary with loving eyes. “You must make up your mind,” I thought, “for suppose it is sold, then it will be too late. Even if you were lucky enough to get hold of it again, you would never have the same feeling about it.” My heart beat violently; then I went into the shop. I bought it and paid for it. “This must be the last time,” thought I, “that you are so extravagant; it is really lucky that you bought it, for now every time you look at it, you will reflect on how extravagant you were; a new period of your life must begin with the acquisition of the secretary.” Alas, desire is very eloquent, and good resolutions are always at hand.

The secretary was duly set up in my apartment, and as in the first period of my enamorment I had taken pleasure in gazing at it from the street, so now I walked back and forth in front of it at home. Little by little I familiarized myself with its rich economy, its many drawers and recesses, and I was thoroughly pleased with my secretary. Still, things could not continue thus. In the summer of 1836 I arranged my affairs so that I could take a week’s trip to the country. The postilion was engaged for five o’clock in the morning. The necessary baggage had been packed the evening before, and everything was in readiness. I awakened at four, but the vision of the beautiful country I was to visit so enchanted me that I again fell asleep, or into a dream. My servant evidently thought he would let me sleep as long as possible, for he did not call me until half-past six. The postilion was already blowing his horn, and although I am not usually inclined to obey the mandates of others, I have always made an exception in the case of the

postboy and his musical theme. I was speedily dressed and already at the door, when it occurred to me, Have you enough money in your pocket? There was not much there. I opened the secretary to get at the money drawer to take what money there was. Of course the drawer would not move. Every attempt to open it failed. It was all as bad as it could possibly be. Just at this moment, while my ears were ringing with the postboy's alluring notes, to meet such difficulties! The blood rushed to my head, I became angry. As Xerxes ordered the sea to be lashed, so I resolved to take a terrible revenge. A hatchet was fetched. With it I dealt the secretary a shattering blow, shocking to see. Whether in my anger I struck the wrong place, or the drawer was as stubborn as myself, the result of the blow was not as anticipated. The drawer was closed, and the drawer remained closed. But something else happened. Whether my blow had struck exactly the right spot, or whether the shock to the whole framework of the secretary was responsible, I do not know, but I do know that a secret door sprang open, one which I had never before noticed. This opened a pigeonhole that I naturally had never discovered. Here to my great surprise I found a mass of papers, the papers which form the content of the present work. My intention as to the journey remained unchanged. At the first station we came to I would negotiate a loan. A mahogany case in which I usually kept a pair of pistols was hastily emptied and the papers were placed in it. Pleasure had triumphed, and had become even greater. In my heart I begged the secretary for forgiveness for the harsh treatment, while my mind found its doubt strengthened, that the external is not the internal, as well as my empirical generalization confirmed, that luck is necessary to make such discoveries possible.

I reached Hillerod in the middle of the forenoon, set my finances in order, and got a general impression of the magnificent scenery. The following morning I at once began my excursions, which now took on a

very different character from that which I had originally intended. My servant followed me with the mahogany case. I sought out a romantic spot in the forest where I should be as free as possible from surprise, and then took out the documents. Mine host, who noticed these frequent excursions in company with the mahogany case, ventured the remark that I must be trying to improve my marksmanship. For this conjecture I was duly grateful, and left him undisturbed in his belief.

A hasty glance at the papers showed me that they were made up of two collections whose external differences were strongly marked. One of them was written on a kind of vellum in quarto, with a fairly wide margin. The handwriting was legible, sometimes even a little elegant, in a single place, careless. The other was written on full sheets of foolscap with ruled columns, such as is ordinarily used for legal documents and the like. The handwriting was clear, somewhat spreading, uniform and even, apparently that of a business man. The contents also proved to be very dissimilar. One part consisted of a number of aesthetic essays of varying length, the other was composed of two long inquiries and one shorter one, all with an ethical content, as it seemed, and in the form of letters. This dissimilarity was completely confirmed by a closer examination. The second series consists of letters written to the author of the first series.

But I must try to find some briefer designation to identify the two authors. I have examined the letters very carefully, but I have found little or nothing to the purpose. Concerning the first author, the aesthete, the papers yield absolutely nothing. As for the second, the letter writer, it appears that his name was William, and that he was a magistrate, but of what court is not stated. If I were to confine myself strictly to this data, and decide to call him William, I should lack a corresponding designation for the first author, and should have to give him an arbitrary name. Hence I have preferred to call the first author A, the second B.

In addition to the longer essays, I have found among the papers a number of slips of paper on which were written aphorisms, lyrical effusions, reflections. The handwriting indicated A as the author, and the nature of the contents confirmed my conjecture.

Then I tried to arrange the papers as well as I could. In the case of those written by B this was fairly easy. Each of these letters presupposes the one preceding, and in the second letter there is a quotation from the first; the third letter presupposes the other two.

The arranging of A'S papers was not so simple. I have therefore let chance determine the order, that is to say, I have left them in the order in which I found them, without being able to decide whether this order has any chronological value or ideal significance. The slips of paper lay loose in the pigeonhole, and so I have had to allot them a place. I have placed them first because it seemed to me that they might best be regarded as provisional glimpses of what the longer essays develop more connectedly. I have called them *Diapsalmata*, and have added as a sort of motto: *ad se ipsum.* This title and this motto are in a manner mine, and yet not altogether so. They are mine in so far as they are applied to the whole collection, but they also belong to A, for the word *Diapsalmata* was written on one of the slips of paper, and on two of them, the phrase, *ad se ipsum.* A little French verse which was found above one of the aphorisms, I have placed on the inside of the title page, a common practice with A himself. Since many of the aphorisms have a lyric form, it seemed proper to use the word *Diapsalmata* as the principal title. If the reader should consider this choice unfortunate, then I must acknowledge that this was my own device, and that the word was certainly in good taste as used by A himself for the aphorism over which it is found. I have left the arrangement of the individual aphorisms to chance. That these individual expressions often contradict one another seemed quite natural, since each one of them belongs precisely to an

essential mood. I did not think it worth while to adopt an arrangement that would make these contradictions less striking. I followed chance, and it is also chance that has directed my attention to the fact that the first and the last aphorisms correspond to one another, as the one is touched by the suffering that lies in being a poet, while the other enjoys the satisfaction which lies in always having the laugh on its side.

As to A'S aesthetic essays, I have nothing to emphasize concerning them. They were found all ready for printing, and in so far as they contain any difficulties, they must be permitted to speak for themselves. For my part I may state that I have added a translation of the Greek quotations scattered through the essays, which is taken from one of the better German translations.

The last of A'S papers is a story entitled, *Diary of the Seducer.* Here we meet with new difficulties, since A does not acknowledge himself as author, but only as editor. This is an old trick of the novelist, and I should not object to it, if it did not make my own position so complicated, as one author seems to be enclosed in another, like the parts in a Chinese puzzle box. Here is not the place to explain in greater detail the reasons for my opinion. I shall only note that the dominant mood in A'S preface in a manner betrays the poet. It seems as if A had actually become afraid of his poem, as if it continued to terrify him, like a troubled dream when it is told. If it were an actual occurrence which he had become privy to, then it seems strange that the preface shows no trace of A'S joy in seeing the realization of the idea which had so often floated before his mind. The idea of the seducer is suggested in the essay on the *Immediate-Erotic* as well as in the *Shadowgraphs,* namely, the idea that the analogue to Don Juan must be a reflective seducer who comes under the category of the interesting, where the question is not about how many he seduces, but about how he does it. I find no trace of such joy in the preface, but rather, as was said, a certain

horror and trembling, which might well have its cause in his poetical relationship to this idea. Nor am I surprised that it affected A thus; for I, who have simply nothing to do with this narrative, I who am twice removed from the original author, I, too, have sometimes felt quite strange when, in the silence of the night, I have busied myself with these papers. It was as if the Seducer came like a shadow over the floor, as if he fixed his demoniac eye upon me, and said: "Well, so you are going to publish my papers! It is quite unjustifiable in you; you arouse anxiety in the dear little lassies. Yet obviously, in return you would make me and my kind harmless. There you are mistaken; for I need only change the method, and my circumstances become more favorable than before. What a stream of lassies I see running straight into my arms when they hear that seductive name: a seducer! Give me half a year and I shall provide a story which will be more interesting than all I have hitherto experienced. I imagine a young, vigorous girl of spirit who conceives the extraordinary idea of avenging her sex upon me. She thinks to coerce me, to make me feel the pangs of unrequited love. That is just the girl for me. If she does not herself strike deeply enough, then I shall come to her assistance. I shall writhe like the eel of the Wise Men of Gotham. And then when I have brought her to the point I wish, then is she mine!"

But perhaps I have already abused my position as editor in burdening the reader with my reflections. The occasion must provide the excuse. It was on account of the awkwardness of my position, occasioned by A'S calling himself only the editor, not the author of this story, that I let myself be carried away.

What more I have to say about this story shall be exclusively in my role as editor. I think that I have perhaps found something in it that will determine the time of its action. The Diary has a date here and there, but the year is always omitted. This might seem to preclude further inquiry, but by

studying the individual dates, I believe I have found a clue. Of course every year has a seventh of April, a third of July, a second of August, and so forth; but it is not true that the seventh of April falls every year upon Monday. I have therefore made certain calculations, and have found that this combination fits the year 1834. I cannot tell whether A had thought of this or not, but probably not, since then he would not have used so much caution as he has. Nor does the Diary read, Monday the seventh of April, and so on, but merely April 7. Even on the seventh of April, the entry begins thus: “Consequently on Monday” — whereby the reader’s attention is distracted; but by reading through the entry under this date, one sees that it must have been written on Monday. As far as this story is concerned, I now have a definite date. But every attempt to utilize it in determining the time of the other essays has failed. I might have made this story the third in the collection, but, as I said above, I preferred to leave it to chance, and everything is in the sequence in which I found it.

As far as B’S papers are concerned, these arrange themselves easily and naturally. In their case I have permitted myself an alteration, and have provided them with a tide, since their epistolary style prevented the author from using a title. Should the reader, therefore, after having become familiar with the contents, decide that the titles are not well chosen, I shall have to reconcile myself to the disappointment of having done something poorly that I wished to do well.

Here and there I found a remark set down in the margin. These I have made into footnotes, so as not to interrupt the even flow of the text.

As regards B’S manuscript, I have allowed myself no alterations, but have scrupulously treated it as a finished document. I might perhaps have easily corrected an occasional carelessness, such as is explicable when one remembers that the author is merely a letter writer. I have not wished to do this because I feared that I might go too far. When B states that out of every

hundred young men who go astray, ninety-nine are saved by women, and one by divine grace, it is easy to see that he has not been very rigid in his reckoning, since he provides no place at all for those who are actually lost. I could easily have made a little modification in the reckoning, but there seemed to me something far more beautiful in B'S miscalculation. In another place he mentions a Greek wise man by the name of Myson, and says of him that he enjoyed the rare distinction of being reckoned among the Seven Sages, when their number is fixed at fourteen. I wondered at first where B could have got this information, and also what Greek author it was that he cited. My suspicion at once fell on Diogenes Laertius, and by looking up Jocher and Morèri, I found a reference to him. B'S statement might perhaps need correction; the case is not quite as he puts it, since there was some uncertainty among the ancients as to who the Seven Sages were. But I have not thought it worth while to make any corrections, since it seemed to me that while his statement is not quite accurate historically, it might have another value.

The point I have now reached, I had arrived at five years ago. I had arranged the papers as at present, had decided to publish them, but thought best to postpone it for a time. Five years seemed long enough. The five years are now up, and I begin where I left off. I need not assure the reader that I have tried in every conceivable way to find some trace of the authors. The dealer, like most of his kind, kept no books; he did not know from whom he had bought the secretary; he thought it might have been at public auction. I shall not attempt to describe the many fruitless attempts I have made to identify the authors, attempts which have taken so much of my time, since the recollection gives me no pleasure. As to the result, however, I can describe it to the reader very briefly, for the result was simply nil.

As I was about to carry out my decision to have the papers published, one more scruple awakened within me. Perhaps the reader will permit me to

speak frankly. It occurred to me that I might be guilty of an indiscretion toward the unknown authors. However, the more familiar I became with the papers, the more these scruples disappeared. The papers were of such a nature that since my most painstaking investigations had failed to throw any Light upon them, I was confident that no reader would be able to do so, for I dare compare myself with any such reader, not in taste and sympathy and insight, but in tirelessness and industry. For supposing the anonymous authors were still living, that they lived in this town, that they came unexpectedly upon their own papers, still if they themselves kept silent, there would be no consequences following the publication. For in the strictest sense of the word, these papers do what we sometimes say of all printed matter — they keep their own counsel.

One other scruple that I have had was in itself of less significance and fairly easy to overcome, and has been overcome in even an easier way than I had anticipated. It occurred to me that these papers might be financially lucrative. It seemed proper that I should receive a small honorarium for my editorial services; but an author's royalty would be too much. As the honest Scotch farmers in *The White Lady* decided to buy and cultivate the family estate, and then restore it to the Counts of Avenel if they should ever return, so I decided to put the entire returns at interest, so that when the authors turned up, I could give them the whole amount with compound interest. If the reader has not already, because of my complete ineptitude, assured himself that I am neither an author nor a professional literary man who makes publishing his profession, then the naïveté of this reasoning must establish it indisputably. My scruples were probably more easily overcome because in Denmark an author's royalty is by no means a country estate, and the authors would have to remain away a long time for their royalties, even at compound interest, to become a financial object.

It remained only to choose a title. I might call them Papers, Posthumous Papers, Found Papers, Lost Papers, and so forth. A number of variants could be found, but none of these titles satisfied me. In selecting a title I have therefore allowed myself a liberty, a deception, for which I shall try to make an accounting. During my constant occupation with the papers, it dawned upon me that they might be looked at from a new point of view, by considering all of them as the work of one man. I know very well everything that can be urged against this view, that it is unhistorical, improbable, unreasonable, that one man should be the author of both parts, although the reader might easily be tempted to the play on words, that he who says A must also say B. However, I have not yet been able to relinquish the idea. Let us imagine a man who had lived through both of these phases, or who had thought upon both, A'S papers contain a number of attempts to formulate an aesthetic philosophy of life. A single, coherent, aesthetic view of life can scarcely be carried out. B'S papers contain an ethical view of life. As I let this thought sink into my soul, it became clear to me that I might make use of it in choosing a title. The one I have selected precisely expresses this. The reader cannot lose very much because of this title, for while reading the book he may perfectly well forget the title. Then, when he has read the book, he may perhaps reflect upon the title. This will free him from all finite questions as to whether A was really convinced of his error and repented, whether B conquered, or if it perhaps ended by B'S going over to A'S opinion. In this respect, these papers have no ending. If anyone thinks this is not as it should be, one is not thereby justified in saying that it is a fault, for one must call it a misfortune. For my own part I regard it as fortunate. One sometimes chances upon novels in which certain characters represent opposing views of life. It usually ends by one of them convincing the other. Instead of these views being allowed to speak for themselves, the reader is enriched by being told the historical result, that

one has convinced the other. I regard it as fortunate that these papers contain no such information. Whether A wrote his aesthetic essays after having received B’S letters, whether his soul continued to be tossed about in wild abandon, or whether it found rest, I cannot say, since the papers indicate nothing. Nor is there any clue as to how things went with B, whether he had strength to hold to his convictions or not. When the book is read, then A and B are forgotten, only their views confront one another, and await no finite decision in particular personalities.

I have nothing further to say except that the honored authors, if they were aware of my project, might possibly wish to accompany their papers with a word to the reader. I shall therefore add a few words with them holding and guiding the pen. A would probably interpose no objection to the publication; he would probably warn the reader: read them or refuse to read them, you will regret both. What B would say is more difficult to decide. He would perhaps reproach me, especially with regard to the publication of A’S papers. He would let me feel that he had no part in them, that he washed his hands of responsibility. When he had done this, then he would perhaps turn to the book with these words: “Go out into the world then; escape if possible the attention of critics, seek a single reader in a favorable hour, and should you meet a feminine reader, then would I say: ‘My fair reader, you will perhaps find in this book something you ought not to know; other things you might well profit from knowing; may you so read the first that having read it, you may be as one who has not read it; may you read the other so that having read it, you may be as one who cannot forget it.’” I, as editor, only add the wish that the book may meet the reader in an auspicious hour, and that the fair reader may succeed in following B’S well meant advice.

The Editor November 1842

DIAPSALMATA

ad se ipsum

Grandeur, savoir, renommée,
Amitié, plaisir et bien,
Tout n'est que vent, que fumée:
Pour mieux dire, tout n'est rien.

WHAT IS A POET? An unhappy man who in his heart harbors a deep anguish, but whose lips are so fashioned that the moans and cries which pass over them are transformed into ravishing music. His fate is like that of the unfortunate victims whom the tyrant Phalaris imprisoned in a brazen bull, and slowly tortured over a steady fire; their cries could not reach the tyrant's ears so as to strike terror into his heart; when they reached his ears they sounded like sweet music. And men crowd about the poet and say to him, "Sing for us soon again" — which is as much as to say, "May new sufferings torment your soul, but may your lips be fashioned as before; for the cries would only distress us, but the music, the music, is delightful." And the critics come forward and say, "That is perfectly done — just as it should be, according to the rules of aesthetics." Now it is understood that a critic resembles a poet to a hair; he only lacks the anguish in his heart and the music upon his lips. I tell you, I would rather be a swineherd, understood by the swine, than a poet misunderstood by men.

The first question in the earliest and most compendious instruction the child receives is, as everyone knows, this: What will the child have? The answer is: da-da. And with such reflections life begins, and yet men deny original sin. And to whom does the child owe its first drubbings, whom other than the parents?

I prefer to talk with children, for it is still possible to hope that they may become rational beings. But those who have already become so — good Lord!

How absurd men are! They never use the liberties they have, they demand those they do not have. They have freedom of thought, they demand freedom of speech.

I do not care for anything. I do not care to ride, for the exercise is too violent. I do not care to walk, walking is too strenuous. I do not care to lie down, for I should either have to remain lying, and I do not care to do that, or I should have to get up again, and I do not care to do that either. *Summa summarum:* I do not care at all.

There are well-known insects which die in the moment of fecundation. So it is with all joy; life's supreme and richest moment of pleasure is coupled with death.

Tested Advice for Authors: Set down your reflections carelessly, and let them be printed; in correcting the proof sheets a number of good ideas will gradually suggest themselves. Therefore, take courage, all you who have not yet dared to publish anything; even misprints are not to be despised, and an author who becomes witty by the aid of misprints, must be regarded as having become witty in a perfectly lawful manner.

This is the chief imperfection of all things human, that the object of desire is first attainable through its opposite. I shall not speak about the multitude of temperamental types which ought to keep the psychologist busy (the melancholy temperament has the greatest comic sense; the most exuberant is often the most idyllic; the debauched often the most moral; the doubtful often the most religious), I shall merely recall the fact that an eternal happiness is first descried through sin.

In addition to the rest of the numerous circle of my acquaintances, I still have one intimate confidante — my melancholy. In the midst of my joy, in

the midst of my work, she beckons to me and calls me aside, even though physically I do not budge. My melancholy is the most faithful mistress I have known; what wonder, then, that I love in return.

There is a gossipy reasoning which in its endlessness bears about the same relation to the result as the interminable line of Egyptian monarchs bears to the historical value of their reigns.

Old age realizes the dreams of youth: look at Dean Swift; in his youth he built an asylum for the insane, in his old age he was himself an inmate.

When you see with what hypochondriac profundity an earlier generation of Englishmen discovered the ambiguity which lies at the root of laughter, it is enough to cause a feeling of anxiety. Dr. Hartley, for example, makes the following remark: "When laughter first manifests itself in the infant, it is an incipient cry, excited by pain, or by a feeling of pain suddenly inhibited, and recurring at brief intervals." What if everything in the world were a misunderstanding, what if laughter were really tears?

There are occasions when it gives one a sense of infinite sadness to see a human being standing all alone in the world. Thus the other day I saw a poor girl walk all alone to church to be confirmed.

Cornelius Nepos tells of a certain commander, who was shut up in a fortress with a considerable force of cavalry, and who ordered the horses to be whipped every day, lest they be injured by so much standing still — so I live these days like one besieged; but lest I take harm from too much sitting still, I cry myself weary.

I say of my sorrow what the Englishman says of his house: my sorrow is my castle. There are many who regard sorrow as one of the conveniences of life.

I feel the way a chessman must, when the opponent says of it: That piece cannot be moved.

The reason why *Aladdin* is so invigorating is that this piece expresses a genial and childlike audacity in the most extravagant desires. How many are there in our age who truly dare to wish, dare to desire, dare to address Nature with anything more than a polite child's please, please, or else with the rage of a lost soul? How many are there who, alive to the feeling that man is made in the image of God, a thing that our age prates so much about, have the true voice of command? Or do we not all stand there like Noureddin, bowing and scraping, fearful lest we ask too much or too little? Does not every magnificent demand little by little get reduced to a sickly reflection over the ego, from the command to the whimper, an art in which we are thoroughly trained?

I am as shrunken as a Hebrew *shewa,* weak and silent as a *daghesh lene;* I feel like a letter printed backward in the line, and yet as ungovernable as a three-tailed Pasha, as jealous for myself and my thoughts as a bank for its notes, and as generally introverted as any *pronomen reflexivum.* If only it were true of misfortunes and sorrows as it is of conscious good works that they who do them have their reward taken away — if this held true of sorrow, then were I the happiest of men: for I take all my troubles in advance, and yet they all remain behind.

The tremendous poetic vigor of folk literature expresses itself, among other ways, in the strength to desire. The desires of our age are in comparison with these both sinful and dull, since we desire what belongs to our neighbor. The characters in folk literature are very well aware that the neighbor as little possesses what they are seeking as they themselves do. And when it indulges in sinful desire, it is so terrible as to cause men to tremble. This desire does not cheapen itself by a cold calculation of probabilities in sober reason. Don Juan still struts across the stage with his 1,003 mistresses. No one dares to smile, out of respect for the venerable

tradition. If a poet had ventured the like in our age, he would have been hooted off the stage.

How strangely sad I felt on seeing a poor man shuffling through the streets in a rather worn-out, light yellowish-green coat. I was sorry for him, but the thing that moved me most was that the color of this coat so vividly reminded me of my first childish productions in the noble art of painting. This color was precisely one of my vital hues. Is it not sad that these color mixtures, which I still think of with so much pleasure, are found nowhere in life; the whole world thinks them harsh, bizarre, suitable only for Nüremberg pictures. Or if one sometimes happens on them, there is always something unpleasant about the encounter, as in this present case. It is always some weak-minded person, or one who has been unfortunate, in short, always someone who feels himself an alien in the world, and whom the world will not recognize. And I, who always painted my heroes with this never-to-be-forgotten yellowish-green coloring on their coats! And is it not so with all the mingled colors of childhood? The hues that life once had gradually become too strong, too harsh, for our dim eyes.

Alas, the doors of fortune do not open inward, so that by storming them one can force them open; but they open outward, and therefore nothing can be done.

I have the courage, I believe, to doubt everything; I have the courage, I believe, to fight with everything; but I have not the courage to know anything; not the courage to possess, to own anything. Most people complain that the world is so prosaic, that life is not like romance, where opportunities are always so favorable. I complain that life is not like romance, where one had hard-hearted parents and nixies and trolls to fight, and enchanted princesses to free. What are all such enemies taken together, compared with the pale, bloodless, tenacious, nocturnal shapes with which I fight, and to whom I give life and substance?

How barren is my soul and thought, and yet forever tortured by empty birthpangs, sensual and tormenting! Must my spirit then ever remain tongue-tied, must I always babble? What I need is a voice as penetrating as the eye of Lynceus, as terrifying as the sigh of the giants, as persistent as the sound of nature, as full of derision as a frosty wind-gust, as malicious as Echo's heartless mockeries, of a compass from the deepest bass to the most mellifluous soprano, modulated from the sacred softness of a whisper to the violent fury of rage. This is what I need in order to breathe, to get expression for what is on my mind, to stir the bowels of my compassion and of my wrath. — But my voice is only hoarse like the cry of a gull, or dies away like the blessing upon the lips of the dumb.

What portends? What will the future bring? I do not know, I have no presentiment. When a spider hurls itself down from some fixed point, consistently with its nature, it always sees before it only an empty space wherein it can find no foothold however much it sprawls. And so it is with me: always before me an empty space; what drives me forward is a consistency which lies behind me. This life is topsy-turvy and terrible, not to be endured.

No time of life is so beautiful as the early days of love, when with every meeting, every glance, one fetches something new home to rejoice over.

My view of life is utterly meaningless. I suppose an evil spirit has set a pair of spectacles upon my nose, of which one lens is a tremendously powerful magnifying glass, the other an equally powerful reducing glass.

The doubter is like a whipped top; he stands upright exactly as long as the lashes continue. He can no more stand erect by himself than can a top.

Of all ridiculous things, it seems to me the most ridiculous is to be a busy man of affairs, prompt to meals, and prompt to work. Hence when I see a fly settle down in a crucial moment on the nose of a business man, or see him bespattered by a carriage which passes by him in even greater

haste, or a drawbridge opens before him, or a tile from the roof falls down and strikes him dead, then I laugh heartily. And who could help laughing? What do they accomplish, these hustlers? Are they not like the housewife, when her house was on fire, who in her excitement saved the fire-tongs? What more do they save from the great fire of life?

Generally speaking, I lack the patience to live. I cannot see the grass grow, but since I cannot, I do not care to look at it at all. My views are the fleeting observations of a "traveling scholastic," rushing through life in greatest haste. People say that the good Lord fills the stomach before the eyes; I have not noticed it; my eyes are sated and weary of everything, and yet I hunger.

Ask whatever questions you please, but do not ask me for reasons. A young woman may be forgiven for not being able to give reasons, since they say she lives in her feelings. Not so with me. I generally have so many reasons, and most often such mutually contradictory reasons, that for this reason it is impossible for me to give reasons. There seems to be something wrong with cause and effect also, that they do not rightly hang together. Tremendous and powerful causes sometimes produce small and unimpressive effects, sometimes none at all; then again it happens that a brisk little cause produces a colossal effect.

And now the innocent pleasures of life. One must admit that they have but one fault, they are so innocent. Moreover, they must be indulged in moderately. When my doctor prescribes a diet, there is some sense in that; I abstain from certain foods for a certain specified time; but to be dietetic on a diet — that is really asking too much.

Life has become a bitter drink to me, and yet I must take it like medicine, slowly, drop by drop.

No one ever comes back from the dead, no one ever enters the world without weeping; no one is asked when he wishes to enter life, no one is

asked when he wishes to leave.

Time flows, life is a stream, people say, and so on. I do not notice it. Time stands still, and I with it. All the plans I make fly right back upon myself; when I would spit, I even spit into my own face.

When I get up in the morning, I go straight back to bed again. I feel best in the evening when I put out the light and pull the eiderdown over my head. Then I sit up again, look about the room with indescribable satisfaction; and so good night, down under the eiderdown.

What am I good for? For nothing or for everything. That is a rare talent; I wonder if the world will appreciate it? God knows whether those servant girls find a place, who seek a position as maid of all work or, failing that, as anything whatsoever.

One ought to be a mystery, not only to others, but also to one's self. I study myself; when I am weary of this, then for a pastime I light a cigar and think: the Lord only knows what He meant by me, or what He would make out of me.

No pregnant woman can have stranger or more impatient desires than I. These desires concern sometimes the most trivial things, sometimes the most exalted, but they are equally imbued with the soul's momentary passion. At this moment I wish a bowl of buckwheat porridge. I remember from my school days that we always had this dish on Wednesdays. I remember how smooth and white it was when served, how the butter smiled at me, how warm the porridge looked, how hungry I was, how impatient to be allowed to begin. Ah, such a dish of buckwheat porridge! I would give more than my birthright for it!

The magician Virgil had himself cut into pieces and put into a kettle to be boiled for a week, in order to renew his youth. He hired a man to stand

watch so that no intruder would peep into the caldron. But the watchman could not resist the temptation; it was too early, Virgil vanished with a cry like a little child. I, too, have doubtless peeped too soon into the kettle, the kettle of life and its historical development, and will probably never be able to become anything more than a child.

"A man should never lose his courage; when misfortunes tower most fearfully about him, there appears in the sky a helping hand." Thus spoke the Reverend Jesper Morten last evensong. Now I am in the habit of traveling much under the open sky, but I had never seen anything of the kind. A few days ago, however, while on a walking tour, some such phenomenon took place. It was not exactly a hand, but something like an arm which stretched out of the sky. I began to ponder: it occurred to me that if only Jesper Morten were here, he might be able to decide whether this was the phenomenon he referred to. As I stood there in the midst of my thoughts, I was addressed by a wayfarer. Pointing up to the sky, he said: "Do you see that waterspout? They are very rare in these parts; sometimes they carry whole houses away with them."

"The Lord preserve us," thought I, "is that a waterspout?" and took to my heels as fast as I could. I wonder what the Reverend Jesper Morten would have done in my place?

Let others complain that the age is wicked; my complaint is that it is paltry; for it lacks passion. Men's thoughts are thin and flimsy like lace, they are themselves pitiable like the lacemakers. The thoughts of their hearts are too paltry to be sinful. For a worm it might be regarded as a sin to harbor such thoughts, but not for a being made in the image of God. Their lusts are dull and sluggish, their passions sleepy. They do their duty, these shopkeeping souls, but they clip the coin a trifle, like the Jews; they think that even if the Lord keeps ever so careful a set of books, they may still cheat Him a little.

Out upon them! This is the reason my soul always turns back to the Old Testament and to Shakespeare. I feel that those who speak there are at least human beings: they hate, they love, they murder their enemies, and curse their descendants throughout all generations, they sin.

I divide my time as follows: half the time I sleep, the other half I dream. I never dream when I sleep, for that would be a pity, for sleeping is the highest accomplishment of genius.

To be a perfect man is after all the highest human ideal. Now I have got corns, which ought to help some.

The result of my life is simply nothing, a mood, a single color. My result is like the painting of the artist who was to paint a picture of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. To this end, he painted the whole wall red, explaining that the Israelites had already crossed over, and that the Egyptians were drowned.

Nature still recognizes the dignity of humanity; for when you wish to keep the birds away from the trees, you fix up something to resemble a man, and even this faint resemblance to a human being which a scarecrow has is enough to inspire the birds with respect.

For love to have significance, the hour of its birth must be illumined by the moon, just as Apis, in order to be the true Apis, must be moon-illuminated. It was necessary that the moon should shine upon the cow that was to bear Apis, at the moment of impregnation.

The best proof for the wretchedness of existence is the proof that is derived from the contemplation of its glories.

Most men pursue pleasure with such breathless haste that they hurry past it. They fare as did that dwarf who kept guard over a captured princess in his castle. One day he took a midday nap. When he woke up an hour later, the princess was gone. Quickly he pulled on his seven-league boots; with one stride he was far beyond her.

My soul is so heavy that thought can no more sustain it, no wingbeat lift it up into the ether. If it moves, it sweeps along the ground like the low flight of birds when a thunderstorm is approaching. Over my inmost being there broods a depression, an anxiety, that presages an earthquake.

Life is so empty and meaningless. — We bury a man; we follow him to the grave, we throw three spadefuls of earth over him; we ride out to the cemetery in a carriage, we ride home in a carriage; we take comfort in thinking that a long life lies before us. How long is seven times ten years?

Why do we not finish it at once, why do we not stay and step down into the grave with him, and draw lots to see who shall happen to be the last unhappy living being to throw the last three spadefuls of earth over the last of the dead?

The lassies do not please me. Their beauty vanishes like a dream, and like yesterday when it is past. Their constancy — yes, their constancy! Either they are faithless, which no longer concerns me, or they are faithful. If I found such a one, she might please me because of her rarity, but she would not please me in the long run; for she would either always remain constant, and then I should become a victim of my own experimental zeal, since I should have to keep up with her; or she would sometime cease to be faithful, and so I should have the same old story over again.

Wretched Destiny! In vain you paint your furrowed face like an old harlot, in vain you jingle your fool's bells; you weary me; it is always the same, an

idem per idem. No variety, always a rehash! Come, Sleep and Death, you promise nothing, you keep everything.

These two familiar strains of the violin! These two familiar strains here at this moment, in the middle of the street. Have I lost my senses? Does my ear, which from love of Mozart's music has ceased to hear, create these sounds; have the gods given me, unhappy beggar at the door of the temple — have they given me an ear that makes the sounds it hears? Only two strains, now I hear nothing more. Just as they burst forth from the deep choral tones of the immortal overture, so here they extricate themselves from the noise and confusion of the street, with all the surprise of a revelation. — It must be here in the neighborhood, for now I hear the lighter tones of the dance music. — And so it is to you, unhappy artist pair, I owe this joy. — One of them was about seventeen, he wore a coat of green kalmuck, with large bone buttons. The coat was much too large for him. He held the violin close up under his chin, his hat was pressed down over his eyes, his hand was hidden in a glove without fingers, his fingers were red and blue from cold. The other man was older; he wore a chenille shawl. Both were blind. A little girl, presumably their guide, stood in front of them, her hands tucked under her neckerchief. We gradually gathered around them, some admirers of this music: a letter carrier with his mailbag, a little boy, a servant girl, a couple of roustabouts. The well-appointed carriages rolled noisily by, the heavy wagons drowned out the strains, which by snatches flashed forth. Unhappy artist pair, do you know that these tones are an epitome of all the glories of the world? — How like a tryst it was!

It happened that a fire broke out backstage in a theater. The clown came out to inform the public. They thought it was a jest and applauded. He repeated

his warning, they shouted even louder. So I think the world will come to an end amid general applause from all the wits, who believe that it is a joke.

In the last analysis, what is the significance of life? If we divide mankind into two great classes, we may say that one works for a living, the other does not need to. But working for a living cannot be the meaning of life, since it would be a contradiction to say that the perpetual production of the conditions for subsistence is an answer to the question about its significance which, by the help of this, must be conditioned. The lives of the other class have in general no other significance than that they consume the conditions of subsistence. And to say that the significance of life is death, seems again a contradiction.

The essence of pleasure does not lie in the thing enjoyed, but in the accompanying consciousness. If I had a humble spirit in my service who, when I asked for a glass of water, brought me the world's costliest wines blended in a chalice, I should dismiss him, in order to teach him that pleasure consists not in what I enjoy, but in having my own way.

And so I am not the master of my life, I am only one thread among many, which must be woven into the fabric of life! Very well, if I cannot spin, I can at least cut the thread.

Everything is to be acquired in stillness, and in the silence of the divine. It is not only of Psyche's future child it holds, that its future depends on her silence.

> *Mit einem Kind, das gottlich, tvenn Du schweigst —*
> *Dock menschlich, wenn Du das Geheimnis zeigst.*

I seem destined to have to suffer every possible mood, to acquire experience in every direction. Every moment I he like a child, who must

learn to swim, out in the middle of the sea. I scream (which I have learned from the Greeks, from whom one can learn everything which is purely human); for I have indeed a harness about my waist, but the pole that holds me up I do not see. It is a fearful way in which to get experience.

It is quite remarkable that one gets a conception of eternity from two of the most appalling contrasts in life. If I think of that unhappy bookkeeper who lost his reason from despair at having involved his firm in bankruptcy by adding 7 and 6 to make 14; if I think of him day after day, oblivious to everything else, repeating to himself: 7 and 6 are 14, then I have an image *of* eternity. — If I imagine a voluptuous feminine beauty in a harem, reclining on a couch in all charming grace, without concern for anything in all the world, then I have a symbol *for* eternity.

What the philosophers say about Reality is often as disappointing as a sign you see in a shop window, which reads: Pressing Done Here. If you brought your clothes to be pressed, you would be fooled; for the sign is only for sale.

There is nothing more dangerous to me than remembering. The moment I have remembered some life-relationship, that moment it ceased to exist. People say that separation tends to revive love. Quite true, but it revives it in a purely poetic manner. The life that is lived wholly in memory is the most perfect conceivable, the satisfactions of memory are richer than any reality, and have a security that no reality possesses. A remembered life-relation has already passed into eternity, and has no more temporal interest.

If any man needs to keep a diary, I do, and that for the purpose of assisting my memory. After a time it frequently happens that I have completely forgotten the reason which led me to do this or that, not only in connection with trifles, but also in connection with the most momentous decisions. And if I do recall my reason, it sometimes seems so strange to me that I can hardly believe it was my reason. This doubt could be resolved if I had

something to refer to. A reason is generally a very curious thing; if I apprehend it with the total intensity of my passion, then it grows up into a huge necessity which can move heaven and earth. But if I lack passion, I look down upon it with scorn. — For some time I have been wondering what it was that moved me to resign my position as teacher in a secondary school. As I think it over, it seems to me that such a position was precisely what I wanted. Today a light dawned upon me; the reason was just this, that I had considered myself absolutely fitted for the post. Had I retained it, I should have had everything to lose and nothing to gain. Hence I thought it best to resign, and to seek employment with a traveling troupe of players, since I had no talent for theatricals, and therefore had everything to gain.

One must be very naïve to believe that it will do any good to cry out and shout in the world, as if that would change one's fate. Better take things as they come, and make no fuss. When I was young and went into a restaurant, I would say to the waiter, "A good cut, a very good cut, from the loin, and not too fat." Perhaps the waiter did not even hear me, to say nothing of paying any attention to my request, and still less was it likely that my voice should reach the kitchen and influence the cook, and even if it did, there was perhaps not a good cut on the entire roast. Now I never shout any more.

The social striving and the beautiful sympathy which prompts it spreads more and more. In Leipzig there has recently been formed a society whose members are pledged, out of sympathy for the sad fate of old horses, to eat their flesh.

I have but one friend, Echo; and why is Echo my friend? Because I love my sorrow, and Echo does not take it away from me. I have only one confidant, the silence of the night; and why is it my confidant? Because it is silent.

As it befell Parmeniscus in the legend, who in the cave of Trophonius lost the power to laugh, but got it again on the island of Delos, at the sight of the shapeless block exhibited there as the image of the goddess Leto, so it has befallen me. When I was young, I forgot how to laugh in the cave of Trophonius; when I was older, I opened my eyes and beheld reality, at which I began to laugh, and since then I have not stopped laughing. I saw that the meaning of life was to secure a livelihood, and that its goal was to attain a high position; that love's rich dream was marriage with an heiress; that friendship's blessing was help in financial difficulties; that wisdom was what the majority assumed it to be; that enthusiasm consisted in making a speech; that it was courage to risk the loss of ten dollars; that kindness consisted in saying, "You are welcome," at the dinner table; that piety consisted in going to communion once a year. This I saw, and I laughed.

What is the power that binds me? How was the chain made with which the Fenris wolf was bound? It was wrought from the sound of a cat's paws walking over the ground, from women's beards, from the roots of rocks, from the nerves of bears, from the breath of fishes, and the spittle of birds. And thus I, too, am bound in a chain formed of dark imaginings, of unquiet dreams, of restless thoughts, of dread presentiments, of inexplicable anxieties. This chain is "very supple, soft as silk, elastic under the highest tension, and cannot be broken in two."

Strangely enough, it is always the same thing which at every age engages our attention, and we go only so far, or rather, we go backward. When I was fifteen years old, and a pupil in the classical school, I wrote with much unction about the proofs for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, about the concept of faith, and on the significance of the miraculous. For my *examen artium* I wrote an essay on the Immortality of the Soul, which was awarded *prae ceteris;* later I won a prize for another essay on this same subject. Who would have believed that I, after having made so

substantial and promising a beginning, should now in my twenty-fifth year have come to the pass of not being able to give a single proof for the immortality of the soul? I remember especially from my school days, that an essay of mine on immortality was singled out for extraordinary praise and read to the class by the teacher, both on account of the excellence of the thought and the beauty of the style. Alas, alas, alas! this essay I threw away a long time ago! What a misfortune! By this essay my doubting soul might now perhaps be captivated, both by reason of the style and of the thought. Hence, I advise all parents, guardians, and teachers to caution the children under their care, so that they may preserve the Danish themes they write at the age of fifteen. To give this advice is the only contribution I can make to the welfare of the human race.

Knowledge of the truth I may perhaps have attained to; happiness, certainly not. What shall I do? Accomplish something in the world, men tell me. Shall I then publish my grief to the world, contribute one more proof for the wretchedness and misery of existence, perhaps discover a new flaw in human life, hitherto unnoticed? I might then reap the rare reward of becoming famous, like the man who discovered the spots on Jupiter. I prefer, however, to keep silent.

How true human nature is to itself. With what native genius does not a little child often show us a living image of the greater relation. Today I really enjoyed watching little Louis. He sat in his little chair; he looked about him with apparent pleasure. The nurse Mary went through the room. “Mary,” he cried. “Yes, little Louis,” she answered with her usual friendliness, and came to him. He tipped his head a little to one side, fastened his immense eyes upon her with a certain gleam of mischief in them, and thereupon said quite phlegmatically, “Not this Mary, another Mary.” What about us older

folk? We cry out to the whole world, and when it comes smiling to meet us, then we say: “This was not the Mary.”

My life is like an eternal night; when at last I die, then I can say with Achilles:

Du bist vollbracht, Nachtwache meines Daseyns.

My life is absolutely meaningless. When I consider the different periods into which it falls, it seems like the word *Schnur* in the dictionary, which means in the first place a string, in the second, a daughter-in-law. The only thing lacking is that the word *Schnur* should mean in the third place a camel, in the fourth, a dust-brush.

I am like a Luneburger pig. My thinking is a passion. I can root up truffles excellently for other people, even if I get no pleasure out of them myself. I dig the problems out with my nose, but the only thing I can do with them is to throw them back over my head.

Vainly I strive against it. My foot slips. My life is still a poet’s existence. What could be more unhappy? I am predestined; fate laughs at me when suddenly it shows me how everything I do to resist becomes a moment in such an existence. I can describe hope so vividly that every hoping individual will acknowledge my description; and yet it is a deception, for while I picture hope, I think of memory.

There is still another proof for the existence of God, one which has hitherto been overlooked. It is propounded by a servant in Aristophanes’ *The Knights:*

Demosthenes: Shrines? shrines? Why surely you don’t believe in the gods?

Nicias: I do.

Demosthenes: But what's your argument? Where's your proof?

Nicias: Because I feel they persecute me and hate me, in spite of everything I try to please 'em.

Demosthenes: Well, well. That's true; you're right about that.

How terrible tedium is — terribly tedious; I know no stronger expression, none truer, for only the like is known by the like. If only there were some higher, stronger expression, then there would be at least one movement. I lie stretched out, inactive; the only thing I see is emptiness, the only thing I move about in is emptiness. I do not even suffer pain. The vulture constantly devoured Prometheus' liver; the poison constantly dripped down on Loki; that was at least an interruption, even though a monotonous one. Even pain has lost its refreshment for me. If I were offered all the glories of the world, or all its pain, the one would move me as little as the other, I would not turn over on the other side either to obtain them or to escape them. I die the death. Is there anything that could divert me? Aye, if I might behold a constancy that could withstand every trial, an enthusiasm that endured everything, a faith that could remove mountains, a thought that could unite the finite and the infinite. But my soul's poisonous doubt is all-consuming. My soul is like the Dead Sea, over which no bird can fly; when it has flown midway, then it sinks down to death and destruction.

Strange, with what equivocal anxiety — for losing and keeping — man yet clings to this life! Sometimes I have considered taking a decisive step, compared with which all my preceding ones would be only childish tricks — of setting out on the great voyage of discovery. As a ship at its launching is hailed with the roar of cannon, so would I hail myself. And yet. Is it courage I lack? If a stone fell down and killed me, that would be a way out.

Tautology is and remains still the supreme principle, the highest law of thought. What wonder then that most men use it? Nor is it so entirely empty but that it may well serve to fill out an entire life. It has its witty, jesting, entertaining form; it is the infinite judgment. This is the paradoxical and transcendental kind of tautology. It has the serious, scientific, edifying form. The formula for this is: when two magnitudes are severally equal to one and the same third magnitude, they are equal to each other. This is a quantitative inference. This kind of tautology is especially useful for rostrums and pulpits, where you are expected to say something profound.

The disproportion in my build is that my forelegs are too short. Like the kangaroo, I have very short forelegs, and tremendously long hind legs. Ordinarily I sit quite still; but if I move, the tremendous leap that follows strikes terror in all to whom I am bound by the tender ties of kinship and friendship.

EITHER/OR

An ecstatic lecture

IF YOU MARRY, you will regret it; if you do not marry, you will also regret it; if you marry or do not marry, you will regret both; whether you marry or do not marry, you will regret both. Laugh at the world's follies, you will regret it; weep over them, you will also regret that; laugh at the world's follies or weep over them, you will regret both; whether you laugh at the world's follies or weep over them, you will regret both. Believe a woman, you will regret it, believe her not, you will also regret that; believe a woman, or believe her not, you will regret both; whether you believe a woman or believe her not, you will regret both. Hang yourself, you will regret it; do not hang yourself, and you will also regret that; hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret both; whether you hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret both. This, gentlemen, is the sum and substance of all philosophy. It is not only at certain moments that I view everything aeterno modo, as Spinoza says, but I live constantly aeterno modo. There are many who think that they live thus, because after having done the one or the other, they combine or mediate the opposites. But this is a misunderstanding; for the true eternity does not lie behind either/or, but before it. Hence, their eternity will be a painful succession of temporal moments, for they will be consumed by a twofold regret. My philosophy is at least easy to understand, for I have only one principle, and I do not even proceed from that. It is necessary to distinguish between the successive dialectic in either/or, and the eternal dialectic here set forth. Thus, when I say that I do not proceed from my principle, this must not be understood in opposition to a proceeding forth from it, but is rather a negative expression

for the principle itself, through which it is apprehended in equal opposition to a proceeding or a non-proceeding from it. I do not proceed from my principle; for if I did, I would regret it, and if I did not, I would also regret that. If it seems, therefore, to one or another of my respected hearers that there is anything in what I say, it only proves that he has no talent for philosophy; if my argument seems to have any forward movement, this also proves the same. But for those who can follow me, although I do not make any progress, I shall now unfold the eternal truth, by virtue of which this philosophy remains within itself, and admits of no higher philosophy. For if I proceeded from my principle, I should find it impossible to stop; for if I stopped, I should regret it, and if I did not stop, I should also regret that, and so forth. But since I never start, so can I never stop; my eternal departure is identical with my eternal cessation. Experience has shown that it is by no means difficult for philosophy to begin. Far from it. It begins with nothing, and consequently can always begin. But the difficulty, both for philosophy and for philosophers, is to stop. This difficulty is obviated in my philosophy; for if anyone believes that when I stop now, I really stop, he proves himself lacking in the speculative insight. For I do not stop now, I stopped at the time when I began. Hence my philosophy has the advantage of brevity, and it is also impossible to refute; for if anyone were to contradict me, I should undoubtedly have the right to call him mad. Thus it is seen that the philosopher lives continuously *aeterno modo,* and has not, like Sintenis of blessed memory, only certain hours which are lived for eternity.

Why was I not born in Nyboder? Why did I not die in infancy? Then my father would have laid me in a little box, taken it under his arm, carried me out some Sunday afternoon to the grave, thrown the earth upon the casket himself, and softly uttered a few words, intelligible only to himself. It was

only in the happy days when the world was young, that men could imagine infants weeping in Elysium, because they had died so early.

Never have I been happy; and yet it has always seemed as if happiness were in my train, as if glad genii danced about me, invisible to others but not to me, whose eyes gleamed with joy. And when I go among men, as happy and glad as a god, and they envy me my happiness, then I laugh; for I despise men, and avenge myself upon them. Never have I wished to wrong any man, but have always tried to give the impression that everyone who came near me would be wronged and insulted. And when I hear others praised for their faithfulness and integrity, then I laugh; for I despise men, and avenge myself upon them. Never has my heart been hardened against any human being, but always, just when I was most affected, I made it look as if my heart were closed and alien to every human feeling. And when I hear others praised for their goodness of heart, and see them loved for the depth and wealth of their feeling, then I laugh; for I despise men and avenge myself upon them. When I see myself cursed, abominated, hated, for my coldness and heartlessness: then I laugh, then my wrath is satiated. If these good people could really put me in the wrong, if they could actually make me do wrong — well, then I should have lost.

This is my misfortune: at my side there always walks an angel of death, and I do not besprinkle the door-lintels of the elect with blood, as a sign that he shall pass by; no, it is just their doors that he enters — for only the love that lives in memory is happy.

Wine can no longer make my heart glad; a little of it makes me sad, much makes me melancholy. My soul is faint and impotent; in vain I prick the spur of pleasure into its flank, its strength is gone, it rises no more to the royal leap. I have lost my illusions. Vainly I seek to plunge myself into the

boundless sea of joy; it cannot sustain me, or rather, I cannot sustain myself. Once pleasure had but to beckon me, and I mounted, light of foot, sound, and unafraid. When I rode slowly through the woods, it was as if I flew; now when the horse is covered with lather and ready to drop, it seems to me that I do not move. I am solitary as always; forsaken, not by men, which could not hurt me, but by the happy fairies of joy, who used to encircle me in countless multitudes, who met acquaintances everywhere, everywhere showed me an opportunity for pleasure. As an intoxicated man gathers a wild crowd of youths about him, so they flocked about me, the fairies of joy, and I greeted them with a smile. My soul has lost its potentiality. If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!

Music finds its way where the rays of the sun cannot penetrate. My room is dark and dismal, a high wall almost excludes the light of day. The sounds must come from a neighboring yard; it is probably some wandering musician. What is the instrument? A flute?... What do I hear — the minuet from *Don Juan!* Carry me then away once more, O tones so rich and powerful, to the company of the maidens, to the pleasures of the dance. — The apothecary pounds his mortar, the kitchen maid scours her kettle, the groom curries the horse, and strikes the comb against the flagstones; these tones appeal to me alone, they beckon only me. O! accept my thanks, whoever you are! My soul is so rich, so sound, so joy-intoxicated!

In itself, salmon is a great delicacy; but too much of it is harmful, since it taxes the digestion. At one time when a very large catch of salmon had been brought to Hamburg, the police ordered that a householder should give his

servants only one meal a week of salmon. One could wish for a similar police order against sentimentality.

Carking care is my feudal castle. It is built like an eagle's nest upon the peak of a mountain lost in the clouds. No one can take it by storm. From this abode I dart down into the world of reality to seize my prey; but I do not remain down there, I bear my quarry aloft to my stronghold. My booty is a picture I weave into the tapestries of my palace. There I live as one dead. I immerse everything I have experienced in a baptism of forgetfulness unto an eternal remembrance. Everything temporal and contingent is forgotten and erased. Then I sit like an old man, grey-haired and thoughtful, and explain picture after picture in a voice as soft as a whisper; and at my side a child sits and listens, although he remembers everything before I tell it.

The sun shines into my room bright and beautiful, the window is open in the next room; on the street all is quiet, it is a Sunday afternoon. Outside the window, I clearly hear a lark pour forth its song in a neighbor's garden, where the pretty maiden lives. Far away in a distant street I hear a man crying shrimps. The air is so warm, and yet the whole town seems dead. — Then I think of my youth and of my first love — when the longing of desire was strong. Now I long only for my first longing. What is youth? A dream. What is love? The substance of a dream.

Something wonderful has happened to me. I was caught up into the seventh heaven. There sat all the gods in assembly. By special grace I was granted the privilege of making a wish. "Wilt thou," said Mercury, "have youth or beauty or power or a long life or the most beautiful maiden or any of the other glories we have in the chest? Choose, but only one thing." For a moment I was at a loss. Then I addressed myself to the gods as follows:

“Most honorable contemporaries, I choose this one thing, that I may always have the laugh on my side.” Not one of the gods said a word; on the contrary, they all began to laugh. From that I concluded that my wish was granted, and found that the gods knew how to express themselves with taste; for it would hardly have been suitable for them to have answered gravely: “Thy wish is granted.”

THE IMMEDIATE STAGES OF THE EROTIC; OR THE MUSICAL EROTIC

INSIGNIFICANT INTRODUCTION.

FROM THE MOMENT that Mozart's music first filled my soul with wonder, and I bowed before it in humble admiration, I have found a dear and grateful occupation in reflecting on how that happy Greek view of the world which calls the world a cosmos, because it manifests itself as a harmonious whole, a transparent and tasteful adornment for the Spirit which works in and through it — how this happy view finds application in a higher realm, in the world of ideals, where there is again an overruling wisdom particularly admirable in joining together those things which belong together: Axel with Valborg, Homer with the Trojan War, Raphael with Catholicism, Mozart with Don Juan. There is a wretched unbelief abroad which seems to contain much healing power. It deems such a connection accidental, and sees in it only a lucky conjunction of the different forces in the game of life. It thinks it an accident that the lovers win one another, accidental that they love one another; there were a hundred other women with whom the hero might have been equally happy, and whom he could have loved as deeply. It thinks that there has been many a poet who might have become as immortal as Homer, if this splendid subject had not already been appropriated by him; many a composer who might have made himself as immortal as Mozart, had the opportunity offered. This wisdom contains much solace and comfort for all mediocre minds, since it lends itself to the delusion with which they deceive themselves and other like-minded souls, that it is a confusion of fate, an error on the part of the world, that they did not become as famous as the famous. It is a very easy optimism that is thus

encouraged. But for every high-minded soul, for every optimate who is not so anxious to save himself in this wretched manner as to lose himself in the contemplation of greatness, it is naturally repugnant; while it is a delight to his soul, a sacred joy, to behold the union of those things which belong together. It is this union which is fortunate, but not as if it were merely accidental; and hence, it presupposes two distinct factors, while the accidental involves merely the inarticulate interjections of a blind fate. It is the realization of this union which constitutes the fortunate in the historical process, the divine conjunction of its forces, the high tide of historic time. The accidental has but one factor; it is accidental that Homer found in the Trojan War the most distinguished epic subject conceivable. The fortunate has two factors: it is fortunate that the most distinguished epic subject fell to the lot of Homer; here the accent falls as much on Homer as on the material. It is this profound harmony which reverberates through every work of art we call classic. And so it is with Mozart; it is fortunate that the subject, which is perhaps the only strictly musical subject, in the deeper sense, that life affords, fell to — Mozart.

With his Don Juan Mozart enters the little immortal circle of those whose names, whose works, time will not forget, because eternity remembers them. And though it is a matter of indifference, when one has found entrance there, whether one stands highest or lowest, because in a certain sense all stand equally high, since all stand infinitely high, and though it is childish to dispute over the first and the last place here, as it is when children quarrel about the order assigned to them in the church at confirmation, I am still too much of a child, or rather I am like a young girl in love with Mozart, and I must have him in first place, cost what it may. And I will appeal to the parish clerk and to the priest and to the dean and to the bishop and to the whole consistory, and I will implore and adjure them to hear my prayer, and I will invoke the whole congregation on this matter,

and if they refuse to hear me, if they refuse to grant my childish wish, I excommunicate myself, and renounce all fellowship with their modes of thought; and I will form a sect which not only gives Mozart first place, but which absolutely refuses to recognize any artist other than Mozart; and I shall beg Mozart to forgive me, because his music did not inspire me to great deeds, but turned me into a fool, who lost through him the little reason I had, and spent most of my time in quiet sadness humming what I do not understand, haunting like a specter day and night what I am not permitted to enter. Immortal Mozart! Thou, to whom I owe everything; to whom I owe the loss of my reason, the wonder that caused my soul to tremble, the fear that gripped my inmost being; thou, to whom I owe it that I did not pass through life without having been stirred by something. Thou, to whom I offer thanks that I did not die without having loved, even though my love became unhappy. Is it strange then that I should be more concerned for Mozart's glorification than for the happiest moment of my life, more jealous for his immortality than for my own existence? Aye, if he were taken away, if his name were erased from the memory of men, then would the last pillar be overthrown, which for me has kept everything from being hurled together into boundless chaos, into fearful nothingness.

And yet I need not fear that any age will ever deny him his place in the kingdom of the gods, but I am prepared to find that men will consider it childish in me to insist that he must have the first place. And though I am by no means ashamed of my childishness, and though it will always have more significance and more value for me than any exhaustive reflection, just because it is inexhaustible, I shall nevertheless attempt to prove his lawful claim by reasoned consideration.

The happy characteristic that belongs to every classic, that which makes it classic and immortal, is the absolute harmony of the two forces, form and content. This concord is so absolute that a later reflective age will scarcely

be able to separate, even for thought, the two constituent elements here so intimately united, without running the risk of entertaining or provoking a misunderstanding. Thus when we say that it was Homer’s good fortune that he had the most remarkable epic subject conceivable, we may forget that we always see this epic material through Homer’s eyes, and that it seems to us the most perfect subject, is clear to us only in and through the transubstantiation which we owe to Homer. But if, on the other hand, we stress Homer’s poetic energy in interpreting the material, we easily run the risk of forgetting that the poem would never have become the thing it is, if the thought with which Homer has imbued it were not its own thought, if the form were not precisely the form that belongs to it. The poet wishes for his subject; but, as we say that wishing is no art, it is quite rightly and truthfully said about many impotent poetic wishes. To wish rightly, on the other hand, is a great art, or, rather, it is a gift. It is the inexplicable and mysterious quality of genius that, like a divining rod, it never gets the idea of wishing except when the thing wished for is present. Here wishing has a more profound significance than it ordinarily does, and to the abstract understanding, it may even seem ridiculous, since we ordinarily think of a wish only in relation to that which is not, not in relation to that which is.

By one-sidedly emphasizing the significance of form, a certain school of aestheticians has been responsible for promoting the corresponding opposite misunderstanding also. It has often seemed strange to me that these aestheticians attached themselves without question to the Hegelian philosophy, since a general knowledge of Hegel, as well as a special acquaintance with his aesthetics, makes it clear that he strongly emphasizes, with regard to the aesthetic, the significance of the content. Both parts belong essentially together, and a single consideration will be sufficient to confirm this, since otherwise such a phenomenon as the following would be unthinkable. It is ordinarily only a single work, or a single suite of works,

which stamps the individual artist as a classic poet, artist, and so on. The same individual may have produced a great many different things, none of which stand in any relation to the classic. Homer has, for example, written a *Batrachomyomachia,* but this poem has not made him classic or immortal. To say that this is due to the insignificance of the subject is foolish, since the classic depends on the perfect balance. If everything that determines a production as classic were to be found solely in the creative artist, then everything produced by him would have to be classic, in a sense similar to, though higher than, that in which bees always produce a uniform kind of cells. To explain this by saying that he was more successful in the one case than the other, would be to explain exactly nothing. For, partly, it would be only a pretentious tautology, which only too often in life enjoys the honor of being regarded as an answer; partly, considered as an answer, it lies in another relativity than the one concerning which our question was asked. For it tells us nothing about the relation between form and content, and at best could be taken into account in connection with an inquiry into the formative activity alone.

In Mozart's case it also happens that there is one work, and only one, which makes him a classical composer, and absolutely immortal. That work is *Don Juan.* The other things which Mozart has produced may give us pleasure and delight, awaken the admiration, enrich the soul, satisfy the ear, delight the heart; but it does him and his immortal fame no service to lump them all together, and make them all equally great. *Don Juan* is his reception-piece. Through *Don Juan* he is introduced into that eternity which does not He outside of time but in the midst of it, which is not veiled from the eyes of men, where the immortals are introduced, not once for all, but constantly, again and again, as the generations pass and turn their gaze upon them, find happiness in beholding them, and go to the grave, and the following generation passes them again in review, and is transfigured in

beholding them. Through his *Don Juan,* Mozart becomes one in the order of these immortals, one of these visibly transfigured ones, whom no cloud ever takes away from the sight of men; with his *Don Juan* he stands foremost among them. This last assertion, as I remarked above, I shall attempt to prove.

As has already been noted above, all classic productions stand equally high, because each one stands infinitely high. If, despite this fact, one were to attempt to introduce an order of rank into the classic procession, one would evidently have to choose as a basis for such a distinction, something which was not essential; for if the basis were essential, the difference itself would become an essential difference; from that it would again follow that the word "classic" was wrongly predicated of the group as a whole. A classification based upon the varying character of the subject matter would immediately involve us in a misunderstanding, which in its wider consequences would tend to nullify entirely the very concept of the classical. The subject matter is essential in so far as it is one of the constitutive factors, but it is not the absolute, since it is only one of the factors. We might notice, for example, that certain species of the classic have, in a sense, no subject matter, while, on the other hand, in others the subject matter plays a very significant role. The first holds true of those works which we admire as classic in the realms of architecture, sculpture, music and painting, especially the first three, and even in the case of painting, to the extent that a subject matter is involved, it has hardly more significance than that of having provided an occasion. The second holds true of poetry, taken in its broadest sense, including all artistic productions based upon language and the historical consciousness. This remark is quite correct in itself; but if we made it the basis of a classification, treating the absence or the presence of a subject as a help or a hindrance to the artist's creative energy, we should fall into error. Strictly speaking, we should

actually be urging the opposite of what we had really intended, as always happens when dealing abstractly with dialectical concepts; it is not only true that we say one thing and mean another, but that we say the other; we do not say what we think we say, but we say the opposite. Such is the result when we employ the subject matter as the principle of classification. In speaking about the subject matter, it turns out that we really speak about something quite different, namely, the formative process. On the other hand, if we were to start from the formative process and stress it exclusively, the same thing would happen. In the attempt to make a valid distinction here by stressing the fact that in some respects the formative process is creative, in that it creates the subject matter, while in others it receives it, the result would be that while one believed that one was speaking about the formative process, one would really be speaking of the subject matter, and would actually base the classification upon the division of the subject matter. To the formative process as a point of departure for such a classification applies exactly the same law as obtains in the case of the subject matter. Therefore, the one side can never be used alone for the purpose of establishing a distinction in rank; for it is always too essential to be accidental, too accidental to be an adequate basis for an essential distinction.

But this absolutely reciprocal interpenetration, which makes it clearly as proper to say that the subject matter penetrates the form, as that the form penetrates the subject matter — this mutual interpenetration, this like for like in the immortal friendship of the classic, may serve to throw a light upon the classic from a new angle, and to limit it so that it does not become too ample. The aestheticians particularly, who have one-sidedly emphasized poetic activity, have so enlarged this concept that this pantheon became so enriched, aye, so overloaded with classical gimcracks and bagatelles, that the natural conception of a cool hall containing individually distinguished

and imposing figures completely disappeared, and this pantheon became rather a lumber-room. Every neat little bit of perfect artistry is, according to this aesthetic verdict, a classical work, assured of absolute immortality; indeed, in this hocus-pocus, such little trifles were admitted most of all. Although otherwise one hated paradoxes, still one did not fear the paradox that the smallest was really the greatest art. The falsity lay in one-sidedly emphasizing the formal. Such an aesthetic could therefore flourish only temporarily, only so long as no one noticed that time made it and its classic works absurd. This tendency in the aesthetic sphere was a form of that radicalism, which, in a corresponding manner, has expressed itself in so many different spheres; it was an expression of the undisciplined subject in its equally undisciplined emptiness.

This endeavor, however, found its master in Hegel. It is, — on the whole, a sad fact regarding the Hegelian philosophy that it has by no means received the significance which it would have had, either for the preceding generation or for the present, if the preceding generation had not been so busy intimidating people into it, as to give them little quiet for its appropriation, and if the present generation were not so untiringly active in pushing people beyond it. Hegel reinstated the content, the idea, in its just rights, and thereby banished all these transitory classics, these flimsy beings, the hawk-moths, from the high-arched vaults of the classic pantheon. It is by no means our intention to deny these works their just worth, but, here as elsewhere, it is necessary to take care that the language does not become confused, the concepts emasculated. A certain kind of immortality they may well have, and this is their desert; but this immortality is only the momentary eternity which every true work of art possesses, not that eternal fullness which can withstand all the vicissitudes of time. What these productions lack is ideas, and the greater their formal perfection, the more quickly will they consume themselves; the more their technical

performance approximates the highest degree of virtuosity, the more fugitive they become, having neither the courage nor the energy nor the poise to withstand the attacks of time, though all the while they more and more pretentiously claim to be the most rectified of spirits. Only when the idea reposes with transparent clearness in a definite form, can it be called a classic work; but then it will also be able to withstand the attacks of time. This unity, this mutual intensity within itself, is a property of every classical work, and hence it is readily evident that every attempt at a classification of the different classic works, which has for its basis a separation of form and content, or idea and form, is *eo ipso* doomed to failure.

In still another way we might attempt a classification. We might consider the medium through which the idea is made manifest, as an object for contemplation, and, as we have noticed that one medium is richer or poorer than another, make this the basis for a classification wherein the wealth or poverty of the medium would be regarded as a help or a hindrance. But the medium stands in too necessary a relation to the production as a whole, not to make it probable that a classification based upon the medium would sooner or later find itself involved in the difficulties already emphasized.

I believe, on the other hand, that the following considerations may open the way for a classification which will have validity, precisely because it is altogether accidental. The more abstract and hence the more void of content the idea is, and the more abstract and hence the more poverty-stricken the medium is, the greater the probability that a repetition will be impossible, and the greater the probability that when the idea has once obtained its expression, then it has found it once for all. The more concrete and consequently the richer the idea, and similarly the medium, the greater the probability for a repetition. When I now arrange the classics side by side and, without wishing to rank them relatively, find myself wondering at their lofty equality, it nevertheless easily becomes apparent that there are more

works in one section than another, or, if this is not the case, that some unequal representation is easily conceivable.

This point I wish to develop a little more in detail. The more abstract the idea is, the smaller the probability of a numerous representation. But how does the idea become concrete? By being permeated with the historical consciousness. The more concrete the idea, the greater the probability. The more abstract the medium, the smaller the probability; the more concrete, the greater. But what does it mean to say that the medium is concrete, other than to say it is language, or is seen in approximation to language; for language is the most concrete of all media. The idea, for example, which comes to expression in sculpture is wholly abstract, and bears no relation to the historical; the medium through which it is expressed is likewise abstract, consequently there is a great probability that the section of the classic works which includes sculpture will contain only a few. In this I have the testimony of time and experience on my side. If, on the other hand, I take a concrete idea and a concrete medium, then it seems otherwise. Homer is indeed a classic epic poet, but just because the epic idea is a concrete idea, and because the medium is language, it so happens that in the section of the classics which contains the epic, there are many epics conceivable, which are all equally classic, because history constantly furnishes us with new epic material. In this, too, I have the testimony of history and the assent of experience.

Now when I propose to base my subdivision wholly on the accidental, one can hardly deny its accidental character. But if, on the other hand, someone should reproach me, my answer would be that the objection is a mistake, since the principle of classification ought to be accidental. It is accidental that one section numbers, or can number, many more works than another. But since this is accidental, it is evident that one might just as well place the class highest which has, or can have, the greatest number. Here I

might fall back upon the preceding discussion, and calmly answer that this is quite correct, but that I ought for this very reason to be all the more lauded for my consistency in accidentally setting the opposite class highest. However, I shall not do this, but, on the other hand, I shall appeal to a circumstance that speaks in my favor, the circumstance, namely, that those sections which embrace the more concrete ideas are not yet completed, and do not permit of being completed. Therefore it is quite natural to place the others first, and to keep the double doors wide open for the latter. Should someone say that this is an imperfection, a defect, in the former class, then he plows a furrow outside of my field of thought, and I cannot pay attention to his argument, however thorough it may be; for it is my fixed point of departure, that seen essentially everything is equally perfect.

But which idea is the most abstract? Here the question is naturally concerned only with such ideas as lend themselves to artistic representation, not with ideas appropriate only for scientific treatment. And what medium is the most abstract? The latter question I shall answer first. The most abstract medium is the one farthest removed from language.

But before I pass on to reply to this question, I desire to remind the reader of a circumstance which affects the final solution of my problem. The most abstract medium is not always employed to express the most abstract idea. Thus the medium employed by architecture is doubtless the most abstract medium, but the ideas which receive expression in architecture are by no means the most abstract. Architecture stands in a much closer relation to history than sculpture, for example. Here we are again confronted with a new alternative. I may place in the first class in this arrangement either those works of art which have the most abstract medium, or those whose idea is most abstract. In this respect I shall choose the idea, not the medium.

Now the media employed in architecture and sculpture and painting and music are abstract. Here is not the place to investigate this matter further. The most abstract idea conceivable is sensuous genius. But in what medium is this idea expressible? Solely in music. It cannot be expressed in sculpture, for it is a sort of inner qualification of inwardness; nor in painting, for it cannot be apprehended in precise outlines; it is an energy, a storm, impatience, passion, and so on, in all their lyrical quality, yet so that it does not exist in one moment but in a succession of moments, for if it existed in a single moment, it could be modeled or painted. The fact that it exists in a succession of moments expresses its epic character, but still it is not epic in the stricter sense, for it has not yet advanced to words, but moves always in an immediacy. Hence it cannot be represented in poetry. The only medium which can express it is music. Music has, namely, an element of time in itself, but it does not take place in time except in an unessential sense. The historical process in time it cannot express.

The perfect unity of this idea and the corresponding form we have in Mozart's *Don Juan.* But precisely because the idea is so tremendously abstract, the medium is also abstract, so it is not probable that Mozart will ever have a rival. It was Mozart's good fortune to have found a subject that is absolutely musical, and if some future composer should try to emulate Mozart, there would be nothing else for him to do than to compose *Don Juan* over again. Homer found a perfect epic subject, but many epic poems are conceivable, because history commands more epic material. This is not the case with *Don Juan.* What I really mean will perhaps be best understood if I show the difference in connection with a related idea. Goethe's *Faust is* a genuinely classical production, but the idea is a historical idea, and hence every notable historical era will have its own *Faust. Faust has* language as its medium, and since this is a far more concrete medium, it follows on this ground also, that several works of the same kind are conceivable. Don Juan,

on the other hand, will always stand alone by itself, in the same sense that the Greek sculptures are classics. But since the idea in *Don Juan* is even more abstract than that underlying sculpture, it is easy to see that while sculpture includes several works, in music there can be only one. There can, of course, be a number of classical musical works, but there will never be more than the one work of which it is possible to say that the idea is absolutely musical, so that the music does not appear as an accompaniment, but reveals its own innermost essence in revealing the idea. It is for this reason that Mozart stands highest among the Immortals through his *Don Juan.*

But I abandon this whole inquiry. It is written only for lovers. And as a little can please a child, so it is well known that lovers take pleasure in highly inconsequential things. It is like a heated lovers' quarrel about nothing, and yet it has its meaning — for the lovers.

While the preceding argument has tried in every possible manner, conceivable and inconceivable, to have it recognized that Mozart's *Don Juan* takes the highest place among all classical works, it has made practically no attempt to prove that this work is really a classic; for the suggestions found here and there, precisely as being only suggestions, show that they are not intended to furnish proof, but only to afford an opportunity for enlightenment. This procedure may seem more than peculiar. The proof that *Don Juan* is a classic work is in the strictest sense a problem for thought; while, on the contrary, the other attempt, with regard to the exact sphere of thought, is quite irrelevant. The movement of thought is satisfied with having it recognized that *Don Juan* is a classic, and that every classic production is equally perfect; to desire to do more than that is for thought a thing of evil. In this way the preceding argument involves itself in a self-contradiction and easily dissolves into nothing. This is, however, quite correct, and such a self-contradiction is deeply rooted in human nature. My

admiration, my sympathy, my piety, the child in me, the woman in me, demanded more than thought could give. My thought had found repose, rested happy in its knowledge; then I came to it and begged it yet once more to set itself in motion, to venture the utmost. It knew very well that it was in vain; but since I am accustomed to living on good terms with my thought, it did not refuse me. However, its efforts accomplished nothing; incited by me it constantly transcended itself, and constantly fell back into itself. It constantly sought a foothold, but could not find it; constantly sought bottom, but could neither swim nor wade. It was something both to laugh at and to weep over. Hence I did both, and I was very thankful that it had not refused me this service. And although I know perfectly well that it will accomplish nothing, I am still as likely to ask it once more to play the same game, which is to me an inexhaustible source of delight. Any reader who finds the game tiresome is, of course, naturally not of my kind; for him the game has no significance, and it is true here as elsewhere, that like-minded children make the best play-fellows. For him the whole preceding argument is a superfluity, while for me it has such great significance, that I say thereof with Horace: *exilis domus est, ubi non et multa supersunt;* to him it is foolishness, to me wisdom; to him boring, to me a joy and delight.

Consequently such a reader will not be able to sympathize with the lyricism of my thought, which is so elevated that it transcends thought; perhaps he will, however, be good-natured enough to say: “We will not quarrel about that; I skip that part, but now let us see how you approach the far more important problem of proving that *Don Juan* is a classical work; for that, I admit, would be a very suitable introduction to the main inquiry.” How far it would be a suitable introduction, I shall leave undecided, but here again I find myself in the unfortunate position of not being able to sympathize with him; for however easy it might be for me to prove it, it would never enter my mind to do so. But while I always presuppose that

matter as decided, the following exposition will serve many times and in many ways to shed light upon *Don Juan* in this respect, just as the preceding exposition has already contributed an occasional suggestion.

The task to which this inquiry is committed is to show the significance of the musical-erotic, and again as a means to this end, to point out the different stages which, as they have this in common, that they are all immediately erotic, also agree in being essentially musical. What I have to say on this subject I owe to Mozart alone. Hence, if one or another reader should be polite enough to agree with my exposition, but still be a little doubtful as to whether it was in Mozart's music, or whether I had not myself read it into the music, I can assure him that not only the little which I here present is found there but infinitely more; aye, I can assure him that it is precisely this thought which gives me courage to attempt an explanation of certain features of Mozart's music.

That which you have loved with youthful enthusiasm and admired with youthful ardor, that which you have secretly and mysteriously preserved in the innermost recesses of your soul, that which you have hidden in the heart: *that* you always approach with a certain shyness, with mingled emotions, when you know that the purpose is to try to understand it. That which you have learned to know bit by bit, like a bird gathering straws for its nest, happier over each separate little piece than over all the rest of the world; that which the loving ear has absorbed, solitary in the great multitude, unnoticed in the secret hiding-place; that which the greedy ear has snatched up, never sated, the miserly ear has hidden, never secure, whose softest echo has never disappointed the sleepless vigil of the spying ear; that which you have lived with by day, that which you have relived by night, that which has banished sleep and made it restless, that which you have dreamed about while sleeping, and have waked up to dream it again while awake, that for which you have leaped out of bed in the middle of the

night for fear lest you forget it; that which has been present to your soul in the highest moments of rapture, that which like a woman's work you have kept always at hand; that which has followed you on bright moonlight nights, in lonely forests, by the ocean's shore, in the gloomy streets, in the dead of night, at the break of day; that which has been your companion on horseback, your fellow traveler in the carriage; that which has permeated the home, that to which your chamber has been witness, that with which your ear has re-echoed, that which has resounded through your soul, that which the soul has spun on its finest loom — that now reveals itself to thought. As those mysterious beings in ancient tales rise from the ocean's bed invested with seaweed, so it now rises from the sea of remembrance, interwoven with memories. The soul becomes sad, and the heart softens; for it is as if you were bidding it farewell, as if you were separating yourself from it, never to meet it again either in time or eternity. It seems as if you were false to it, faithless to your trust, you feel that you are no longer the same, neither so young nor so childlike; you fear for yourself, lest you lose what has made you happy and rich and glad; you fear for the object of your love, lest it suffer in this transformation, lest it show itself perhaps less perfect, lest it may not be able to answer the many questions, and then, alas! everything is lost, the magic vanished, never to be evoked again. As far as Mozart's music is concerned, my soul knows no fear, my confidence is boundless. For one thing, I know that what I have hitherto understood is very little, so there will always be enough left behind, hiding in the shadows of the soul's vaguer intimations; and for another, I am convinced that if ever Mozart became wholly comprehensible to me, he would then become fully incomprehensible to me.

To assert that Christianity has brought sensuousness into the world may seem boldly daring. But as we say that a bold venture is half the battle, so also here; and my proposition may be better understood if we consider that

in positing one thing, we also indirectly posit the other which we exclude. Since the sensuous generally is that which should be negatived, it is clearly evident that it is posited first through the act which excludes it, in that it posits the opposite positive principle. As principle, as power, as a self-contained system, sensuousness is first posited in Christianity; and in that sense it is true that Christianity brought sensuousness into the world. Rightly to understand this proposition, that Christianity has brought sensuousness into the world, one must apprehend it as identical with the contrary proposition, that it is Christianity which has driven sensuousness out, has excluded it from the world. As principle, as power, as a self-contained system, sensuousness was first posited by Christianity; to add still another qualification, which will, perhaps, show more emphatically what I mean: as a determinant of spirit, sensuousness was first posited by Christianity. This is quite natural, for Christianity is spirit, and spirit is the positive principle which Christianity has brought into the world. But when sensuousness is understood in its relationship to spirit [i.e. as its contrary], it is clearly known as a thing that must be excluded; but precisely because it should be excluded, it is determined as a principle, as a power; for that which spirit — itself a principle — would exclude must be something which is also a principle, although it first reveals itself as a principle in the moment of its exclusion. To say that sensuousness was in the world before Christianity would, of course, be a very stupid objection against me, for it goes without saying that what is to be excluded must have been before that which excludes it, although in another sense it first emerges in being excluded. This means that it begins to exist *in another sense,* and that is why I said at once that a bold venture is only half the battle.

Sensuousness, then, already existed in the world but without being spiritually determined. How then has it existed? Psychically. It was in this manner that it existed in paganism, and, in its most perfect expression, in

Greece. But sensuousness psychically determined is not opposition, exclusion, but harmony and accord. But precisely because sensuousness was harmoniously determined, it appeared, not as a principle, but as an enclitic assimilated by assonance.

This consideration will serve to throw light upon the different forms assumed by the erotic in the different stages of the evolution of the world-consciousness, and thereby lead us to determine the immediate-erotic as identical with the musical-erotic. In the Greek consciousness, the sensuous was under control in the beautiful personality, or, more rightly stated, it was not controlled; for it was not an enemy to be subjugated, not a dangerous rebel who should be held in check; it was liberated unto life and joy in the beautiful personality. The sensuous was thus not posited as a principle; the principle of soul which constituted the beautiful personality was unthinkable without the sensuous; the erotic based upon the sensuous was for this reason not posited as a principle. Love was present everywhere as moment, and as such it was momentarily present in the beautiful personality. The gods recognized its power no less than men; the gods, no less than men, knew happy and unhappy love adventures. In none of them, however, was love present as principle; in so far as it was in them, in the individual, it was there as a moment of the universal power of love, which was, however, not present anywhere, and therefore did not even exist for Greek thought nor for the Greek consciousness. The objection might be offered that Eros was the god of love, and that love as principle must be conceived as present in him. But disregarding now the consideration that here again love does not rest upon the erotic, as based upon the sensuous alone, but is a qualification of the soul, there is another circumstance which it is necessary to note, which I shall emphasize more particularly.

Eros was the god of love, but was not himself in love. In so far as the other gods or men felt the power of love in themselves, they ascribed it to

Eros, referred it to him, but Eros was not himself in love; and in so far as this happened to him once, this was an exception, and though he was the god of love, he stood far behind the other gods in the number of his love adventures, far behind men. The fact that he did once fall in love, best expresses also the fact that he, too, bowed before the universal power of love, which thus in a certain sense became a force outside of himself, and which, rejected by him, now had no place at all where it might be found. Nor is his love based upon the sensuous, but upon the psychical. It is a genuine Greek thought that the god of love is not himself in love, while all others owe their love to him. If I imagined a god or goddess of longing, it would be a genuinely Greek conception, that while all who knew the sweet unrest of pain or of longing, referred it to this being, this being itself could know nothing of longing. I cannot characterize this remarkable relation better than to say it is the converse of a representative relation. In the representative relation the entire energy is concentrated in a single individual, and the particular individuals participate therein, in so far as they participate in its particular movements. I might almost say that this relation is the opposite of that which lies at the basis of the Incarnation. In the Incarnation, the special individual has the entire fullness of life within himself, and this fullness exists for other individuals only in so far as they behold it in the incarnated individual. The Greek consciousness gives us the converse relation. That which constitutes the power of the god is not in the god, but in all the other individuals, who refer it to him; he is himself, as it were, powerless and impotent, because he communicates his power to the whole world. The incarnated individual, as it were, absorbs the power from all the rest, and the fullness is therefore in him, and only so far in the others as they behold it in him. This consideration will be seen as important in its relation to what follows, as well as significant in itself, with respect to the

categories which the universal consciousness makes use of in different periods of the world's history.

As a principle, then, we do not find the sensuous in the Greek consciousness, nor do we find the erotic as principle based upon the principle of the sensuous; and even if we had found this, we still see, what is for this inquiry of the greatest importance, that the Greek consciousness did not have the energy to concentrate the whole in a single individual, but thought of it as emanating from a point which does not possess it, to all the other points, so that this constitutive point is almost identifiable by the fact that it is the only point which does not have that which it gives to all the others.

Hence the sensuous as principle is posited by Christianity, as is also the sensuous-erotic, as principle; the representative idea was introduced into the world by Christianity. If I now imagine the sensuous-erotic as a principle, as a power, as a kingdom qualified spiritually, that is to say, so qualified that the spirit excludes it; if I imagine this principle concentrated in a single individual, then I have the concept of sensuous-erotic genius. This is an idea which the Greeks did not have, which Christianity first brought into the world, even if only in an indirect sense.

If this sensuous-erotic genius demands expression in all its immediacy, the question arises as to which medium is appropriate for the purpose. Not to be lost sight of here is the fact that it demands expression and representation in its immediacy. In its mediacy and as reflected in something other than itself, it comes under language, and becomes subject to ethical categories. In its immediacy, however, it can only be expressed in music. In this connection I must ask the reader to remember something which was said in the insignificant introduction. Here the significance of music is revealed in its full validity, and it also reveals itself in a stricter sense as a Christian art, or rather as the art which Christianity posits in

excluding it from itself, as being a medium for that which Christianity excludes from itself, and thereby posits. In other words, music is the daemonic. In the erotic-sensuous genius, music has its absolute object. It is not of course intended to say by this that music cannot also express other things, but this is its proper object. In the same way the art of sculpture is also capable of producing much else than human beauty, and yet this is its absolute object; painting can express much else than the beauty which is celestially glorified, and yet this is its absolute object. In this respect it is important to be able to see the essential idea in each art, and not to permit oneself to be disturbed by what it is incidentally capable of representing. Man's essential idea is spirit, and we must not permit ourselves to be confused by the fact that he is also able to walk on two legs. The idea in language is thought, and we must not permit ourselves to be disturbed by the opinion of certain sentimental people, that its highest significance is to produce inarticulate sounds.

Here I beg to be allowed a little unmeaning interlude; *praeterea censeo,* that Mozart is the greatest among classic composers, and that his *Don Juan* deserves the highest place among all the classic works of art.

Now regarding the nature of music as a medium, this will naturally always be a very interesting problem. Whether I am capable of saying anything satisfactory about it is another question. I know very well that I do not understand music. I freely admit that I am a layman. I do not conceal the fact that I do not belong to the chosen people who are connoisseurs of music, that I am at most a proselyte at the gate, whom a strangely irresistible impulse carried from far regions to this point, but no farther. And yet it is perhaps possible that the little I have to say might contain some particular remark, which, if it met with a kind and indulgent reception, might be found to contain something true, even if it concealed itself under a shabby coat. I stand outside the realm of music and contemplate it from this

standpoint. That this standpoint is very imperfect, I freely admit; that I am in a position to see very little in comparison with the fortunate ones who stand inside, I do not deny; but I still continue to hope that from my standpoint I may be able to throw some light upon the subject, although the initiated could do it much better, aye, to a certain extent, even understand better what I say, than I myself can. If I imagined two kingdoms adjoining one another, with one of which I was fairly well acquainted, and altogether unfamiliar with the other, and I was not allowed to enter the unknown realm, however much I desired to do so, I should still be able to form some conception of its nature. I could go to the limits of the kingdom with which I was acquainted and follow its boundaries, and as I did so, I should in this way describe the boundaries of this unknown country, and thus without ever having set foot in it, obtain a general conception of it. And if this was a task that engrossed my energies, and if I was indefatigable in my desire to be accurate, it would doubtless sometimes happen that, as I stood sadly at my country's boundary and looked longingly into the unknown country, which was so near me and yet so far away, some little revelation might be vouchsafed to me. And though I feel that music is an art which to the highest degree requires experience to justify one in having an opinion about it, still I comfort myself again, as I have so often done before, with the paradox that, even in ignorance and mere intimations, there is also a kind of experience. I comfort myself by remembering that Diana, who had not herself given birth, nevertheless came to the assistance of the child-bearing; moreover, that she had this as a native gift from childhood, so that she came to the assistance of Latona in her labor, when she herself was born.

The kingdom known to me, to whose utmost boundaries I intend to go in order to discover music, is language. If one wished to arrange the different media according to their appointed developmental process, one would have to place music and language next to one another, for which reason it has

often been said that music is a language, which is something more than a genial remark. If one enjoyed indulging in clever speeches, one might almost say that sculpture and painting are each a kind of language, in so far as every expression of the idea is necessarily a language, since language is the essence of the idea. Very clever people, therefore, talk about the language of nature, and maudlin clergymen open the book of nature for us now and then to read something which neither they nor their hearers understand. If the remark that music is a language had no better standing than this, I should not trouble about it, but let it go and be valid for what it is. But such, however, is not the case. Not until the spiritual is posited is language invested with its rights; but when the spiritual is posited, all that which is not spirit is thereby excluded. But this exclusion is a determination of spirit, and in so far as the excluded is to assert itself, it requires a medium which is spiritually determined, and this is music. But a medium which is spiritually determined is essentially language; since then music is spiritually determined, it has justly been called a language.

As a medium, language is the one absolutely spiritually qualified medium; therefore it is the proper vehicle for the idea. A more adequate development of this point is not within my competence, nor is it within the scope of this little inquiry. Perhaps I may, however, find room for one remark, which again brings me back to music. In language the sensuous is as medium depressed to the level of a mere instrumentality and constantly negated. Such is not the case with the other media. Neither in sculpture nor in painting is the sensuous a mere instrumentality, but it is an integral part; nor is it constantly negated, for it is constantly taken into account. It would be a peculiarly preposterous way of regarding a statue or a painting if I were to contemplate it in such wise that I took the trouble of abstracting the sensuous, thereby completely annulling its beauty. In sculpture, architecture, painting, the idea is bound up with the medium; but this fact

that the idea does not depress the medium to the level of a mere instrumentality, nor constantly negate it, is, as it were, an expression of the fact that this medium cannot speak. So also with nature. Hence, we rightly say that nature is dumb, and architecture and sculpture and painting; we say it correctly, in spite of all the sensitive and sentimental ears that can hear them speak. It is in truth as silly to say that nature is a language as it is inept to say that that which is mute is speaking, since it is not even a language in the sense in which the manual alphabet is a language. But it is different in the case of language. The sensuous is reduced to a mere instrument and is thus annulled. If a man spoke in such a way that one heard the movement of his tongue, he would speak badly; if he heard so that he heard the air vibrations instead of the words, he would hear badly; if in reading a book he constantly saw the individual letters, he would read badly. Language becomes the perfect medium just at the moment when everything sensuous in it is negatived. So it is also with music: that which really should be heard, constantly emancipates itself from the sensuous. That music as a medium stands lower than language has already been pointed out, and it was, therefore, on this account that I said that only in a certain sense is music a language.

Language addresses itself to the ear. No other medium does this. The ear is the most spiritually determined of the senses. That I believe most men will admit. If anyone wishes further information on this point, I refer the reader to the preface of *Karikaturen des Heiligsten* by Steffens. Aside from language, music is the only medium that addresses itself to the ear. Herein is again an analogy and a testimony concerning the sense in which music is a language. There is much in nature which addresses itself to the ear, but that which affects the ear is the purely sensuous, and for that reason nature is dumb; and it is a ridiculous delusion that one hears something because one hears a cow moo or, that which perhaps makes greater pretensions, a

nightingale sing; it is a delusion to think that one hears something, a delusion to think that one is worth more than the other, since it is all a case of tweedledum and tweedledee.

Language has time as its element; all other media have space as their element. Music is the only other one that takes place in time. But the fact that it does take place in time is again a negation of the sensuous. What the other arts produce indicates their sensuousness precisely by reason of the fact that it has its continuance in space. Now there is, of course, much in nature that takes place in time. Thus when a brook ripples and continues to ripple, there seems to be in it a qualification of time. However, this is not so, and in so far as one may wish to insist that we have here a qualification of time, one would have to say that time is indeed present, but present as if spatially qualified. Music exists only in the moment of its performance, for if one were ever so skillful in reading notes and had ever so lively an imagination, it cannot be denied that it is only in an unreal sense that music exists when it is read. It really exists only in being performed. This might seem to be an imperfection in this art as compared with the others whose productions remain, because they have their existence in the sensuous. Yet this is not so. It is rather a proof of the fact that music is a higher, a more spiritual art.

Now if I take language for my point of departure, in order by moving through it, as it were, to spy out the land of music, the result appears about as follows. If I assume that prose is the language-form that is farthest removed from music, then I notice even in the oratorical discourse, in the sonorous structure of its periods, a hint of the musical which manifests itself more and more strongly at different levels in the poetic form, in the structure of the verse, in the rhyme, until at last the musical has been developed so strongly that language ceases and everything becomes music. This is a favorite expression which the poets have used to signify that they

have, so to speak, renounced the idea, which vanishes from them, and everything ends in music. This might seem to indicate that music is an even more perfect medium than language. However, this is one of those sentimental misunderstandings which originate only in empty heads. That it is a misunderstanding will be shown later; here I desire only to call attention to the remarkable circumstance that, by moving through the language in the opposite direction, I again come up against music, in that I proceed from a prose interpenetrated by the concept, downward until I land in interjections which are again musical, just as the child's first babbling syllables are musical. Here it will hardly be said that music is a more perfect medium than language or that music is a richer medium than language, unless one is willing to assume that saying "uh" is worth more than a complete thought. But what follows from maintaining that wherever language ceases, I encounter the musical? This is probably the most perfect expression of the idea that music everywhere limits language. From this it is easy to see how the misunderstanding arose that music is a richer medium than language. By saying that when language ceases, music begins, and by saying, as people do, that everything becomes musical, we do not advance but go backwards.

This is the reason why I never had any sympathy — and in this perhaps even the experts will agree with me — with that sublime music which believes it can dispense with words. As a rule it thinks itself higher than words, although it is inferior. Now I might perhaps be confronted with the following objection: "If it is true that language is a richer medium than music, then it is hard to understand why it should be so hard to give an aesthetic account of the musical; inconceivable that language in this connection should always appear as a poorer medium than music." This is, however, neither inconceivable nor inexplicable. Music always expresses the immediate in its immediacy; it is for this reason, too, that music shows

itself first and last in relation to language, but for this reason, also, it is clear that it is a misunderstanding to say that music is a more perfect medium. Language involves reflection, and cannot, therefore, express the immediate. Reflection destroys the immediate, and hence it is impossible to express the musical in language; but this apparent poverty of language is precisely its wealth. The immediate is really the indeterminate, and therefore language cannot apprehend it; but the fact that it is indeterminate is not its perfection but an imperfection. This is indirectly acknowledged in many ways. Thus, to cite but one example, we say: "I cannot really explain why I do this or that so and so, I do it by ear." Here we often use about things which have no relation to music a word derived from music, but we indicate by this the obscure, the unexplained, the immediate.

Now if it is the immediate, qualified spiritually, which receives its precise expression in music, we may again inquire more closely what species of the immediate it is which is essentially the subject of music. The immediate, qualified spiritually, may either be determined so as to fall within the sphere of the spiritual or as falling outside it. When the immediate, spiritually qualified, is determined as falling within the sphere of the spiritual, it may then well find its expression in the musical, but this immediacy cannot be the absolute subject of music, for since it is determined in such a way as to be included under the spiritual, it is thereby indicated that music is in a foreign sphere, it constitutes a prelude which is constantly being annulled. But if the immediate, spiritually qualified, is such that it falls outside the realm of spirit, then music here has its absolute subject. For the first species of the immediate, it is unessential that it be expressed in music, whereas it is essential for it to become spirit and, consequently, to be expressed in language; for the second, on the contrary, it is essential that it be expressed in music, it cannot be expressed otherwise than in music, it cannot be expressed in language, since it is spiritually

determined so that it falls outside of the spiritual and, consequently, outside of language. But the immediacy which is thus excluded by the spirit is sensuous immediacy. This belongs to Christianity. In music it has its absolute medium, and from this circumstance it is also possible to explain the fact that music did not really become developed in the ancient world but belongs to the Christian era. Music is, then, the medium for that species of the immediate which, spiritually determined, is determined as lying outside of the spirit. Music can, naturally, express many other things, but this is its absolute subject. It is easy to perceive that music is a more sensuous medium than language, since it stresses the sensuous sound much more strongly than language does.

The genius of sensuousness is hence the absolute subject of music. In its very essence sensuousness is absolutely lyrical, and in music it breaks forth in all its lyrical impatience. It is, namely, spiritually determined, and is, therefore, force, life, movement, constant unrest, perpetual succession; but this unrest, this succession, does not enrich it, it remains always the same, it does not unfold itself, but it storms uninterruptedly forward as if in a single breath. If I desired to characterize this lyrical quality by a single predicate, I should say: it *sounds;* and this brings me back again to sensuous genius as that which in its immediacy manifests itself in music.

That even I might be able to say considerably more in connection with this point, I know; that it would be an easy matter for the experts to clear the matter up quite differently, of that I am convinced. But since no one, as far as I know, has attempted or even pretended to do so, since they all continue to reiterate that Mozart's *Don Juan* is the crown of all operas, but without explaining what they mean by that, although they all say it in a manner which clearly demonstrates that by this statement they intend to say something more than that *Don Juan is* the best opera, that there is a qualitative difference between it and all other operas, which cannot well be

sought in anything other than in the absolute relationship between idea, form, subject and medium; since, I say, this is so, it is for this reason that I have broken silence. Perhaps I have been a little too hasty, perhaps I should have been able to say it better had I waited a little longer, perhaps — I do not know; but this I know, I have not hurried in order to enjoy the pleasure of speaking, I have not hurried because I feared someone more capable than myself might anticipate me, but because I feared that if I kept silent, even the stones would cry out in Mozart's honor, and cry shame to every human being to whom it has been given to speak.

What has been said in the preceding will, I assume, be enough with respect to this little inquiry, since it will essentially serve to clear the way for a discussion of the immediate-erotic stages as we learn to know them through Mozart. Before passing on to that, however, I wish to cite a fact, which, from another side, can direct the thought to the absolute relationship between sensuous genius and the musical. It is well known that music has always been the object of suspicion from the standpoint of religious enthusiasm. Whether this is justifiable or not does not concern us here, since it has only a religious interest; on the other hand, it is not unimportant to consider what brought it about. If I trace back the history of religious fervor in regard to this, then I can generally mark the course of the movement in this way: the stronger the religiosity, the more one renounces music and stresses the importance of words. The different stages in this respect are represented in the periods of world history. The last stage entirely excludes music and insists solely upon speech. I could deck out this statement with a variety of particular observations; however I shall not do that, but cite only a word or two from a Presbyterian who figures in a story by Achim v. Arnim: "We Presbyterians regard the organ as the devil's bagpipe, by which serious reflection is not only lulled to sleep, but its devil's dance bewilders the good intention." This must be regarded as a

speech *instar omnium.* What reason can one have for excluding music and making the spoken word the only prevalent means of expression? That the spoken word when wrongly used can confuse the emotions equally with music, all intelligent sects will certainly admit. Hence there must be a qualitative difference between them. But that which religious enthusiasm wishes to have expressed is spirit, therefore it requires language, which is the proper medium of the spirit, and rejects music which for it is a sensuous medium and, as such, always an imperfect medium for expressing the spiritual. Whether, then, religious zeal is really right in rejecting music is, as was said, another question; on the other hand, its conception of the relation of music to language may be perfectly right. Music need not, therefore, be excluded, but we must recognize that in the realm of the spirit it is an imperfect medium, and, hence, that it cannot have its absolute subject in the immediately spiritual, determined as spirit. From this it by no means follows that one needs to regard music as the work of the devil, even if our age does offer many horrible proofs of the daemonic power with which music may lay hold upon an individual, and this individual in turn, grip and capture a multitude, especially women, in the seductive snare of fear, by means of the all-disturbing power of voluptuousness. It by no means follows that one needs to regard music as the work of the devil, even though one notices with a certain secret horror that this art, more than any other, frequently harrows its votaries in a terrible manner, a phenomenon which strangely enough seems to have escaped the attention of psychologists and the multitude, except at the single moment when they are startled by the wild shriek of some despairing individual. However, it is noticeable enough that in legends, hence in the popular consciousness which finds its expression in legends, the musical is again the daemonic. As an example I may mention the *Irish March of the Elves.*

Now with respect to the immediate-erotic stages, I owe everything I can say about it exclusively to Mozart, to whom I owe altogether everything. Since, however, the classification and comparison I here attempt can only be referred to him indirectly (the classification having been suggested by somebody else), I have, before setting about it seriously, tested myself and the classification lest I might in any way disturb my own pleasure or that of some other reader in admiring the immortal works of Mozart. He who would see Mozart in his true immortal greatness must witness his *Don Juan;* in comparison with that every other work is accidental, unessential. But if we now look at *Don Juan* so that we see individual things from Mozart's other operas from this same point of view, then I am convinced that we shall neither disparage him nor injure ourselves or our neighbor. Then we shall have the opportunity to rejoice over the fact that all the essential potency of music is poured out in the music of Mozart.

As for the rest, when in the preceding I used, and in what follows I continue to use, the expression "stage," it must not be insisted upon as implying that each stage existed independently, the one wholly separate from the other.

I might, perhaps, more pertinently have used the word "metamorphosis." The different stages taken together constitute the immediate stage, and from this we may perceive that the individual stages are rather a revelation of a predicate, so that all the predicates rush down into the wealth of the last stage, since this is the real stage. The other stages have no independent existence; in and of themselves they exist only as parts of a conceptual scheme, and from this one may see their accidental character as over against the last stage. Since, however, they have found separate expression in Mozart's music, I shall discuss them separately. Above all, however, one must avoid considering them as different degrees of consciousness, since

even the last stage has not yet arrived at consciousness; I have always to do only with the immediate in its sheer immediacy.

The difficulties which are always met with when one would make music the subject for aesthetic consideration, naturally do not fail to appear here. The difficulty in the preceding lay chiefly in the fact that while I would prove by means of thought that sensuous genius is essentially the subject of music, this can actually only be proved by means of music, just as I, too, can only come to an appreciation of music through the music itself. The difficulty the following must contend with is, rather, that since that which the music under discussion expresses is essentially music's proper subject, it expresses it far more perfectly than does language, which makes a mighty poor showing in comparison therewith. To be sure, if I had to do with different degrees of consciousness, then the advantage would naturally be on my side and on the side of language, but here that is not the case. Hence that which remains to be explained here can only have significance for him who has heard the music and who constantly continues to hear it. For him it may perhaps contain a single suggestion which may influence him to hear it again.

FIRST STAGE

The first stage is suggested by the Page in *Figaro*. It is naturally not fair here to see in the Page a single individual, which we are so easily tempted to do, when in imagination or reality we see it presented on the stage by a person. Then it becomes difficult to avoid, as is also partly the case with the Page in the play, having something accidental, something irrelevant to the idea enter, so that he becomes more than he should be; for in a certain sense he becomes this the moment he becomes an individual. But in becoming more, he becomes less, he ceases to be the idea. Therefore, we cannot grant him speech, but music becomes his only adequate means of expression, and

for that reason it is noticeable that *Figaro* as well as *Don Juan,* as they issue from the hand of Mozart, belong to *opera seria.* Now if we regard the Page only as a mythical figure, we shall find the characteristic of this first stage expressed in music.

The sensuous awakens, not yet to movement, but to a hushed tranquillity; not to joy and gladness, but to a deep melancholy. Desire is not yet awake, it is only a gloomy foreboding. In desire there is always present the object of desire, which arises out of it and manifests itself in a bewildering half-light of dawn. This relation obtains for the sensuous: by clouds and mists it is kept at a distance; by being reflected in these it is brought nearer. Desire possesses what will become its object, but possesses it without having desired it, and so does not possess it. This is the painful but also, in its sweetness, the delightful and fascinating contradiction which, in its sadness and its melancholy, resounds throughout this stage. Its pain lies not in there being too little, but rather in there being too much. The desire is quiet desire, the longing quiet longing, the ecstasy quiet ecstasy, wherein the object of desire is dawning, and is so near that it is within the desire. The object of desire hovers over the desire, sinks down in it, still without this movement happening through desire's own power to attract or because desire is operative. The object of desire does not fade away, nor does it elude desire's embrace, for then indeed desire would awaken; but it is, without being desired, present to desire, which just because of this becomes melancholy because it cannot come to the point of desiring. As soon as desire awakens, or rather in and with its awakening, desire and its object are separated; now desire breathes freely and soundly, whereas earlier it could not live and breathe for the desired. When desire is not awake, its object charms and inveigles it, aye, almost frightens it. Desire must have air, it must burst forth; thereby it happens that they part company. The object of desire flees shyly, modest as a woman, and they are separated;

the object of desire vanishes *et apparet sublimis* or in any case outside of desire. If one paints the ceiling of a room all over with figures from one side to the other, such a ceiling depresses one, as the painters say; if one paints only one light and graceful figure, then the room seems higher. Such is the relation between desire and its object at a first and later stage.

Hence the desire, which in this stage is present only as a presentiment about itself, is without movement, without disquiet, only gently rocked by an unclarified inner emotion. As the life of the plant is bound to the earth, so is desire lost in a present quiet longing, buried in contemplation, and yet cannot evacuate its object, because essentially in a deeper sense, there is no object. And yet this lack of an object is not its object, for then it would immediately be in motion, would be determined, if not in another way, then in sorrow and pain, but sorrow and pain have not the contradiction in them which is characteristic of melancholy and heaviness, nor the ambiguity which is the sweetness in the melancholy. Although desire in this stage is not qualified as desire, although this nascent desire, so far as its object is concerned, is entirely undefined, still it has the characteristic of being infinitely deep. It sucks, like Thor, through a horn whose point is buried in the sea; yet the reason why it cannot draw its object to it is not that it is infinite, but that this infinity cannot become its object. Its sucking, therefore, does not indicate a relation to the object but is identical with its sigh, and this is infinitely deep.

In harmony with the description of the first stage given here, we shall find it very significant that the Page's part is so arranged musically that it always lies within the range of a female voice. The contradictory in this stage is, as it were, suggested by this contradiction, the desire is so indefinite, its object so little separated from it, that the object of desire rests androgynously within the desire, just as in plant life the male and female

parts are both present in one blossom. Desire and its object are joined in this unity, that they both are of neuter gender.

Although speech does not belong to the mythical Page but to the Page in the play, the poetic figure Cherubino, and although because of this we cannot in this connection pay attention to it, partly because it does not belong to Mozart, partly because it expresses something quite different from that of which we are speaking here, I would, however, point to a particular speech, because it gives me occasion to describe this stage in its analogy to a later one. Susanne mocks Cherubino because he is in a way in love with Marcellina, and the Page has no answer ready other than this: she is a woman. With respect to the Page in the play, it is essential that he should be in love with the Countess, unessential that he should fall in love with Marcellina, which is only an indirect and paradoxical expression for the intensity of the passion which binds him to the Countess. With respect to the mythical Page, it is equally essential that he should be in love with the Countess and with Marcellina; the eternal feminine is his object, and both the Countess and Marcellina have this in common. Hence, when we later hear about Don Juan:

> Coquettes whom sixty years have kissed,
> With joy he adds them to his list,

we have the perfect analogy to this, except that the intensity and determination of the desire is far more strongly expressed.

Were I now to venture the attempt of indicating by a single predicate the characteristic of Mozart's music as it concerns the Page in *Figaro*, I would say: it is drunk with love. But like all intoxication, the intoxication of love can also act in two ways, either increasing the transparent joy of life, or compressing it in unclarified gloom. This latter is the case with the music here, and rightly so. Music cannot give the reason for it, that is beyond its

power; the spoken word cannot express the mood, it is too heavy, too ponderous, for speech to carry; only music can express it. The reason for its melancholy lies in the profound inner contradiction that we attempted to call attention to in the preceding.

We now leave the first stage, which is represented by the mythical Page; we leave him to continue his melancholy dreaming about what he has, his melancholy desiring of what he possesses. He never comes any farther, he never gets going, for his movements are illusory, and hence nothing. It is otherwise with the Page in the play. We feel a true and sincere friendly interest in his future, we congratulate him upon becoming a captain, we permit him to kiss Susanne once more in farewell, we shall not betray him about the mark on his forehead which none can see except the initiated; but nothing more than this, my good Cherubino, or we shall call the Count, and he will shout: “Be off with you, get out of the house, to your regiment! He is certainly no child, as no one knows better than myself.”

SECOND STAGE

This stage is represented by Papageno in *The Magic Flute.* Here again, naturally, it is important to separate the essential from the accidental, to conjure up the mythical Papageno and forget the actual person in the play; particularly so here, since the character in the play appears in connection with all sorts of doubtful galimatias. For this reason it might not be without interest to run through the whole opera in order to show that its subject matter, considered as operatic material, profoundly fails of its purpose. Nor would we lack occasion to illuminate the erotic from a new side, as we noticed how the endeavor to invest it with a deeper ethical view, in such wise that this view tries its hand at all sorts of more significant dialectical exercises, is an adventure which has ventured quite beyond the range of music, so that it was impossible for even a Mozart to lend it any deeper

interest. This opera definitively tends toward the unmusical, and therefore, it is, in spite of individually perfect concert numbers and individually deeply moving, pathetic utterances, by no means a classic opera. Still all this cannot occupy us in the present little inquiry. We have only to do with Papageno. This is a great advantage to us, if for no other reason than that we are thereby excused from every attempt to explain the significance of Papageno's relation to Tamino, a relationship which, with regard to the plan, looks so profound and thoughtful that it almost becomes unthinkable for sheer thoughtfulness.

Such a treatment of *The Magic Flute* might perhaps seem arbitrary to one or another reader, both because it sees too much in Papageno and too little in the rest of the opera; he will, perhaps, not approve of our procedure. The reason for this is that he does not agree with us as to the point of departure for every consideration of Mozart's music. In our opinion, this is, of course, *Don Juan*, and it is also our conviction that it is in seeing various features of the other operas in relation to this one that one shows the highest devotion to Mozart, although I would not thereby deny the importance of making each individual opera the object of separate consideration.

Desire awakens, and as it always happens that one first realizes he has dreamed in the moment of awakening, so likewise here, the dream is over. This impulse with which desire awakens, this trembling, separates the desire and its object, affords desire an object. This is a dialectical qualification which must be kept sharply in mind — only when the object exists does the desire exist, only when the desire exists does the object exist; desire and its object are twins, neither of which is born a fraction of an instant before the other. But though they are thus born at exactly the same instant, and with no time interval between, as is the case with other twins, the importance of their thus coming into existence is not that they are united but, on the contrary, that they are separated. But this movement of

the sensuous, this earthquake, splits the desire and its object infinitely asunder for the moment; but as the moving principle appears a moment separating, so it again reveals itself as wishing to unite the separated. The result of this separation is that desire is pulled out of its substantial repose within itself, and consequently the object no longer falls under the qualifications of substantiality, but disperses itself in a manifold.

As the life of the plant is bound to earth, so is the first stage held captive in substantial longing. Desire awakens, the object flees, manifold in its revelation; the longing breaks away from the earth and starts out wandering; the flower gets wings and flits inconstant and unwearied here and there. Desire is directed toward the object, it is also moved within itself, the heart beats soundly and joyously, the objects swiftly vanish and reappear; but still before every disappearance is a present enjoyment, a moment of contact, short but sweet, evanescent as the gleam of a glowworm, inconstant and fleeting as the touch of a butterfly, and as harmless; countless kisses, but so swiftly enjoyed, that it is as if there were only taken from one object what is given to the next. Only momentarily is a deeper desire suspected, but this suspicion is forgotten. In Papageno the desire aims at discoveries. This craving for discovery is the throbbing in it, is its sprightliness. It does not find the precise object of this search, but it discovers the manifold, as it seeks therein the object it would discover. Desire is thus awakened, but it is not yet qualified as desire. If you remember that desire is present in all three stages, then you can say that in the first stage, desire is defined as *dreaming,* in the second as *seeking,* in the third as *desiring.* The seeking desire is not yet the desiring one; it only seeks that which it can desire, but it does not desire it. Therefore this predicate will perhaps describe it best: it discovers. If from this perspective we compare Papageno with Don Juan, we see that the latter's journey through the world is something more than a journey of discovery; he enjoys not only the adventures of the journey of discovery,

but he is a knight who aims at conquest (*veni, vidi, vici).* Discovery and victory are here identical; indeed, in a certain sense one may say that he forgets the discovery in the victory, or that the discovery lies behind him, and he therefore leaves it to his servant and secretary Leporello, who keeps the list in quite a different sense than if I imagined Papageno keeping books. Papageno selects, Don Juan enjoys, Leporello inspects.

The characteristic of this, as of every stage, I can indeed represent to thought, but always only in the moment that it has ceased to be. For even if I could perfectly describe its characteristic and explain the reason for this, there would still always be something left behind, which I cannot express, and which yet would be heard. It is too immediate to be fixed in words. So hers with Papageno, it is the same song, the same melody; as soon as he finishes, he begins anew from the beginning, and so continuously. Someone may now offer the objection that it is wholly impossible to express anything which is immediate. In a certain sense this is quite true, but the immediacy of the spirit has, in the first place, its immediate expression in language, and next, in so far as there occurs, through the intervention of language, a change therewith, it yet remains essentially the same, just because it is a qualification of the spirit. Here, however, it is the immediacy of the sensuous which, as such, has quite another medium, where consequently the disproportion between the media makes the impossibility absolute.

If I should now attempt by means of a single predicate to indicate the characteristics of the Mozart music in the part of this play in which we are interested, I should say: it is cheerfully chirping, vigorous, bubbling with love. What I would especially emphasize are the first aria and the chime of bells; the duet with Pamina and later with Papagena falls entirely outside the category of the immediate-musical. If, on the other hand, one considers the first aria, then one will approve of the predicate I have chosen; and if one pays closer attention, there will be an opportunity to see what

significance the musical has, how it appears as the absolute expression of the idea, and how this, as a consequence, is the immediate-musical. As you know, Papageno accompanies his light-hearted cheerfulness on the flute. Every ear has certainly felt itself moved in a strange manner by this accompaniment. But the more one considers it, the more one sees in Papageno the mythical Papageno, all the more expressive and characteristic one will find it; one does not tire of hearing it again and again, because it is an absolutely adequate expression of Papageno's life, whose whole life is such an incessant twittering; who, always carefree, chirps on in all idleness, and who is happy and satisfied because this is his life-content, happy in his work and happy in his song. As you know, it is so very profoundly arranged in the opera, that the flutes of Tamino and Papageno harmonize with one another. And yet, what a difference! Tamino's flute, from which the opera takes its name, fails altogether in its effect. And why? Because Tamino is simply not a musical figure. This is due to the mistaken plan of the opera as a whole. Tamino becomes exceedingly tiresome and sentimental on his flute; and when one considers all the rest of his development, his state of consciousness, one cannot help but think, every time he takes up his flute and begins to play on it, of the farmer in Horace *(rusticus exspectat, dum defluat amnis*), except that Horace did not give his farmer a flute for an unprofitable pastime. Tamino as a dramatic figure is entirely outside of the musical, just as the intellectual development the play would realize is, on the whole, a totally unmusical idea. Tamino has really come so far that the musical ceases; therefore his fluteplaying is only a time-killer, brought in to drive away thought. Music can effectively banish thoughts, even evil thoughts, just as we say about David that his playing exorcised Saul's evil spirit. On the other hand, there is a great delusion in this idea, for it is true only in so far as it carries consciousness back into immediacy, and lulls it therein. The individual may therefore feel happy in the moment of

intoxication, but he only becomes the more unhappy. Quite in parenthesis I shall now permit myself an observation. We have used music to heal mental aberrations; we have also in a certain sense achieved our purpose, and yet it is an illusion. That is, when madness has a mental cause, it is always the result of the induration of one or another part of the brain. This induration must be overcome, but in order to overcome it, one must go quite the opposite way from that which leads to music. If one employs music, one uses entirely the wrong method, and makes the patient even more unbalanced, even if he seems to be better.

What I have said here about Tamino's flute-playing, I can readily let stand without fear of seeing it misunderstood. It is by no means my intention to deny what several times has been conceded, that music as an accompaniment can have its significance upon entering an alien sphere — that of language. The fault in *The Magic Flute* is, however, that the whole opera tends toward consciousness, and consequently its whole trend is to do away with music, while still remaining an opera; and not even this thought is brought out clearly in the play. Ethically determined love, or married love, is posited as the goal of the development, and therein lies the radical fault of the play; for let marriage be, ecclesiastically or secularly, what it will be; one thing it is not, it is not musical; indeed, it is absolutely unmusical.

The first aria considered musically has, consequently, great significance as the immediate-musical expression for Papageno's whole life, and to the degree that history can find its absolutely adequate expression in music, it is only history in a figurative sense. The chime of bells, on the other hand, is the musical expression for his activity, of which one can only get an understanding through music; it is charming, tempting, entrancing, alluring, like the playing of the man who caused the fish to pause and listen.

The speeches, for which either Schikaneder or the Danish translator is responsible, are in general so crazy and stupid that it is almost inconceivable how Mozart has brought as much out of them as he has. To let Papageno say of himself, “I am a child of Nature,” and so in that very moment make himself a liar, may be regarded as an example *instar omnium.* One might make an exception of the words of the text in the first aria, that he puts the maidens he catches in his cage. That is, if one will put a little more into this than the author himself has presumably done, then it will serve nicely to indicate the inoffensive character of Papageno’s activity, as we have indicated it above.

We leave now the mythical Papageno. The fate of the actual Papageno need not concern us. We wish him happiness with his little Papagena, and we willingly permit him to seek his happiness in populating a primitive forest or an entire continent with nothing but Papagenos.

THIRD STAGE

This stage is represented by *Don Juan.* Here I am not under the necessity, as in the preceding, of having to pick out a single portion of an opera. Here it is not necessary to separate but to sum up, since the entire opera is essentially an expression of the idea, and with the exception of one or two numbers, is based essentially upon this idea, with dramatic necessity gravitating toward this as its center. Hence one will again have opportunity to see in what sense I may call the preceding stages by that name, when I call the third stage *Don Juan.* I earlier reminded you that they do not have any separate existence, and when one understands this third stage, which is really the whole stage, then one cannot so easily regard them as one-sided abstractions or provisional anticipations, but rather as presentiments of *Don Juan,* except that something always constantly remains behind, which more

or less justifies me in using the term *stage,* in that they are one-sided presentiments, each of them suggesting only one phase.

The contradiction in the first stage lay in the fact that desire could acquire no object, but without having desired was in possession of its object, and therefore could not reach the point of desiring. In the second stage, the object appears in its manifold, but as desire seeks its object in this manifold, it still has, in a deeper sense, no object, it is not yet posited as desire. In *Don Juan,* on the other hand, desire is absolutely determined as desire; it is, in an intensive and extensive sense, the immediate synthesis of the two preceding stages. The first stage desired the one ideally, the second stage desired the particular under the qualification of the manifold; the third stage is a synthesis of these two. Desire has its absolute object in the particular, it desires the particular absolutely. Herein lies the seductiveness of which we shall later speak. Hence, desire in this stage is absolutely sound, victorious, triumphant, irresistible and daemonic. We must, therefore, naturally not overlook the fact that we are not here talking about desire in a particular individual, but about desire as principle, spiritually determined as that which the spirit excludes. This is the idea of sensuous genius, as we also indicated above. Don Juan is the expression for this idea, and the expression for Don Juan is again exclusively musical. It is particularly these two considerations which will be continually emphasized from different points of view in what follows, from which also the proof of this opera's classic significance will be indirectly demonstrated. Meantime, to make it easier for the reader to maintain a general viewpoint, I shall attempt to collect the scattered considerations under particular headings.

It is not my intention to say something simple about this music, and I shall, with the assistance of all good spirits, especially guard against scaring together a multitude of insignificant but very noisy predicates. I likewise eschew the linguistic orgy, which would betray the impotence of language,

and that so much the more, since I do not regard it as an imperfection in language but as a high power. But therefore I am the more willing to recognize music within its own limits. By contrast, what I wish to do is, in part, to illuminate the idea from as many sides as possible and its relation to language, thereby always circumscribing more and more closely the region where music has its home; I would, as it were, worry it into breaking forth, yet without my being able to say more of something that exists to be heard than: listen! I mean by this that I have tried to do the best of which aesthetics is capable; whether I shall succeed in doing so is another matter. Only in a single place will a predicate, like a warrant for arrest, furnish the description, without my forgetting, or allowing the reader to forget, that he who holds the warrant in his hand has by no means on that account apprehended the one it names. Further, the whole plan of the opera, its inner structure, will in its place become the subject for separate discussion, but once again in such wise that I do not undertake to shout loud enough for two: "O! bravo schwere Noth Gotts Blitz bravissimo," but only so that I persistently tempt the musical forth, and mean thereby to have wished to do the utmost that one in a purely aesthetic sense is capable of doing with the musical.

What I shall give, consequently, is not a running commentary on the music, which essentially cannot contain other than subjective accidentalities and idiosyncrasies, and can only appeal to something corresponding in the reader. Even so able a commentator as Dr. Hotho, so rich in reflection, so manifold in expression, has still not been able to avoid, on the one hand, his exposition's degenerating into mere verbosity, which must form a counterbalance for Mozart's harmony, or sound like a weak echo, a pale impression of Mozart's full-toned, exuberant vigor; and, on the other hand, Don Juan's becoming at times something more than he is in the opera, a reflective individual, and at times becoming less. This last is naturally due

to the fact that the profound, absolute point of *Don Juan* has escaped Hotho; to him *Don Juan* is still only the best of operas but not qualitatively different from all other operas. But if one has not perceived this with the omnipresent certainty of the speculative eye, then one cannot worthily and correctly discuss *Don Juan*, even though, if one had perceived it, one might be able to speak more gloriously, more richly, and above all, more truthfully, than he who here ventures to be the spokesman.

On the other hand, I shall constantly ferret out the musical in the idea, the situation, and so on, distilling its very essence, and then when I have made the reader so musically receptive that he seems to hear the music, although he hears nothing, then I shall have completed my task, then I become mute, then I say to the reader as to myself: listen. You friendly genii, who protect all innocent love, to you I commit all endowments of my mind and soul; guard the questing thoughts that they may be found worthy of the subject; fashion my soul into a harmonious instrument, let the soft breezes of eloquence blow over it, send the refreshment and blessings of fruitful moods! You righteous spirits, who guard the boundaries in the realms of the beautiful, watch over me, that I do not in a moment of unclarified enthusiasm and a blind zeal to exalt *Don Juan* above all, do it wrong, disparage it, make it something other than what it is, which is the highest! You powerful spirits, you who know and understand the hearts of men, stand by me that I may catch the reader, not in the net of passion, nor by the artfulness of eloquence, but by the eternal truth of conviction.

1. SENSUOUS GENIUS QUALIFIED AS SEDUCTION

When the idea in *Don Juan* originated is not known; only so much is known, that it belongs to the Christian era, and through Christianity it also belongs to the Middle Ages. Even if one could not with some degree of certainty trace the idea back in the human consciousness to that period of

the world's history, still a consideration of the inner nature of the idea would immediately remove every doubt. The Middle Ages are altogether impregnated with the idea of representation, partly conscious, partly unconscious; the total is represented in a single individual, yet in such a way that it is only a single aspect which is determined as totality, and which now appears in a single individual, who is because of this, both more and less than an individual. By the side of this individual there stands another individual who, likewise, totally represents another aspect of life's content, such as the knight and the scholastic, the ecclesiastic and the layman. The grand dialectic of life is here invariably illustrated by representative individuals, who, more often than not, stand in pairs over against each other; life constantly presents itself only *sub una specie,* and the great dialectic unity which in unity possesses life *sub utraque specie* is not suspected. The contrasts usually stand, therefore, indifferent, apart from one another. This the Middle Ages knew nothing about. Thus they themselves instinctively realize the representative idea, while only a later reflection sees the idea contained in it. If the Middle Ages posit for their own consciousness an individual as representative of the idea, then they usually posit at his side another individual in relation to him. This relationship is generally a comic one, where the one individual, as it were, compensates for the disproportionate greatness of the other in actual life. Thus the king has his fool by his side, Faust has his Wagner, Don Quixote Sancho Panza, Don Juan Leporello. This arrangement, too, belongs essentially to the Middle Ages. The idea belongs, accordingly, to the Middle Ages; in the Middle Ages, however, it is not the exclusive property of a single poet; it is one of those conceptions of primal power which spring forth spontaneously out of the popular world-consciousness. The conflict between flesh and spirit which Christianity brought into the world, the Middle Ages had to regard as a subject for its consideration, and to that end, they made the

contending forces individually the subject of reflection. Don Juan is, then, if I dare say so, flesh incarnate, or the inspiration of the flesh by the spirit of the flesh. This has already been sufficiently stressed in the preceding; what I would here call attention to, however, is whether one ought to refer Don Juan to the earlier or later period of the Middle Ages. That he stands in an essential relation to this era is evident to everyone. Either he is, then, the rebellious, misunderstood anticipation of the erotic, which appeared in the days of knighthood, or chivalry is yet only in a relative opposition to the spiritual, and only when this contradiction became still sharper did Don Juan appear as the sensuous which opposes the spiritual to the death. The erotic in the age of chivalry had a certain resemblance to that of the Greeks. The latter, like the former, is psychically determined. But the difference is this, that this psychical determination lay within a general spiritual qualification or in a qualification as totality. The idea of the feminine is constantly in movement in many ways, which was not the case among the Greeks, where everyone was only the beautiful individuality, but the feminine was not anticipated. The erotic element of knighthood was present therefore in the consciousness of the Middle Ages in an attitude somewhat conciliatory toward the spiritual, even if the spiritual in its zealous austerity held it suspect.

If we now assume that the spiritual principle is posited in the world, we may either imagine that the most glaring contrasts come first, the most atrocious disjunctions, and that afterward they gradually become milder. Under such an assumption, Don Juan belongs to the earlier Middle Ages. If, on the contrary, we assume that the relationship gradually developed into this absolute contradiction, as is also more natural, the spiritual more and more withdrawing its shares from the united firm, in order to act independently whereupon the essential offense appears, then Don Juan belongs to the later Middle Ages. We are led thus to that point in time

where the Middle Ages are about to become important, where we then meet a related idea, namely, Faust, except that Don Juan must be placed a little earlier. As the spirit, qualified exclusively as spirit, renounces the world, it not only feels that this is not its home, but that it is not even its sphere of action; it withdraws into the higher regions, and so leaves the worldly behind as the arena of the power with which it has always been at strife, and to which it now gives place. As the spirit thus frees itself from the earth, the sensuous appears in all its power; it offers no objection to the change; it, too, sees the advantage in being separated, and rejoices that the Church is not able to keep them together, but cuts the bond which united them.

Stronger than ever before, the sensuous now awakens in all its richness, in all its joy and enthusiasm; and like that hermit of nature, the reticent echo, who never speaks first to anyone, nor speaks without being questioned, it finds great satisfaction in the hunting horn of the knights, in their love ballads, in the baying of the hounds, the snorting of the horses, so that it never becomes tired of repeating it again and again, and at last, as it were, of saying it to itself, so as not to forget it; thus did the whole world become a mammoth sounding-board for the worldly spirit of the sensuous, while the spiritual had abandoned the world.

The Middle Ages had much to say about a mountain, not found on any map, which is called the mountain of Venus. There the sensuous has its home, there it has its own wild pleasures, for it is a kingdom, a state. In this kingdom language has no place, nor sober-minded thought, nor the toilsome business of reflection. There sound only the voice of elemental passion, the play of appetites, the wild shouts of intoxication; it exists solely for pleasure in eternal tumult. The first-born of this kingdom is Don Juan. That it is the kingdom of sin is not yet affirmed, for we confine ourselves to the moment at which this kingdom appears in aesthetic indifference. Not until reflection enters does it appear as the kingdom of sin, but by that time Don Juan is

slain, the music is silent; one sees only the despairing defiance which in impotence protests, but which can find no consistency, not even in sounds. When sensuousness appears as that which must be excluded, as that which the spirit can have nothing to do with, yet without passing judgment upon it or condemning it, then the sensuous assumes the form of the daemonic in aesthetic indifference. It is only the matter of a moment; soon everything is changed, the music, too, is over. Faust and Don Juan are the Titans and giants of the Middle Ages, who in the supercilious haughtiness of their endeavors are not different from those of olden times, except that they stand in isolation, not forming a union of forces with which unitedly to storm the heavens, but here all the power is concentrated in the single individual.

Don Juan, consequently, is the expression for the daemonic determined as the sensuous; Faust, its expression determined as the intellectual or spiritual, which the Christian spirit excludes. These ideas stand in an essential relation to one another, and have much in common; hence, one might expect to find them both incorporated in sagas. That this is true for Faust, is well known. There is a folk-book whose title is familiar enough, although the book itself is little used; this is especially strange in our time, when men are so occupied with the idea of Faust. But so it goes. While every intending *privatdocent* or professor, as intellectually mature, hopes to establish his reputation among the reading public by publishing a book on Faust, in which he faithfully repeats what all the other licentiates and candidates for academic degrees have already said, he dares to ignore such an insignificant little folk-book. It never occurs to him how beautiful it is that the veritably great is common property for everybody, that a peasant goes to Tribler's Widow, or to a ballad seller in Halmtorvet, and reads it half aloud to himself at the very time Goethe is composing a *Faust.* And indeed this folk-book merits attention, for it has what one appreciates above all as an honorable quality in wine, it has bouquet, it is an excellent bottling from

the Middle Ages, and as one opens it, it bubbles forth so spicy, so sparkling, so characteristically fragrant, that one is quite strangely affected. Still, enough of this. I would only call attention to the fact that no such legend is to be found concerning Don Juan. No folk-book, no ballad issued every year, has preserved his memory. Probably a tradition has existed, but this in all likelihood restricted itself to just a few hints; perhaps it was even shorter than the few stanzas which form the basis of Burger's *Lenore.* Perhaps it contained nothing but the number; for I am greatly mistaken if the present number, 1,003, did not belong to a legend. A legend which does not contain anything else seems somewhat poverty-stricken, and this would suggest that it was not reduced to writing; but still this number has an excellent property, a lyrical foolhardiness, which many perhaps do not notice because they are so accustomed to seeing it. Although this idea has not found expression in a legend, it has been preserved in another manner. It is well known that Don Juan existed in very early times in the form of a farce; this is likely its first existence. But here the idea is conceived comically, just as everywhere it is remarkable that the Middle Ages, so proficient in furnishing ideals, were inerrant in sensing the comical which lay in the supernatural size of the ideal. To make Don Juan a braggart who imagined that he had seduced every girl he met, to let Leporello believe his lies, was not at all an unfortunate basis for the comic. And had this not been the case, had this not even been the conception, still the comic turn could not have failed to appear, since it lies in the contrast between the hero and his scene of action. So one may permit the Middle Ages to describe heroes so powerfully built that their eyes were a foot apart, but if an ordinary man were to come on the stage and pretend to have eyes a foot apart, the comic would be in full swing.

What has been said here regarding the tradition about Don Juan would not have found a place here if it did not have some closer relation to the

subject of the investigation, if it did not serve to direct thought to the one definite goal. The reason that this idea, as compared with that of Faust, has so poor a past lay in the fact, I suppose, that there was something mysterious in it as long as no one noticed that music was its proper medium. Faust is idea, but an idea which is also essentially individual. To imagine daemonic intellectuality concentrated in a single individual is the peculiar office of thought, while to imagine the sensuous thus concentrated is unthinkable. Don Juan constantly hovers between being an idea, that is to say, energy, life — and being an individual. But this hovering is the musical trembling. When the sea tosses tempestuously, then the swirling billows form images of strange creatures in this wild upheaval. It is as if these creatures set the waves in motion, and yet it is the conflict of the opposing billows which creates them. So Don Juan is an image which constantly appears, but does not gain form and substance, an individual who is constantly being formed, but is never finished, of whose life history one can form no more definite impression than one can by listening to the tumult of the waves. When Don Juan is conceived in this manner, there is meaning and profound significance in everything. If I imagine a particular individual, if I see him or hear him speak, then it becomes comic to imagine that he has seduced 1,003; for as soon as he is regarded as a particular individual, the accent falls in quite another place; it stresses, in fact, those whom he has seduced and how. The naïveté of ballads and legends can successfully express such things without suspecting the comical; for reflection, that is impossible. When, on the contrary, he is interpreted in music, then I do not have a particular individual, but I have the power of nature, the daemonic, which as little tires of seducing or is done with seducing as the wind is tired of blowing, the sea of billowing, or a waterfall of tumbling downward from the heights. In this respect, the number of the seduced can just as well be any other number far greater. It is often not an easy task, when translating

the text of an opera, to do it so exactly that the translation is not only singable but also harmonizes fairly well with the meaning of the text and thus with the music as well. As an example of the fact that sometimes it is altogether unimportant [to be so exact], I shall cite the number in the list in *Don Juan,* without taking the matter as thoughtlessly as people generally do, thinking that such things do not matter. I, on the contrary, consider the matter aesthetically serious to a high degree, and therefore I think the number is unimportant. Yet I would commend one single characteristic of this number 1,003, that it is odd and accidental, which is not at all unimportant, since it gives the impression that the list is by no means closed, but that, on the contrary, Don Juan is in a hurry. One almost begins to pity Leporello, who must not only, as he himself says, stand watch outside the door, but along with that, carry on so complicated a system of book-keeping that it could well keep a registered accountant busy.

Never before in the world has sensuousness been conceived as it is in *Don Juan* — as a principle: for this reason the erotic is here defined by another predicate: the erotic here is *seduction.* Strangely enough, the idea of a seducer was entirely wanting among the Greeks. It is by no means my intention, because of this, to wish to praise the Greeks, for, as everybody knows, gods as well as men were indiscreet in their love affairs; nor do I censure Christianity, for, after all, it has the idea only as something external to itself. The reason that the Greeks lacked this idea lay in the fact that the whole of the Greek life was posited as individuality. The psychical is thus the predominant or is always in harmony with the sensuous. Greek love, therefore, was psychical, not sensuous, and it is this which inspires the modesty which rests over all Greek love. They fell in love with a girl, they set heaven and earth in motion to get her; when they succeeded, then they perhaps tired of her, and sought a new love. In this instability they may, indeed, have had a certain resemblance to Don Juan. To mention only one

instance, Hercules might surely produce a goodly list, when one considers that he sometimes took whole families numbering up to fifty daughters, and like a family son-in-law, according to some reports, had his way with all of them in a single night. Nevertheless, he is still essentially different from a Don Juan, he is no seducer. When one considers Greek love, it is, in accordance with its concept, essentially faithful, just because it is psychical; and it is some accidental factor in the particular individual that he loves many, and with regard to the many he loves, it is again accidental every time he loves a new one; when he is in love with one, he does not think of the next one. Don Juan, on the contrary, is a seducer from the ground up. His love is not psychical but sensuous, and sensuous love, in accordance with its concept, is not faithful, but absolutely faithless; it loves not one but all, that is to say, it seduces all. It exists only in the moment, but the moment, in terms of its concept, is the sum of moments, and so we have the seducer.

Chivalrous love is also psychical and, therefore, in accordance with its concept, is essentially faithful; only sensuous love, in terms of its very concept, is essentially faithless. But this, its faithlessness, appears also in another way; it becomes in fact only a constant repetition. Psychical love has the dialectic in it in a double sense. For partly it has the doubt and unrest in it, as to whether it will also be happy, see its desire fulfilled, and be requited. This anxiety sensuous love does not have. Even a Jupiter is doubtful about his victory, and this cannot be otherwise; moreover, he himself cannot desire it otherwise. With Don Juan this is not the case; he makes short work of it and must always be regarded as absolutely victorious. This might seem an advantage to him, but it is precisely poverty. On the other hand, psychical love has also another dialectic, it is in fact different in its relation to every single individual who is the object of love. Therein lies its wealth, its rich content. But such is not the case with Don

Juan. For this, indeed, he has not time; everything for him is a matter of the moment only. To see her and to love her, that was one and the same. One may say this in a certain sense about psychical love, but in that there is only suggested a beginning. With regard to Don Juan it is valid in another way. To see her and to love her is the same thing; it is in the moment, in the same moment everything is over, and the same thing repeats itself endlessly. If one imagines a psychical love in Don Juan, it becomes at once ridiculous and a self-contradiction, which is not even in accord with the idea of positing 1,003 in Spain. It becomes an over-emphasis which acts disturbingly, even if one imagined oneself considering him ideally. Now if we had no other medium for describing this love than language, we should be up against it, for as soon as we have abandoned the naïveté which in all simplicity can insist that there were 1,003 in Spain, then we require something more, namely, the psychical individualization. The aesthetic is by no means satisfied that everything should thus be lumped together, and is astonished at the number. Psychical love does not exactly move in the rich manifold of the individual life, where the nuances are really significant. Sensuous love, on the other hand, can lump everything together. The essential for it is woman in the abstract, and at most is a more sensuous difference. Psychical love is a continuance in time, sensuous love a disappearance in time, but the medium which exactly expresses this is music. Music is excellently fitted to accomplish this, since it is far more abstract than language, and therefore does not express the individual but the general in all its generality, and yet it expresses the general not in reflective abstraction, but in the immediate concrete.

As an example of what I mean, I shall discuss a little more carefully the servant's second aria: the List of the Seduced. This number may be regarded as the real epic of Don Juan. Consequently, make this experiment, if you are sceptical about the truth of my assertion! Imagine a poet more

happily endowed by nature than anyone before him; give him vigor of expression, give him mastery and authority over the power of language, let everything wherein there is the breath of life be obedient unto him, let his slightest suggestion be deferred to, let everything wait, ready and prepared for his word of command; let him be surrounded by a numerous band of light skirmishers, swift-footed messengers who overtake thought in its most hurried flight; let nothing escape him, not the least movement; let nothing secret, nothing unutterable be left behind him in the whole world — give him, after all this, the task of singing Don Juan as an epic, of unrolling the list of the seduced. What will the result be? He will never finish! The epic has the fault, if one wishes to call it that, of being able to go on as long as you will. His hero, the improviser, Don Juan, can go on indefinitely. The poet may now enter into the manifold, there will always be enough there which will give pleasure, but he will never achieve the effect which Mozart has obtained. For even if he finally finishes, he will still not have said half of what Mozart has expressed in this one number. Mozart has not even attempted the manifold; he deals only with certain great formations which are set in motion. This finds its sufficient explanation in the medium itself, in the music which is too abstract to express the differences. The musical epic thus becomes something comparatively short, and yet it has in an inimitable manner the epic quality that it can go on as long as it will, since one can constantly let it begin again from the beginning, and hear it over and over again, just because it expresses the general in the concreteness of immediacy. Here we do not hear Don Juan as a particular individual, nor his speech, but we hear a voice, the voice of sensuousness, and we hear it through the longing of womanhood. Only in this manner can Don Juan become epic, in that he constantly finishes, and constantly begins again from the beginning, for his life is the sum of repellent moments which have

no coherence, his life as moment is the sum of the moments, as the sum of the moments is the moment.

In this generality, in this floating between being an individual and being a force of nature, lies Don Juan; as soon as he becomes individual the aesthetic acquires quite other categories. Therefore it is entirely proper, and it has a profound inner significance, that in the seduction which takes place in the play, Zerlina, the girl, should be a common peasant girl. Hypocritical aestheticists who, under the show of understanding poets and composers, contribute everything to their being misunderstood, will perhaps instruct us that Zerlina is an unusual girl. Anyone who believes this shows that he has totally misunderstood Mozart, and that he is using wrong categories. That he misunderstands Mozart is evident enough; for Mozart has purposely made Zerlina as insignificant as possible, something Hotho has also called attention to, yet without seeing the real reason for it. If, for instance, Don Juan's love were qualified as other than sensuous, if he were a seducer in an intellectual sense (a type which we shall consider presently), then it would have been a radical fault in the play for the heroine in the seduction which dramatically engages our attention to be only a little peasant girl. Then the aesthetic would require that Don Juan should have been set a more difficult task. To Don Juan, however, these differences mean nothing. If I could imagine him making such a speech about himself, he might perhaps say: "You are wrong. I am no husband who requires an unusual girl to make me happy; every girl has that which makes me happy, and therefore I take them all." In some such way we have to understand the saying I earlier referred to: "even sixty-year coquettes" — or in another place: *pur chè porti la gonella, voi sapete quel chè fà.* To Don Juan every girl is an ordinary girl, every love affair an everyday story. Zerlina is young and pretty, and she is a woman; this is the uncommon which she has in common with hundreds of others; but it is not the uncommon that Don Juan desires, but the common,

and this she has in common with every woman. If this is not the case, then Don Juan ceases to be absolutely musical, and aesthetics requires speech, dialogue, while now, since it *is* the case, Don Juan is absolutely musical.

From another point of view I may throw some additional light upon this by analyzing the inner structure of the play. Elvira is Don Juan's mortal enemy; in the dialogue for which the Danish translator is responsible, this is frequently emphasized. That it is an error for Don Juan to make a speech is certain enough, but because of this it does not follow that the speech might not contain an occasional good observation. Well then, Don Juan fears Elvira. Now probably some aestheticist or other believes that he can profoundly explain this by coming forward with a long disquisition about Elvira's being a very unusual girl and so on. This altogether misses the mark. She is dangerous to him because she has been seduced. In the same sense, exactly in the same sense, Zerlina becomes dangerous to him when she is seduced. As soon as she is seduced, she is elevated to a higher sphere, to a consciousness which Don Juan does not have. Therefore, she is dangerous to him. Hence, it is not by means of the accidental but by means of the general that she is dangerous to him.

Don Juan, then, is a seducer; in him the erotic takes the form of seduction. Here much is well said when it is rightly understood, little when it is understood with a general lack of clarity. We have already noted that the concept, a seducer, is essentially modified with respect to Don Juan, as the object of his desire is the sensuous, and that alone. This is of importance in order to show the musical in Don Juan. In ancient times the sensuous found its expression in the silent stillness of plastic art; in the Christian world the sensuous must burst forth in all its impatient passion. Although one may say with truth that Don Juan is a seducer, this expression, which can work so disturbingly upon the weak brains of certain aestheticians, has often given rise to misunderstandings, as they have scraped this and that

together that could be said about such a one, and have at once applied it to Don Juan. At times they have exposed their own cunning in tracking down Don Juans, at times they talk themselves hoarse in explaining his intrigues and his subtlety; in short, the word *seducer* has given rise to the situation that everybody has been against him to the limit of his power, has contributed his mite to the total misunderstanding. Of Don Juan we must use the word *seducer* with great caution — assuming, that is, that it is more important to say something right than simply to say something. This is not because Don Juan is too good, but because he simply does not fall under ethical categories. Hence I should rather not call him a deceiver, since there is always something more ambiguous in that word. To be a seducer requires a certain amount of reflection and consciousness, and as soon as this is present, then it is proper to speak of cunning and intrigues and crafty plans. This consciousness is lacking in Don Juan. Therefore, he does not seduce. He desires, and this desire acts seductively. To that extent he seduces. He enjoys the satisfaction of desire; as soon as he has enjoyed it, he seeks a new object, and so on endlessly. Therefore, I suppose he is a deceiver, but yet not so that he plans his deceptions in advance; it is the inherent power of sensuousness which deceives the seduced, and it is rather a kind of Nemesis. He desires, and is constantly desiring, and constantly enjoys the satisfaction of the desire. To be a seducer, he lacks time in advance in which to lay his plans, and time afterward in which to become conscious of his act. A seducer, therefore, ought to be in possession of a power Don Juan does not have, however well equipped he may otherwise be — the power of eloquence. As soon as we grant him eloquence he ceases to be musical, and the aesthetic interest becomes an entirely different matter.

Achim v. Arnim tells somewhere of a seducer of a very different style, a seducer who falls under ethical categories. About him he uses an expression which in truth, boldness, and conciseness is almost equal to Mozart's stroke

of the bow. He says he could so talk with a woman that, if the devil caught him, he could wheedle himself out of it if he had a chance to talk with the devil's grandmother. This is the real seducer; the aesthetic interest here is also different, namely: how, the method. There is evidently something very profound here, which has perhaps escaped the attention of most people, in that Faust, who reproduces Don Juan, seduces only one girl, while Don Juan seduces hundreds; but this one girl is also, in an intensive sense, seduced and crushed quite differently from all those Don Juan has deceived, simply because Faust, as reproduction, falls under the category of the intellectual. The power of such a seducer is speech, i.e., the He. A few days ago I heard one soldier talking to another about a third who had betrayed a girl; he did not give a long-winded description, and yet his expression was very pithy: "He gets away with things like that by lies and things like that." Such a seducer is of quite a different sort from Don Juan, is essentially different from him, as one can see from the fact that he and his activities are extremely unmusical, and from the aesthetic standpoint come within the category of the interesting. The object of his desire is accordingly, when one rightly considers him aesthetically, something more than the merely sensuous.

But what is this force, then, by which Don Juan seduces? It is desire, the energy of sensuous desire. He desires in every woman the whole of womanhood, and therein lies the sensuously idealizing power with which he at once embellishes and overcomes his prey. The reaction to this gigantic passion beautifies and develops the one desired, who flushes in enhanced beauty by its reflection. As the enthusiast's fire with seductive splendor illumines even those who stand in a casual relation to him, so Don Juan transfigures in a far deeper sense every girl, since his relation to her is an essential one. Therefore all finite differences fade away before him in comparison with the main thing: being a woman. He rejuvenates the older

woman into the beautiful middle age of womanhood; he matures the child almost instantly; everything which is woman is his prey *(pur chè porti la gonella, voi sapete quel chè fà).* On the other hand, we must by no means understand this as if his sensuousness were blind; instinctively he knows very well how to discriminate and, above all, he idealizes. If for a moment I here think back to the Page in a preceding stage, the reader will perhaps remember that once when we spoke of the Page, I compared a speech of his with one of Don Juan's. The mythical Page I left standing, the real one I sent away to the army. If I now imagined that the mythical Page had liberated himself, was free to move about, then I would recall here a speech of the Page which is appropriate to Don Juan. As Cherubino, light as a bird and daring, springs out of the window, it makes so strong an impression upon Susanne that she almost swoons, and when she recovers, she exclaims: "See how he runs! My, won't he make conquests among the girls!" This is quite correctly said by Susanne, and the reason for her swoon is not only the idea of the daring leap, but rather that he had already "got around her." The Page is really the future Don Juan, though without this being understood in a ridiculous way, as if the Page by becoming older became Don Juan. Now Don Juan can not only have his way with the girls, but he makes them happy and — unhappy, but, curiously enough, in such wise that that's the way they want it, and a foolish girl it would be who would not choose to be unhappy for the sake of having once been happy with Don Juan. If I still continue, therefore, to call him a seducer, I by no means imagine him slyly formulating his plans, craftily calculating the effect of his intrigues. His power to deceive lies in the essential genius of sensuousness, whose incarnation he really is. Shrewd sober-mindedness is lacking in him; his life is as effervescent as the wine with which he stimulates himself; his life is dramatic like the strains which accompany his joyous feast; always he is triumphant. He requires no preparation, no plan,

no time; for he is always prepared. Energy is always in him and also desire, and only when he desires is he rightly in his element. He sits feasting, joyous as a god he swings his cup — he rises with his napkin in his hand, ready for attack. If Leporello rouses him in the middle of the night, he awakens, always certain of his victory. But this energy, this power, cannot be expressed in words, only music can give us a conception of it. It is inexpressible for reflection and thought. The cunning of an ethically determined seducer I can clearly set forth in words, and music will try in vain to solve this problem. With Don Juan, the converse holds true. What is this power? — No one can say. Even if I questioned Zerlina about it before she goes to the dance: "What is this power by which he captivates you?" — she would answer: "No one knows," and I would say: "Well said, my child! You speak more wisely than the sages of India; *richtig, das weiss man nicht;* and the unfortunate thing is that I can't tell you either."

This force in Don Juan, this omnipotence, this animation, only music can express, and I know no other predicate to describe it than this: it is exuberant joy of life. When, therefore, Kruse lets his Don Juan say, as he comes upon the scene at Zerlina's wedding: "Cheer up, children, you are all of you dressed as for a wedding," he says something that is quite proper and also perhaps something more than he is aware of. He himself brings the gaiety with him, and no matter whose wedding it is, it is not unimportant that everyone be dressed as for a wedding; for Don Juan is not only husband to Zerlina, but he celebrates with sport and song the wedding of all the young girls in the parish. What wonder, then, that they crowd about him, the happy maidens! Nor are they disappointed, for he has enough for them all. Flattery, sighs, daring glances, soft handclasps, secret whispers, dangerous proximity, alluring withdrawal — and yet these are only the lesser mysteries, the gifts before the wedding. It is a pleasure to Don Juan to look

out over so rich a harvest; he takes charge of the whole parish, and yet perhaps it does not cost him as much time as Leporello spends in his office.

By these considerations we are again brought to the main subject of this inquiry, that Don Juan is absolutely musical. He desires sensuously, he seduces with the daemonic power of sensuousness, he seduces everyone. Speech, dialogue, are not for him, for then he would be at once a reflective individual. Thus he does not have stable existence at all, but he hurries in a perpetual vanishing, precisely like music, about which it is true that it is over as soon as it has ceased to sound, and only comes into being again, when it again sounds.

Were I to raise the question now as to how Don Juan looks — is he handsome, young or old, or about how old then it is only an accommodation on my part, and anything I may say about it can only expect to find a place here in the same way that a tolerated sect finds a place in the established church. He is handsome, not very young; were I to venture a guess, I should suggest thirty-three, that being the length of a generation. The hesitation in attempting such an inquiry is due to the fact that one easily loses sight of the total in dwelling on the details, as if it were by means of his good looks, or whatever else one might mention, that Don Juan seduced. One sees him, then, but no longer hears him, and in that way he is lost. If, as though to contribute my bit toward helping the reader to get a visual image of Don Juan, I were to say: "See, there he stands, see how his eyes blaze, his lips curve in a smile, so sure he is of his victory. Observe his imperial glance, which demands the things that are Caesar's; see how gracefully he moves in the dance, how proudly he stretches out his hand; who is the fortunate girl he is inviting?" — or were I to say: "There he stands in the shadow of the forest, he leans against a tree, he accompanies himself on a guitar, and look! yonder a young girl, timid as a startled fawn, disappears among the trees, but he does not hurry, he knows that she is seeking him" — or were I to say:

"There he rests by the lake shore in the pale night, so beautiful that the moon pauses and lives over again its first young love, so beautiful that the young girls of the village would give much to dare to steal upon him, and taking advantage of a moment of darkness while the moon mounted heavenward, bestow a kiss upon him." If I did this the observant reader would say: "See, now he has spoiled everything, he has himself forgotten that Don Juan should not be seen but heard." Therefore I don't do it, but I say: "Hear Don Juan, that is to say, if you cannot get a conception of him by hearing him, then you never will. Hear the beginning of his life; as the lightning flashes forth from the murk of the thunderclouds, so he bursts forth from the depths of earnestness, swifter than the lightning's flash, more inconstant and yet as constant; hear how he rushes down into the manifold of life, how he dashes himself against its solid dam; hear those light dancing tones of the violin, hear the signal of gladness, hear the exultation of lust, hear the festive happiness of enjoyment; hear his wild flight, he is transported beyond himself, ever swifter, ever more impetuously; hear the unbridled demands of passion, hear the sighing of love, hear the whisper of temptation, hear the whirlpool of seduction, hear the stillness of the moment — hear, hear, hear Mozart's *Don Juan!*"

2. OTHER ADAPTATIONS OF DON JUAN, CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO THE MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

It is well known that the idea in Faust has been the object of a variety of interpretations; this, however, has by no means been the case with Don Juan. This may seem strange, especially as this latter idea suggests a far more universal phase in the development of the individual's life than does the first. However, this is readily explained by the fact that Faust presupposes such an intellectual maturity as to make an interpretation far more natural. There is also the fact, of which I reminded you in the

preceding section, with reference to the circumstance that no such legend exists about Don Juan, that difficulty with respect to the medium had been vaguely felt until Mozart discovered the medium and the idea. From that moment the idea first attained its true dignity, and has more than ever filled a period of time in the individual life, but so satisfyingly that the need of distilling off poetically that which had been experienced in fantasy did not become a poetic necessity.

This is again an indirect proof of the absolute classic value of Mozart's opera. The ideal in this direction had already found its perfect artistic expression to such a degree that it might indeed act temptingly, but it could not tempt to poetic productivity. Mozart's music has certainly been tempting; for where can a young man be found who has not had moments in his life when he would have given half, or perhaps all of his possessions to be a Don Juan; when he would have given half a lifetime, aye, perhaps his whole life, for the sake of being Don Juan for a single year. But so it goes. The deepest natures, those which were affected by the idea, found everything, even the softest breeze, expressed in Mozart's music; they found in its grandiose passion a full-toned expression for whatever stirred their own hearts, they felt how every mood strained forward, responsive to this music, as the brook hastens on to lose itself in the infinitude of the sea. These natures found in Mozart's *Don Juan* as much text as commentary, and while they were thus borne along and down in its music, they enjoyed the delight of losing themselves, and gained in addition the richness of wonder. The music of Mozart was in no sense too restricted; on the contrary, their own moods were expanded, assumed a supernatural greatness, as they found them again in Mozart. The lower natures, who have no idea of infinity, get no infinity; the dabblers, who imagine themselves to be Don Juans because they had pinched the cheek of a peasant girl, flung their arms about a waitress, or made a little maiden blush, they naturally

understand neither the idea nor Mozart; nor do they know how to produce a Don Juan, other than a ridiculous deformity, a family idol, who perhaps to the dim, sentimental eyes of some cousins, seems a true Don Juan, the essence of all attractiveness. Faust has never yet found expression in this sense, and, as above noted, can never find it, because the idea in Faust is far more concrete. An interpretation of Faust may deserve to be called perfect, and yet the following generation will produce a new *Faust,* while Don Juan, on account of the abstract character of the idea, will live to all eternity, and to hope to produce a new *Don Juan* after Mozart's, is like wishing to write an *Iliad* after Homer's, in an even more profound sense than is true about Homer.

If now this explanation is correct, it by no means follows from this that some particularly gifted nature might not have attempted to interpret Don Juan in another way. Everyone knows that this is so, but everyone may not have noticed that the pattern for all the other interpretations is essentially Molière's *Don Juan;* but again, this is much older than Mozart's and is also a comedy. It is to Mozart's *Don Juan* what a fairy tale interpreted by Musaeus is to an adaptation of Tieck's. For that reason I can really restrict myself to mentioning the *Don Juan* of Molière, and in seeking to appraise it aesthetically, I shall also indirectly be appraising the other interpretations. Still, I shall make an exception of Heiberg's *Don Juan.* He himself explains in the title that it is "partly after Molière." Although this is true, still Heiberg's play has a great advantage over Molière's. This is due to the unerring aesthetic feeling with which Heiberg always interprets his task, his taste in discriminating; yet it is not impossible that in the present case Professor Heiberg was indirectly influenced by Mozart's interpretation to see how Don Juan might be interpreted, when he is not expressed musically or brought under very different aesthetic categories. Professor Hauch has also produced a *Don Juan* which almost falls under the category of the

interesting. But now, as I proceed to mention the other types of adaptations of Don Juan, I trust I do not need to remind the reader that this present little inquiry is not carried on for its own sake, but only for the purpose of showing more completely than was possible in the preceding the importance of the musical interpretation.

The crucial point in the interpretation of Don Juan has already been indicated above: as soon as he acquires speech, everything is altered. The reflection which motivates the speech reflects him out of the obscurity wherein he is only musically audible. For this reason it might seem that Don Juan was perhaps best interpreted through the ballet. Everyone knows that he has been interpreted in this way. However, one must praise this form of interpretation for having recognized its own powers, and it has therefore restricted itself to the last scene, where the passion in Don Juan might most easily become visible in the pantomimic display of muscle. The result is that Don Juan is not presented in his essential passion, but only in the accidental, and the playbills for such a performance always contain more than the play itself; they tell, for instance, that it is Don Juan, the seducer Don Juan, while the ballet at most can only represent the pangs of despair, whose expression, since it can only be in pantomime, he can have in common with many other despairing individuals. The essential in Don Juan cannot be brought out in the ballet, and everyone feels instinctively how ridiculous it would be to see him beguile a girl by his dancing-steps and ingenious gestures. Don Juan is in an inward category, and so cannot become visible nor reveal himself through the physical form and its movements or in plastic harmony.

Even if we are unwilling to grant Don Juan speech, yet we can conceive an interpretation which, notwithstanding this, uses words as the medium. Such an interpretation actually exists in Byron. That Byron was in many ways suitably equipped to produce a *Don Juan* is clear enough, and one can

therefore be certain that when the project miscarried, the reason for this was not in Byron, but in something more profound. Byron had ventured to bring Don Juan into existence for us, to describe for us his childhood and youth, to reconstruct him from the sum of his finite relationships. But by this Don Juan became a reflective personality, who lost the ideality he had in the traditional conception. I shall at once explain the change which took place in the idea. When Don Juan is interpreted musically, then I hear in him the whole infinitude of passion, but also its infinite power which nothing can withstand; I hear the wild craving of desire, but also the absolute victory of this desire, against which it would be futile for anyone to offer resistance. If thought dwells a single moment on the obstacle, then it is clear that the obstacle has importance as a means merely of exciting passion rather than as presenting much in the way of opposition; enjoyment is increased, victory is certain, and the obstacle only a stimulus. Such a primitively controlled life, powerfully and irresistibly daemonic, I find in Don Juan. This is his ideality, and this I can unperturbed enjoy, because the music does not represent him as person or as individual, but only as power. If Don Juan is interpreted as individual, then is he, *eo ipso,* in conflict with his environment; as an individual he feels the pressure and restraint of his surroundings; as a great individual he perhaps overcomes them, but we feel immediately that the difficulties caused by these obstacles here play a different role. The interest essentially occupies itself with these. But thereby Don Juan is brought under the category of the interesting. If we would present him here as absolutely victorious through the aid of bombast, we feel at once that this is not satisfactory, since essentially it does not belong to an individual as such to be victorious, and we demand conflict and crisis.

The opposition which the individual has to encounter can in part be an external opposition, which lies not so much in the object as in its environment; in part it can lie in the object itself. The former is the one

which has occupied most of the interpretations of Don Juan, because the authors have retained that aspect of the idea which demands that as erotic he must be victorious. Not until the other side is emphasized do I believe that there is a prospect of a significant interpretation of Don Juan, which will furnish a contrast to the musical one, while any interpretation which lies between these two will always contain imperfections. In the musical Don Juan we would then have the extensive seducer, in the other the intensive one. This latter Don Juan is shown, then, not as by a single stroke coming into possession of his object; he is not the seducer immediately determined, he is the reflective seducer. That which we are interested in here is the craftiness, the cunning with which he knows how to insinuate himself into a maiden's heart, the mastery he knows how to establish over it, the beguiling, systematic, continuous seduction. Here the number he has seduced becomes a matter of indifference; what concerns us is the art, the thoroughness, the profound cunning, with which he seduces. At last the enjoyment itself becomes so reflective that in comparison with the musical Don Juan's enjoyment it becomes something different. The musical Don Juan enjoys the satisfaction of desire; the reflective Don Juan enjoys the deception, enjoys the cunning. The immediate enjoyment is over, and a greater enjoyment is found in contemplating the enjoyment. On this point there is found a single suggestion in Molière's interpretation, except that this can by no means come into its rights, because all the rest of the interpretation interferes. Desire awakens in Don Juan because he sees a girl happy in her relation to her beloved; he begins to be jealous. This is an interest which in the opera would not at all engage us, just because Don Juan is not a reflective individual. As soon as he is interpreted as being such, we can achieve something corresponding to the musical ideality only by transferring the matter to the psychological sphere. There one attains the ideality of the intensive. For this reason Byron's *Don Juan* must be stamped

as a failure, because it extends itself epically. The immediate Don Juan must seduce 1,003; the reflective need only seduce one, and what interests us is how he did it. The reflective Don Juan's seduction is a sleight-of-hand performance, wherein every single little trick has its special importance; the musical Don Juan's seduction is a handspring, a matter of an instant, swifter done than said. I am reminded of a tableau I once saw. A handsome young man, rightly a ladies' man. He played about with a good many young girls, who were all in the dangerous age of being neither grown-up nor children. Among other things they amused themselves by jumping over a ditch. The young man stood on the edge of the ditch, and to help them with the leap, he would take them around the waist, swing them easily into the air, and set them down on the other side. It was a pleasant sight; I enjoyed him as much as I did the young girls. Then I thought about Don Juan. The young girls fling themselves into his arms, swiftly he catches them, and as swiftly sets them down on the other side of the ditch of life.

The 'musical Don Juan is absolutely victorious and therefore, naturally, in absolute possession of every means that can contribute to this victory, or rather, he is in such absolute possession of the medium that it is as if he did not need to use it, that is, he does not use it as a means. As soon as he becomes a reflective individual, it appears that there is something in existence which is called the means. If the poet grants him this means, but does it in the face of such serious opposition and obstacles that the victory becomes doubtful, then Don Juan comes under the category of the interesting, and on this basis many interpretations of Don Juan are conceivable, even approaching what we have earlier called intensive seduction. If the poet denies him this means, then the interpretation falls under the category of the comic. I have never yet seen a perfect interpretation which brings him under the category of the interesting; on the other hand, it is true of most of the interpretations of Don Juan, that they

approach the comic. This is easily explained by the fact that they follow Molière, in whose interpretation the comic is implicit, and it is Heiberg's merit that he was clearly conscious of this, and that he therefore not only called his play a puppet show, but that in many other ways he let the comic shine through. As soon as passion as represented is denied the means for its satisfaction, then it can produce either a tragic or a comic turn. A tragic note cannot well be evoked where the idea appears as wholly unwarranted, and therefore the comic lies very near. Were I to depict addiction to gambling in an individual, and then give him five dollars to bet with, the effect becomes comic. Such is not quite the case with Molière's *Don Juan,* but yet there is a similarity. If I allow Don Juan to be in financial straits, harassed by creditors, he at once loses the ideality he has in the opera, and the effect becomes comic. The famous comedy scene in Molière, which as comedy has great value, and also fits very well into the whole, ought naturally, therefore, never to be introduced into opera, where it would be utterly disturbing.

That Molière's interpretation strives to achieve the comic is shown not only by the aforementioned comic scene (which, if it stood entirely in isolation, would prove nothing at all) but also the whole layout bears the mark of it. Sganarelle's first and last speeches, the beginning and end of the play, afford more than sufficient evidence concerning this. Sganarelle begins with a eulogy over a rare snuff, from which one learns among other things, that he cannot be quite so busy in the service of this Don Juan; he ends by complaining that he is the only one in the whole world who has been wronged. When one considers now that Molière had allowed the statue to come and fetch Don Juan, and that, although Sganarelle had been a witness to this frightfulness, he still puts these words into his mouth, as if Sganarelle would say that since the statue otherwise meddled with exercising justice on earth and punishing vice, it ought to have been

prepared to pay Sganarelle the wages due him for long and faithful service to Don Juan, which his master, because of his sudden departure, had not been able to do — when one considers this, then everyone must feel the power of the comical in Molière's *Don Juan.* (Heiberg's adaptation, which has the great advantage over Molière's of being more correct, has also evoked a comic effect in a number of ways, by putting a casual learning into Sganarelle's mouth, which lets us see him as a smatterer, who after having tried many things, finally ends up as Don Juan's servant.) The hero in the piece, Don Juan, is anything but a hero, he is an unsuccessful individual who presumably has failed in his examinations, and now has chosen another means of livelihood. One indeed learns that he is the son of a very distinguished man, who has also attempted to inspire his son to virtue and immortal deeds, by giving him an idea of the great reputation his forefathers enjoyed, but this is so improbable in connection with all the rest of his deportment, that one begins to wonder if the whole matter is not a lie, fabricated by Don Juan himself. His conduct is not very chivalrous; one does not see him with sword in hand, clearing his way through the difficulties of life; he deals out a box on the ear as readily to one as to the other; indeed, he all but beats up the betrothed of one girl. Hence, if Molière's Don Juan is really a knight, the poet knows excellently how to make us forget it, and strives to show us a bully, an ordinary rake, who is not afraid to use his fists. Whoever has had occasion to make what we call a bully the object of his observations knows, too, that this class of men has a great predilection for the sea, and he will therefore find it quite in order that Don Juan, having got his eye on a pair of skirts, should immediately put out after them in a boat on the Kallebrodstrand, a Sunday adventure upon the sea, and that the boat should capsize. Don Juan and Sganarelle are almost drowned, and at last are saved by Pedro and the tall Lucas, who at first were betting on whether it really was a man or a stone, a wager that cost Lucas

two bits, which was almost too much for Lucas and for Don Juan. Now if one finds all this quite proper, the impression becomes confused the next moment, as one comes to know that Don Juan is also a fellow who had seduced Elvira, murdered the Commandant, and so on, something one finds highly unlikely and which, in turn, one must explain as a lie in order to reconcile the situation. If Sganarelle is supposed to give us an idea of the passion which rages in Don Juan, then his explanation is such a travesty that it is impossible to keep from laughing at it, as when Sganarelle says to Gusmann: "In order to get the one he wants, Don Juan would gladly marry her dog or cat, aye, even worse, he would even marry you." Or as when he remarks that his master not only disbelieves in love but also in medicine.

If, now, Molière's interpretation of Don Juan, considered as a comic adaptation, were correct, then I should say nothing more about it here, since in this inquiry I have only to do with the ideal interpretation and the significance of music for it. I might then be content with calling attention to the remarkable circumstance that only in music has anyone interpreted Don Juan ideally in the ideality he had in the traditional conception of the Middle Ages. The absence of an ideal interpretation through the medium of words might furnish an indirect proof for the soundness of my position. Here, however, I can do more, precisely because Molière is not correct, and that which kept him from being so is that he has retained something of the ideal in Don Juan, as this is derived from the traditional conception. In pointing this out, it will again appear that this could only be essentially expressed in music, and so I return to my proper thesis.

In the first act of Molière's *Don Juan,* Sganarelle immediately makes a very long speech in which he would give us a conception of his master's boundless passion, and the multiplicity of his love affairs. This speech corresponds exactly to the servant's second aria in the opera. The speech produces simply no effect other than the comic, and here again, Heiberg's

interpretation has the advantage of the comic being more unalloyed than in Molière. This speech makes an attempt to give us an idea of his power, but the effect fails to appear; only music can unite it, because at the same time it describes Don Juan's behavior the music lets us hear the power of seduction, as the list of the seduced is unrolled before us.

In Molière, the statue comes in the last act to fetch Don Juan. Even if the poet has attempted to motivate the approach of the statue by sending a warning in advance, this stone would still always constitute a dramatic stumbling block. If Don Juan is interpreted ideally as force, as passion, then must even heaven itself be set in motion. If this is not the case, it is ill-advised to use such strong measures. The Commandant need not in truth have troubled himself, since it is far easier to have Mr. Paaske throw Don Juan into a debtor's prison. This would be quite in the spirit of modern comedy which does not require such great forces for destruction, precisely because the moving forces themselves are not so grandiose. It would be quite consistent with the spirit of modern comedy for Don Juan to learn to know the tedious barriers of actuality. In the opera it is quite right that the Commandant should return, but there his appearance also has an ideal truth. The music immediately makes the Commandant something more than a particular individual, his voice is expanded to the voice of a spirit. As Don Juan is therefore interpreted in the opera with aesthetic seriousness, so also is the Commandant. In Molière he comes with an ethical solemnity and heaviness which almost makes him ridiculous; in the opera he comes with aesthetic lightness, metaphysical truth. No power in the play, no power on earth, has been able to coerce Don Juan, only a spirit, a ghost, can do that. If this be understood correctly, then this will again throw light upon the interpretation of Don Juan. A spirit, a ghost, is a reincarnation; this is the mystery which lies in the return, but Don Juan can do everything, can

withstand everything, except the reincarnation of life, precisely because he is immediate sensuous life, whose negation the spirit is.

Sganarelle, as interpreted by Molière, becomes an inexplicable person, whose character is extremely confused. What here causes the confusion is that Molière has again retained something of the traditional. Since Don Juan is above all a force, this also appears in his relation to Leporello. Leporello feels himself drawn to him, overwhelmed by him, absorbed in him, and he becomes only an instrument for carrying out his master's will. This obscure, undefined sympathy is exactly what makes Leporello into a musical personality, and we find it quite in order that he should not be able to disengage himself from Don Juan. With Sganarelle it is another matter. In Molière, Don Juan is a particular individual, and Sganarelle consequently appears in relation to him as to an individual. If Sganarelle feels himself indissolubly bound to Don Juan, it is no more than fair that aesthetics should demand enlightenment as to how this is to be accounted for. It is of no use for Molière to let him say that he cannot tear himself loose from Don Juan, for neither reader nor spectator can see any rational ground for this, and a rational ground is here the point in question. The instability in Leporello is well motivated in the opera because in his relation to Don Juan he is nearer to being an individual consciousness, and the Don Juanesque life therefore reflects itself differently in him, still without his being able to penetrate it. In Molière, Sganarelle is sometimes better, sometimes worse than Don Juan, but it is inconceivable that he should not desert him when he does not even get his wages. If someone perhaps imagines a unity in Sganarelle corresponding to the sympathetic musical obscurity Leporello has in the opera, then there is nothing to do except to leave such a one alone in his prejudiced folly. Here again one sees an illustration of how the musical must come to the fore in order for Don Juan to be interpreted in his

true ideality. The fault in Molière is not in his having interpreted him comically, but in his not having interpreted him correctly.

Molière's Don Juan is also a seducer, but the play gives us only a poor conception of his being so. That in Molière Elvira should be Don Juan's wife is undoubtedly rightly planned, especially with respect to the comic effect. We see at once that we are dealing with a common person who uses the promise of marriage in order to deceive a girl. Through this Elvira entirely loses the ideal bearing she has in the opera, where she appears with no other weapon than her affronted womanhood, while here one expects her to come with her marriage certificate; and Don Juan loses the seductive ambiguity of being at once a young man and an experienced husband, experienced, that is, by reason of his many essays in this field. How he had seduced Elvira, by what means he had enticed her out of the convent — of this several of Sganarelle's speeches are supposed to enlighten us; but since the seduction scene which takes place in the play gives us no opportunity to admire Don Juan's art, our confidence in Sganarelle's account is naturally weakened. In so far as Molière's Don Juan is comic, this was hardly necessary; but since he still wishes us to understand that his Don Juan is actually the hero Don Juan, who has deceived Elvira and murdered the Commandant, we readily see the error in Molière, but we are then forced to consider whether this was not really because Don Juan can never be presented as a seducer except in a musical setting, unless, as suggested in the preceding, one wishes to go into the psychological phase, which, again, cannot so easily arouse the dramatic interest.

In Molière, one does not hear him deceiving the two young girls, Mathurine and Charlotte. The deception takes place off stage, and Molière again gives us to understand that Don Juan has given them promises of marriage, so here again we get a poor idea of his talent. To deceive a young girl by a promise of marriage is indeed very poor art, and because one is

low enough to do this, it by no means follows that he is worthy of being called a Don Juan. The only scene which seems to show us Don Juan in his seducing, though scarcely seductive, activity is the scene with Charlotte. But to tell a young peasant girl that she is pretty, that she has sparkling eyes, to beg her to turn around in order to observe her form, does not exhibit Don Juan as someone exceptional but simply as a lewd fellow who looks over a girl as a dealer does a horse. One may freely concede the scene a comic effect, and if that had been its sole purpose, I would not mention it here. But since this, his famous attempt, stands in no relation to the many affairs he must have had, this scene contributes, directly or indirectly, to showing the imperfection in the comedy. Molière seems to have wished to make something more of Don Juan, seems to have wished to retain the ideal in him, but he lacks the medium, and therefore everything that actually happens falls flat. On the whole we can say that in Molière's Don Juan we get to know only historically that he is a seducer; dramatically we do not see it. The scene where he shows the greatest activity is the scene with Charlotte and Mathurine, where he keeps them both a-twitter by flattery, and constantly makes each one believe that it is she he has promised to marry. But what engages our attention here is not his seductive art, but a very common theatrical device.

In conclusion, I can perhaps elucidate what has been developed here by considering a remark that is often made, that Molière's Don Juan is more moral than Mozart's. Precisely this, however, when it is rightly understood, is an encomium on the opera. In the opera there is not only talk about a seducer, but Don Juan is a seducer, and we cannot deny that in its details the music can often be very seductive. This, however, is as it should be; this is exactly its strength. Therefore to say that the opera is immoral is a foolishness which only originates with people who do not understand interpreting an opera in its totality, but who only grasp at its details. The

definitive endeavor in the opera is highly moral, and the impression it produces absolutely salutary, because everything is big, everything has genuine unaffected pathos, the passion of pleasure not less than the passion of seriousness, the passion of enjoyment not less than the passion of wrath.

3. THE INNER MUSICAL STRUCTURE OF THE OPERA

Although the title of this section may be regarded as sufficiently illuminating, yet for safety's sake I shall point out that it is naturally not my intention to give an aesthetic appraisal of the play *Don Juan* or a demonstration of its dramatic structure in the text. To discriminate thus requires much caution, especially in the case of a classic production. That which I have so frequently emphasized in the preceding, I shall once again repeat: that Don Juan can only be expressed musically. I have learned this myself essentially through music, and I ought therefore to guard in every way against giving the impression that the music arrives on the scene as an import from without. If you propose to treat the matter in this way, then you may, for all of me, admire the music in this opera as much as you wish, you will not have grasped its absolute significance. Hotho has not kept himself free from such a false abstraction, and therefore it follows that his presentation cannot be regarded as satisfactory, however distinguished it otherwise is. His style, his presentation, his reproduction are lively and moving; his categories are undetermined and vague; his interpretation of Don Juan is not impregnated by one thought, but dispersed in many. To him Don Juan is a seducer. But even this category is indefinite, and it must still be decided in what sense he is a seducer, as I have tried to do. Many things true in themselves are said about this seducer, but since ordinary conceptions are given far too much free play, such a seducer easily becomes so reflective that he ceases to be absolutely musical. He goes through the play, scene by scene; his analysis is freshly saturated by his personality,

occasionally perhaps a little too much so. When this has happened, then come sympathetic effusions over how beautifully, how richly, how variously, Mozart has expressed all this. But this lyric pleasure in Mozart's music is too little, and however well it becomes the man, and however beautifully it is expressed, Mozart's *Don Juan* is not by this interpretation recognized in its absolute validity. This is the recognition I am working for, because such recognition is identical with the right insight into that which constitutes the object of this inquiry. Therefore, it is not my intention to analyze the whole opera in detail but rather the opera as a whole, not dealing with its particular parts separately, but incorporating these as far as possible in my observations, so as not to see them outside of their connection with the whole, but within it.

In a drama the chief interest quite naturally centers in what one calls the hero of the play; the other characters in relation to him have only a subordinate and relative importance. The more the inward reflection penetrates the drama with its divisive power, However, the more the subordinate characters tend to assume a certain relative absoluteness, if I may say so. This is by no means a fault, but rather a virtue, just as the contemplation of the world which sees only the few eminent individuals and their importance in the world development, but is unaware of the common man, in a certain sense stands higher but is lower than the contemplation which views the lesser man in his equally great validity. The dramatist will succeed in this only to the degree in which nothing of the incommensurable remains, nothing of the mood from which the drama originates, that is to say, nothing of the mood *qua* mood, but in which everything is converted into the sacred dramatic coin: action and situation. In the same degree as the dramatist is successful in this, to that degree the general impression his work produces will be less that of a mood than of a thought, an idea. The more the general impression of a drama is that of a

mood, the more certain one can be that the poet himself has anticipated it in the mood, and continually allowed it to become that, instead of seizing upon an idea, and letting this dramatically unfold itself. Such a drama then suffers from an abnormal excess of the lyric. This is a fault in a drama, but by no means such in an opera. That which preserves the unity in the opera is the keynote which dominates the whole production.

What has been said here about the general dramatic effect also applies to the individual parts of the drama. If I were to characterize in a single word the effect of the drama, in so far as this is different from the effect which every other kind of poetry produces, then I should say: drama operates with the contemporary. In drama I see factors which are external to each other together in the situation, a unity of action. The more, then, the discrete factors are separated and the more profoundly the dramatic situation is self-reflective, so much the less will the dramatic unity manifest itself as a mood and so much the more will it become a definite idea. But just as the totality of the opera cannot be self-reflective as it is in drama proper, this is also the case with the musical situation, which is indeed dramatic, but which still has its unity in the mood. The musical situation has the contemporary quality like every dramatic situation, but the activity of the forces is a concord, a harmony, an agreement, and the impression made by the musical situation is the unity achieved by hearing together what sounds together. The more the drama is self-reflective, the more the mood is explained in the action. The less action, the more the lyrical element dominates. This is quite proper in opera. Opera does not so much have character delineation and action as its immanent goal; it is not reflective enough for that. On the other hand, passion, unreflective and substantial, finds its expression in opera. The musical situation depends on maintaining the unity of mood in the diverse plurality of voices. This is exactly the characteristic of music that it can preserve the diversity in the unity of mood. When in ordinary

conversation one uses the word *majority,* one commonly means by that a unity which is the final result; this is not the case in music.

The dramatic interest requires a swift forward movement, a quick-step, what one might call the inherent, increasing tempo of the dénouement. The more the drama is interpenetrated by reflection, the more impetuously it hurries forward. On the other hand, if the lyric or the epic element is one-sidedly predominant, this expresses itself in a kind of lethargy which allows the situation to fall asleep, and makes the dramatic process and progress slow and laborious. This haste is not inherent in the nature of the opera, for this is characterized by a certain lingering movement, a certain diffusion of itself in time and space. The action has not the swiftness of the dénouement or its direction, but it moves more horizontally. The mood is not sublimated in character and action. As a result, the action in an opera can only be immediate action.

If we apply this explanation to the opera *Don Juan,* we shall have an opportunity to see it in its true classic validity. Don Juan is the hero of the opera, the chief interest centers in him; not only so, but he lends interest to all the other characters. This must not be understood, however, in a merely superficial sense, for this constitutes the mysterious in this opera, that the hero is also the animating force in the other characters. Don Juan's life is the life-principle within them. His passion sets the passion of all the others in motion; his passion resounds everywhere; it sounds in and sustains the earnestness of the Commandant, Elvira's anger, and Anna's hate, Ottavio's conceit, Zerlina's anxiety, Mazetto's exasperation, and Leporello's confusion. As hero in the play, he gives it his name, as is generally true in the case of the hero, but he is more than a name, he is, so to speak, the common denominator. The existence of all the others is, compared with his, only a derived existence. If we now require of an opera that its unity provide the keynote, then we shall easily see that one could not imagine a

more perfect subject for an opera than Don Juan. The keynote can really be, in relation to the forces in the play, a third force which sustains these. As an illustration of such an opera, I might mention *The White Lady,* but such a unity is, with relation to the opera, a more external determination of the lyric. In *Don Juan* the keynote is nothing other than the primitive power in the opera itself; this is Don Juan, but again — just because he is not character but essentially life — he is absolutely musical. Nor are the other persons in the opera characters, but essentially passions, who are posited with Don Juan, and thereby become musical. That is, as Don Juan encircles them all, so do they in turn encircle Don Juan; they are the external consequences his life constantly posits. It is this musical life of Don Juan, absolutely centralized in the opera, which enables it to create a power of illusion such as no other is able to do, so that its life transports one into the life of the play. Because the musical is omnipresent in this music, one may enjoy any snatch of it, and immediately be transported by it. One may enter in the middle of the play and instantly be in the center of it, because this center, which is Don Juan's life, is everywhere.

We know from experience that it is not pleasant to strain two senses at the same time, and it is often very confusing if we have to use our eyes hard when our ears are already occupied. Therefore we have a tendency to close our eyes when hearing music. This is true of all music more or less, and of *Don Juan* in *sensu eminentiori.* As soon as the eyes are engaged, the impression becomes confused; for the dramatic unity which presents itself to the eye is always subordinate and imperfect in comparison with the musical unity which is heard at the same time. This, at least, has been my own experience. I have sat close up, I have sat farther and farther back, I have tried a corner in the theater where I could completely lose myself in the music. The better I understood it, or believed that I understood it, the farther I was away from it, not from coldness, but from love, for it is better

understood at a distance. This has had for my life something strangely mysterious in it. There have been times when I would have given anything for a ticket. Now I need no longer spend a single penny for one. I stand outside in the corridor; I lean up against the partition which divides me from the auditorium, and then the impression is most powerful; it is a world by itself, separated from me; I can see nothing, but I am near enough to hear, and yet so infinitely far away.

Since the characters appearing in the opera do not need to be so self-reflective that as characters they become transparent, it also follows from this, as I earlier emphasized, that the situation cannot be perfectly developed or expanded but to a certain extent is carried by mood. The same applies to the action of an opera. What one in a stricter sense calls action, a deed undertaken with consciousness of a purpose, cannot find its expression in music, but only what we might call immediate action. Both are the case in Don Juan. The action is immediate; concerning this I must refer to a previous statement, where I explained in what sense Don Juan is a seducer. Because the action is immediate action, it is quite proper that irony should so dominate this piece; for irony is and remains the chastener of the immediate life. Thus, to cite only one example, the Commandant's return is prodigious irony; for Don Juan can overcome every obstacle, but a ghost, you know, cannot be killed. The situation throughout is borne by the mood; in this connection I would remind you of Don Juan's significance for the whole and of the relative existence of the other characters in relation to him. I shall, by citing a single situation, show what I mean. I choose for this Elvira's first aria. The orchestra plays the prelude, Elvira enters. The passion which rages in her bosom must find relief, and she finds it in her song. This, however, would be too lyrical really to create a situation; her aria then would be of the same nature as the monologue in a play. The only difference would be that the monologue more nearly expresses the universal

individually, the aria the individual universally. But, as was said, this would be too little for a situation. Therefore, it is not that way. In the background we see Don Juan and Leporello awaiting in tense expectation the approach of the lady they have already seen in the window. Now if this were a drama, the situation would not consist in Elvira standing in the foreground and Don Juan in the background, but the situation would lie in the unexpected encounter. The interest would hinge upon how Don Juan would escape from it. In the opera the encounter also has its importance, but a very subordinate one. The encounter is there to be seen; the musical situation, to be heard. The unity in the situation is effected by the harmony wherein Elvira and Don Juan are heard together. It is therefore quite right for Don Juan to remain as far in the background as possible; for he should be unseen, not only by Elvira, but even by the audience. Elvira's aria begins. I do not know how to characterize her passion other than as love's hatred, a mingled, but still sonorous, full-toned passion. Her inmost being is stirred by turbulent emotions, she has aired her grief, she grows faint for a moment, as every passionate outbreak enervates her; there follows a pause in the music. But the turbulence in her inmost being shows clearly that her passion has not yet reached its full expression; the diaphragm of wrath must yet vibrate more intensely. But what is to call forth this agitation, what incitement? There is but one thing that can do this — Don Juan's mockery. Mozart has, therefore — would that I were a Greek, for then I would say, quite divinely — made use of this pause in the music to fling in Don Juan's jeering laughter. Now passion blazes stronger, rages more violently within her, and bursts forth in sound. Once again it repeats itself; then her emotion shakes her to the depths of her soul, and wrath and pain pour forth like a stream of lava in the celebrated run with which the aria ends.

We see here, then, what I mean when I say that Don Juan re-echoes in Elvira and that it is something more than phrase-making. The spectator

should not see Don Juan, should not see him with Elvira in the unity of the situation; he should hear him in Elvira, through Elvira, for it is indeed Don Juan who sings, but he sings in such a way that the more the listener's ear is developed, the more it seems to him as if it came from Elvira herself. As love transforms its object, so also does indignation. She is possessed by Don Juan. That pause and Don Juan's voice make the situation dramatic, but the unity in Elvira's passion wherein Don Juan echoes, while her passion is still engaged with him, makes the situation musical. The situation conceived as a musical situation is matchless. If, however, Don Juan is a personality and Elvira equally so, then the situation is a failure, and it is a mistake to permit Elvira to unburden herself in the foreground while Don Juan jeers in the background; for this demands that I hear them together without having been given the means for this, and in spite of the fact that they both are characters who could not possibly be heard together. If they are characters, then the encounter forms the situation.

It has been noted above that the same dramatic haste, the mounting acceleration, is not demanded in the opera as in the drama, that the situation here is at liberty to extend itself a bit. This must not, however, degenerate into perpetual retardation. As an example of the happy medium, I may single out the situation I just now mentioned, not as if this were the only situation in *Don Juan,* or the most perfect — on the contrary, there are many such, and all perfect — but because the reader will best remember this one. And yet I here approach a precarious point; for I admit that there are two arias that must go, that however perfect they are in themselves, they still cause an interruption, retard the action. I would willingly keep this a secret, but that would not help, the truth must out. If one takes these two away, then all the rest is perfect. One of these is Ottavio's, the other Anna's, and both are really concert numbers rather than dramatic music, since, on the whole, Ottavio and Anna are far too insignificant to justify their

retarding the action. When one takes these two away, then the rest of the opera has a perfect musical-dramatic swiftness, perfect as no other is.

It would well repay the trouble to go through each individual situation piecemeal, not to exclaim over it, but to show its significance, its validity as a musical situation. However, this really lies outside the scope of this little investigation. It was of importance to emphasize Don Juan’s centrality in the opera. Something similar recurs with reference to the individual situations.

The above-mentioned centrality of Don Juan’s in the opera can be further elucidated by considering the rest of the persons in the play in their relationship to him. As in a solar system the dark bodies which receive their light from a central sun are never more than half illuminated, namely, on the side which is turned toward the sun, so is this the case with the persons in this play — only that moment in their lives, that side which is turned toward Don Juan, is illuminated, the rest is dark and obscure. This must not be understood in a restricted sense, as if each of these characters were only an abstract passion, as if Anna, for example, represented hate, Zerlina frivolity. Such a lack of taste belongs here least of all. The passion in the individual is concrete, but concrete in itself, not concrete in the personality, or, to express myself more definitely, the rest of the personality is swallowed up in that passion. This is absolutely right, because we are dealing with an opera. This obscurity, this partly sympathetic, partly antipathetic mysterious communication with Don Juan makes them all musical and causes the whole opera to sound simultaneously in Don Juan. The only figure in the play who seems to be an exception is, naturally, the Commandant; but therefore it is also so wisely planned that to a certain extent he lies outside of, or circumscribes the piece; the more the Commandant is pushed forward, the more the opera ceases to be completely musical. He is always, therefore, kept in the background, and as indistinct as possible. The

Commandant is the powerful antecedent and the bold consequence between which lies Don Juan's intermediate clause, but the rich content of this intermediate clause constitutes the value of the opera. The Commandant appears only twice. The first time is at night; it is backstage in the theater; one does not see him, but hears him fall before Don Juan's sword. Even there his earnestness, which contrasts only the more strongly with Don Juan's burlesque mockery, is something Mozart has wonderfully expressed in the music; even there his earnestness is too profound to be that of a human being; he is spirit before he dies. The second time he appears as spirit, and the thunders of heaven reverberate in his earnest, solemn voice, but as he himself is transfigured, his voice is changed into something more than a human voice; he speaks no more, he judges.

Next to Don Juan, the most important character in the play is undoubtedly Leporello. His relation to his master becomes quite explicable through the medium of music, inexplicable without it. If Don Juan is a reflective individuality, then Leporello becomes almost a greater scoundrel than he is, and it becomes inexplicable how Don Juan can exercise so much power over him; the only motive back of this seems to be that Don Juan can pay him better than anyone else, a motive even Molière seems not to have wished to use, since he allows Don Juan to be in financial difficulties. If, however, we regard Don Juan as immediate life, then it is easy to understand that he can exercise a decisive influence upon Leporello, that he assimilates him, so that he can almost become a voice for Don Juan. Leporello in a certain sense comes nearer to being a personal consciousness than Don Juan, but to become that, he must himself become clear about his relationship to Don Juan, and he is unable to do that, he cannot break the spell. Here again it holds good, that as soon as Leporello makes a speech, he becomes transparent to us. There is also something erotic in Leporello's relationship to Don Juan; there is a power by which Don Juan captivates

him, even against his will. But in this ambiguity he is musical, and Don Juan constantly echoes through him; later I shall suggest something to show that this is more than a phrase.

With the exception of the Commandant, everyone stands in a kind of erotic relation to Don Juan. Over the Commandant he can exercise no power, for the Commandant represents reflective consciousness; the others are in his power. Elvira loves him, her love puts her in his power; Anna hates him, so she is in his power; Zerlina fears him, which puts her in his power; Ottavio and Mazetto go along for the sake of relationship, for the blood bond is strong.

If for a moment we now glance back over the argument, the reader will perhaps see how it has been developed from many sides, in what relation the Don Juan idea stands to the musical, how this relationship really constitutes the whole opera, how it repeats itself in the individual parts.

I might readily stop at this point, but for the sake of completeness I shall explain this by running through some of the individual parts of the opera. The selection will not be arbitrary. I choose for this the overture, which most nearly gives the keynote of the opera in a condensed concentration. I choose next the most epic and the most lyric moments in the production, in order to show how the perfection of the opera is preserved even to its utmost limits, how the musical-dramatic is maintained, how it is Don Juan who musically sustains the opera.

This is not the place to explain what function the overture has for opera in general. Only so much can here be pointed out, that the fact that an opera requires an overture sufficiently proves the preponderance of the lyrical, and that the effect aimed at is the evocation of a mood, something which the drama cannot undertake to do, since there everything must be transparent. It is therefore proper that the overture should be the last part composed, so that the composer himself may be completely permeated with the music.

The overture, therefore, generally affords an opportunity to get a deep insight into the composer and his spiritual relation to his music. If he is not successful in apprehending the central idea in it, if he is not in the most profound sympathetic contact with the keynote of the opera, then this will inevitably betray itself in the overture; it then becomes, by virtue of a loose association of ideas, an aggregate of the leading themes slung together, but with no totality which, as it essentially ought to do, contains the most profound illumination of the content of the music. Such an overture is therefore generally entirely arbitrary, that is, it can be as long or as short as it will, and the cohesive element, the continuity, since it is only an association of ideas, can stretch out as long as it will. Therefore, the overture is often a dangerous temptation to minor composers; they are easily seduced into plagiarizing themselves, filching from their own pockets, something which produces much confusion. While it is clear from this that the overture should not have the same content as the opera, neither should it, naturally, contain something absolutely different. It should, in other words, have the same ideas as the opera, but in a different manner; it should contain the central idea, and grip the listener with the whole intensity of this central idea.

In this respect the ever admirable overture to *Don Juan* is and remains a perfect masterpiece, so that if no other proof were forthcoming for *Don Juan's* classicity, it would be sufficient to emphasize this one thing: the absurdity of thinking that he who had the center should not also have the periphery. This overture is no interweaving of themes, it is not a labyrinthine hodgepodge of associated ideas; it is concise, definite, strongly constructed, and, above all, it is impregnated with the essence of the whole opera. It is powerful as the thought of a god, moving as a world's life, trembling in its earnestness, quivering in its passion, crushing in its terrible wrath, inspiring in its joy of life; it is faithful in its judgment, strident in its

lust, it is deliberately solemn in its imposing dignity, it is stirring, flaming, dancing in its joy. And it has not attained this by sucking the blood of the opera; on the contrary, it is related to the opera as a prophecy. In the overture the music unfolds its entire compass; with a few mighty wing-strokes it hovers over itself, as it were, hovers over the place where it will alight. It is a conflict, but a conflict in the loftier regions of the air. He who, after having made a closer acquaintance with the opera, hears the overture, to him it will perhaps seem as if he had penetrated into that secret workshop where the wild forces he has learned to know in the opera move in their primitive energy, where in full fury they strive against each other. Still, the struggle is too unequal. Even before the battle the one power is victorious; the other flees and escapes, but this flight is just its passion, its burning unrest in its brief *joie de vivre,* the quickened pulse in its passionate heat. By its flight it sets the other power in motion, and carries it along with itself. That which at first seemed so firmly fixed as to be almost immovable, must now be off, and soon the movement becomes so swift that it seems like actual combat. It is impossible to follow this farther. Here it is a matter of listening to the music, for the conflict is not a strife about words but a raging of elemental forces. I shall only note what I earlier explained, that the interest of the opera centers in Don Juan, not in Don Juan and the Commandant. This is everywhere apparent in the overture. Mozart seems purposely to have planned it so that the deep voice of the Commandant, so resonant in the beginning, gradually becomes weaker and weaker, almost loses, as it were, its majestic firmness, must hurry to keep pace with the demoniac haste which eludes him, and which almost has the power to degrade him by projecting him into a race in the brevity of an instant. With this, the transition to the opera itself is more and more formed. As a consequence, one must consider the finale in close relation to the first part of the overture. In the finale, earnestness again comes to itself, while in the

progress of the overture, it was as if it were beside itself. Now there is no question about running a race with passion; earnestness returns, and thereby has cut away every possibility for a new race.

While the overture therefore is in one sense independent, in another sense it may be regarded as a running start for the opera. I have tried in the preceding passages to remind the reader of this by recalling the successive diminutions in which the one power approaches the beginning of the play. The same thing is apparent when one observes the other power growing in an increasing progression; it begins in the overture, it waxes and increases. This, its beginning, is particularly admirably expressed. One hears it so faintly, so mysteriously shadowed forth, one hears it, but it is so swiftly over, that one gets the impression of having heard something one has not heard. It takes an attentive, an erotic ear to detect the first hint the overture gives us of the light play of this passion which subsequently gets expressed in all its prodigal abundance. I cannot indicate to the dot where this place is, since I am not an expert in music, but then I only write for lovers, and these will readily understand me, some of them better than I understand myself. I, however, am satisfied with my appointed task, with this mysterious thing of being in love, and though otherwise I always thank the gods that I was born a man and not a woman, still Mozart's music has taught me that it is beautiful and refreshing and rich to love like a woman.

I am no friend of figures of speech; modern literature has given me a distaste for them; it has almost reached the point that every time I meet a metaphor, I am seized by an involuntary fright that its true purpose is to conceal an obscurity of the thought. I shall not, therefore, venture on an indiscreet and fruitless attempt to translate the energetic and pithy brevity of the overture into long-winded and meaningless figurative language. There is only one point in the overture I would emphasize, and in order to call the reader's attention to it, I shall employ a figure of speech, the only way I

have to put myself in touch with him. This point is naturally no other than Don Juan's first outburst, the premonition about him, about the power with which he later breaks through. The overture begins with certain deep, earnest, uniform notes. Then we hear for the first time, infinitely far away, a hint which yet, as if it had come too early, is instantly recalled, until later one hears again and again, bolder and bolder, louder and louder, that voice, which first subtly and coyly, and not without anxiety slipped in, but could not force its way through. Sometimes in nature one sees the horizon thus heavy and lowering; too heavy to support itself, it rests upon the earth, and hides everything in the blackness of night; a single hollow rumble is heard, not yet in movement, but a deep muttering within itself — then one sees at the farthest limit of the heavens, remote on the horizon, a flash; swiftly it runs along the earth, and is instantly gone. But soon it comes again, it grows stronger; for a moment it lights up the whole heaven with its flame, in the next the horizon seems darker than ever, but more swiftly, even more fiery it blazes up; it is as if the darkness itself had lost its tranquillity and was coming into movement. As the eye in this first flash suspects a conflagration, so the ear in that dying strain of the violin has a foreboding of the whole intensity of passion. There is apprehension in that flash, it is as if it were born in anxiety in the deep darkness — such is Don Juan's life. There is a dread in him, but this dread is his energy. It is not a subjectively reflected dread, it is a substantial dread. We do not have in the overture — what we commonly say without realizing what we say — despair. Don Juan's life is not despair; but it is the whole power of sensuousness, which is born in dread, and Don Juan himself is this dread, but this dread is precisely the daemonic joy of life. When Mozart has thus brought Don Juan into existence, then his life is developed for us in the dancing tones of the violin in which he lightly, casually hastens forward over the abyss. When one skims a stone over the surface of the water, it skips lightly for a time,

but as soon as it ceases to skip, it instantly sinks down into the depths; so Don Juan dances over the abyss, jubilant in his brief respite.

But if, as noted above, the overture is to be regarded as a running start for the opera; if in the overture one comes down from these higher regions, then it may be asked where one lands best in the opera, or how does one get the opera to begin? Here Mozart has perceived the only right thing to do, to begin with Leporello. Perhaps it might seem that there was not such great merit in this, inasmuch as nearly all the adaptations of *Don Juan* begin with a monologue by Sganarelle. Yet there is a great difference, and we have again occasion to admire Mozart's mastery. He has placed the first tenor aria in immediate conjunction with the overture. This is something which is rarely done; here it is entirely proper, and it gives us a new light on the construction of the overture. The overture is trying to settle down, to secure a footing in the theatrical effect. The Commandant and Don Juan we have already heard in the overture, next to them Leporello is the most important character. However, he cannot be lifted up to that conflict in the regions of the air, and yet he has a better right than any other. Therefore the play begins with him so that he stands in immediate connection with the overture. One is absolutely correct, therefore, in including Leporello's first aria with the overture. This aria corresponds to the not inglorious monologue of Sganarelle in Molière. Let us examine the situation a little more closely. Sganarelle's monologue is far from being unwitty, and when we read it in Professor Heiberg's graceful and fluent verse, it is very entertaining. On the other hand, the situation itself is deficient. I say this with particular reference to Molière, for with Heiberg it is another matter, and I say it not to disparage Molière, but to show Mozart's talent. A monologue is always more or less of a breach in the dramatic situation, and when the poet for the sake of an effect, attempts to accomplish this by the humor of the monologue itself, instead of through its character, then he has

condemned himself, and has surrendered the dramatic interest. It is otherwise in the opera. Here the situation is absolutely musical. I have previously called attention to the difference that exists between a dramatic and a musically dramatic situation. In the drama no palaver is tolerated; there plot and situation are demanded. In opera there is an easing of the situation. But what establishes this as a musical situation? It was earlier stressed that Leporello is a musical figure, and yet he is not the one who sustains the situation. If he were, then his aria would be analogous to Sganarelle's monologue, even though it remains true that such a quasi-situation belongs to opera rather than to drama. That which makes the situation musical is Don Juan, who is indoors. The gist of the situation does not lie in Leporello who approaches, but in Don Juan, whom we do not see — but do hear. Now someone may object that we do not hear Don Juan. To this I would reply: "One does indeed hear him, for he is heard through Leporello." To this end, I shall call attention to the transition *(vuol star dentro colla bella*), where Leporello evidently reproduces Don Juan. But even if this were not the case, still the situation is so arranged that involuntarily we get Don Juan anyway, forgetting Leporello, who stands outside, because of the force of Don Juan who is within. With true genius Mozart has everywhere permitted Leporello to reproduce Don Juan, and has thereby accomplished two things: the musical effect, that one always hears Don Juan when Leporello is alone; and the burlesque effect, that when Don Juan is present, one hears Leporello repeat him, and thereby unconsciously parody him. As an example of this I may cite the conclusion of the ballet.

If anyone asks which is the most epic moment in the opera, the answer is easily and unmistakably that it is the List in Leporello's second aria. It has been previously emphasized by comparing this aria with the corresponding monologue in Molière, what absolute significance the music has and that the music, precisely because it lets us hear Don Juan, lets us hear the

variations in him, evokes the effect which the spoken word or the dialogue is not able to do. Here it is important to emphasize both the situation and the musical in it. Let us now take a look at the stage; there the scenic ensemble consists of Leporello, Elvira, and the faithful servant. The faithless lover, on the contrary, is not present; as Leporello pertinently expresses it, "he is away." This is a virtuosity possessed by Don Juan, he is — and so he is away, and he is (that is, for himself) just as opportunely away as a Jeronimus comes opportunely. Since it is general knowledge that he is away, it might seem queer that I mention him, and in a way, draw him into the situation; on second thought we might find this quite proper and see here an example of how literally the statement must be taken that Don Juan is omnipresent in the opera. For this can hardly be more strongly indicated than by calling attention to the fact that even when he is away, he is present. However, we shall allow him to be away, and later we shall come to see in what significance he is present.

Meantime we shall observe the three persons in the scene. That Elvira is present naturally contributes to producing the situation; for it would not do to let Leporello unroll the fist just to kill time. But her position also tends to make the situation painful. It certainly cannot be denied that the mockery which is sometimes made of Elvira's love is almost cruel. Thus, in the second act, where in the decisive moment when Ottavio has at last got the courage in his heart and his sword out of the sheath to murder Don Juan, she throws herself between them, and then discovers it is not Don Juan but Leporello, a difference Mozart has so strikingly indicated by a certain whimpering bleat. Thus there is also something painful in our situation, in that she should be present to learn that the list of Spanish women seduced stands at 1,003, and what is more, in the German version she is told that she is one of them. This is a German improvement which is as foolishly

indecent as the German translation, in a no less foolish manner, is ridiculously decent and a total failure.

Leporello gives Elvira an epic survey of his master's life, and we cannot deny that it is entirely proper that Leporello should recite it, and that Elvira should listen to him, for they are both intensely interested in the matter. As we therefore hear Don Juan throughout the whole aria, so in some places we hear Elvira, who is now visibly present on the stage as a witness instar omnium, not because of some accidental advantage she has, but because, since the method is essentially the same, one example does for all. If Leporello were character or a self-reflective personality, then it would be difficult to imagine such a monologue, but precisely because he is a musical figure who is submerged in Don Juan, this aria has so much meaning. He is a reproduction of Don Juan's whole life. Leporello is the epic narrator. Such a one should not be cold or indifferent toward what he tells, but still he ought to maintain an objective attitude toward it. This is not the case with Leporello. He is altogether fascinated by the life he describes, he forgets himself in telling about Don Juan. Thus I have another example of what I mean when I say that Don Juan echoes through everything. The situation, therefore, does not lie in the conversation between Leporello and Elvira about Don Juan, but in the mood that sustains the whole, in Don Juan's invisible, spiritual presence. To explain more particularly the transition in this aria, how it begins quietly with a slow movement, but is enkindled more and more, as Don Juan's life increasingly resounds through it; how Leporello is more and more transported by it, carried away and rocked by these erotic breezes; how the nuances, all as dissimilar as were the women who came within Don Juan's range, all became audible in it — this is not the place for that.

If we ask which is the most lyric moment in the opera, the answer might be more doubtful. It can hardly be open to question, however, that the most

lyric moment must be conceded to Don Juan, that it would be a breach of dramatic discipline were a subordinate character allowed to engage our attention in this way. Mozart has realized this. The choice is thus considerably restricted, and on closer inspection, it is apparent that the only possibilities are either the banquet in the first part of the grand finale or the familiar champagne aria. As far as the banquet scene is concerned, this may indeed be regarded as a lyric moment, and the feast's intoxicating cordials, the foaming wine, the festal strains of distant music, everything combines to intensify Don Juan's mood, as his own festivity casts an enhanced illumination over the whole enjoyment, an enjoyment so powerful in its effect that even Leporello is transfigured in this opulent moment which marks the last smile of gladness, the last farewell to pleasure. On the other hand, it is more a situation than a sheerly lyrical moment. This, naturally, is not because there is eating and drinking in the scene, for that in itself is very inadequate, regarded as a situation. The situation lies in the fact that Don Juan is keyed up to life's highest tension. Pursued by the whole world, this victorious Don Juan has now no place of abode other than a little secluded room. It is at the highest point of life's seesaw that once again, for lack of lusty companionship, he excites every lust of life in his own breast. If *Don Juan* were a drama, then this inner unrest in the situation would need to be made as brief as possible. On the other hand, it is right in opera that the situation should be prolonged, glorified by every possible exuberance, which only sounds the wilder, because for the spectators it reverberates from the abyss over which Don Juan is hovering.

It is otherwise with the champagne aria. I believe one will look in vain for a dramatic situation here, but it has the more significance as a lyric effusion. Don Juan is wearied by the many intercrossing intrigues; on the other hand, he is by no means spent; his soul is still as vigorous as ever; he stands in no need of convivial society, of seeing and hearing the foaming of

the wine, or of fortifying himself with it; the inner vitality breaks forth in him, stronger and richer than ever. He is still interpreted ideally by Mozart as life, as power, but ideally as over against actuality. He is here, as it were, ideally intoxicated in himself. If every girl in the world surrounded him in this moment, he would not be a source of danger to them, for he is, as it were, too strong to wish to deceive them; even the manifold enjoyments of actuality are too little for him in comparison with what he enjoys in himself. Here is the clear indication of what it means to say that the essence of Don Juan is music. He reveals himself to us in music, he expands in a world of sound. Someone has called this the champagne aria, and this is undeniably very descriptive. But that which especially needs to be noted is that it does not stand in an accidental relationship to Don Juan. His life is like this, effervescent as champagne. And just as the bubbles in this wine ascend and continue to ascend, while it seethes in its own heat, harmonious in its own melody, so the lust for enjoyment sounds through the primitive seething which is his life. Therefore, that which gives this aria dramatic significance is not the situation, but the fact that the keynote of the opera here sounds and resounds in itself.

INSIGNIFICANT POSTLUDE

If now this explanation proves to be correct, then I again return to my favorite theme, that among all classic works Mozart's *Don Juan* ought to stand highest; then I shall again rejoice over Mozart's happiness, a happiness which is in truth enviable, both in itself, and because it makes all of those happy who only moderately understand his happiness. I, at least, feel myself indescribably happy in having even remotely understood Mozart and in having suspected his happiness. How much more, then, those who have perfectly understood him, how much more must they not feel themselves happy with the happy.

THE ANCIENT TRAGICAL MOTIF AS REFLECTED IN THE MODERN

An Essay in the Fragmentary Read before a Meeting of the SYMPARANEKROMENOI

SHOULD ANYONE FEEL called upon to say that the tragic always remains the tragic, I should in a sense have no objection to make, in so far as every historical evolution always remains within the sphere of the concept. On the supposition that his statement has meaning, and that the two-fold repetition of the word *tragic* is not to be regarded as constituting a meaningless parenthesis enclosing an empty nothing, then the meaning must be this, that the content of a concept does not dethrone the concept but enriches it. On the other hand, it can scarcely have escaped the attention of any observer — and it is something that the reading and theater-going public already believes itself to be in lawful possession of, as its share dividend in the labors of the experts — that there is an essential difference between ancient tragedy and modern tragedy. If, in turn, one were to emphasize this difference absolutely, and by its aid, first stealthily, then perhaps forcibly, to separate the conceptions of the ancient and modern tragical, his procedure would be no less absurd than that of the man who denied any essential difference, since he would forget that the foothold necessary for him was the tragic itself, and that this again was so far from being able to separate, that it really bound the ancient and modern together. And it must be regarded as a warning against every such prejudiced attempt to separate them, that aestheticians still constantly turn back to established Aristotelian determinations and requirements in connection with the tragical, as being exhaustive of the concept; and the warning is needed so much the more, as

no one can escape a feeling of sadness in observing that however much the world has changed, the conception of the tragic is still essentially unchanged, just as weeping is still natural to all men alike.

Reassuring as this may seem to him who desires no such separation, least of all a breach, the same difficulty which has just been rejected reappears in another and almost more dangerous form. That we still constantly go back to the Aristotelian aesthetics, not merely from a dutiful sense of respect, or because of old habits, no one will deny who has any knowledge of modern aesthetics, and thus perceives how exactly this latter follows Aristotle in all the main points. But as soon as we view these a little more in detail, the difficulties immediately become evident. The qualifications are very general, and one may in one sense be quite in agreement with Aristotle, and in another sense wholly disagree with him. In order not to anticipate the following essay by mentioning at once the subject which will constitute its content, I prefer to illustrate my meaning by citing the corresponding observation with respect to comedy. If an old aesthetician had said that comedy presupposes character and situation, and has for its purpose the arousal of laughter, one might indeed turn back to this again and again; but when one reflects upon how widely different are the things which can make a human being laugh, then one soon becomes convinced of how tremendously inclusive this requirement was. Whoever has at any time made his own laughter and that of others the subject of his observation; whoever, in this study, has had his eye not so much on the accidental as on the general; whoever has observed with psychological interest how different are the things which in each generation arouse laughter, will readily be convinced that the invariable requirement that comedy ought to arouse laughter contains a high degree of variability relative to the different conceptions of the ridiculous entertained in the world consciousness, without the variability becoming so diffuse that the corresponding somatic

expression would be that the laughter expressed itself in tears. So also in relation to the tragic.

That which will here constitute the principal content of this little inquiry is not so much the relation between ancient and modern tragedy as it will be an attempt to show how the characteristic of ancient tragedy is embodied within the modern, so that the true tragedy herein may come to light. But however much I may endeavor to make this evident, I shall still refrain from every prophecy about this being what the age demands, so that its appearance becomes entirely without result, more especially so as the entire tendency of the age is in the direction of the comic.

Existence is more or less undermined by doubt on the part of the subjects; isolation constantly gets more and more the upper hand, something one can best be convinced of by giving attention to the multitudinous social exertions. These movements seek to counteract isolation in ways which are themselves an expression of it. The isolationist idea is alway in evidence where men assert themselves numerically. When one man will assert himself as one, then this is isolation; in this, all friends of association will concur, even if unable or unwilling to see that there is quite the same isolation when hundreds stress themselves simply and solely as hundreds. The number is always a matter of indifference, whether it be one or a thousand, or the population of the whole world determined merely numerically. This spirit of association is, therefore, in principle just as revolutionary as the spirit it would counteract. When David would rightly savor his power and glory, he took a census of the people; in our age, on the other hand, one might say that the people, in order to feel their importance in comparison with a higher power, count themselves. All these associations bear, however, the stamp of the arbitrary and are most frequently created for some accidental purpose, whose master, naturally, is the Association.

The many associations thus prove the disorganization of the age, and themselves contribute toward hastening that dissolution; they are the infusoria in the organism of the state, which indicate that it is disorganized. When was it that political clubs began to be general in Greece, if not at the very moment when the state was in process of dissolution? And has not our own age a remarkable similarity to that one, which not even Aristophanes could make more ludicrous than it actually was? Is not the invisible and spiritual bond lost which held the state together politically; is not the power of religion, which held fast to the invisible, weakened and annihilated; have not the statesmen and clergy this in common, that they, like the augurs of old, can scarcely look at one another without smiling? One characteristic our age certainly has to a greater degree than Greece, this, namely, that it is more melancholy, and hence it is more profoundly in despair. Thus, our age is melancholy enough to realize that there is something which is called responsibility, and that this indicates something significant. While, therefore, everyone wishes to rule, no one wishes to accept responsibility. It is still fresh in our memory that a French statesman, when a portfolio was offered to him for a second time, declared that he would accept it, but only on the condition that the secretary of state be made responsible. It is well known that the king of France is not responsible, while his minister is; the minister does not wish to be responsible, but will be minister with the proviso that the secretary of state become responsible; naturally, the final result is that the watchmen or street commissioners become responsible. Would not this story of shifted responsibility really be a proper subject for Aristophanes! And on the other hand, why are the government and rulers so afraid of accepting responsibility, unless because they fear an attack from an opposition party, which equally seeks to evade responsibility? When, then, one considers these two powers in opposition to one another, but not able to come to grips with each other, because the one constantly vanishes from the

other, the one only a duplicate of the other, then such a lay-out is certainly not without its comic effect. This is sufficient to show that the bond which essentially holds the state together is disorganized, but the isolation effected thereby is naturally comic, and the comic lies in the fact that subjectivity as mere form would assert itself. Every isolated individual always becomes comic by stressing his own accidental individuality over against necessary development. It would undoubtedly be most deeply comic for some accidental individual to get the universal idea of wishing to be the saviour of the world. On the other hand, the appearance of Christ is in a certain sense (in another sense it is infinitely more) the deepest tragedy, because Christ came in the fullness of time, and — a point I would particularly emphasize in connection with what follows — He bore the sins of the world.

It is well known that Aristotle mentions two things, thought and character, as the source of action in tragedy, but he notes also that the main thing is the plot, and the individuals do not act in order to present characters, but the characters are included for the sake of the action. Here one readily notices a divergence from modern tragedy. The peculiarity of ancient tragedy is that the action does not issue exclusively from character, that the action does not find its sufficient explanation in subjective reflection and decision, but that the action itself has a relative admixture of suffering [passion, *passio].* Hence ancient tragedy has not developed the dialogue to the point of exhaustive reflection, so that everything is absorbed in it; it has in the monologue and the chorus exactly the factors supplemental to the dialogue. Whether the chorus approaches nearer the epic substantiality or the lyric exaltation, it indicates, as it were, the more which will not be absorbed in individuality; the monologue, for its part, is more the lyric concentration and has the more which will not be absorbed in action and situation. In ancient tragedy the action itself has an epic moment

in it; it is as much event as action. The reason for this naturally lies in the fact that the ancient world did not have subjectivity fully self-conscious and reflective. Even if the individual moved freely, he still rested in the substantial categories of state, family, and destiny. This substantial category is exactly the fatalistic element in Greek tragedy, and its exact peculiarity. The hero's destruction is, therefore, not only a result of his own deeds, but is also a suffering, whereas in modern tragedy, the hero's destruction is really not suffering, but is action. In modern times, therefore, situation and character are really predominant. The tragic hero, conscious of himself as a subject, is fully reflective, and this reflection has not only reflected him out of every immediate relation to state, race, and destiny, but has often even reflected him out of his own preceding life. We are interested in a certain definite moment of his life, considered as his own deed. Because of this the tragedy can be exhaustively represented in situation and dialogue, since absolutely nothing of the immediate remains anymore. Hence, modern tragedy has no epic foreground, no epic heritage. The hero stands and falls entirely on his own acts.

This brief but adequate analysis may be useful in illuminating the difference between ancient and modern tragedy, which I regard as having great significance, the difference, namely, in the nature of tragic guilt. It is well known that Aristotle requires the tragic hero to have guilt. But just as the action in Greek tragedy is intermediate between activity and passivity (action and suffering), so is also the hero's guilt, and therein lies the tragic collision. On the other hand, the more the subjectivity becomes reflected, the more one sees the individual left to himself, as Pelagius would have it, all the more does his guilt become ethical. Between these two extremes lies the tragic. If the individual is entirely without guilt, the tragic interest is nullified, for the tragic collision is thereby enervated; if, on the other hand, he is absolutely guilty, he can no longer interest us tragically. Hence, it is

certainly a misunderstanding of the tragic, when our age strives to let the whole tragic destiny become transubstantiated in individuality and subjectivity. One would know nothing to say about the hero's past life, one would throw his whole life upon his shoulders, as being the result of his own acts, would make him accountable for everything, but in so doing, one would also transform his aesthetic guilt into an ethical one. The tragic hero thus becomes bad; evil becomes precisely the tragic subject; but evil has no aesthetic interest, and sin is not an aesthetic element. This mistaken endeavor certainly has its cause in the whole tendency of our age toward the comic. The comic lies exactly in isolation; when one would maintain the tragic within this isolation, then one gets evil in all its baseness, not the truly tragic guilt in its ambiguous innocence. It is not difficult, when one looks about in modern literature, to find examples. Thus, the very ingenious work of Grabbe, Faust und Don Juan, is precisely constructed around this evil. However, in order not to argue from a single work, I prefer to show it in the whole general consciousness of the age. If one wished to represent an individual whom an unhappy childhood had influenced so disturbingly that these influences occasioned his downfall, such a defense would simply not appeal to the present age, and this naturally not because it was wrongly handled, for I have a right to assume that it would be handled with distinction, but because our age employs another standard. It would know nothing about such coddling; without further ceremony, it holds every individual responsible for his own life. Hence, if he goes to the dogs, it is not tragic, but it is bad. One might now believe that this must be a kingdom of the gods, this generation in which also I have the honor to live. On the contrary, this is by no means the case; the energy, the courage, which would thus be the creator of its own destiny, aye, its own creator, is an illusion, and when the age loses the tragic, it gains despair. There lies a sadness and a healing power in the tragic, which one truly should not despise, and when a

man, in the preternatural manner our age affects, would gain himself, he loses himself and becomes comical. Every individual, however original he may be, is still a child of God, of his age, of his nation, of his family and friends. Only thus is he truly himself. If in all this relativity he tries to be the absolute, then he becomes ridiculous. One sometimes finds in languages a word which, because of the construction, has been so often used in a particular case that at last it ends, if you will, by being declared independent as an adverb in this case. For the experts such a word acquires an emphasis and a weakness that it never loses. If, in spite of this, it should seek recognition as a substantive and demand the right to be inflected in all five cases, it would be truly comic. And so it is, too, with the individual, when perhaps with great difficulty he issues from the womb of time, he will in this tremendous relativity be absolute. If, however, he renounces this claim of the absolute in order to become relative, then he has *eo ipso* the tragic, even if he were the happiest of individuals; indeed I might say that an individual does not become happy until he has the tragic.

The tragic has in it an infinite gentleness; it is really in the aesthetic sense with regard to human life, what the divine love and mercy are; it is even milder, and hence I may say that it is like a mother's love, soothing the troubled. The ethical, that is strict and harsh. If a criminal should therefore plead before the judge that his mother had a propensity for stealing, especially at the time she was carrying him, then the judge might secure the opinion of the health commissioner about his mental condition, and decide that he was dealing with a thief and not with a thief's mother. Since we are talking about a crime, the sinner can hardly flee to the temple of aesthetics, but yet the aesthetic will put in an extenuating word for him. However, it would be wrong for him to seek comfort there, for his path leads him not to the aesthetic but to the religious. The aesthetic lies behind him, and it would be a new sin for him now to grasp at the aesthetic. The religious is the

expression of a paternal love, since it contains the ethical, but it makes it milder; and by what means? Precisely by that which gives the tragic its mildness: by continuity. But while the aesthetic offers this repose before the profound opposition of sin is pressed home, the religious does not offer it until after this opposition is seen in all its frightfulness. Just at the moment when the sinner almost sinks under the universal sin that he has taken upon himself, because he felt that the more guilty he became, the more prospect there was of being saved — in that same moment of terror, consolation appears in the fact that it is a universal sinfulness which has asserted itself also in him. But this consolation is a religious consolation, and he who thinks to attain it in some other way, e.g., by aesthetic vaporings, has taken this consolation in vain and possesses it not. In a certain sense, therefore, it is an entirely correct tactic of the age to hold the individual responsible for everything; but the misfortune is that it does not do it deeply and inwardly enough, and hence its vacillation. It is self-complacent enough to disdain the tears of tragedy, but it is also self-complacent enough to dispense with the divine mercy. But what is human life when we take these two things away, what is the human race? Either the sadness of the tragic, or the profound sorrow and profound joy of the religious. Or is that not the characteristic of everything that proceeds from that happy people [the Greeks] — a melancholy, a sadness, in its art, in its poetry, in its life, and in its joy?

In the preceding I have principally attempted to emphasize the difference between ancient and modern tragedy, in so far as this is illustrated in the differing estimates of the tragic hero's guilt. This is precisely the focus from which everything radiates in its peculiar difference. If the hero is unambiguously guilty, the monologue disappears and there is no destiny; the thought is transparent in the dialogue, and the action in the situation. The same thing may also be explained from another side, with regard to the

mood which the tragedy evokes in the spectator. It may be remembered that Aristotle requires that tragedy should arouse fear and compassion in the spectator. I recall that Hegel in his Aesthetics adopted this view, and indulged in a double reflection about each of these points, which was not, however, particularly exhaustive. When Aristotle separates fear and compassion, then one might interpret fear as the mood which accompanies the individual idea, compassion as the mood which is the definitive impression. This latter mood is the one that engages me most, because it is the one which corresponds to the tragic guilt, and therefore, it has the same dialectic as this concept of guilt. Hegel observes in this connection that there are two kinds of sympathy, the ordinary kind which is concerned with the finite aspect of suffering, and the true tragic pity. This observation is indeed quite correct, but to me it is of less importance, since this common emotion is a misunderstanding which can just as well apply to ancient as to modern tragedy. True and powerful, however, is what Hegel adds regarding true compassion: "Das wahrhafte Mitleiden ist im Gegentheil die Sympathie mit der zugleich sittlichen Berechtigung des Leidenden." While Hegel rather considers sympathy in general and its differences in the variations of the individualities, I prefer to emphasize the different kinds of sympathy in relation to the different kinds of tragic guilt. To make this point promptly, I shall let the thought of "passion" or suffering separate itself from the "com" to which it is joined in the word compassion, and shall attribute to each and every man the sympathy expressed by the "com" — yet in such a way that I affirm nothing about the mood of the spectator which could be indicative of his arbitrariness, but in such a way that when I explain the difference in his mood, I also express the difference of the tragic guilt.

In ancient tragedy the sorrow is deeper, the pain less; in modern, the pain is greater, the sorrow less. Sorrow always contains something more

substantial than pain. Pain always implies a reflection over suffering which sorrow does not know. From a psychological standpoint it is interesting to watch a child when it sees an older person suffer. The child is not reflective enough to feel pain, and yet its sorrow is infinitely deep. It is not reflective enough to have any conception of sin and guilt; when it sees an older person suffer, it does not occur to it to reflect upon it, and yet when the cause of the suffering is concealed from it, there is a dim suspicion about it in its sorrow. Such, but in complete and profound harmony, is the Greek sorrow, and therefore it is at one and the same time so gentle and so deep. When an older person sees a child suffer, his pain is greater, his sorrow less. The more clearly the conception of guilt stands out, the greater is the pain, the less profound the sorrow. If one now applies this to the relation between ancient and modern tragedy, then must one say: in ancient tragedy, the sorrow is deeper, and in the consciousness which corresponds to this, the sorrow is deeper. It must in fact be constantly remembered that the sorrow does not lie in me, but it lies in the tragedy, and that I, in order to understand the deep sorrow of the Greek tragedy, must myself live in the Greek consciousness. Hence, it is certainly often only an affectation when so many profess to admire the Greek tragedies; for it is obvious that our age, at least, has no great sympathy with the specific character of Greek sorrow. The sorrow is deeper because the guilt has the aesthetic ambiguity. In modern times, the pain is greater. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. One might say this about Greek tragedy. The wrath of the gods is fearful, yet the pain is not so great as in modern tragedy where the hero suffers entirely according to his own desert, is transparent to himself in his suffering of his guilt. Here it is relevant, in conformity with the tragic guilt, to show which sorrow is the true aesthetic sorrow and which the true aesthetic pain. The bitterest pain is manifestly remorse, but remorse has ethical not aesthetic reality. It is the bitterest pain because it has the total

transparency of guilt, but just because of this transparency, it does not interest us aesthetically. Remorse has a sacredness which obscures the aesthetic, it may not be seen, least of all by the spectator, and it requires quite a different kind of self-activity. Modem comedy has sometimes presented remorse on the stage, but this only shows a lack of judgment on the part of the author. One may indeed be reminded of the psychological interest it can have to see remorse delineated on the stage, but again the psychological interest is not the aesthetic. This is part of the confusion which in our age asserts itself in so many ways: we look for a thing where we ought not to look for it, and what is worse, we find it where we ought not to find it; we wish to be edified in the theater, aesthetically impressed in church, we would be converted by novels, get enjoyment out of books of devotion, we want philosophy in the pulpit, and the preacher in the professorial chair. This pain of remorse is consequently not the aesthetic pain, and yet it is apparently this which the modern age tends toward as the highest tragic interest. This is also true with regard to the tragic guilt. Our age has lost all the substantial categories of family, state, and race. It must leave the individual entirely to himself, so that in a stricter sense he becomes his own creator, his guilt is consequently sin, his pain remorse; but this nullifies the tragic. Also, that which in a stricter sense is to be called the tragedy of suffering has really lost its tragic interest, for the power from which the suffering comes has lost its significance, and the spectators cry: "Heaven helps those who help themselves!" In other words, the spectator has lost his compassion; but compassion is, in a subjective as well as in an objective sense, the precise expression for the tragic.

For the sake of clarity I shall now, before carrying this explanation further, define a little more carefully the true aesthetic sorrow. Sorrow has the opposite movement from that which pain has. When one does not spoil this by means of a wretched consistency — something I, too, shall prevent

in another way — one may say: the more innocence, the more profound the sorrow. If one insists on that, then one destroys the tragic. An element of guilt always remains, but this element is never really subjectively reflected; hence the sorrow in the Greek tragedy is so deep. In order to prevent ill-timed consequences, I shall only note that all exaggerations only succeed in carrying the matter over into another sphere. The synthesis of absolute innocence and absolute guilt is not an aesthetic category, but a metaphysical one. This is the real reason why one has always been ashamed to call the life of Christ a tragedy, because one instinctively feels that aesthetic categories do not exhaust the matter. In yet another way it is clear that Christ's life is something more than can be exhausted in aesthetic categories: by the fact that these categories neutralize themselves in this phenomenon, and are stilled in equilibrium.

The tragic action always has an element of suffering in it, and the tragic suffering an element of action, the aesthetic lies in the relativity of these. The identity of an absolute action and an absolute suffering is beyond the powers of aesthetics, and belongs to metaphysics. This identity is exemplified in the life of Christ, for His suffering is absolute because the action is absolutely free, and His action is absolute suffering because it is absolute obedience. Hence the element of guilt which remains is not subjectively reflected, and this makes the sorrow profound. The tragic guilt is something more than merely subjective guilt, it is inherited guilt; but inherited guilt, like inherited sin, is a substantial category, and it is exactly this substantiality which makes the sorrow deeper. The ever admired tragic trilogy of Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus, Oedipus Rex,* and *Antigone,* essentially centers on this authentic tragic interest. But inherited guilt contains the self-contradiction of being guilt, and yet not being guilt. The bond which makes the individual guilty is precisely piety, but the guilt which he thus draws down upon himself has every possible aesthetic

ambiguity. One might readily conclude that the people who developed profound tragedy must have been the Jews. Thus, when they say about Jehovah that He is a jealous God who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations, or when one hears those terrible imprecations in the Old Testament, then one might easily be tempted to seek here for tragic material. But Judaism is too ethically developed for this; Jehovah's curses are, even though terrible, still also righteous punishment. This was not the case in Greece; the wrath of the gods had no ethical character, but only aesthetic ambiguity.

In Greek tragedy itself a transition is found from sorrow to pain, and as an example of this I might mention *Philoctetes.* This, in the stricter sense, is a tragedy of suffering. But here too a high degree of objectivity still obtains. The Greek hero rests in his fate; his fate is unchangeable; there is nothing further to be said about it. This factor furnishes the element of sorrow in the pain. The first doubt with which pain really begins is this: why has this befallen me, why can it not be otherwise? There is, indeed, in Philoctetes a high degree of reflection, which has always seemed remarkable to me, and which essentially separates him from that immortal trilogy: I refer to the masterly depicting of the self-contradiction in his pain, which contains so deep a human truth, while yet there is an objectivity which sustains the whole. Philoctetes' reflection is not absorbed in itself, and it is genuinely Greek when he complains that no one understands his pain. There is an extraordinary truth in this, and yet precisely here is manifested the difference between his pain and the reflective pain which always wants to be alone with its pain, which seeks a new pain in this solitude of pain.

The true tragic sorrow consequently requires an element of guilt, the true tragic pain an element of innocence; the true tragic sorrow requires an element of transparency, the true tragic pain an element of obscurity. This I believe best indicates the dialectic wherein the categories of sorrow and

pain come in contact with each other, as well as the dialectic which lies in the concept of tragic guilt.

Since it is contrary to the spirit of the Symparanekromenoi to produce closely coherent works or greater wholes, since it is not our purpose to labor upon a Tower of Babel, which God in His righteousness can descend upon and destroy, since we, conscious of the fact that this confusion of tongues happened justly, recognize as a characteristic of all human striving in its truth that it is fragmentary, and that it is precisely this which distinguishes it from Nature's infinite coherence; that the wealth of an individual consists precisely in his proficiency in fragmentary prodigality, and that that which brings enjoyment to the producing individual also brings enjoyment to the receiving individual, not the troublesome and meticulous execution, nor the protracted apprehension of this execution, but the production and enjoyment of the gleaming transitoriness, which for the producer contains something more than the thorough execution, since it is the appearance of the Idea, and which for the recipient contains something more, since its fulguration awakens his own productivity — since, I say, all this is contrary to the purpose of our society (and indeed, since even the period just read must almost be regarded as a disquieting attack upon the interjectory style, in which the idea breaks out without breaking through, a style which in our society has an official status): then, after having called attention to the fact that my procedure still cannot be called rebellious, since the bond which holds this period together is so loose that the intermediary clauses stand out aphoristically and arbitrarily enough, I shall merely call to mind that my style has made an attempt to appear to be what it is not — revolutionary.

Our society needs at every single meeting a renewal and rebirth, to the end that its inner activity may be renewed by a new description of its productivity. Let us then describe our purpose as an attempt in fragmentary pursuits, or in the art of writing posthumous papers. A completely finished

work has no relation to the poetic personality; in the case of posthumous papers one constantly feels, because of the incompletion, the desultoriness, a need to romance about the personality. Posthumous papers are like a ruin, and what haunted place could be more natural for the interred? The art, then, is artistically to produce the same effect, the same appearance of carelessness and the accidental, the same anacoluthic flight of thought; the art consists in producing an enjoyment which never actually becomes present, but always has an element of the past in it, so that it is present in the past. This has already been expressed in the word: posthumous. In a certain sense, everything a poet has produced is posthumous; but one would never think of calling a completed work posthumous, even though it had the accidental quality of not having been published in the poet's lifetime. Also, I assume that this is the true characteristic of all human productivity, as we have apprehended it, that it is a heritage, since men are not permitted to live eternally in the sight of the gods. A heritage, then, is what I shall call the effects produced among us, an artistic heritage; negligence, indolence, I shall call the genius we appreciate; *vis inertiae,* the natural law that we worship. By this explanation I have now complied with our sacred customs and rules.

So draw nearer to me, dear brothers of Symparanekromenoi; close around me as I send my tragic heroine out into the world, as I give the daughter of sorrow a dowry of pain as a wedding gift. She is my creation, but still her outline is so vague, her form so nebulous, that each one of you is free to imagine her as you will, and each one of you can love her in your own way. She is my creation, her thoughts are my thoughts, and yet it is as if I had rested with her in a night of love, as if she had entrusted me with her deep secret, breathed it and her soul out in my embrace, and as if in the same moment she changed before me, vanished, so that her actuality could only be traced in the mood that remained, instead of the converse being

true, that my mood brought her forth to a greater and greater actuality. I place the words in her mouth, and yet it is as if I abused her confidence; to me, it is as if she stood reproachfully behind me, and yet it is the other way around, in her mystery she becomes ever more and more visible. She is my possession, my lawful possession, and yet sometimes it is as if I had slyly insinuated myself into her confidence, as if I must constantly look behind me to find her; and yet, on the contrary, she lies constantly before me, she constantly comes into existence only as I bring her forth. She is called Antigone. This name I retain from the ancient tragedy, which for the most part I will follow, although, from another point of view, everything will be modern. First, however, a remark. I use a feminine figure because I firmly believe that a feminine nature will be best adapted for showing the difference. As woman she will have substantiality enough for sorrow to show itself, but as belonging in a reflective world, she will have reflection enough to mark the pain. In order to experience sorrow, the tragic guilt must vacillate between guilt and innocence; that whereby the guilt passes over into her consciousness must always be a determination of substantiality. But since in order to experience sorrow, the tragic guilt must have this vagueness, so reflection must not be present in its infinitude, for then it would reflect her out of her guilt, because reflection in its infinite subjectivity cannot let the element of inherited guilt remain, which causes the sorrow. Since, however, her reflection is awake, it will not reflect her out of her sorrow, but into it, each moment transforming her sorrow into pain.

Labdakos' family is, then, the object of the indignation of the angry gods. Oedipus has slain the sphinx, liberated Thebes; he has murdered his father, married his mother, and Antigone is the daughter of this marriage. Thus goes the Greek tragedy. Here I diverge from the Greek. All the relationships are the same in mine, and yet everything is different. That he

has slain the sphinx and liberated Thebes is known to everyone, and Oedipus lives honored and admired, happy in his marriage with Jocasta. The rest is concealed from the eyes of men, and no suspicion has ever called this horrible nightmare into actuality. Only Antigone knows it. How she has come to know it lies outside the tragic interest, and everyone is free to work out his own explanation in regard to it. At an early age, before she was fully developed, dim suspicions of this horrible secret had at times gripped her soul, until certainty with a single blow cast her into the arms of anxiety. Right here I discover a definition of the modern idea of the tragical. For anxiety is a reflection, and in this respect is essentially different from sorrow. Anxiety is the organ by which the subject appropriates sorrow and assimilates it. Anxiety is the energy of the movement by which sorrow bores its way into one's heart. But the movement is not swift like the thrust of a dart, it is successive; it is not once for all, but it is constantly continuing. As a passionate, erotic glance desires its object, so anxiety looks upon sorrow to desire it. As the quiet, incorruptible glance of love is preoccupied with the beloved object, so anxiety occupies itself with sorrow. But anxiety has another element in it which makes it cling even more strongly to its object, for it both loves and fears it. Anxiety has a two-fold function. Partly it is the detective instinct which constantly touches, and by means of this probing, discovers sorrow, as it goes round about the sorrow. Or anxiety is sudden, posits the whole sorrow in the present moment, yet so that this present moment instantly dissolves in succession. Anxiety is in this sense a truly tragic category, and the old saying: quern deus vult perdere, primum dementat, in truth rightfully applies here. That anxiety is determined by reflection is shown by our use of words; for I always say: to be anxious about something, by which I separate the anxiety from that about which I am anxious, and I can never use anxiety in an objective sense; whereas, on the contrary, when I say "my sorrow," it can just as well

express that which I sorrow over, as my sorrow over it. In addition, anxiety always involves a reflection upon time, for I cannot be anxious about the present, but only about the past or the future; but the past and the future, so resisting one another that the present vanishes, are reflective determinations. Greek sorrow, on the other hand, like the whole of Greek life, is in the present tense, and therefore the sorrow is deeper but the pain less. Anxiety therefore belongs essentially to the tragic. Hence, Hamlet is deeply tragic because he suspects his mother's guilt. Robert le Diable asks how on earth it could happen that he caused so much evil. Hogne, whom his mother had begotten by a troll, happens accidentally to see his image in the water, and asks his mother how his body had acquired such a shape.

The difference is now easily perceptible. In the Greek tragedy Antigone is not at all concerned about her father's unhappy destiny. This rests like an impenetrable sorrow over the whole family. Antigone lives as carefree as any other young Grecian maiden, indeed the chorus pities her, since her death is foreordained, because she must quit this life at so early an age, quit it without having tasted its most beautiful joys, evidently forgetting the family's own deep sorrow. However, it should by no means be said that it is thoughtlessness, or that the particular individual stands alone by himself, without worrying about his relationship to the family. But that is genuinely Greek. Life-relationships are once and for all assigned to them, like the heaven under which they live. If this is dark and cloudy, it is also unchangeable. This furnishes the keynote of the Greek soul, and this is sorrow, not pain. In Antigone the tragic guilt concentrates itself about one definite point, that she had buried her brother in defiance of the king's prohibition. If this is seen as an isolated fact, as a collision between sisterly affection and piety and an arbitrary human prohibition, then *Antigone* would cease to be a Greek tragedy, it would be an entirely modern tragic subject. That which in the Greek sense affords the tragic interest is that Oedipus'

sorrowful destiny re-echoes in the brother's unhappy death, in the sister's collision with a simple human prohibition; it is, so to say, the after effects, the tragic destiny of Oedipus, ramifying in every branch of his family. This is the totality which makes the sorrow of the spectator so infinitely deep. It is not an individual who goes down, it is a small world, it is the objective sorrow, which, released, now advances in its own terrible consistency, like a force of nature, and Antigone's unhappy fate, an echo of her father's, is an intensified sorrow. When, therefore, Antigone in defiance of the king's prohibition resolves to bury her brother, we do not see in this so much a free action on her part as a fateful necessity, which visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. There is indeed enough freedom of action in this to make us love Antigone for her sisterly affection, but in the necessity of fate there is also, as it were, a higher refrain which envelops not only the life of Oedipus but also his entire family.

While, then, the Greek Antigone lives so carefree that were it not for the disclosure of this new fact, we might imagine her life as very happy in its gradual unfolding, our Antigone's life, on the contrary, is essentially over. I have not endowed her stingily, and as we say that a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver, so I have placed the fruit of her sorrow in a cup of pain. Her dowry is not a vain magnificence which moth and rust can corrupt, it is an eternal treasure. Thieves cannot break in and steal it; she herself will be too vigilant for that. Her life does not unfold like that of the Greek Antigone; it is not turned outward but inward, the scene is not external but internal; it is an invisible scene. Have I not succeeded, dear Symparanekromenoi, in arousing your interest in such a maiden, or must I resort to a *captatio benevolentiae?* Then, too, she does not belong to the world she lives in; even though she appears flourishing and sound, her real life is concealed. Although she is living, she is in another sense dead; quiet is her life and secretive, the world hears not even a sigh, for her sigh is

hidden in the depths of her soul. I need not remind you that she is by no means a weak and sickly woman, rather she is proud and vigorous. There is nothing, perhaps, which ennobles a human being so much as keeping a secret. It gives a man's whole life a meaning which of course it has for himself only. It saves him from every vain regard for his environment; self-contained he rests, blessed in his secret — that we could almost say, even if his secret was most painful.

Such is our Antigone. Proud she is of her secret, proud that she has been selected to be in a peculiar manner the saviour of the honor and renown of the house of Oedipus; and when the grateful people acclaim Oedipus with praise and gratitude, then she feels her own importance, and her secret sinks ever deeper into her soul, still more inaccessible to every living being. She feels how much responsibility is placed in her hands, and this gives her a supernatural greatness, which is necessary if she is to engage our attention as a tragic personality. As an individual figure she must be able to interest us. She is more than a young girl in general, and yet she is a young girl; she is a bride, and yet she is all innocence and purity. As a bride, woman achieves her destiny, and hence a woman can ordinarily interest us only to the degree that she is brought into relation to her destiny. However, there are analogies here. One says of a bride of God that she has the inward faith and spirit in which she rests. Our Antigone I should call a bride in a perhaps even more beautiful sense, indeed she is almost more, she is mother, she is in the purely aesthetic sense *virgo mater,* she carries her secret under her heart, hidden and concealed. She is silence, precisely because she is secretive, but this introversion which lies in silence, gives her a supernatural bearing. She is proud of her sorrow, she is jealous for it, for her sorrow is her love. But still her sorrow is not a dead, immovable possession; it moves constantly, it gives birth to pain, and is born in pain. When a girl resolves to dedicate her life to an idea, when she stands there with the sacrificial wreath

upon her brow, she stands as a bride, for the great inspiring idea transforms her, and the votive wreath is like a bridal garland. She knows not any man, and yet she is a bride; she does not even know the idea which inspires her, for that would be unwomanly, and yet she is a bride.

Such is our Antigone, the bride of sorrow. She dedicates her life to sorrow over her father's destiny, over her own. Such a misfortune as has overtaken her father calls for sorrow, and yet there is no one who can grieve over it, because there is no one who knows about it. And as the Greek Antigone cannot bear to have her brother's corpse flung away without the last honors, so she feels how hard it would have been if no one had known this; it worries her that no tears should be shed; she almost thanks the gods because she is selected as this instrument. Thus is Antigone great in her pain. Here again I can show a difference between Greek and modern tragedy. It is genuinely Greek for Philoctetes to complain that there is no one who knows what he suffers; it is a deep human need to wish that others should realize this; reflective grief, however, does not desire this. It does not occur to Antigone to wish that anyone should understand her pain, but on the other hand, in relation to her father, she feels the justice of having to suffer grief, for this is just as right aesthetically as that a man should suffer punishment when he has done wrong. While, therefore, the very conception that it is predestined that the living should be buried alive wrings from Antigone in the Greek tragedy the outburst of sorrow:

> O mockery of my woe!
> I go to the strong mound of yon strange tomb
> All hapless, having neither part nor room
> With those who live or those who die,

our Antigone can say it about herself all her life. The difference is extraordinary; there is a factual truth in her assertion which makes the pain less. If our Antigone were to say the same, it would be unreal, but this

unreality is the real pain. The Greeks do not express themselves figuratively, just because the reflection which goes with this was not present in their lives. So when Philoctetes complains that he lives solitary and forsaken on a desert island, his assertion corresponds to an external truth; when, on the other hand, our Antigone feels pain in her solitude, it is, after all, only in a figurative sense that she is alone, but just because of this, her pain is real pain.

As far as tragic guilt is concerned, it consists partly in the fact that she buries her brother, partly in the context of her father's sorry fate, which is presupposed from the two preceding tragedies. Here again I come to the peculiar dialectic which sets the guilt of the race in relation to the individual. This is the hereditary guilt. Dialectics is commonly considered fairly abstract; one thinks generally of logical movement. However, life will soon teach one that there are many kinds of dialectics, that almost every passion has its own. The dialectic, therefore, which sets the guilt of the race or the family in connection with a particular subject, so that he not only suffers under it — for this is a natural consequence against which one would vainly try to harden himself — but bears the guilt, participates in it, this dialectic is foreign to us, has nothing compelling for the modern mind. If a man, however, were to contemplate regeneration in terms of ancient tragedy, then must every individual contemplate his own regeneration, not merely in a spiritual sense, but in the definite sense of rebirth from the matrix of family and race. The dialectic which sets the individual in connection with family and race is no subjective dialectic, for such a dialectic lifts the connection and the individual out of the continuity; it is an objective dialectic. It is essentially piety. To preserve this cannot be regarded as something injurious to the individual. In our age one allows the applicability of something in natural relations which he is unwilling to allow as applicable to spiritual relationships. Still, one would not wish to be

so isolated, so unnatural, that one would not regard the family as a whole, of which one must say that when one member suffers, all suffer. One does this involuntarily, otherwise why is a particular individual so afraid that another member of the family may bring disgrace upon it, unless because he feels that he will suffer thereby? This suffering the individual must obviously endure, whether he will or not. But since the point of departure is the individual, not the family, this forced suffering is *maximum;* one feels that man cannot completely become master over his natural relationship, yet desires this as far as possible. On the other hand, if the individual sees the natural relationship as a factor involved in his truth, this expresses itself in the spiritual world thus: the individual participates in guilt. This is a conclusion many, perhaps, fail to understand, but then neither do they understand the tragic. If the individual is isolated, then he is either absolutely the creator of his own destiny, in which case nothing tragic remains, but only the evil — for it is not even tragic that an individual should be blindly engrossed in himself, it is his own fault — or the individuals are only modifications of the eternal substance of existence, and so again the tragic is lost.

With regard to the tragic guilt, the difference in the modern is readily apparent, after this has assimilated the ancient, for only now can we really speak of this. The Greek Antigone participates by filial piety in her father's guilt, as does also our modern one; but for the Greek Antigone her father's guilt and suffering is an external fact, an immovable fact, which her sorrow does not alter *(quod non volvit in pectore);* and in so far as she herself personally, as a natural consequence, suffers under her father's guilt, this again is altogether an external fact. It is otherwise with our Antigone. I assume that Oedipus is dead. Even while he lived Antigone had been aware of this secret, but she had not had courage to confide in her father. By his death she is deprived of the only way by which she could be freed from her

secret. To confide it now to any living being would be to disgrace her father; her life acquires meaning for her as she dedicates it, by her inviolable silence, to a daily, almost hourly, showing him the last honors. Of one thing, however, she is ignorant, whether her father himself had known it or not. Here is the modern: unrest in her sorrow, ambiguity in her pain. She loves her father with all her soul, and this love transports her out of herself and into her father’s guilt; as the fruit of such a love, she feels herself alienated from mankind; she feels her own guilt the more she loves her father; only with him could she find rest, as equally guilty they would sorrow together. But while her father lived she had not been able to confide her sorrow to him, for she did not know whether he knew about it, and consequently there was a possibility of plunging him into a similar pain. And yet, was his guilt less if he had not known about it? The movement here is constantly relative. If Antigone had not known with certainty the actual relationship, then she would be insignificant, then she would have had nothing more than a suspicion to fight against, and that contains too little of the tragic to interest us. But she does know everything; yet even in this knowledge there is still an ignorance which can always keep sorrow in movement, always transform it into pain. Then, too, she is constantly at odds with her environment. Oedipus lives in the popular estimation as a fortunate king, honored and acclaimed; Antigone herself has admired as well as loved her father. She participates in every celebration and festival in his honor; she is more enthusiastic about him than any other young girl in the realm; her thoughts constantly turn back to him; she is praised throughout the kingdom as a model, loving daughter, and yet this enthusiasm is the only way in which she can give her sorrow any relief. Her father is always in her thoughts, but in what way is her painful secret. And yet she dares not give way to her sorrow, dares not grieve; she feels how much depends on her; she fears if anyone saw her suffering that people

would begin to ask questions, and so, on this side too, she knows not sorrow but pain.

Considered in this way, I think that Antigone can really interest us; I think you will not reproach my extravagance nor my paternal partiality when I believe that she might well try her hand at dramatics and venture to appear in a tragedy. So far she is only an epic figure, and the tragic in her has only epic interest.

It is not so difficult to discover a context into which she might fit; in this respect we may readily be content with what the Greek tragedy gives. She has a sister living, who is, I assume, older than herself and married. Her mother might also be living. That these are naturally always subordinate characters is self-evident, as is the fact that the tragedy acquires an epic element at all, such as the Greek has, without its needing to be so conspicuous; still, the monologue will here always play a principal role, even if it must be assisted by the situation. One must imagine everything united about this one chief interest which constitutes Antigone's life content, and when the whole is set in order, then the question arises as to how the dramatic interest is brought about.

Our heroine, as she has been presented in the foregoing, seems bent on overleaping an element in her life; she is about to become wholly spiritual, something nature does not tolerate. With the depth of soul she possesses, she must necessarily love with an extraordinary passion, if she does fall in love. Here, consequently, I encounter the dramatic interest — Antigone is in love, and, I say it with pain, Antigone is mortally in love. Here manifestly is the tragic collision. One ought generally to be a little more particular about what one calls a tragic collision. The more sympathetic the colliding forces are, the deeper but also the more homogeneous they are, the more important the collision. She is, then, in love, and he who is the object of her affections knows that she loves him. My Antigone is no ordinary woman, and

consequently her dowry is unusual — it is her pain. She cannot belong to a man without this dowry; she feels that would be very hazardous. To conceal it from such an observer would be impossible, to wish to conceal it would be a betrayal of her love; but can she marry him with it? Dare she confide it to any human being, even to the beloved? Antigone has strength; the question is not whether for her own sake, to relieve her heart, she should reveal something of her pain, for she can indeed bear this without assistance; but the question is, can she justify this to the dead? She herself suffers in a way by confiding her secret to the man she loves, for her own life, too, is sorrowfully interwoven with this. This, however, does not trouble her. The question is only concerning her father. Consequently the collision from this side is of a sympathetic nature. Her life, which was formerly peaceful and quiet, now becomes violent and passionate, always of course within herself, and her speech here begins to be pathetic. She struggles with herself, she has been willing to sacrifice her life to her secret, but now she must sacrifice her love. She conquers, that is to say, the secret conquers, and she loses. Now comes the second collision, for in order that the tragic collision should really be profound, the colliding forces must be homogeneous. The collision just described had not this quality; for the collision is really between her love for her father and for herself, and whether her own love be not too great a sacrifice. The other colliding force is the sympathetic love for her beloved. He knows he is loved, and boldly presses his suit. Her reserve puzzles him; he notices that there must be quite peculiar difficulties, but he thinks they cannot be insurmountable to him. What is all important to him is to convince her of how much he loves her, to persuade her that his life is over if he is obliged to relinquish her love. His passion at last becomes something almost unfair, but only the more ingenious because of her resistance. With every assurance of his love, he increases her pain, with every sigh he sinks the dart of sorrow deeper and

deeper into her heart. He leaves no means untried to influence her. He knows, as did everyone, how deeply she loves her father. He meets her at the grave of Oedipus, where she had gone to find relief for her emotion, where she surrenders herself to her longing for her father, even though this very longing is mingled with pain because she does not know what her encounter with him might be, not knowing whether he was aware of his guilt or not. Her lover surprises her, and he adjures her by the love she bears her father; he notes that he makes an unusual impression upon her; he persists, he hopes for everything by this means, and he does not know that in this he has actually worked against himself.

Consequently, the interest centers on his being able to wrest her secret from her. To allow her to become momentarily deranged and thus to betray her secret, would not help. The colliding forces are so evenly matched that action becomes impossible for the tragic individual. Her pain is now increased by her love, by her sympathetic suffering with him whom she loves. Only in death can she find peace; so her whole life is dedicated to sorrow, and she has, as it were, established a limit, a dam, for the evil destiny, which might perhaps fatally have transmitted itself to succeeding generations. Only in the moment of death can she admit the intensity of her love, admit that she belongs to him only in the moment that she does not belong to him. When Epaminondas was wounded in the battle of Mantinea, he left the arrow sticking in the wound until he heard that the battle was won, because he knew that the instant it was drawn out, he would die. Thus does our Antigone bear her secret in her heart like an arrow which life unrelentingly has driven in deeper and deeper without depriving her of life, for as long as it remains in her heart she can live, but in the moment it is drawn out, she must die. The beloved must constantly strive to wrest her secret from her, and yet this means her certain death. By whose hand, then, does she fall? By the hand of the living or the dead? In a certain sense, the

dead, for what had been foretold of Hercules, that he would not be slain by the living but by the dead, applies to her, in so far as the memory of her father is the cause of her death; in another sense, by the hand of the living, in so far as her unhappy love makes that memory kill her.

SHADOWGRAPHS

Psychological Pastime Lecture delivered before the
SYMPARANEKROMENOI

Abgeschworen mag die Liebe immer sein; Liebes-Zauber wiegt in dieser Höhle Die berauschte, überraschte Seele In Vergessenheit des Schwures ein.

* * *

Gestern liebt' ich,
Heute leid' ich,
Morgen sterb' ich;
Dennoch denk' ich
Heut' und Morgen
Gern an Gestern.

IMPROVISED SALUTATORY

We celebrate in this hour the founding of our society. Again we rejoice in the return of the happy occasion which marks the passing of the year's longest day, and heralds the approaching victory of night. We have waited the livelong day; a moment ago we heaved a sigh over its length, but now is our despair turned into joy. The victory that has been won is indeed but an insignificant beginning, and day will doubtless maintain its rule for some time to come; but its mastery has been challenged, this cannot escape our attention. Therefore we do not wait to rejoice until the victory of night has become manifest to all, until the growing sluggishness of civic life reminds us that the day is waning. No, as a young bride impatiently awaits the coming of night, so we longingly await the first signs of its coming, the first intimations of its final victory; and the more we have felt the pangs of

despair, not comprehending how life was to be endured unless the days were shortened, the greater is now our joy and our surprise.

A year has passed, and our society still lives. Shall we rejoice over this fact, dear Symparanekromenoi, shall we rejoice that its continued existence seems to mock our teaching that all things vanish? Or shall we not rather grieve that it still stands, and rejoice that in any event it has but another year to stand; since we have resolved at that time to put an end to its life if it does not pass out of existence before. — We formed no far-reaching plans in connection with its founding; for, knowing the wretchedness of human life, and the treacherousness of all existence, we determined to come to the assistance of nature in the execution of its universal law, and dissolve our society if we were not anticipated. A year has passed, and our membership is still complete. No one has been released from life, and no one has released himself; for since death is for us the greatest happiness, our pride forbids us to take this way of escape.

Shall we rejoice over this, or shall we not rather grieve, and take pleasure only in the hope that the confusion of life will soon separate us, the storms of life soon tear us apart? Such thoughts are indeed more appropriate to our society, more in harmony with this festive occasion, with every feature of our present environment. For is it not ingeniously significant that the floor in this little room, in accordance with the custom of the land, is strewn with green, as if for a funeral; and does not nature voice its approval of our mood in the wild storm that rages outside, in the wind's mighty roaring? Aye, and let us keep silence a moment while we listen to the music of the storm, its bold assault, its daring challenge; while we hearken to the defiant bellowing of the sea, the anguished sigh of the forest, the desperate crashing of the trees, the cowardly rustle of the grass. Men say, indeed, that the divine voice is not in the rushing wind, but rather in the soft breeze. Our ears, however, are not attuned to catching soft breezes, but only to devouring the

wild fury of the elements. Aye, let the storm break forth in still greater violence, making an end of life, and of the world, and of this brief speech, which has at least the advantage over all things else, that it is soon ended! Let that wild vortex, which is the inmost principle of the world, although this escapes the attention of men, who eat and drink and marry and increase in heedless preoccupation — let it break forth, I say, and in pent-up resentment sweep away the mountains and the nations and the achievements of culture and the cunning inventions of mankind, let it break forth with the last terrible shriek which more surely than the trump of doom proclaims the destruction of everything; let it move, and moving whirl along this naked cliff on which we stand, as lightly as thistledown before the breath of our nostrils! — But night conquers, the day is shortened, our hope grows stronger! Fill then your cups once more, dear drinking brethren. In this toast I hail thee, silent Night, eternal mother from whom all things are! From thee they come, to thee they return. Again have mercy upon the world, open thine arms wide to receive all things in thy embrace, and hide us safe in thy bosom! Dark Night, I hail thee, I hail thee victor! And this is my solace, for thou dost shorten all things: day and time and life and troublesome memory in an eternal forgetfulness!

Ever since Lessing in his renowned essay, *Laokoon,* defined the disputed boundaries between poetry and art, the result, unanimously accepted by all aestheticians, has been to consider that the difference between them is that art lies in the qualification of space, poetry in that of time, that art expresses repose, poetry movement. In order, therefore, for a subject to lend itself to artistic representation, it must have a quiet transparency, so that its inner essence rests in a corresponding outer form. The less this is true of a subject, the more difficult becomes the artist’s task, until at last the difference asserts itself, and warns him that there is simply nothing he can do. If we apply the principle here casually suggested but not expounded, to

the relation between grief and joy, we shall readily see that joy is far more easily represented artistically than grief. It should by no means be denied that grief can be artistically represented, but it should be said that there is a stage in its evolution when it becomes essential to establish a contrast between the inner and the outer, which makes its representation impossible for art.

This evolution is rooted in the very nature of grief. It is of the essence of joy to reveal itself, while grief tries to hide, sometimes even to deceive. Joy is communicative, social, open-hearted, and desires expression; grief is secretive, silent, solitary, and seeks to retire into itself. The truth of this remark will surely not be denied by anyone who has even a moderate acquaintance with life. There are men so constituted that under the stress of emotion, the blood rushes to the surface, making the inner emotion outwardly visible; others are so constituted that the blood flows backward, seeking the inner parts and the chambers of the heart. A somewhat similar relation exists as to the mode of expression, between joy and grief. The first type described is much easier to observe than the latter. In the first you see the expression, the inner feeling is outwardly visible; in the case of the second, you suspect the inner emotion. The outward pallor is, as it were, the parting salutation of the inner excitement; and imagination and thought hasten after the fugitive emotion to where it conceals itself in its secret hiding place. Especially is this true of the type of grief I propose to consider, that which we may call reflective grief. In reflective grief the external contains at most a hint which may furnish a clue, sometimes not even that much. This type does not lend itself to artistic representation, for the equilibrium between the inner and the outer has been destroyed, and thus the emotion is not spatially determinable. Also, in another respect this grief resists artistic representation, since it lacks inner repose, and is constantly in movement; although this motion does not enrich it with any

new content, yet the agitation is nevertheless essential. It revolves within itself, like a squirrel in its cage, although not so monotonously, since it is constantly alternating between the different combinations of sorrow's internal factors. What prevents reflective grief from being artistically portrayed is that it lacks repose, that it never comes into harmony with itself, or rests in any single definitive expression. As a sick man throws himself about in his pain, now on one side and then on the other, so is reflective grief tossed about in the effort to find its object and its expression. Whenever grief finds repose, then will its inner essence gradually work its way out, becoming visible externally, and thus also subject to artistic representation. As soon as it finds rest and peace within itself, this movement from within outward invariably sets in; the reflective grief moves in the opposite direction, like blood retreating from the surface of the body, leaving only a hint of its presence in the sudden paleness. Reflective grief is not accompanied by any characteristic outward change; even at its very inception it hastens inward, and only a watchful observer suspects its vanishing; afterwards it keeps careful guard over its outward appearance, so as to make it as unobtrusive as possible.

Retiring thus within, it finds at last an enclosure, an innermost recess, where it hopes it can remain; and now begins its monotonous movement. Back and forth it swings like a pendulum, and cannot come to rest. Ever it begins afresh from the beginning and reconsiders everything, it rehearses the witnesses, it collates and verifies their testimony, as it has done a hundred times before, but the task is never finished. Monotony exercises in the course of time a benumbing influence upon the mind. Like the monotonous sound of water dripping from the roof, like the monotonous whir of a spinning-wheel, like the monotonous sound of a man walking with measured tread back and forth on the floor above, so this movement of reflective grief finally gives to it a certain sense of numb relief, becoming a

necessity as affording it an illusion of progress. Finally an equilibrium is established, and the need of obtaining for itself an outward expression, in so far as this need may have once or twice asserted itself, now ceases; outwardly everything is quiet and calm, and far within, in its little secret recess, grief dwells like a prisoner strictly guarded in a subterranean dungeon, who spends year after year in monotonously moving back and forth within his little enclosure, never weary of traversing sorrow's longer or shorter path.

The circumstance which gives rise to grief of this reflective type may lie partly in the subjective nature of the individual, partly in the objective grief, or in the occasion for it. An abnormally reflective individual will transform every sorrow that comes to him into reflective grief, since his individual make-up and the organization of his personality make it impossible for him to assimilate his sorrow in an immediate manner. This is a morbid condition, however, which does not interest us particularly, since in this way every accidental phenomenon can undergo a metamorphosis which transforms it into reflective grief. It is another matter when the objective grief, or its occasion in the individual, itself nourishes the reflection which makes the grief a reflective grief. This is everywhere the case when the objective grief is not complete, when it leaves a doubt behind, whatever be the specific nature of this doubt. Here a great many different varieties of thought at once present themselves, greater in proportion to the scope and depth of one's experience, or one's predilection for such investigations. It is not, however, by any means my intention to work my way through the entire manifold of these varieties; I desire only to bring out a single aspect of reflective grief, as this has revealed itself to my observation.

When the cause of the grief is a deception, then the objective nature of the emotion is itself such as to produce the reflective grief in the individual. That a deception really is a deception is often very hard to prove, and yet

everything hinges on placing this beyond all possible doubt; as long as this remains disputable, grief will find no rest, but will be compelled to wander back and forth in the arena of reflection. Moreover, when the supposed deceit touches not some external fact, but the entire inner life of a human being, the inmost kernel of his personality, it becomes increasingly probable that the reflective grief aroused by it will persist and become permanent. But what can with greater truth be called a woman's entire life than her love? When, therefore, the sorrow of an unhappy love is rooted in deceit, it is an inevitable consequence that reflective grief should set in, whether it persists for the rest of the individual's life, or she succeeds in overcoming it. Unhappy love is indeed of itself one of the most profound sorrows which a woman can experience; but it does not follow that unhappy love always generates a reflective grief. When her lover dies, or her love is unrequited, or circumstances make its realization impossible, there is cause for grief to be sure, but not for reflective grief except in so far as the individual is abnormally reflective beforehand, in which case she does not come within the scope of our interest. But if she is not abnormally reflective, her grief will be of an immediate type, and as such it will be capable of artistic representation; contrariwise, it is quite impossible for the artist adequately to portray reflective grief, or to express the essential point in such grief. The immediate grief is the immediate impression and expression of the inner sorrow's impression, as precisely congruent with its original as the image that Veronica retained in her handkerchief; its sacred script is stamped upon the features, beautiful and clear and legible to all.

Reflective grief, consequently, cannot be represented artistically, partly because it never is, but is always in the process of becoming, and partly it is indifferent to and unconcerned with the external and the visible. Hence, unless the artist is satisfied with the naïveté sometimes found in old books, where a figure is drawn that could represent almost anything, which bears

on its breast a plate in the form of a heart or the like, to which it points or otherwise calls attention, whereon one may read a description of the picture, an effect the artist could just as well have produced by writing above the picture: Please note — he will have to renounce the idea of portraying reflective grief, leaving it to be dealt with by poets or psychologists.

It is this reflective grief which I now propose to bring before you and, as far as possible, render visible by means of some pictures. I call these sketches Shadowgraphs, partly by the designation to remind you at once that they derive from the darker side of life, partly because like other shadowgraphs they are not directly visible. When I take a shadowgraph in my hand, it makes no impression upon me, and gives me no clear conception of it. Only when I hold it up opposite the wall, and now look not directly at it, but at that which appears on the wall, am I able to see it. So also with the picture which I wish to show here, an inward picture which does not become perceptible until I see it through the external. This external is perhaps quite unobtrusive but not until I look through it, do I discover that inner picture which I desire to show you, an inner picture too delicately drawn to be outwardly visible, woven as it is of the tenderest moods of the soul. If I look at a sheet of paper, there may seem to be nothing remarkable about it, but when I hold it up to the light and look through it, then I discover the delicate inner inscriptions, too ethereal, as it were, to be perceived directly.

Turn your attention then, dear Symparanekromenoi, to this inner picture; do not allow yourselves to be distracted by the external appearance, or rather, do not yourselves summon the external before you, for it shall be my task constantly to draw it aside, in order to afford you a better view of the inner picture. But surely I do not need to encourage this society, of which I have the honor to be a member, to do this; for although young, we are yet old enough not to be deceived by appearances, nor to continue in this

deception. Do I flatter myself with a vain hope when I believe that you will do these pictures the honor of granting them your attention? Or must these efforts of mine be regarded as alien, a matter of indifference to you, out of harmony with the purpose of our society, a society that knows but a single passion: a sympathetic interest in the secrets of sorrow? We too form an order, we too venture forth into the world now and then, in the role of knights errant, each taking his own way, not to fight huge monsters, nor for the sake of assisting innocence in distress, nor to seek adventures in love. Nothing of all this interests us, not even the last, for the dart from a woman's eye cannot wound our hardy breasts, and the merry smile of happy lassies cannot move us — but only the secret beckoning of sorrow. Let others boast that no woman near or far has been able to withstand the power of their love, we do not envy them; we will be proud that no secret sorrow can escape our attention, that no hidden grief can be so coy and so proud as to hinder us from penetrating victoriously into its innermost haunts.

Which conflict is the more dangerous, which presupposes the greater skill, and which promises the greater reward, we do not ask. Our choice is made: we love only grief, grief alone is the object of our search, and everywhere we find its footprints, there we follow after them, intrepidly, immovably, until grief reveals itself. For this conflict we arm ourselves, in this struggle we train ourselves daily. And in truth, grief steals through the world so secretively that only the sympathetic observer even succeeds in suspecting its presence. You walk through the streets, each house looks like its neighbor, and only the experienced observer suspects that here in this house at midnight, all is different: an unhappy person wanders about, unable to find rest; he ascends the stairs, his footsteps echoing in the stillness of the night. We pass one another on the street, and each resembles his neighbor, and his neighbor the common run of mankind. Only the experienced observer divines that within this head there dwells a lodger who has

renounced the world, and pursues a solitary life in quiet domesticity. The external appearance presents itself as an object for our inspection, but it does not engage our interest; thus the fisherman sits by the water and gazes fixedly upon the float, but the float does not interest him at all, but only the movements beneath the surface. The outward appearance has significance, it is true, but not as an expression of the inward, but rather as a telegraphic communication which tells us that there is something hidden deep within.

Sometimes when you have scrutinized a face long and persistently, you seem to discover a second face hidden behind the one you see. This is generally an unmistakable sign that this soul harbors an emigrant who has withdrawn from the world in order to watch over secret treasure, and the path for the investigator is indicated by the fact that one face lies beneath the other, as it were, from which he understands that he must attempt to penetrate within if he wishes to discover anything. The face, which ordinarily is the mirror of the soul, here takes on, though it be but for an instant, an ambiguity that resists artistic production. An exceptional eye is needed to see it, and trained powers of observation to follow this infallible index of a secret grief. This eye is eager, and yet so solicitous; anxious and compelling, and yet so sympathetic; persistent and shrewd, and yet sincere and benevolent. It lulls the individual into a certain pleasant languor, in which he finds an almost voluptuous pleasure in pouring forth his grief, like the pleasure said to accompany blood-letting. The present is forgotten, the external is broken through, the past is resurrected, grief breathes easily. The sorrowing soul finds relief, and sorrow's sympathetic knight errant rejoices that he has found the object of his search; for we seek not the present but the past, not joy which is always of the present, but sorrow whose nature it is to pass by. In the present it manifests itself only for a fleeting instant, like the glimpse one may have of a man turning a corner and vanishing from sight.

But sometimes grief succeeds even better in hiding itself, and the outward appearance gives us not even the slightest intimation. This may then escape our attention for a long time, until by chance one day a look, a word, a sigh, a quaver in the voice, a glance of the eye, a trembling of the lips, or a convulsive handclasp, treacherously betrays the carefully guarded secret — then passion for the quest is aroused, the struggle begins. Now we have need of vigilance and cunning and persistence. For what is so inventive as secret grief? But a prisoner for life has ample time to devise ingenious ways of concealment. And what is so swift to hide itself as secret sorrow? For no young girl can cover an exposed bosom in greater haste and with greater anxiety than the secret grief when it has been surprised. In this conflict there is need of unflinching courage, for one strives with a Proteus; but if only one can hold out, the antagonist must surrender. Though it may, like that ancient sea-god, assume every possible form in order to escape: now a serpent winding about the hand, now a lion terrible in its roaring, now a tree with leaves rustling in the wind, or a turbulent waterfall, or a crackling fire — at last it must prophesy, and grief must at last reveal itself.

Lo, these are the adventures in which we find our pleasure and our pastime, in them is the test of our knighthood. For their sake we arise like thieves in the night, for their sake we are willing to risk everything; for no passion is so undisciplined as sympathy. Nor need we fear that opportunities for adventure will be wanting, but only that we may meet an opposition too hard and unyielding for our strength. As scientists say that by blasting open great rocks which have defied the centuries, they have found a living animal inside, which undiscovered has maintained itself in life, so there may be found human beings whose stony exterior conceals an eternal life of secret sorrow. Such a possibility cannot quench our passion nor cool our ardor, but rather must inflame it. For our passion is not mere curiosity, content with the external and the superficial. It is sympathetic dread which searches the

reins and the hidden thoughts of the heart; it evokes things secret by means of magic and incantations, even when death has buried them from our view. Saul came in disguise before the battle to the Witch of Endor and demanded that she summon up for him the shade of Samuel. Surely it was not mere curiosity which prompted him, not a wish to behold Samuel's visible image, but he would learn his thoughts; and it was not without anxiety that he waited for the stern judge to pronounce his verdict. And so it cannot be mere curiosity which prompts one and another of you, dear Symparanekromenoi, to give attention to the pictures I am about to display to you. For though I have borrowed the names of certain literary characters for purposes of designation, it does not follow that only these fictitious characters pass in review. The names must be regarded as *nomina appellativa,* and I shall not object if one or another of you should feel inclined to choose for a particular picture some other name, a dearer one, perhaps, or one which seems more natural to him.

I. MARIE BEAUMARCHAIS

This young woman is known to us through the pages of Goethe's *Clavigo,* and we shall take that work as our point of departure, except that we intend to pursue her history a little further, after she has lost the dramatic interest, and the retinue of grief begins to fall away. We, however, keep her company; for as knights of sympathy we have both the native gift and the acquired art to keep pace in the procession of grief. Her story is brief: Clavigo was betrothed to her, Clavigo left her. And this is quite enough for all who are accustomed to viewing the phenomena of life as one inspects curiosities in an art cabinet — the more briefly the better, the more one can see. In the same way one might briefly relate that Tantalus thirsts, and that Sisyphus rolls a stone up the mountain. For one who is in a hurry, it would only delay matters to linger longer over such things, since one can learn no

more than one already knew, which is the whole. To claim more attention, a story must be of a different kind. As we cluster familiarly about the tea table, the samovar singing its last refrain, the hostess asks the mysterious stranger to unburden his heart; as she serves the sugared water and the sweetmeats, he begins: It is a long drawn out and complicated story. The novel employs this method, but that is of course a very different thing: a long and complicated story, and such a brief little advertisement. Whether it is a short story for Marie Beaumarchais is another question; so much is certain, it is not a long story, for a long story has a measurable length; a short story, on the contrary, sometimes has the mysterious quality of being longer than the most long-winded, in spite of its brevity.

I have already remarked that reflective grief is not outwardly visible, that is, it does not find a beautiful outward expression in repose. The inner unrest prevents this transparency, the external is rather consumed thereby, and in so far as the inner manifests itself in the outer, it does so rather by a certain morbidity, which never lends itself to artistic representation since it lacks the interest of beauty. Goethe has given us one or two hints about this. But although one might assent to the correctness of this observation, one might still be tempted to regard it as an accident, and only when by considering the purely poetic and aesthetic point of view, one becomes convinced that what observation teaches has aesthetic truth, only then does one gain the deeper consciousness of its meaning. Now if I imagine a reflective grief, and ask myself if it can be represented artistically, it is at once evident that the external appearance is wholly accidental in relation to it; but if this is true, then the idea of artistic beauty is renounced. It is a matter of indifference whether she be large or small, significant or insignificant in appearance, more or less beautiful; to ask whether it would be more correct to let her head bend to one side or the other, or toward the ground, to let her stare in melancholy, or sadly fix her gaze upon the

ground, all such things are entirely irrelevant — the one does not express reflective grief any more adequately than the other. The external is, in comparison with the internal, unimportant and indifferent. The point in reflective grief is the fact that sorrow is constantly seeking its object; this search is its life and the secret of its unrest. But this search is a constant fluctuation, and if the external were in each separate moment a perfect expression for the internal, it would be necessary to have an entire series of pictures to represent it; but no single picture could express it, and no single picture would have essential artistic value, since it would not be beautiful but true. The pictures would have to be regarded as one regards the second-hand of a watch; the works themselves are not visible, but the inner movement constantly expresses itself by the constantly changing positions of the second-hand. This change cannot be represented artistically, and yet it is the gist of the whole matter. Thus, when unhappy love has its ground in a deception, its pain and suffering are due to its inability to find its object. If the deception is proved, and if its victim understands that it is a deception, then the grief does not cease, but it becomes an immediate sorrow, not a reflective one. The dialectical difficulty is readily evident, for why does she grieve? If he was a deceiver, then it was just as well that he left her, the sooner the better; in fact, she should be glad that he left her, and mourn only because she had loved him. And yet it is still a profound sorrow that he was a deceiver. But the question whether or not he really was a deceiver is precisely the unrest which gives perpetual motion to her grief. To establish certainty for the external fact that a deception is really a deception, is always very difficult, and even this would by no means settle the matter, or end the movement of reflection. A deception is for love an absolute paradox, and herein lies the necessity for a reflective grief. The different factors constituting love may be combined in very different ways in the individual, so that love as it exists in one may not be the same as in another;

the egoistic may predominate more, or the sympathetic; but whatever the love is, for the particular elements as well as for the total, a deception is a paradox which love cannot think, but which it must nevertheless attempt to think. If either the egoistic or the sympathetic factor were absolutely present, the paradox would disappear, that is, the individual by virtue of the absolute is lifted above reflection; he does not abolish the paradox through reason or reflection but is saved from the paradox by not attempting to think it, by not troubling himself about the illuminations or the confusions of a busy reflection; he rests in himself. An egoistically proud love, because of its pride, regards a deception as impossible; it does not trouble to listen to the arguments for or against, defending or excusing the person in question; it is absolutely secure because it is too proud to believe that anyone would dare to deceive it. Sympathetic love has the faith which can remove mountains; and the strongest defense is as nothing to it compared with the immovable certainty it possesses that there was no deception; every accusation is impotent in the face of the advocate, who explains that there was no deception, and explains it not in this way or that, but absolutely. But such a love is rarely or perhaps never seen in life. Ordinarily, both elements are present in love, and this brings it into relation with the paradox. In the two extreme forms described, the paradox exists in a sense, but love refuses to recognize it; in the last case it exists essentially. The paradox is unthinkable, and yet love persistently attempts to think it, and determined by the momentary dominance of one factor or another, it constantly seeks to think the paradox, often in contradictory fashion, in the ever unsuccessful effort to understand it. This process of reflection pursues an endless path, and can come to an end only if the individual arbitrarily breaks it off by bringing something else into play, a resolution of the will, but in so doing the individual brings himself under ethical categories, and loses his

aesthetic interest. What he cannot win by reflection, he attains by a resolution of the will: finality and rest.

This holds true of all unhappy love which has its ground in a deception. What further helps to evoke reflective grief in Marie Beaumarchais is the fact that it is only an engagement which has been broken. An engagement is a possibility, not an actuality, but precisely because it was only a possibility, it might seem that the effect of breaking it could not be so great, that the shock would be far easier for the individual to bear. This might sometimes be the case; but, on the other hand, the fact that it is only a possibility that has been destroyed tends to provoke a more intensive reflection. When an actuality is destroyed, its destruction generally involves a far more radical breach with the past; every nerve is cut, and the finality of the breach is far more complete. When a possibility is destroyed, the suffering for the moment may perhaps not be so great, but it often leaves a small ligament or two whole and uninjured, which remains a constant source of continued suffering. The annihilated possibility seems transfigured into a higher possibility, whereas the temptation to conjure up such a new possibility is not so great when it is the actual which has been destroyed, because the actual is higher than the possible.

So then, Clavigo has forsaken her, he has faithlessly ended their engagement. Accustomed to depend on him, when he rejects her she has not sufficient strength to stand; she sinks helpless into the arms of the environment. Thus it seems to have been with Marie. It is possible also to imagine another beginning. It is possible to conceive of her as having sufficient strength immediately to transform her sorrow into reflective grief, so that, either in order to escape the humiliation of hearing others talk about her having been deceived, or because she still cares so much for him that it gives her pain to hear others repeatedly abuse him as a deceiver, she breaks off at once every connection with her environment, in order to feed upon

her grief and to consume herself in sorrow. We follow Goethe. Her environment is not unsympathetic, it feels her pain with her, and sympathetically says: it will be the death of her. Aesthetically this is quite correct. An unhappy love affair may be such that suicide is aesthetically indicated, but not when the cause of it is a deception. In that case suicide loses its elevated character, and implies a concession which pride must refuse to yield. But when, on the other hand, she dies as a result of it, this is identical with his having murdered her. This expression completely-harmonizes with the intensity of her inner passion, and she finds relief therein. But life does not exactly follow aesthetic categories, nor always obey aesthetic norms, and she does not die. This becomes a source of embarrassment to the environment. It feels it will not do constantly to repeat the assertion that she will die, when she continues to live; moreover, it cannot infuse the same pathetic energy into the assertion as in the beginning, and yet it is only this condition which might be of any comfort to her. Hence the environment changes the method. He was a scoundrel, it says, a deceiver, a detestable creature, for whose sake it is not worth while to die; forget him, think no more about the matter, it was only an engagement; blot out the affair from your memory, and you will again be young and full of hope. This inflames her, for this angry pathos harmonizes with other moods within her; her pride finds satisfaction in the revengeful thought that she will transform the whole experience into a mere nothing. She tells herself that it was not because he was such an extraordinary man that she loved him, far from it; she saw his faults clearly enough, but she thought he was a good man, a faithful man, and this was why she loved him; it was only pity, and therefore it will be easy to forget him, since she has never really needed him. The environment and Marie are again in tune, and the duet goes capitally.

For the environment, it is not difficult to think of Clavigo as a deceiver; for it has never loved him, and so there is no paradox; and in so far as it perhaps may have admired him a little (something Goethe suggests in connection with Marie's sister), this interest now arms it against him, and this benevolence, which perhaps was a little more than benevolence, now becomes excellent fuel for feeding the flames of hate. Nor is it difficult for the environment to erase every memory of him, and hence it demands that Marie shall do the same. Her pride breaks forth in hate, the environment fans the flames, she finds a vent for her passion in strong words and powerful energetic resolutions, and intoxicates herself with these. The environment rejoices. It does not perceive, what she will hardly acknowledge to herself, that the next moment she is weak and faint; it does not notice the anxious misgiving that seizes her, as to whether the strength she has in certain moments is an illusion. This she carefully conceals, and will admit to no one. The environment continues the theorizing exercises with vigor, but begins to wish signs of practical results. These do not appear. The environment continues to inflame her; her words reveal an inward strength, and yet the suspicion grows that all is not well. It becomes impatient, and ventures upon extreme measures, it drives the spur of ridicule into her side to incite her. It is too late. Misunderstanding has slipped in. There is nothing humiliating to the community in his having been a deceiver, but it is otherwise with Marie. The revenge offered her, the privilege of despising him, does not mean much; only if he loved her would it have real significance, but he does not love her, and her scorn becomes a draft which no one honors. On the other hand, there is no pain for the environment in Clavigo's being a deceiver, but only for Marie, and yet he is not without a defender in her own heart. She feels that she has gone too far, that she has laid claim to a strength she does not possess, although she will not admit it. And what comfort is there for her in despising him? It is better

to grieve. Moreover, she is perhaps in possession of a secret note or two, of great importance in explaining the text, and capable of placing him in a more or less favorable light according to circumstances. She has not shared and will not share this knowledge with anyone, for, if he is not a deceiver, it is conceivable that he might regret the step he has taken and return to her; or — and this would be still more glorious — perhaps he has no need of regretting it, perhaps he will be able to justify himself absolutely and explain everything, and then, if she had made use of it, the fact might become a stumbling-block, preventing the establishment of their old relationship; and that would be her fault, for it was she who had made others privy to his love's secret growth. And if she could really be persuaded that he was a deceiver, then it would make no difference anyway, and at all events, it would be more handsome of her not to make use of it.

In this manner the environment now assists her, against its will, in developing a new passion — jealousy in behalf of her own grief. Her decision is made. The environment lacks on every side the energy to harmonize with her passion — she takes the veil. She does not enter a convent, but she puts on the veil of sorrow which conceals her from every alien glance. Her outward appearance is calm, the past is forgotten; her conversation lets no one suspect; she has taken the vow of sorrow, and now begins her solitary secret life. Everything is at once changed; before, it seemed as if she could unburden herself to others, but now she is not only bound by the vow of silence her pride wrung from her with the consent of her love, or which her love required of her, and her pride assented to; but she simply does not know how or where to begin, not because new elements have entered, but because reflection has conquered. If someone should ask her now why she grieves, she would have nothing to say, or she would answer in the manner of that ancient sage who was asked what religion was, and requested time for consideration, and again more time, and so the

answer was always postponed. Now she is lost to the world, lost to her environment, immured alive. With sadness she closes the last aperture; even at this moment she feels that it would perhaps be possible to reveal herself; another moment and she will be forever isolated. However, it is decided, irrevocably decided, and she does not need to fear, like others immured alive, that when the meager portion of bread and water which is consumed by her is used up she will perish, for she has nourishment for a long time; nor need she fear boredom, for she indeed has occupation. Her outward appearance is calm and quiet, not arresting the attention, and yet her inner self is not the incorruptible essence of a quiet spirit but the unfruitful activity of a restless spirit. She seeks solitude or its opposite. In solitude she rests from the effort it always costs to force the outer appearance into some definite form. As one who has been standing or sitting for a long time in a cramped position stretches himself with pleasure, as a branch which has long been bent by force joyfully returns to its natural position when the bond is broken, so she finds refreshment in solitude. Or she seeks the opposite — noise, distraction — so that while all the others fix their attention on other things, she may safely occupy herself with her grief. The things going on nearest to her — the sound of music, the noisy conversation — sound so far away that it is as if she sat in a little room by herself, far from the entire world. And if perchance she cannot keep back the tears, she is certain to be misunderstood — perhaps she is just having a good cry [to get it out of her system]; for when one lives in an *ecclesia pressa,* it is rightly a satisfaction that one's worship coincides in mode of expression with the public form. She fears only the more quiet intercourse, for here she is less on guard, here it is so easy to make a mistake, so difficult to prevent its being noticed.

Thus there is outwardly nothing to attract the attention, but inwardly there is a ceaseless activity. Here she institutes an inquiry, one which may

with perfect right and particular emphasis be called a painful inquiry; everything is brought forward and accurately tested: his figure, his mien, his voice, his words. It sometimes happens that a judge in such a painful inquiry, fascinated by the beauty of the accused, has broken off the inquiry, and not been able to continue it. The court expectantly awaits the result of his inquiry, but it is not forthcoming. And yet it is by no means because the magistrate neglects his duty; the turnkey can testify that he comes every night, that the accused is brought before him, that the examination lasts several hours, that in his time there has never been a magistrate who could thus persevere. From all this the court concludes that it must be a very complicated case. And so it goes with Marie, not once only, but again and again. She reviews everything precisely as it happened; precisely, for justice requires it, and — love. The accused is summoned. "There he comes, he turns the corner, he opens the wicket, see how he hastens, he has longed to see me, impatiently he throws everything aside so as to reach me as soon as possible, I hear his swift footsteps, swifter than my own heart beats, he comes, there he is" — and the inquiry — it is postponed.

"Great God, this little word! I have so often repeated it to myself, I have remembered it in the midst of so many other things, but I have never before perceived what it really conceals within it. Aye, it explains everything; he is not serious about leaving me, he turns back to me. What is the whole world against this one little word! People weary of me, I had no friend, but now I have a friend, a confidant, a little word which explains everything — he turns back, but not with downcast eye; he looks at me half reproachfully, and says: O you of little faith! and this little word trembles like an olive leaf upon his lips — he is there" — and the inquiry is postponed.

Under such circumstances, it is natural enough that there should be great difficulty in rendering a verdict. Of course a young woman is not a jurist, but it does not follow that she cannot pass judgment, and yet this young

woman's verdict will always be of such a nature that while at first glance it appears to be a verdict, it also contains something more which shows that it is not a real verdict, and which also shows that an opposite verdict may be rendered in the very next moment. "He was no deceiver; for if he had been, he must have been conscious of being one from the beginning. But this is not so; my heart tells me that he has loved me." If one insists upon this conception of a deceiver, then it follows in all likelihood that a deceiver has never existed. To acquit him on such grounds shows a partiality for the accused which is inconsistent with strict justice, and cannot hold against a single objection. "He was a deceiver, a detestable creature, who cold and heartless has made me infinitely unhappy. Before I knew him I was content. Aye, it is true, I had no conception that I could become so happy, or that there was such a wealth of joy as he revealed to me; but neither had I any conception that I could become so unhappy as he has made me. Therefore I will hate him, despise him, curse him. Yea, I curse you, Clavigo, in my soul's innermost depths I curse you. But no one must know it; I cannot permit anyone else to curse you, for no one has the right to do so except myself. I have loved you as no other has, but I also hate you, for no one knows your craft as I do. Ye good gods, to whom vengeance belongs, lend it to me a little while; I shall not misuse it, I shall not be cruel. I shall creep into his soul when he is about to love another, not to slay his love, for that would be no punishment, for I know that he loves her as little as he loves me, for he does not love human beings at all; he loves only ideas, thoughts, his mighty influence at court, his intellectual power, things which I cannot understand how he can love. I shall deprive him of these, and then he will learn to know my pain. And when he is near to the brink of despair, I shall give them all back to him again, and he will have me to thank for it — and this shall be my revenge."

“No, he was no deceiver. He did not love me any longer, and so he left me, but this was no deceit. Had he remained without loving me, then he would have been a deceiver, then should I have lived like a pensioner on the love he had once borne me, lived on his compassion, lived on the mite he, though rich, might perhaps have cast me, lived a burden to him and a torment to myself. Wretched, cowardly heart, despise yourself, learn to be great, learn it from him; he has loved me more than I have known how to love myself. And should I be angry with him? No, I shall continue to love him, because his love was stronger, his thought more proud than my weakness and cowardice. And perhaps he even loves me still — aye, it was out of love for me that he left me.”

“Ah, now I see the truth, now I doubt no longer; he was a deceiver. I saw him; his air was proud and triumphant, his mocking glance swept superciliously over me. At his side was a Spanish lady, ravishingly beautiful; oh, why was she so beautiful — I could murder her — why am I not as beautiful? And was I not? — I did not know it, but he taught me; and why am I no longer beautiful? Whose fault is it? A curse upon you, Clavigo! Had you remained with me I should have become even more beautiful, for my love was nourished by your words and your assurances, and my beauty grew with my love. Now I am faded, now I thrive no more. What virtue is there in the tenderness of a whole world in comparison with a single word of yours? Oh, that I were again beautiful, that I might again be pleasing to him! For this reason alone would I be beautiful. Oh, that he might no longer love youth and beauty, for then I would grieve more than before, and who can grieve as I can?”

“Aye, he was a deceiver. How otherwise could he have ceased to love me? Have I ceased to love him? Or is there one law for a man’s love and another for a woman’s? Or should a man be weaker than the weak? Or was it perhaps a mistake, an illusion, that he loved me, an illusion that vanished

like a dream; is this proper for a man? Or was it instability? Is it then proper for a man to be unstable? And why in the beginning did he assure me that he loved me so much? If love cannot endure, what then can endure? Aye, Clavigo, you have deprived me of everything; you have taken from me my faith, my faith in love, not only my faith in your love!"

"He was no deceiver. What it was that tore him away from me I do not know; I do not understand this mysterious power. But it has given him pain, deep pain; he did not wish me to share this pain, and therefore he pretended to be a deceiver. True, if he had loved another, then would I call him a deceiver, then nothing in the world could make me believe anything else, but he has not done this. Perhaps he thinks to lessen my suffering by making himself appear like a deceiver, and so arm me against him. This is why he shows himself now and then with young girls, this is why he looked so derisively at me the other day, in order to make me angry, and thus set me free. No, he certainly was no deceiver. How could anyone be a deceiver who had a voice like his? It was so calm and yet so full of feeling; as if it burst forth through solid rock, so it sounded forth from a depth I could not even fathom. Can such a voice deceive? What then is the voice — a mere movement of the tongue, a noise produced at pleasure? Somewhere in the soul it must have a home, a birthplace it must have. And it had that; in his heart's innermost chamber it had its home, there he loved me, there he still loves me. True, he also had another voice, it was cold, icy, it had power to kill every joy in my soul, to smother every happy thought, it could even make my kisses seem cold and distasteful to myself. Which was the true voice? He could deceive in all ways, but I feel sure that this quivering voice wherein his passion trembled, that it was no deception, that would be impossible. The other was a deception. Or some evil power overmastered him. No, he was not a deceiver, this voice which has bound me to him

forever, it was no deception. A deceiver he was not, even if I never understood him."

The inquiry is never finished, nor the verdict; the inquiry not, because something constantly intrudes, the verdict not, because it is only a mood. Once begun the movement can continue indefinitely, and it is impossible to envisage any end. It can be made to cease only by a breach, by breaking off this entire course of thought. But this cannot happen; for the will is always in the service of the reflection, which gives energy to the momentary' passion.

When she tries at times to tear herself free, it comes to nothing, so this is again only a mood, a momentary passion, and reflection constantly remains victorious. Mediation is impossible. If she tries to make a new beginning, but so that this beginning is in one way or another the result of her previous reflection, she is at once carried away. The will must be wholly indifferent; it must begin in the strength of its own willing before there can be any talk of a beginning. If this happens, she may indeed find a beginning, but she removes herself from the field of our interest, since we turn her over willingly to the moralists, or whoever cares to attend her. We wish her a respectable marriage, and pledge ourselves to dance on her wedding-day, when fortunately the altered name will help us forget that it was the Marie Beaumarchais of whom we have spoken.

But we return to Marie Beaumarchais. The characteristic feature of her grief is, as we remarked above, the restlessness which prevents her from finding the object of her grief. Her suffering cannot attain quietude; she lacks the peace which every life must have in order to assimilate its nourishment and benefit by it. No illusion overshadows her with its quiet coolness while she assimilates the pain. She lost childhood's illusion when she gained that of love, and she lost love's illusion when Clavigo deceived her; if it were possible to win the illusion of sorrow, then she would be

helped. Then would her grief grow to man's maturity, and she would have compensation for her loss. But her sorrow does not thrive, for she has not lost Clavigo; he has deceived her. Her grief remains always a puny babe with its tiny wail, a child without father or mother; for if Clavigo had been torn away from her, it would have had a father in the memory of his faithful love, and a mother in Marie's ecstasy. But now she has nothing on which she can nourish it; for the experience was indeed beautiful, but it had no significance in itself, but only as a foretaste of the future. And she cannot hope that this child of pain will become transformed into a child of joy; she cannot hope for Clavigo's return, for she would not have strength to bear a future. She has lost the glad confidence with which she would willingly have followed him to the brink of the bottomless pit, and she has acquired instead a hundred hesitations, and would at most only be able to live over the past with him again. When Clavigo left her, there stretched a future before her, so beautiful, so enchanting, that it almost confused her thoughts. It had already begun dimly to exercise its power, her metamorphosis had already begun, when the development was checked, and her transformation ceased. She had begun vaguely to feel a new life, its energies were already moving within her; then it was crushed, she was thrust back, and there is no compensation for her, neither in this world nor in the world to come. The future smiled upon her, and its riches were reflected in the illusion of her love; and still everything was natural and straightforward. Now an impotent reflection perhaps sometimes paints her an impotent illusion, an illusion which does not even tempt her, but for a moment soothes her. And thus she will pass her time until at last she has consumed the object of her grief which was not identical with her grief, but the occasion through which she always sought an object for her grief.

If a man possessed a letter which he knew, or believed, contained information bearing upon what he must regard as his life's happiness, but

the writing was pale and fine, almost illegible — then would he read it with restless anxiety and with all possible passion, in one moment getting one meaning, in the next another, depending on his belief that, having made out one word with certainty, he could interpret the rest thereby; but he would never arrive at anything except the same uncertainty with which he began. He would stare more and more anxiously, but the more he stared, the less he would see. His eyes would sometimes fill with tears; but the oftener this happened the less he would see. In the course of time, the writing would become fainter and more illegible, until at last the paper itself would crumble away, and nothing would be left to him except the tears in his eyes.

II. DONNA ELVIRA

We find this young woman in the opera Don Juan, and it will not be without significance in our later inquiry to take notice of the hints concerning her earlier life, which the text of the opera contains. She had been a nun; it was from the peace of the cloister that Don Juan had torn her away. In this is suggested the tremendous intensity of her passion. It was no frivolous girl from a boarding school, who had learned to love at school and to flirt at balls; the seduction of such a girl has no great significance. By contrast, Elvira has been brought up in the discipline of the cloister, but this has not been able to eradicate passion, but has taught her to suppress it, and thereby to make it more violent as soon as it is allowed to break forth. She is certain prey for a Don Juan; he will know how to entice her passion forth, wild, ungovernable, insatiable, satisfied only in his love. In him she has everything, and the past is nothing; if she loses him, she loses everything, including the past. She had renounced the world. Then there appeared a figure she could not renounce, and it is Don Juan. From now on she relinquishes everything in order to live with him. The more significant the past she leaves behind her, the more closely must she cling to him; the more

closely she has twined herself about him, the more terrible becomes her despair when he leaves her. Her love is even from the beginning a kind of despair; nothing has any significance for her, either in heaven or on earth, except Don Juan.

In the opera Elvira is of interest to us only in so far as her relationship to Don Juan has significance for him. If I were to attempt briefly to indicate this significance, I should say: she is Don Juan's epic fate, the Commandant is his dramatic fate. There is in her a hatred which will seek Juan in every nook and corner, a flame which will light up the darkest hiding place, and should this still not discover him, there is in her a love which will find him. She shares with the rest in the pursuit of Don Juan; but I imagine that if all the forces of the pursuit were neutralized, if the efforts of the pursuers had destroyed one another so that Elvira was alone with Don Juan and he was in her power, then would her hate arm her to murder him; but her love would forbid it, not from pity, since for that he is too great a figure for her, and so she would continue to keep him alive; for if she killed him, she would also have killed herself. Hence, if the forces active in the opera were restricted to Don Juan and Elvira, it would never end; for Elvira would prevent the lightning itself, if that were possible, from striking him, in order that she might avenge herself, and yet she would again be unable to take her revenge. Such is the interest she has for us in the opera; but here we are concerned about her relationship to Don Juan only in so far as it has significance for her. Many are interested in her, but in very different ways. Don Juan was interested in her before the opera begins, the spectator grants her his dramatic interest, but we, the friends of sorrow, follow her not only to the nearest street-crossing, not only in the moment when she passes across the stage, no, we follow her on her solitary way.

Well then, Don Juan has seduced Elvira and abandoned her. It was quickly done, as quickly as a "tiger breaks a lily"; when Spain alone

reckons 1,003, it is easy to see that Don Juan is in a hurry, and in some measure to calculate the speed of his movements. Don Juan has abandoned her, but there is no environment into whose arms she can fall fainting; she need not fear that the environment will close too tightly about her, it will rather open wide its ranks to make her departure easier; she need not fear that anyone will deny her loss, rather perhaps will one or another take it upon himself to demonstrate it. She stands alone and abandoned, and there is no doubt to sustain her; it is clear that he was a deceiver who has deprived her of everything and exposed her to shame and dishonor. This is, however, aesthetically speaking, not the worst for her; it saves her for a time from the reflective grief which is certainly more painful than the immediate. The fact is indisputable, and reflection cannot give it now one meaning, now another. A Marie Beaumarchais may have loved a Clavigo as intensely, as violently, and as passionately, as regards her own passion; it may have been entirely an accident that the worst has not happened, she may almost wish that it had happened; for then the story would have an end and she would be far more strongly armed against him, but this did not happen. The fact in her case is far more ambiguous; its essential character always remains a secret between her and Clavigo. When she thinks of the cold craftiness, the miserable calculation he needed to deceive her so that in the eyes of the world it takes on a far more innocent aspect, so that she becomes a prey to the sympathy which says: “Well, good Lord, the case is not so terrible, it might have been worse” — it revolts her; she almost loses her mind when she thinks of the proud superiority over against which she has meant absolutely nothing, which set her a limit and said: thus far and no farther. And yet, the whole story can also be explained in another manner, in a more beautiful manner. But as the explanation becomes different, the fact also becomes different. Reflection, therefore, has immediately enough to keep it busy, and the reflective grief is unavoidable.

Don Juan has abandoned Elvira. In the same instant everything is clear to her, and no doubt lures her grief into the discussion room of reflection; she is dumb in her despair. With a single pulse-beat it streams through her, and its current is outward; in a blaze the passion illuminates her, and becomes visible externally. Hate, despair, revenge, love, all break forth, to reveal themselves visibly. In this moment she is picturesque. The imagination therefore also shows us at once a picture of her, and the external is by no means set in indifference; its reflection is not meaningless, and its activity not without significance, as it rejects and chooses.

Whether she is herself in this moment a subject for artistic representation is another question; but so much is certain, in this moment she is visible and can be seen, naturally not in the sense that this or that actual Elvira can be seen, which is most frequently identical with her not being seen, but the Elvira we imagine is essentially visible. Whether art is able to shade her expression to such a degree that the point in her despair becomes visible, I shall not attempt to decide, but she can be described, and the picture which thus appears, becomes not merely a burden for the memory, which neither adds to nor takes away, but has its validity. And who has not seen Elvira!

It was early morning when I undertook a journey by foot in one of the romantic valleys of Spain. Nature awoke, the trees of the forest shook their heads, and the leaves, as it were, rubbed the sleep out of their eyes, one tree bent to the other to see if it was yet awake, and the whole forest billowed in the fresh cool breeze; a light mist rose from the earth, the sun turned it back as if it had been a blanket under which it had rested during the night, and now it looked down like a loving mother upon the flowers and upon everything that had life, and said: Arise, dear children, the sun is already shining. As I swung around a defile, my eye fell on a cloister high up on the peak of the mountain, to which a footpath led up through many turnings. My thoughts dwelt upon the scene; so, I said to myself, it stands there like a

house of God fast founded upon a rock. My guide told me that it was a convent, known for its strict discipline. My pace slowed down, like my thought; what is there to hasten for, so near the cloister? I should probably have come altogether to a stop, if I had not been aroused by a quick movement near me. Involuntarily I turned about to look; it was a knight who hurried past. How handsome he was, how light his step, and yet so full of energy; how royal his carriage, and yet so evidently in flight; he turned his head to look back, his aspect so engaging and yet his glance so restless; it was Don Juan. Is he hurrying to some place of assignation, or coming from one? Still, he was soon lost to sight and forgotten by my thought; my eye was fixed upon the cloister. I sank again into a contemplation of the joys of life and the quiet peace of the cloister, when I saw high up on the mountain a feminine figure. In great haste she ran down the path, but the way was steep, and it constantly seemed as if she would tumble down the mountain. She came nearer. Her face was pale, only her eyes blazed terribly, her body was faint, her bosom rose and fell painfully, and yet she ran faster and faster, her dishevelled locks streamed loose in the wind, but not even the fresh morning breeze and her own rapid motion was able to redden her pale cheeks; her nun's veil was torn and floated out behind her, her thin white gown would have betrayed much to a profane glance, had not the passion in her countenance turned the attention of even the most depraved of men upon itself. She rushed past me; I dared not address her, her brow was too majestic, her glance too royal, her passion too high-born. Where does this woman belong? In the cloister? Have these passions their home there? — In the world? But this costume? — Why does she hurry so? Is it to conceal her shame and disgrace, or is it to overtake Don Juan? She hastens on to the forest, and it closes about her and hides her, and I see her no more, but hear only the sigh of the forest. Poor Elvira! Have the trees

found out something? — and yet, the trees are better than men, for the trees sigh and are silent — men whisper.

In this first moment Elvira can be represented; and even though art cannot really cope with this, because it would be difficult to find a single expression which also includes the whole range of her passions, the soul demands to see her. This I have attempted to suggest by the little picture sketched above; it was not my thought that this picture adequately describes her, but I wished to suggest that description is what belongs to her, that it was not an arbitrary notion of mine, but a valid claim of the idea. However, this is only one moment, and we must follow Elvira farther.

The movement which lies nearest at hand is a movement in time. Through a series of moments she maintains herself at the pitch, previously suggested, of being picturesque. Thereby she achieves a dramatic interest. Through the haste with which she rushed past me, she overtakes Don Juan. This is also quite in order, for he had indeed forsaken her, but he has drawn her into his own life movement, and she must reach him. If she does reach him, her entire attention is again directed outwardly, and we do not yet get a reflective grief. She has lost everything — heaven when she chose the world, the world when she lost Don Juan. She has, therefore, nowhere to seek refuge except with him; only by being in his presence can she keep despair at a distance, either by drowning out the inner voices with the clamor of hate and bitterness, which only sounds with emphasis when Don Juan is personally present, or by hoping. This latter signifies that the elements of a reflective grief are already present, but they have not yet had time to marshal themselves within her. "She must first be cruelly convinced," says Kruse's interpretation, but this requirement completely reveals the inner disposition. If she has not been convinced by what has happened that Don Juan was a deceiver, she never will be. But as long as she requires a further proof, so long can she succeed — by living a restless,

wandering life, constantly occupied in pursuing Don Juan — in escaping the inner unrest of a quiet despair. The paradox already exists in her soul, but as long as she can keep her soul in a state of agitation by means of external proofs which do not explain the past, but do throw light upon Don Juan's present condition, so long she escapes the reflective grief. Hate, bitterness, curses, prayers, adjurations alternate, but her soul has not yet turned back upon itself to rest in the reflection that she has been deceived. She looks for an explanation from without. When therefore Kruse makes Don Juan say:

> Have you a mind to hear,
> To believe my words — you who suspect me so;
> Then let me tell you now, strange and improbable
> Must seem the cause which forced, etc.,

one must be careful not to believe that this, which to the spectator's ear sounds like mockery, has the same effect on Elvira. For her this speech is a relief, for she demands the improbable, and she wants to believe it, just because it is improbable.

When we now permit Don Juan and Elvira to meet each other, we have a choice between permitting Don Juan to be the stronger or Elvira. If he is the stronger then her whole appearance will mean nothing. She demands a "proof in order to be cruelly convinced"; he has gallantry enough to furnish it. But she is, naturally enough, not convinced, and demands a new proof; for demanding a proof is an amelioration, and the uncertainty is refreshing. Thus she becomes only one more witness of Don Juan's exploits. But we might also imagine Elvira as the stronger. It rarely happens, but out of gallantry toward the fair sex we shall grant it. She stands, then, still in her full beauty, for though she has wept, the tears have not yet put out the fire in her eyes; and though she has sorrowed, the sorrow has not consumed the vitality of youth; and though she has grieved, her grief has not decimated

the vitality of her beauty; and though her cheek has become pale, it has but enhanced the spirituality of her expression; and though she no longer glides with the lightness of childish innocence, she steps forth with the energetic assurance of womanly passion. Thus she confronts Don Juan. She has loved him more than all the world, more than her soul's salvation; she has thrown away everything for him, even her honor, and he was untrue. Now she knows only one passion, hate, only one thought, revenge. Thus she is as great a figure as Don Juan; for the power to seduce all women is the masculine expression which corresponds to the feminine one of being seduced once with her whole soul, and then of hating, or, if you will, of loving her seducer with an energy no wife ever had. Thus she confronts him; she does not lack the courage to dare to meet him, she fights for no moral principles, she fights for her love, a love she does not base on respect; she does not fight to become his wife, she fights for her love, which is not satisfied with a repentant faithfulness, but which demands revenge; out of love for him she has thrown away her eternal happiness, and if it were again offered her, she would cast it away again for the sake of her revenge.

Such a figure cannot fail to make an impression upon Don Juan. He knows the pleasure of inhaling the fragrance of the finest and most fragrant blossoms of first youth, he knows that it lasts but an instant, and he knows what comes later; he has often enough seen these pale figures fade so quickly that it was almost visible to the eyes; but here is indeed a miracle; the laws governing the ordinary course of existence have been broken; it is a young woman he has seduced, but her life is not ruined, her beauty is not faded; she has been transformed, and is more beautiful than ever. He cannot deny that she fascinates him more than any young woman has ever fascinated him before, more than Elvira herself; for the innocent nun was, in spite of her beauty, a girl like many others, his love for her an adventure like many another one; but this woman is alone of her kind. This woman is

armed; she does not conceal a dagger in her bosom, but she carries an invisible weapon, for her hate is not to be satisfied with speeches and declamations, but it is unseen, and this weapon is her hate. Don Juan's passion awakens; she must once more be his; but not so. True, if it were a woman who knew his nefariousness, who hated him, although she had not been seduced by him, then would Don Juan be victorious; but this woman he cannot win, all his seductiveness is unavailing. If his voice were more ingratiating than his own voice, his approach more insidious than his own approach, he could not move her; if angels interceded for him, if the Mother of God were willing to be bridesmaid at the wedding, it would be in vain. As Dido, even in the underworld, turns away from Aeneas who was unfaithful to her, so would Elvira not indeed turn away from him, but confront him more coldly than Dido.

But this encounter of Elvira with Don Juan is only a transitional moment; she walks across the stage, the curtain falls, but we, dear Symparanekromenoi, steal away after her; for only now does she really become Elvira. As long as she is in the presence of Don Juan she is beside herself; when she comes to herself then it is time to think the paradox. To think a contradiction is, in spite of all the assurances of modern philosophy and the foolhardy courage of its young adherents, not an easy matter; it is always connected with great difficulties. A young woman may well be forgiven if she finds it difficult, and yet this is the task which is set her, to think that the man she loves is a deceiver. This is something she has in common with Marie Beaumarchais, and yet there is a difference between them, in the manner in which each one comes to the paradox. The fact Marie had to go on was in itself so controversial that reflection with all its exigency could not help seizing it immediately. But with respect to Elvira, the factual proof for Don Juan's deception seems so evident that it is not easy to see how reflection can get hold of it. It therefore attacks the matter

from another side. Elvira has lost everything, and yet there lies an entire life before her, and her soul requires a pittance to live on.

Here two possibilities present themselves, either to go on under ethical and religious categories, or to preserve her love for Juan. If she adopts the first, she places herself outside the range of our interest; with pleasure we permit her to retire to an institution for Magdalenes, or wherever she likes. This will probably be difficult for her, however, for to make it possible she must first despair; she has already once known the religious, and the second time it makes greater demands. The religious is in general a dangerous power to have anything to do with; it is jealous for itself, and will not be mocked. When she chose the cloister, it is quite possible that her proud soul found a rich satisfaction in it, for say what you will, no woman makes so brilliant a match as she who becomes the bride of heaven; but now, on the contrary, as a penitent she must go back in penitence and remorse. Moreover it is a question whether she can find a priest who can preach the gospel of repentance and remorse with the same power with which Don Juan had preached the glad gospel of pleasure. Therefore to save herself from that despair, she must hold fast to Don Juan's love, something which she finds so much easier since she still loves him. A third course of action is unthinkable, for that she should seek comfort in the love of another would be still more terrible than the most terrible. For her own sake, consequently, she must love Don Juan; it is self-defense which bids her do it, and this is the spur of reflection which drives her to fix her eyes upon this paradox: can she love him although he has deceived her. Whenever despair would take hold of her, she seeks refuge in the memory of Don Juan's love, and in order to make herself secure in this refuge, she is tempted to think that he is no deceiver, although she thinks this thought in many ways. For a woman's dialectic is remarkable, and only he who has had opportunity to observe,

only he can imitate it, whereas even the greatest dialectician who ever lived could speculate himself mad trying to produce it.

I have, however, been so fortunate as to know a couple of excellent examples with whom I have gone through a whole course in dialectics. Strangely enough, though one might expect to find them in the capital, for the noise and multitude of people hide much, this is not so, that is to say, when you wish to find a perfect specimen. In the provinces, in small towns, on country estates, you will find the most beautiful specimens. The one I have particularly in mind was a Swedish lady of noble birth. Her first lover cannot have desired her with greater intensity than I, her second lover, strove to follow her heart's thoughts. However, I owe it to truth to acknowledge that it was not my keenness and cunning which put me on the track, but an accidental circumstance which would take too long to relate here. She had lived in Stockholm, where she had come to know a French count, to whose faithless charm she became a victim. She still stands vividly before me. The first time I saw her she made no particular impression upon me. She was still beautiful, with a proud and aristocratic bearing; she spoke very little, and I should probably have left her as wise as I had come, if an accident had not initiated me into her secret. From that moment she became significant to me; she gave me such a vivid picture of Elvira, that I was never tired of looking at her. One evening I was present with her at a large social gathering; I had come before her, had already waited for some time, when I stepped to the window to see if she were not coming, and a moment later her carriage was at the door. She stepped out, and immediately her dress made a singular impression upon me. She had on a thin light silk coat, almost like the domino in which Elvira makes her appearance in the ballet. She entered with a stately dignity which was really imposing; she was attired in a black silk dress; she was in the highest degree tastefully gowned, and yet very simply; no ornament adorned her, her neck

was bare, and as her skin was whiter than snow, I have rarely seen so beautiful a contrast as that between her black silk and her white bosom. It is not rare to see an uncovered neck, but rarely do you see a young woman who really has a bosom. She curtsied to the whole company, and when, thereupon, the host stepped forward to greet her, she curtsied very low to him, but though her lips parted to form a smile, I heard not a word from her. To me her deportment was highly perfect; and I who was a party to her secret mentally applied to her the words which were spoken of the oracle: It neither speaks out nor conceals, it hints.

From her I have learned many things, and among others have found the observation confirmed that I have frequently made, that people who hide a sorrow, in the course of time acquire a special word or thought by which they are able to indicate everything to themselves and to the individual whom they have initiated therein. Such a word or thought is like a diminutive in comparison with the diffuseness of the grief; it is like a pet name one uses every day. Often it stands in an altogether accidental relation to that which it is supposed to signify, and almost always owes its origin to an accident. After I had won her confidence, after I had succeeded in overcoming her suspicion of me, because an accident had put her in my power, after she had told me everything, I often went through the whole scale of moods with her. If, on the other hand, she did not at times feel inclined to do so, and yet desired to indicate that her soul was occupied with her grief, she would take my hand, look at me and say: “I was more slender than a reed, he more glorious than the cedars of Lebanon.” Where she had found these words I do not know; but I am convinced that when Charon comes in his boat to convey her to the underworld, he will find in her mouth not the required obol, but these words upon her lips: “I was more slender than a reed, he more glorious than the cedars of Lebanon!”

Consequently, Elvira cannot discover Don Juan, and now she must find her own way out of her life's labyrinth, she must come to herself. She has changed her surroundings, and so is deprived of the assistance which might perhaps have contributed to directing her grief outward. Her new environment knows nothing of her earlier life, suspects nothing; for her appearance has nothing obtrusive or noteworthy, no marks of grief, no sign which advertises to the public the presence of grief. She can control every expression, for the loss of her honor can indeed teach her this, and even though she does not set a high estimate on the judgment of men, she can at any rate avoid their condolence. And so everything is in order, and she can reckon pretty safely on going through life without awakening any suspicion in the minds of the curious multitude, which is usually as stupid as it is curious. She is in lawful and undisputed possession of her grief, and only if she should be so unfortunate as to come in contact with a professional prowler will she have a more searching examination to fear.

What goes on within her? Does she grieve? Indeed she does! But how shall we designate this grief? I should call it a worry about sustenance; for a man's life consists not alone in meat and drink; the soul also requires nourishment. She is young, and yet her life's supply is exhausted, but it does not follow that she dies. In this respect she is every day anxious for the morrow. She cannot give up her love for him, and yet he deceived her; but if he deceived her then her love has lost its power to nourish her. Aye, had he not deceived her, had a higher power torn him away, then she would have been as well supplied as any woman could wish; for the memory of Don Juan was considerably more than many a living husband. But if she gives up her love, then is she reduced to beggary, then she must return to the cloister in shame and dishonor. Ah, if even this could buy back his love again! So she lives on. The present day, it seems to her, she can still endure, there is still something to live on; but the next day, that she fears for. As she

considers over and over again, she seizes every way out, and yet she finds none, and so she can never grieve connectedly and soundly, because she always seeks to discover how she ought to grieve.

"I will forget him, I will tear his image out of my heart, I will search through my soul like a consuming fire, and every thought that belongs to him shall be destroyed; only then can I be saved; it is self-defense, and if I do not tear out every thought of him, even the most remote, I am lost; only in this way can I defend myself. Myself — what is this myself? Wretchedness and misery. To my first love I was faithless, and now shall I try to make up for it by becoming faithless to my second love?"

"No, I will hate him; only so can my soul find satisfaction, only so can I find rest and occupation for my thoughts. I will weave a garland of curses from everything that reminds me of him, and for every kiss I say: Curses upon you! and for every time he has embraced me: Ten times accursed! and for every time he swore he loved me, I shall swear that I hate him. This shall be my work, my task, to which I dedicate myself; in the convent I learned to tell my rosary, and so I become a nun after all, praying early and late. Or should I be content that he has once loved me? Perhaps I ought to be a sensible woman who does not cast him away in proud contempt, now that I know he is a deceiver; perhaps I ought to be a good housewife, thrifty enough to make a little go as far as possible. No, I will hate him, for this is the only way in which I can tear myself away from him, and prove to myself that I do not need him. But do I not owe him something when I hate him? Do I not live on his bounty? for what else is it that feeds my hate, except my love for him?"

"He was not a deceiver, he had no conception of what a woman can suffer. If he had, he would never have forsaken me. He was a man, wholly self-contained. Is that then a comfort to me? Certainly, for my suffering and my torture prove to me how happy I have been, so happy that he can have

had no conception of it. Why then do I complain because a man is not like a woman, not as happy as she is when she is happy, not as unhappy as she is when she is infinitely unhappy, because her happiness had no bounds?”

“Did he deceive me? No! Had he promised me anything? No! My Juan was no suitor, he was no wretched poltroon; for such, a nun does not degrade herself. He did not ask for my hand; he stretched out his own, and I seized it; he looked at me, and I was his; he opened his arms, and I belonged to him. I clung to him as a vine clings. I twined myself about him; I reclined my head upon his breast and looked into this omnipotent face, by which he ruled the world, and which nevertheless rested on me as if I were the whole world for him; like a nursing infant, I drank fullness and wealth and blessing. Can I ask for more? Was I not his? Was he not mine? And if he was not, was not I, nonetheless, his? When the gods visited the earth and loved women, did they remain faithful to them? And yet no one thinks of saying that they deceived them! And why not, unless it is that a woman ought to be proud of having been loved by a god. And what are all the gods of Olympus in comparison with my Juan! Ought I not to be proud, should I degrade him, should I insult him in my thoughts, allow myself to place him in the strait-jacket of the miserable laws that hold for ordinary men? No, I will be proud that he loved me, that he was greater than the gods, and I will honor him by making myself nothing. I will love him because he belonged to me, love him because he left me, and I am still his constantly, and I will treasure what he squanders.”

“No, I cannot think of him; every time I remember him, every time my thought approaches the hiding place in my heart where his memory’ dwells, then it is as if I committed a new sin; I feel an anguish, an inexpressible anguish, an anguish like that I felt in the convent when I sat in my solitary cell and waited for him, and the thoughts terrified me: the severe contempt of the prioress, the convent’s terrible punishment, my crime against God.

And yet did not this anguish form part and parcel of my love for him? What would it have been without it? He was not indeed consecrated to me, we had not received the blessing of the Church, no bells had rung for us, no hymns were sung; and yet, what were all the music and solemnity of the Church, how might it have power over my mood in comparison with this anguish! — But then he came, and the discord of my anguish resolved itself into the harmony of the most blessed safety, and only sweet tremblings moved my soul. Shall I then fear this anguish, does it not remind me of him, is it not a promise of his coming? If I could remember him without the anguish, I would not be remembering him. He comes, he commands stillness, he governs the spirits that desire to tear me away from him. I am his, blessed in him."

If I were to imagine a human being in a wreck at sea, unconcerned for his life, remaining on board because there was something he wanted to save and yet could not save, because he could not decide what it was he should save, then would I have a picture of Elvira; she is in distress at sea, her destruction impends, but this does not worry her, she does not notice it, she is hesitating about what she should save.

III. MARGARET

We know this young woman from Goethe's *Faust.* She was a little girl from the middle class, not, like Elvira, destined for a convent; but yet brought up in the fear of the Lord, although her soul was too childlike to feel the earnestness of it, as Goethe so incomparably says:

> *Halb Kinderspiel,*
> *Halb Gott im Herzen.*

What we especially love in this girl is the charming simplicity and humility of her pure soul. The first time she sees Faust, she feels herself too

humble to be loved by him, and it is not out of curiosity to learn whether Faust loves her that she plucks the petals from the daisy, but from humility, because she feels herself too unworthy to make a choice, and therefore bows to the oracular dictum of a mysterious power. Aye, lovely Margaret! Goethe has told us how you plucked the petals and recited the words: he loves me, he loves me not; poor Margaret, you can now continue this occupation, only changing the words: he deceived me, he deceived me not; you can plant a little plot of ground with these flowers, and you will have handiwork for the rest of your life.

Someone has remarked that it is noteworthy that while the folk-tale about Don Juan tells of 1,003 victims in Spain alone, the story of Faust tells of only one woman seduced by him. It will be worth while not to forget this observation, since it will have significance in what follows, and will guide us in determining the characteristic of Margaret's reflective grief. At first sight it might seem that the only difference between Elvira and Margaret was that which exists between two individuals who have had the same experience. The difference is, however, far more essential, not based so much upon the different personalities of the two women, as upon the essential difference between a Don Juan and a Faust. From the very beginning there must be a difference between an Elvira and a Margaret, inasmuch as a woman by whom a Faust is affected must be essentially different from a woman who affects a Don Juan; even if I imagined that it was the same woman who attracted the attention of both, it would still be something different which attracted the one from that which attracted the other. The difference which thus might from the beginning be present only as a possibility would, by being brought into relation with a Faust or a Don Juan, develop into a complete actuality. Faust is indeed a reproduction of Don Juan; but precisely because he is a reproduction, it makes him, even at that stage of his life in which one might call him a Don Juan, essentially

different from the other; for to reproduce another stage does not mean merely to become this stage, but to become it with all the elements of the preceding stage within one's self. Even if he desires the same thing as a Don Juan, he still desires it in a different manner. But in order for him to desire it in a different manner, it must also be present in a different manner. There are elements in him which make his method different, just as there are also elements in Margaret which make another method necessary. His method depends upon his inclination, and his inclination is different from Don Juan's, even if there is an essential likeness between them.

It is usually thought to be very clever to say that Faust finally becomes a Don Juan, but this means very little, since the real question is in what sense he becomes one. Faust is a daemonic figure like a Don Juan, but higher. The sensuous first becomes significant for him only after he has lost an entire preceding world, but the consciousness of this loss is not erased, it is constantly present, and he seeks therefore in the sensuous not so much enjoyment as diversion of mind. His doubting soul finds nothing in which it can rest, and now he reaches after love, not because he believes in it, but because it has a present element in which there is rest for a moment, and a striving which distracts and diverts his attention from the nothingness of doubt. Hence his enjoyment does not have the cheerful serenity which distinguishes a Don Juan. His countenance is not wreathed in smiles, his brow is not unclouded, and happiness is not his companion; the young women do not dance into his embrace, but he frightens them to him. What he seeks is not merely the pleasure of the sensuous, but what he desires is the immediacy of the spirit. As the shades of the underworld, when they got hold of a living being, sucked his blood, and lived as long as this blood warmed and nourished them, so Faust seeks an immediate life by which he can be renewed and strengthened. And where can this be found better than in a young woman, and how can he absorb it more perfectly than in the

embrace of love? As the Middle Ages tell of sorcerers who understood how to prepare an elixir for the renewal of youth, and used the heart of an innocent child for that purpose, so is this the strengthening potion his starved soul needs, the only thing which is able to satisfy him for a moment. His sick soul needs what I might call a young heart's first green shoots; and with what else shall I compare an innocent feminine soul's first youth? If I were to call it a blossom, I should say too little, for it is more, it is a flowering: the soundness of hope and faith and trust shoots forth and blossoms in rich variety, and soft impulses move the delicate shoots, and dreams shade their fruitfulness. Thus it affects a Faust, it beckons to his restless soul like a peaceful isle in the quiet sea. That it is transient no one knows better than Faust; he does not believe in it any more than he believes in anything else; but that it exists, of that he convinces himself in the embrace of love. Only the fullness of innocence and childlikeness can for a moment refresh him.

In Goethe's *Faust,* Mephistopheles shows him Margaret in a mirror. His eye finds enjoyment in the vision, but it is not her beauty that he desires, although he accepts that also. What he desires is the pure, rich, untroubled, immediate happiness of a woman's soul, but he desires it not spiritually, but sensually. Hence, he desires in a certain sense like Don Juan, but yet quite otherwise. Here perhaps one or another *privatdocent,* who is convinced of having been a Faust, since otherwise he could not possibly have become a *privatdocent,* will remark that Faust requires intellectual culture and breeding in the woman who shall attract him. Perhaps a large number of *privatdocents* would consider this an excellent remark, and their respective wives and sweethearts nod assent. However, it is completely beside the point; for Faust would desire nothing less. A so-called cultured woman would belong within the same relativity as himself, and would have no significance for him, would be simply nothing. By her crumb of culture she

might perhaps tempt this old Magister of doubt to take her out on the stream, where she would soon despair. An innocent young girl, however, belongs within another relativity, and is therefore, in a certain sense, nothing over against Faust, and yet, in another sense, tremendously much, since she is immediacy. Only in this immediacy is she the goal of his desire, and therefore I said that he desires immediacy, not spiritually but sensually.

Goethe perfectly perceived all this, and hence we find Margaret an ordinary little maiden, a girl one is almost tempted to call insignificant. Since it is of importance with respect to Margaret's sorrow, we shall consider a little more in detail how Faust must have impressed her. The individual traits that Goethe has emphasized have naturally great value; and yet I believe that for the sake of completeness we must imagine a little modification. In her innocent simplicity Margaret soon notices that all is not as it should be with Faust in respect to his faith. In Goethe this is brought out in a little catechismal scene, which is undeniably an excellent invention by the poet. The question is, what consequences this examination may have on their relation to one another. Faust appears in the role of a doubter, and it seems that Goethe, since he has not suggested anything further in this respect, has wished to let Faust continue to be a doubter also, as over against Margaret. He has attempted to divert her attention from all such inquiries, and to fix it solely and alone on the reality of love. But partly I believe that this would be a difficult task for Faust, after the issue has once been raised, and partly I believe it is not psychologically correct. I would not dwell further on this point for Faust's sake, but for Margaret's sake; for if he has not revealed himself to her as a doubter, her sorrow has an additional moment. Faust is then a doubter, but he is no vain fool, who merely wishes to feel his own significance by doubting what others believe; his doubt has an objective ground in himself. So much must be said in fairness to Faust.

As soon, however, as he would try to involve others in his doubt, there can easily intermingle with it an impure passion. As soon as doubt is urged upon others, an envy may be at work which finds satisfaction in depriving them of that which they regard as sure. But in order that this passion of envy should be aroused in the doubter, there must be some opposition from the individual in question. Where there can either be no opposition, or where it would be impossible to think it, there the temptation ceases. This last is the case with a young girl. Over against her, a doubter finds himself embarrassed. To deprive her of her faith is no task for him; on the contrary he feels that it is only through her faith that she is the great person she is. He feels himself humbled, for there is in her a natural demand that he should protect her, in so far as she has become uncertain. Aye, a poor wretch of a doubter, a half-baked thief, might perhaps find satisfaction in depriving a young girl of her faith, feel a joy in frightening women and children, since he cannot terrify men. But this is not true of Faust, he is too great for that. We may well agree with Goethe, then, that Faust betrays his doubt the first time, but I scarcely think that it will happen a second time. This is of great importance with respect to our conception of Margaret. Faust readily perceives that Margaret's entire significance depends on her innocent simplicity; if this is taken away, then she is nothing in herself, nothing to him. This must therefore be preserved. He is a doubter; but as such he has all the moments of the positive within himself, for otherwise he is a poor doubter. He lacks the final conclusion; herewith all the moments become negative moments. She, on the contrary, has the conclusion; she has childlikeness and innocence. Nothing is therefore easier than for him to endow her. His experience has frequently taught him that what he presented as doubt has affected others as positive truth. Now he finds his happiness in enriching her with the whole wealth of a view of life, he brings forth all the treasures of an immediate faith; he delights in festively adorning her with

them, because they are suited to her, and she thereby becomes more beautiful in his eyes. Besides, he also derives from this the advantage that her soul comes to cling to him more and more closely. She does not really understand him; as a child she clings to him, for what is doubt to him is for her irrefragable truth. But while he thus builds up her faith, he at the same time undermines it, for he becomes at last an object of faith to her, a god and not a man.

But here I must seek to forestall a misunderstanding. It might seem that I make Faust a contemptible hypocrite. This is by no means the case. Margaret herself has brought the matter up; with half a glance he surveys the whole glory she thinks she possesses, and perceives that it cannot stand against his doubt; but he has no wish to annihilate it, and his conduct toward her is even dictated by a sort of benevolence. Her love gives her significance for him, and yet she remains almost a child; he descends to her level, and finds his happiness in seeing how she appropriates everything. For Margaret's future, however, this brings sorry consequences. Had Faust stood out before her as a doubter, then she might later perhaps have been able to save her faith; she would then in all humility have acknowledged that his high-flown and daring thoughts were not for her; she would have held fast to what she had. But now, however, she owes to him the content of her faith, and yet she perceives, since he has abandoned her, that he has not believed in it himself. As long as he was with her, she did not discover the doubt; now that he is gone, everything is changed for her, and she sees doubt everywhere, a doubt she cannot control, since she always thinks it with the circumstance that Faust himself had not been able to master it.

The source of Faust's fascination for Margaret, according to Goethe also, is not the seductiveness of a Don Juan, but his tremendous superiority. Hence she simply cannot understand, as she herself says so lovably, what it is that Faust sees in her to love. The first impression she receives of him is

altogether overwhelming; she becomes an absolute nothing over against him. She belongs to him, therefore, not in the same sense as Elvira belongs to Don Juan, for this still expresses an independent existence over against him, but Margaret vanishes altogether in him; she does not break with heaven to belong to him, for therein would lie a justification against him; unnoticeably, without the slightest reflection, he becomes her all. But just as from the beginning she is nothing, so, if I may ventrue to say so, she becomes less and less the more she is convinced of his almost divine superiority; she is nothing, and exists only in him. What Goethe has somewhere said about Hamlet, that in relation to his body his soul was an acorn planted in a flower-pot, which at last breaks the container, is also true of Margaret's love. Faust is too great for her, and her love must finally break her soul in pieces. And the moment for this soon comes, for Faust doubtless feels that she cannot remain in this immediacy; he does not carry her up in the higher regions of the spirit, for it is from these he flees; he desires her sensually — and abandons her.

Faust has accordingly abandoned Margaret. Her loss is so terrible that the environment itself forgets for a moment what it otherwise finds so hard to forget, that she has been dishonored; she sinks back in total impotence, in which she is not even able to think of her loss; even the power to form a conception of her misfortune has been taken from her. If this condition could continue, it would be impossible for reflective grief to gain a foothold. But the grounds of solace afforded by her surroundings will little by little bring her to herself, give her thought an impulse by which it again comes into motion; but as soon as it begins to move, it readily appears that she is not able to hold fast a single one of its considerations. She listens to it as if it were not to her that its words are addressed, and not a word of it halts or advances the disquiet in her train of thought. Her problem is the same as Elvira's, to think that Faust was a deceiver, but it is still more

difficult, because she is more deeply impressed by Faust than Elvira is by Don Juan. He was not only a deceiver, but he was a hypocrite; she has not given up anything for him, but she owes him everything, and this everything she still possesses to a certain degree, except that it now reveals itself as a deception. But is then what he said less true because he has not believed it himself? By no means, and yet it is so for her, for she believed it through him.

It might seem that it would be more difficult for reflection to be set in motion in Margaret; that which really tends to stop it is the feeling that she was absolutely nothing. And yet there lies in this a tremendous dialectical elasticity. If she were able to hold the thought fast that she was, in the strictest sense of the word, absolutely nothing, then reflection would be excluded, and then she would not have been deceived; for when you are nothing, then there is no relation, and where there is no relation, there can be no talk of a deception. So far she is at peace. However, this thought cannot be held fast, but instantly changes into its opposite. That she was nothing is merely an expression for the fact that all the finite differences of love are negatived, and is therefore the exact expression for the absolute validity of her love, wherein again lies her absolute justification. His conduct is then not merely a deception, but an absolute deception, because her love was absolute. And herein she will again be unable to find rest; for since he has been her all, she will not even be able to hold this thought fast except through him; but she cannot think it through him, because he was a deceiver.

As her environment becomes more and more alien to her, the inner movement begins. She has not merely loved Faust with all her soul, but he was her vital force, through him she came into being. This has the effect, while her soul is not less moved than Elvira's, of making the individual moods less violent. She is on the way to acquiring a fundamental emotional

tone, and the individual mood is like a bubble rising from the deep without strength to maintain itself, which is not so much replaced by a new bubble as it is dissolved in the general mood that she is nothing. This fundamental mood is again a state of mind that is felt, that does not receive expression in any particular outbreak; it is inexpressible, and the attempt that each particular mood makes to give life to it, to raise it up, is in vain. The total mood is therefore constantly present as an undertone in each particular mood, creating for it a resonance of impotence and faintness. The individual mood gives it expression, but it does not soothe, it does not ease, it is — to use an expression of my Swedish Elvira which is certainly very apt, though a man will scarcely feel its full import — like a false sigh which disappoints, and not like a genuine sigh, which is strengthening and beneficial. Nor is the individual mood full-toned and energetic, since her expression is too heavily encumbered.

“Can I forget him? Can the brook, then, however far it continues to flow, forget the spring, forget its source, cut itself off from the fountainhead? Then must it cease to flow! Can the arrow, however swift it flies, forget the bowstring? Then must its motion cease. Can the raindrop, however far it falls, forget the sky from which it fell? Then must it dissolve itself. Can I become another being, can I be born again of a mother who is not my mother? Can I forget him? Then I must cease to be!”

“Can I remember him? Can my memory call him forth, now that he is vanished, I who am myself only a memory of him? This pallid, dim image, is this the Faust I worshipped? I remember his words, but I do not possess the harp in his voice! I remember his speeches, but my breast is too weak to complete them. Meaningless they sound forth on deaf ears!”

“Faust, O Faust! turn back, satisfy the hungry soul, clothe the naked, refresh the faint, visit the solitary! Well do I know that my love had no meaning for you, neither did I demand it. My love laid itself humbly at your

feet, my sigh was a prayer, my kiss a thank-offering, my embrace an act of worship. Will you therefore forsake me? Did you not know it from the beginning? Or does it not constitute a ground for loving me that I need you, that my soul dies if you are not with me?"

"God in heaven, forgive me that I have loved a human being more than Thee, and still do so; I know that it is a new sin for me to speak so to Thee. Eternal Love, O may Thy mercy sustain me; do not reject me, give him back to me, incline his heart to me again, have pity upon me, Thou Pity, that I pray thus again!"

"Can I then curse him? What am I, that I should thus dare? Can the earthen vessel presume against the potter?

What was I? Nothing! the clay in his hand, a rib in his side from which he made me! What was I? A lowly plant, and he bent down to me; he caused me to grow; he was my all, my god, the source of my thought, my soul's nourishment!"

"Can I grieve? No, no! Grief settles like a night fog over my soul. O turn back, I will give you up, never demand to belong to you; only sit by my side, look at me, that I may gain strength to sigh; speak to me, speak to me about yourself as if you were a stranger, I will forget that it is you; speak, that the tears may burst forth. Am I then absolutely nothing, unable even to weep without him?"

"Where shall I find rest and peace? The thoughts arise in my soul, the one against the other, the one confounding the other. When you were with me, then they obeyed your least hint, then I played with them like a child, I wove garlands of them and placed them on my head. I let them flutter like my hair loose in the wind. Now they twine themselves terrifyingly about me, like serpents they twist themselves around me and crush my anguished soul."

“And I am a mother! A living creature demands nourishment from me. Can then the hungry satisfy the hungry, the faint slake the thirst of the thirsty? Shall I then become a murderer? O Faust, return, save the child in the womb, even though you do not care to save the mother!”

So she is moved, not by moods, but in her mood; but there is no relief for her in the expression of the individual mood, because it dissolves itself in the total mood which she cannot raise. Aye, if Faust had been taken from her, Margaret would not seek any relief; in her eyes her lot would have been an enviable one; but she is deceived. She lacks what might be called the situation of sorrow, for she cannot grieve alone. Aye, if like poor Florine in the fairy story, she could find access to some cave of echoes, from which she knew that every sigh, every complaint, was wafted to her lover, then she would not only, like Florine, spend three nights there, but she would remain day and night; but in Faust’s palace there is no echo-cave, and he has no ear in her heart.

Too long, perhaps, I have already engrossed your attention with these pictures, dear Symparanekromenoi, and that so much the more, since in spite of all that I have said, nothing visible has appeared before you. Yet this does not have its ground in the deceptiveness of my presentation, but in the matter itself, and in the craftiness of grief. When a favorable occasion arises, then the hidden reveals itself. This we have in our power, and we shall now in farewell let these three brides of sorrow come together, let them embrace one another in the unison of grief, let them form a group before us, a tabernacle, where the voice of sorrow is never silenced, where the sigh never ceases, because they watch more scrupulously and more faithfully than vestal virgins over the observance of the sacred rites. Should we interrupt them in this occupation, should we wish them a restoration of what they have lost, would that be a gain for them? Have they not already received a higher consecration? And this consecration will unite them, and

throw a beauty over their union, and bring them relief in the union; for only he who has been bitten by a serpent knows the suffering of one who has been bitten by a serpent.

THE UNHAPPIEST MAN

An enthusiastic address before the SYMPARANEKROMENOI

Peroration presented at the Friday meeting

Somewhere in England there is said to be a grave which is distinguished not by a splendid monument, nor by its melancholy surroundings, but by a brief inscription: The Unhappiest Man. Someone must have opened the grave, but had found no trace of a body. Which is the more astonishing, that no body was found, or that the grave was opened? It is indeed strange that anyone should have taken the trouble to see whether there was a body there or not. Sometimes when you read a name in an epitaph, you wonder what manner of life was his who bore it, and you wish you might step down into the grave to converse with him. But this inscription is so significant! A book may have a title which makes you wish to read the book, but a title can be so richly suggestive of thought, so personally appealing, as to leave you with no desire to read the book. This inscription is indeed so significant — harrowing or comforting according to one's mood — for everyone who has in quietness secretly cherished the thought that he was the unhappiest of men. But I can imagine a man, whose soul has never known such thoughts, to whom it would be a matter of curiosity to find out whether there actually was a body in this grave. And lo, the tomb was empty! Is he perhaps risen from the dead? Has he perhaps wished to mock the poet's word:

> ... In the grave there is peace,
> Its silent dweller from grief knows release.

Did he find no rest, not even in the grave; does he perhaps wander restlessly about in the world? Has he forsaken his dwelling-place, his home, leaving only his address behind! Or has he not yet been found, he the unhappiest man, who is not even pursued by the furies until he finds the door of the sanctuary and the seat of the humble suppliant, but who is kept alive by sorrow and by sorrow pursued to the grave!

If it is true that he has not yet been found, then, dear Symparanekromenoi, let us begin upon a pilgrimage, not as crusaders to seek the sacred tomb in the happy east, but to find this melancholy grave in the unhappy west. At that empty tomb we shall seek for him, the unhappiest man, certain to find him; for as the faithful long to see the sacred tomb, so do the unhappy feel themselves drawn toward that empty tomb in the west, each filled with the thought that it is destined for him.

Or is not such an inquiry worthy of our attention, we whose activities, in conformity with the sacred tradition of our society, are essays devoted to the aphoristical and the accidental, we who do not merely think and speak aphoristically but live aphoristically, we who live aphorismenoi and *ségrégatif* like aphorisms in life, without community of men, without sharing their griefs and their joys; we who are not consonantal sounds in the alarums of life, but solitary birds in the stillness of night, gathering together only occasionally, to be edified by considering the wretchedness of life, the length of the day, and the endless permanence of time; we, dear Symparanekromenoi, who have no faith in the game of happiness or the luck of fools, who believe in nothing save misfortune.

Behold how the unhappy crowd forward in countless multitudes! Many are they who believe themselves called, but few are the chosen. A distinction must be made between them — a word, and the crowd vanishes; excluded are they, the uninvited guests, who think death to be the greatest misfortune, who became unhappy because they fear death; for we, dear

Symparanekromenoi, we, like the Roman soldiers, fear not death; we know of greater misfortunes, and first and last and above all — life. If indeed there were some human being who could not die, if the story told of the Wandering Jew be true, then how could we hesitate to declare him the unhappiest of men? Then we could also explain why the tomb was empty, in order to signify, namely, that the unhappiest man was the one who could not die, could not slip down into a grave. The case would then be decided, the answer easy: for the unhappiest man was the one who could not die, the happy, he who could; happy he who died in his old age, happier, whoever died in his youth, happiest he who died at birth, happiest of all he who never was born. But it is not so; death is the common lot of all men, and in so far as the unhappiest man is not yet found, he will have to be sought within this universal limitation.

Behold the crowd vanishes, its number is diminished. I do not now say: grant me your attention, for I know I have it; nor do I say: lend me your ears, for I know they belong to me. Your eyes shine, you rise in your seats. It is a contest for a wager, which it is indeed worth participating in, a struggle even more terrible than one of life and death; for death we do not fear. But the reward, aye, it is more glorious than any other in the world, and more certain; for he who is assured that he is the unhappiest man need fear no good fortune; he will not taste the humiliation in his last hour of having to cry: Solon, Solon, Solon!

So we open a free competition, from which no one is excluded by virtue of rank or age. No one is excluded except the happy, and he who fears death — every worthy member of the community of the unhappy is welcome, there is a seat of honor for every really unhappy person, the grave for the unhappiest of all. My voice sounds forth through the world: "Hear you, all you who call yourselves unhappy, and do not fear death." My voice rings back into the past; for we would not be sophistical enough to exclude the

dead because they are dead, for they have once lived. “I beseech you, forgive that I disturb your rest for a moment; meet us here by this empty tomb.” Thrice I let the call ring forth over the world: “Hear this, you unhappy ones.” For it is not our intention to decide this matter among ourselves in a corner. The place is found where it must be decided before all the world.

But before we examine the claimants, let us make ourselves fit to sit here as worthy judges and competitors. Let us reinforce our thought, let us arm it to withstand the seductiveness of words; for what voice is so insinuating as that of the unhappiest, which so beguiling as that of the unhappiest when he speaks of his own unhappiness? Let us make ourselves fit to sit as judges and competitors so that we do not lose the sense of proportion, nor become disturbed by the individual claims; for the eloquence of grief is boundless and infinitely inventive. Let us divide the unhappy into groups, and admit only one spokesman for each group; for this we shall not deny, that it is not some particular individual who is the unhappiest, but it is a class; but, therefore, we shall not hesitate to assign the representative of this class the name: the unhappiest, nor hesitate to assign him the tomb.

In each of Hegel’s systematic writings there is a section which treats of the unhappy consciousness. One approaches the reading of such inquiries with an inner restlessness, with a trembling of the heart, with a fear lest one learn too much, or too little. The unhappy consciousness is a term which, when casually introduced, almost makes the blood run cold, and the nerves to quiver; and then to see it so expressly emphasized, like the mysterious sentence in a story of Clemens Brentano’s, tertia nux mors est — it is enough to make one tremble like a sinner. Ah, happy he who has nothing more to do with it than to write a paragraph on the subject, happier still, he who can write the next. The unhappy person is one who has his ideal, the content of his life, the fullness of his consciousness, the essence of his

being, in some manner outside of himself. He is always absent, never present to himself. But it is evident that it is possible to be absent from one's self either in the past or in the future. This, then, at once circumscribes the entire territory of the unhappy consciousness. For this rigid limitation We are grateful to Hegel; and now, since we are not merely philosophers beholding the kingdom from afar, we shall as native inhabitants give our attention in detail to the various types which are implied herein. The unhappy person is consequently absent. But one is absent when living either in the past or in the future. The form of expression must here be carefully noted; for it is clear, as philology also teaches us, that there is a tense which expresses presence in the past, and a tense which expresses presence in the future; but the same science also teaches us that there is a tense which is plus quam perfectum, in which there is no present, as well as a futurum exactum of an analogous character. Now there are some individuals who live in hope, and others who live in memory. These are indeed in a sense unhappy individuals, in so far, namely, as they live solely in hope or in memory, if ordinarily only he is happy who is present to himself. However, one cannot in a strict sense be called an unhappy individual, who is present in hope or in memory. That which must here be emphasized is that he is present to himself in one or the other of these forms of consciousness. We shall also see from this that a single blow, be it ever so heavy, cannot possibly make a man the unhappiest of all. For one blow can either deprive him of hope, thereby leaving him present in memory, or of memory, thus leaving him present in hope. We now go on to get a more detailed description of the unhappy individual.

First we shall consider the man of hope. When he as a hoping individual (and in so far, of course, unhappy) is not present to himself in his hope, then he becomes in the stricter sense unhappy. An individual who hopes for an eternal life is, indeed, in a certain sense unhappy, since he has renounced

the present, but not yet in the strict sense, because he is himself present in this hope, and does not come into conflict with the individual moments of the finite life. But if he does not become present to himself in this hope, but loses his hope and then hopes again and again loses, and so on, he is absent from himself, not only with respect to the present, but also with respect to the future; this gives us one type of the unhappy consciousness. In the case of the man of memory the case is parallel. If he can find himself present in the past, he is not in the strict sense unhappy; but if he cannot, but is constantly absent from himself in the past, then we have another type of unhappiness.

Memory is emphatically the real element of the unhappy, as is natural, because the past has the remarkable characteristic that it is past, the future, that it is yet to come, whence one may say that in a certain sense the future is nearer the present than is the past. In order that the man of hope may be able to find himself in the future, the future must have reality, or, rather, it must have reality for him; in order that the man of memory may find himself in the past, the past must have had reality for him. But when the man of hope would have a future which can have no reality for him, or the man of memory would remember a past which has had no reality, then we have the essentially unhappy individuals. It might seem as if the first supposition were impossible, or sheer lunacy; however, it is not so; for though the hoping individual does not hope for something which has no reality for him, he may nevertheless hope for something which he himself knows cannot be realized. For when an individual loses his hope, and then instead of taking refuge in memory, continues to hope, then we have such a type. When an individual who loses his memory, or who has nothing to remember, will not become a hoping individual, but continues to be a man of memory, then we have one type of unhappiness. If thus an individual buried himself in antiquity, or in the Middle Ages, or in any other period of

time so that this had an authentic reality for him, or if he lost himself in his own childhood or youth, so that these things had an authentic reality for him, then he would not in a strict sense be an unhappy individual. On the other hand, if I imagine a man who himself had had no childhood, this age having passed him by without attaining essential significance for him, but who now, perhaps by becoming a teacher of youth, discovered all the beauty that there is in childhood, and who would now remember his own childhood, constantly staring back at it, then I should have an excellent illustration of this type of unhappiness. Too late he would have discovered the significance of that which was past for him but which he still desired to remember in its significance. If I imagined a man who had lived without real appreciation of the pleasures or joy of life, and who now on his deathbed gets his eyes opened to these things, if I imagined that he did not die (which would be the most fortunate thing) but lived on, though without living his life over again — such a man would have to be considered in our quest for the unhappiest man.

The unhappiness of hope is never so painful as the unhappiness of memory. The man of hope always has a more tolerable disappointment to bear. It follows that the unhappiest man will have to be sought among the unhappy individuals of memory.

Let us proceed. Let us imagine a combination of the two stricter types of unhappiness already described. The unhappy man of hope could not find himself present in his hope, just as the unhappy man of memory could not find himself present in his memory. There can be but one combination of these two types, and this happens when it is memory which prevents the unhappy individual from finding himself in his hope, and hope which prevents him from finding himself in his memory. When this happens, it is, on the one hand, due to the fact that he constantly hopes something that should be remembered; his hope constantly disappoints him and, in

disappointing him, reveals to him that it is not because the realization of his hope is postponed, but because it is already past and gone, has already been experienced, or should have been experienced, and thus has passed over into memory. On the other hand, it is due to the fact that he always remembers that for which he ought to hope; for the future he has already anticipated in thought, in thought already experienced it, and this experience he now remembers, instead of hoping for it. Consequently, what he hopes for lies behind him, what he remembers lies before him. His life is not so much lived regressively as it suffers a two-fold reversal. He will soon notice his misfortune even if he is not able to understand the reason for it. To make sure, however, that he really shall have opportunity to feel it, misunderstanding puts in its appearance to mock him at each moment in a curious way.

In the ordinary course of things, he enjoys the reputation of being in full possession of his five senses, and yet he knows that if he were to explain to a single person just how it is with him, he would be declared mad. This is quite enough to drive a man mad, and yet he does not become so, and this is precisely his misfortune. His misfortune is that he has come into the world too soon, and therefore he always comes too late. He is constantly quite near his goal, and in the same moment he is far away from it; he finds that what now makes him unhappy because he has it, or because he is this way, is just what a few years ago would have made him happy if he had had it then, while then he was unhappy because he did not have it. His life is empty, like that of Ancaeus, of whom it is customary to say that nothing is known about him except that he gave rise to the proverb: “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip” — as if this was not more than enough. His life is restless and without content; he does not live in the present, he does not live in the future, for the future has already been experienced; he does not live in the past, for the past has not yet come. So like Latona, he is

driven about in the Hyperborean darkness, or to the bright isles of the equator, and cannot bring to birth though he seems constantly on the verge. Alone by himself he stands in the wide world. He has no contemporary time to support him; he has no past to long for, since his past has not yet come; he has no future to hope for, since his future is already past. Alone, he has the whole world over against him as the *alter* with which he finds himself in conflict; for the rest of the world is to him only one person, and this person, this inseparable, importunate friend, is Misunderstanding. He cannot become old, for he has never been young; he cannot become young, for he is already old. In one sense of the word he cannot die, for he has not really lived; in another sense he cannot live, for he is already dead. He cannot love, for love is in the present, and he has no present, no future, and no past; and yet he has a sympathetic nature, and he hates the world only because he loves it. He has no passion, not because he is destitute of it, but because simultaneously he has the opposite passion. He has no time for anything, not because his time is taken up with something else, but because he has no time at all. He is impotent, not because he has no energy, but because his own energy makes him impotent.

And now our hearts are indeed sufficiently steeled, our ears stopped, even if not closed. We have listened to the cool voice of deliberation; let us now hear the eloquence of passion — brief, pithy, as all passion is.

There stands a young woman. She complains that her lover has been faithless. This we cannot take into consideration. But she loved him, and him alone, in all the world. She loved him with all her heart, and with all her soul, and with all her mind-then let her remember and grieve.

Is this a real being, or is it an image, a living person who dies, or a corpse who lives? It is Niobe. She lost all at a single blow; she lost that to which she gave life, she lost that which gave her life. Look up to her, dear Symparanekromenoi, she stands a little higher than the world, on a burial

mound, like a monument. No hope allures her, no future moves her, no prospect tempts her, no hope excites her — hopeless she stands, petrified in memory; for a single moment she was unhappy, in that same moment she became happy, and nothing can take her happiness from her; the world changes, but she knows no change; and time flows on, but for her there is no future time.

See yonder, what a beautiful union! The one generation clasps hands with the next! Is it unto blessing, unto loyal fellowship, unto the joy of the dance? It is the outcast house of Oedipus, and the curse is transmitted from one generation to the next, until it crushes the last of the race — Antigone. Yet she is provided for; the sorrow of a family is enough for one human life. She has turned her back on hope, she has exchanged its instability for the faithfulness of memory. Be happy, dear Antigone! We wish you a long life, significant as a deep sigh. May no forgetfulness deprive you of aught, may the daily bitterness of grief be yours in fullest measure!

A powerful figure appears, but he is not alone, he has friends, how comes he here then? It is Job, the patriarch of grief — and his friends. He lost all, but not at a single blow; for the Lord took, and the Lord took, and the Lord took. Friends taught him to feel the bitterness of his loss; for the Lord gave, and the Lord gave, and the Lord also gave him a foolish wife into the bargain. He lost all; for what he retained lies outside the scope of our interest. Respect him, dear Symparanekromenoi, for his gray hairs and his unhappiness. He lost all; but he had possessed it.

His hair is gray, his head bent low, his countenance downcast, his soul troubled. It is the father of the prodigal son. Like Job he lost his most precious possession. Yet it was not the Lord who took it, but the enemy. He did not lose it, but he is losing it; it is not taken away from him, but it vanishes. He does not sit by the hearth in sackcloth and ashes; he has left his home, forsaken everything to seek the lost. He reaches after him, but his

arms do not clasp him; he cries out, but his cries do not overtake him. And yet he hopes even through tears; he sees him from afar, as through a mist; he overtakes him, if only in death. His hope makes him old, and nothing binds him to the world except the hope for which he lives. His feet are weary, his eyes dim, his body yearns for rest, his hope lives. His hair is white, his body decrepit, his feet stumble, his heart breaks, his hope lives. Raise him up, dear Symparanekromenoi, he was unhappy.

Who is this pale figure, unsubstantial as the shadow of the dead? His name has been forgotten, many centuries have passed since his day. He was a youth, he had enthusiasm. He sought martyrdom. In imagination he saw himself nailed to the cross, and the heavens open; but the reality was too heavy for him; enthusiasm vanished, he denied his Master and himself. He wished to lift a world, but he broke down under the strain; his soul was not crushed nor annihilated, but it was broken, and his spirit was enervated, his soul palsied. Congratulate him, dear Symparanekromenoi, for he was unhappy. And yet did he not become happy? He became what he wished, a martyr, even if his martyrdom was not, as he had wished, to be nailed to the cross, nor to be thrown to wild beasts, but to be burned alive, to be slowly consumed by a slow fire.

A young woman sits here of thoughtful mien. Her lover was faithless — but this we cannot take into consideration. Young woman, observe the serious countenances of this society; it has heard of more terrible misfortunes, its daring soul demands something greater still. — Yes, but I loved him and him only in all the world; I loved him with all my soul, and with all my heart, and with all my mind. — You merely repeat what we have already heard before, do not weary our impatient longing; you can remember, and grieve. — No, I cannot grieve, for he was perhaps not a deceiver, he was perhaps not faithless. — Why, then, can you not grieve? Come nearer, elect among women; forgive the strict censor who sought for

a moment to exclude you. You cannot sorrow. Then why not hope? — No, I cannot hope; for he was a riddle. — Well, my girl, I understand you. You stand high in the ranks of the unhappy; behold her, dear Symparanekromenoi, she stands almost at the pinnacle of unhappiness. But you must divide yourself, you must hope by day and grieve by night, or grieve by day and hope by night. Be proud; for happiness is no real ground for pride, but only unhappiness. You are not indeed the unhappiest of all; but it is your opinion, dear Symparanekromenoi, is it not, that we ought to offer her an honorable *accessit?* The tomb we cannot offer her, but the place adjoining shall be hers.

For there he stands, the ambassador from the kingdom of sighs, the chosen favorite of the realm of suffering, the apostle of grief, the silent friend of pain, the unhappy lover of memory, in his memories confounded by the light of hope, in his hope deceived by the shadows of memory. His head hangs heavy, his knees are weak; and yet he seeks no support save in himself. He is faint, and yet how powerful; his eyes seem not to have wept, but to have drunk many tears; and yet there is a fire in them strong enough to destroy a world, but not one splinter of the grief within his breast. He is bent, and yet his youth presages a long life; his lips smile at a world that misunderstands him. Stand up, dear Symparanekromenoi, bow before him, ye witnesses of grief, in this most solemn hour! I hail thee, great unknown, whose name I do not know; I hail thee with thy title of honor: The Unhappiest Man! Welcomed here to your home by the community of the unhappy, greeted here at the entrance to the low and humble dwelling, which is yet prouder than all the palaces of the world. Lo, the stone is rolled away, the grave's shade awaits you with its refreshing coolness. But perhaps your time has not yet come, perhaps the way is long before you; but we promise you to gather here often to envy you your good fortune. Accept then our wish, a good wish: May no one understand you, may all men envy

you; may no friend bind himself to you, may no woman love you; may no secret sympathy suspect your lonely pain, may no eye pierce your distant grief; may no ear trace your secret sigh! But perhaps your proud soul spurns such sympathetic wishes, and despises the alleviation, so may the maidens love you; may the pregnant in their anguish seek your aid; may the mothers set their hopes on you, and the dying look to you for comfort; may the youth attach themselves to you; may men depend upon you; may the aged lean upon you as on a staff — may the entire world believe that you are able to make them happy. So live well, then, unhappiest of men! But what do I say: the unhappiest, the happiest, I ought to say, for this is indeed a gift of the gods which no one can give himself. Language fails, and thought is confounded; for who is the happiest, except the unhappiest, and who the unhappiest, except the happiest, and what is life but madness, and faith but folly, and hope but the briefest respite, and love but vinegar in the wound.

He vanished, and we again stand before the empty tomb. Let us then wish him peace and rest and healing, and all possible happiness, and an early death, and an eternal forgetfulness, and no remembrance, lest even the memory of him should make another unhappy.

Arise, dear Symparanekromenoi. The night is spent, and the day begins its unwearied activities, never weary, it seems, of everlastingly repeating itself.

THE FIRST LOVE

A Comedy in One Act by Scribe, translated by J. L. Heiberg

THIS ARTICLE WAS definitely intended for publication in a periodical which Frederik Unsmann had intended to issue at certain definite intervals. Alas, what are all human intentions!

Anyone who has ever felt an inclination toward literary productivity has certainly noticed that it is a little accidental external circumstance which furnishes the *occasion* for the actual production. Only the authors who in one way or another have been inspired by a definitive purpose will perhaps deny this. This is their own loss, however, for they are thereby deprived of the extreme poles of true and sound productivity. One of these poles is what is traditionally called the invocation of the muse, the other is the occasion. The expression, invocation of the muse, may give rise to a misunderstanding. The call of the muse may partly signify that I call upon the muse, partly that the muse calls upon me. Any author who is naïve enough to believe that everything depends upon honest volition, upon diligence and industry, or who is shameless enough to offer for sale the productions of the spirit, will be sparing neither of zealous invocations nor of audacious importunities. However, not much is accomplished by this, for what Wessel once said regarding the god of taste is still valid: “He whom all call upon, seldom comes.” If, however, one understands by this expression that it is the muse who calls, I do not say upon us, but upon the ones concerned, then the saying acquires another significance. While the authors who call upon the muse go on board before she comes, the others, on the contrary, are embarrassed in another way, because — in order that their inward determination may become an outward one — they need one factor

more: this is what we call the occasion. When the muse summoned them, she beckoned them away from the world, and they now listen only to her voice, and the wealth of thought lies open before them, but so overpoweringly that although every word stands out clearly and vividly, it seems to them as if it were not their own property. When, then, consciousness has so come to itself that it possesses the entire content, then the moment has arrived which contains the possibility of real creation; and yet something is missing; missing is the occasion, which one might say is equally necessary, although in another sense, it is infinitely insignificant. Thus it has pleased the gods to join the greatest contradictions together. This is a mystery in which reality abounds, a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness. The occasion is always the accidental, and this is the tremendous paradox, that the accidental is just as absolutely necessary as the necessary. The occasion is not in the ideal sense the accidental, as when I logically think the accidental; but the occasion is, irrationally regarded, the accidental, and yet in this accidentally, the necessary.

Regarding what we ordinarily call the occasion, there rules a great confusion. In part we see too much in it, in part too little. Every productivity which lies in the category of triviality — and, worse luck, this productivity belongs especially to the order of the day — overlooks occasion and inspiration equally. Therefore, too, such a productivity believes, what we may admit, that it is equally suitable at all times. It entirely overlooks the significance of occasion, that is to say, it sees an occasion in everything; it is like a garrulous man who sees in the most contradictory things an occasion to talk about himself and his doings, just as readily when one has heard it all before as when one has not. But in this, the salient point is lost. On the other hand, there is a productivity which falls in love with the occasion. About the first kind, one may say that it sees an

occasion in everything, about the other that it sees everything in the occasion. In this class is included the great body of occasional authors, the writers of occasional pieces in the more profound sense, as well as those who in a stricter sense see everything in the occasion, and therefore use the same verse, the same formulas, and still hope that for the authors concerned, the occasion will be a sufficient occasion for a suitable honorarium.

The occasion which as such is the unessential and accidental can sometimes in our age try its hand at the revolutionary. The occasion quite often plays the master; it decides the matter, it makes the product and the producer into something or into nothing, whichever it will. The poet expects the occasion to inspire him, and sees with astonishment that it does not work out that way; or he produces something which in his heart of hearts he regards as insignificant, and then sees the occasion make it everything, sees himself honored and distinguished in every possible manner, and knows within himself that he has only the occasion to thank for all this. These become enamored of the occasion; those we described in the foregoing overlook it, and therefore always come entirely unbidden. They really divide themselves into two classes: those who still intimate that an occasion is necessary, and those who do not even notice this. Both classes naturally depend on an infinite overvaluation of their own talents. When a man constantly uses such phrases as, "on this occasion it occurs to me,"

"on this occasion I am reminded," and so on, then one can always be sure that such a man is at fault regarding himself. Even in the most significant things, he frequently sees only an occasion for getting his smidgeon of comment noticed. Those who do not even suspect the necessity for an occasion may be regarded as less vain, but more unbalanced. They spin assiduously, without looking to the right or to the left, the thin thread of their small talk, and with their talk and their writing they produce the same

effect in life as the mill in the fairy story, about which it is said that whatever happened, the mill went klip klap, klip klap.

And yet even the most complete, the most profound, the most significant production has an occasion. The occasion is the delicate, almost invisible, web in which the fruit hangs. In so far, therefore, as it sometimes seems as if the occasion were the essential element, this is in general a misunderstanding, for normally it is but a particular side of it. If someone will not grant that I am right in this, then it is because he has confused ground and cause with occasion. If such a one should now ask me, "What is the occasion for all these observations," and he was then satisfied if I answered, "That which follows," then he would make himself guilty, and allow me to become guilty of such a confusion. On the other hand, if in his question he used the word occasion in a very strict sense, it would be exactly right for me to answer, "It has no occasion." In relation to a single part of the whole, it would be absurd to demand that which one can rightfully demand of the whole. Should these observations, for instance, demand an occasion, then they must in themselves constitute a well rounded little whole, which would be an egotistic attempt on their part.

Occasion is thus of the greatest importance in regard to every production; indeed, it is this which essentially decides the question regarding its true aesthetic value. Productions without any occasion always lack something, not outside of themselves (for although the occasion belongs to it, yet in another sense it is foreign to it), but they lack something within themselves. A production where the occasion is everything, also lacks something. For the occasion is not positively productive, but negatively productive. A creation is a production from nothing; the occasion is, however, the nothing from which everything comes. The whole wealth of thought, an abundance of ideas can be there and yet lack the occasion. Hence it is not something new that comes with the occasion, but

with the occasion everything comes forward. This modest meaning of the occasion is also expressed in the word itself.

There are many men who are not able to understand this, but that is because they have no conception of what an aesthetic production really is. An attorney can write his brief, a merchant his letter, and so on, without suspecting the mystery which hides in the word *occasion,* and that in spite of the fact that he begins thus: “On the occasion of your great favor.”

Perhaps, now, one or another may concede my point and admit its significance for poetical productions, but would marvel greatly if I were to make a similar point with respect to reviewers and critics. And yet I believe that just here this is of the greatest importance, and that inattention to the significance of the occasion has been the reason that reviews in general are so bungling, pure hackwork. In the world of criticism, the occasion gets an even potentiated significance. Although one often enough hears talk in critical reviews about the occasion, one still sees with half an eye how little they know the answer as to how the matter stands. The critic does not seem to need to invoke the muse, for it is truly no poetical work he produces; but if he does not need to invoke the muse, neither does he need the occasion. Meanwhile, one should never forget the significance of the old saying: The like is only understood by the like.

The object of the aestheticist’s consideration is no doubt something already finished, and he should not, like the poet, himself produce. Notwithstanding this, the occasion has exactly the same significance. The aestheticist who adopts aesthetics as his profession, and in his profession sees the real occasion, is eo ipso lost. This is by no means to say that he cannot perform his work skillfully; but the secret of all production he has not understood. He is too much a Pelagian autocrat to be able, in childish wonder, to rejoice over the curious fact that it is as if alien powers had produced that which a human being believes is his own: the inspiration,

namely, and the occasion. Inspiration and occasion belong inseparably together; it is a union which one finds often enough in the world, that the great, the elevated, are constantly accompanied by a nimble little person. Such a person is the occasion, a person one otherwise wouldn't tip his hat to, who does not dare to open his mouth in fine society, but who sits silent, with a roguish smile, and enjoys himself by himself, without hinting to anyone why he smiles or that he knows how important, how indispensable he is; even less would he enter into a dispute concerning it; for he knows very well that it would do no good and that the others merely seize every occasion to humiliate him. The occasion is invariably of this ambiguous nature; and it avails a man just as much to wish to deny it, to wish to free himself from this thorn in the flesh, as to wish to set the occasion on the throne; for in purple with a scepter in its hand, it makes a poor showing, and one immediately sees that it was not born to rule. This wrong way, however, lies very near, and it is often the best minds that fall into error. When a man has enough of an eye for life to see how the Eternal Being makes sport of a man, so that something so insignificant and subordinate, something one almost blushes to mention in polite society, belongs absolutely to the whole scheme of things, then he is easily tempted to wish to dabble in the subject, indeed to return the sarcasm, so that he, as well as God, mocks the greatness of man by flinging him headlong into the law of the occasion, thus mocking him again by making the occasion everything and the other moment a foolishness, whereby God then becomes superfluous and the conception of a wise Providence a folly, and the occasion a rogue who ridicules everything, God as well as man, so that the whole of existence ends in a jest, a joke, a charade.

The occasion is at one and the same time the most significant and the most insignificant, the most exalted and the most humble, the most important and the most unimportant. Without the occasion, precisely

nothing at all happens, and yet the occasion has no part at all in what does happen. The occasion is the last category, the essential transitional category, from the sphere of the idea to actuality. Logic should consider this. It can be absorbed as much as it wishes in immanent thinking, it can rush down from nothing into the most concrete form; the occasion it never reaches, and, therefore, never reality. The whole of reality can be ready in the idea; without the occasion, it never becomes real. The occasion is a category of the finite, and it is impossible for immanent thinking to lay hold of it; for that it is too paradoxical. This can also be seen from the fact that that which comes out of the occasion is something quite different from the occasion itself, which is an absurdity for all immanent thought. But therefore, the occasion is the most amusing, the most interesting, the wittiest of all categories. Like a wren it is everywhere and nowhere. Like the fairies it goes around in life, invisible to all schoolmasters, whose gestures, therefore, become an inexhaustible source of laughter to one who believes in the occasion. The occasion is, then, in itself nothing, and only something in relation to that which it gives rise to, and in relation to this it is exactly nothing. For as soon as the occasion becomes something other than nothing, then it would stand in a relatively immanent relation to that which it produces, and would then be either ground or cause. Unless one holds on to this firmly, everything again becomes confused.

Thus, if I were to say that the occasion for this little review of a play by Scribe was the masterly performance which fell to its lot, then I should insult the scenic art; for it is indeed true that I might write a review without having seen the play produced, without having seen it expertly performed, aye, even if I had seen it badly performed. In the last case I should rather call the bad performance the occasion. On the other hand, since I have seen it perfectly performed, the stage presentation becomes much more to me than an occasion; it is a very important moment in my interpretation,

whether it has served to correct or to confirm and sanction my point of view. My piety will therefore forbid me to call the stage production the occasion, it will oblige me to see something more in it, to confess that without it I should perhaps not quite have understood the play. Therefore, in this case I am not like reviewers in general, who prudently or stupidly enough first mention the play, and later the performance separately. To me the performance itself is the play, and I cannot adequately rejoice over it in a purely aesthetic sense, nor sufficiently rejoice as a patriot. If I wished to show a stranger our theater in its full glory, I would say: Go and see The First Love. The Danish stage possesses in Madame Heiberg, Frydendahl, Stage, and Phister, a four-leaf clover which here appears in all its beauty. A four-leaf clover I call this union of artists, and yet I would seem to have said too little, for a four-leaf clover is remarkable only in that four ordinary clover leaves are borne on one stem, but our four-leaf clover has this distinction that each single leaf by itself is just as rare as a four-leaf clover, and yet these four leaves again in their union form a four-leaf clover.

Still, it was on the occasion of the occasion for this little critique that I had wished to say something quite general about the occasion, or about the occasion in general. It happens, however, quite fortunately that I have already said what I wished to say; for the more I consider this matter, the more certain I am that there is simply nothing to be said about it in general, because there is no occasion in general. So I have come about as far as I was when I began. The reader must not be angry with me; it is not my fault, it is the occasion's. The reader may perhaps think that I ought to have considered the whole thing thoroughly before I started to write, and then not have begun to say something which afterward proved to be nothing. However, I still believe that he ought to do my mode of procedure justice, in so far as he has assured himself far more convincingly that the occasion in general is something which is nothing. Later he will perhaps begin again

to reflect on this, when he has ascertained that there is something else in the world about which one can say much, with the idea that it is something, and yet it is of such a nature that when it has been said, then it appears to be nothing. What then is said here must be regarded as unnecessary, like a superfluous title page which is not included when the work is bound. I do not therefore know any way to end it, other than in the incomparable laconic manner in which I see Professor Poul Moller ends the introduction to his excellent review of *The Extremists:* "With this the introduction is finished."

Concerning the special occasion for the present little critique, it has a certain relation to my own insignificant personality, and dares to recommend itself to the reader with the normal quality of being trivial. Scribe's play, *The First Love,* has in numerous ways affected my personal life, and this contact has occasioned the present review, which thus, in the strictest sense, is the child of the occasion. I, too, was once young, was enthusiastic, was in love. The girl who was the object of my longing, I knew from an earlier period, but the different circumstances of our lives made it possible for us to see one another but seldom. On the other hand we thought of each other all the oftener. This mutual preoccupation with each other at the same time drew us closer together, and set us farther apart. When we actually met, we were so shy and bashful that we were farther apart than when we did not see each other. Then when we were again separated, and the unpleasantness of this mutual diffidence was forgotten, our meeting assumed its full significance, we began again in our dreams exactly where we had left off. Such, at least, was the case with me, and I later learned that it was the same with my beloved. I had remote prospects of marriage; our understanding in other respects encountered no obstacles which might have inflamed us, and so we were in love in the most innocent manner in the world. Before there could be any thought of declaring my

feelings, a rich uncle, whose sole heir I was, must die. This too seemed the proper thing, for in all the romances and comedies I knew, the hero was in a like situation, and I was secretly glad of being a poetical figure.

So my beautiful, romantic life went on, and then one day I saw in a newspaper that a play was to be given, called *The First Love.* I had not known there was such a play, but the title pleased me, and I resolved to see it. *The First Love* — thought I — it exactly expresses your own feelings. Have I ever loved anyone else; does not my love go back to my earliest recollections; could I imagine loving another, or seeing her pledged to another? No, she becomes my bride, or I never marry. That is why the phrase, *the first,* is so beautiful. It suggests the primitive in love, for it is not in a numerical sense that one speaks of first love. The poet could just as well have said, the true love, or entitled it, "The First Love is the True Love." Now this play would help me to understand myself; through it I would get a deep insight into myself; for this reason poets are called priests, because they explain life, but they will not be understood by the crowd but only by the natures who have hearts to feel with. To those the poet is an inspired singer, who shows beauty everywhere, but first and last bears witness to the beauty of love. By its poetic power this play will cause the love in my breast to blossom forth, its flower to open with a snap like a passion-flower. Ah, at that time I was very young! I hardly understood what I said, and yet I found it well said. The flower of love must open with a snap, the feeling burst its locks with an energy like that of champagne. It was a bold expression, full of passion, and I was right pleased with it. And yet what I said was well said, for I meant that love must open like a passion-flower. This was the good feature of the remark, for love really opens with marriage, and in so far as one may call it a flower, one may appropriately call it a passionflower.

Still, back to my youth. The day was approaching when the play would be presented. I had bought my ticket, my soul was solemnly attuned, and with a certain unrest and joyously expectant I hastened to the theater. When I entered the door I glanced up at the first balcony. What did I see? My beloved, the mistress of my heart, my ideal, she was sitting there! Involuntarily I stepped back into the dimness of the parquet in order to observe her without being seen. How had she come here? She must have come to town this very day, and I did not know it, and now she is here in the theater. She would see the same play. It was no accident, but a guidance, a benevolence on the part of the blind god of love. I stepped forward, our eyes met, she noticed me. There was no question of bowing to her, of conversing with her; in short, there was nothing to embarrass me. My ardor breathed freely. We were meeting halfway, like transfigured beings each reached out a hand to the other, we floated like wraiths, like disembodied spirits, in a world of fantasy. Her eyes rested longingly upon me; her breast heaved with a sigh; it was for me, she belonged to me, I understood that. And yet I did not wish to rush up to her, nor to throw myself at her feet; that would have embarrassed me, but thus at a distance I felt the beauty of loving her and of daring to hope that I was loved. The overture was over. The chandelier was raised; my eye followed its movement, it cast for the last time its light over the first balcony and over her. Twilight settled over the house; this light seemed even more beautiful, even more infatuating. The curtain went up. Once again it was as if I gazed in a dream when my eyes sought her. I turned around. The play began. I would think only of her and of my love; everything that would be said in honor of first love, I would apply to her and to my relation to her. There was perhaps no one else in the whole theater who would thus understand the divine speech of the poet as well as I — and perhaps she. Thinking about the powerful impression already made me stronger, I felt courage for the next day to let my hidden

feelings burst forth, they must not fail of their effect upon her; by a single allusion I would remind her of what we had this evening heard and seen, and thus should the poet come to my assistance, and make her more approachable, make me stronger and more eloquent than ever. I saw and heard — and heard — and the curtain went down. The chandelier again deserted its heavenly hiding place, the shadows vanished; I looked up — all the young girls looked so delighted, my beloved also; tears stood in her eyes, so heartily had she laughed, her bosom heaved tumultuously, laughter had got the upper hand. Luckily I was in the same condition.

We met the following day at my aunt's. The shy embarrassment which we had experienced at being in the same room together had vanished, a certain jubilant gladness had taken its place. We laughed a little at one another, we had understood each other, and we owed it to the poet. For this reason a poet is called a prophet, because he predicts the future. We arrived at an explanation. We still could not decide to destroy all that had gone before. Then we bound ourselves by a sacred promise. As Emmeline and Charles promised one another to look at the moon, so we promised to see this play every time it was produced. I have faithfully kept my promise. I have seen it in Danish, in German, in French, at home and abroad, and never have tired of its inexhaustible humor, whose truth no one understands better than I. This became the first occasion for the present little critique. Through having seen it so often, I finally produced something about the play. However, this productivity still remained in part unwritten and only a few observations were recorded. This occasion may then be regarded as an occasion for the ideal possibility of this critique.

I should probably not have carried it any farther, if there had not arisen a new occasion. For some years past, an editor of one of our periodicals had solicited me and desired me to furnish him with a little article. He possessed an uncommon eloquence for ensnaring souls, and me too he lured into a

promise. This promise, then, was also an occasion, but it was an occasion in general, and therefore contributed little toward helping me. I found myself in an embarrassment like that in which a candidate in theology would find himself, if he were given the whole Bible from which to choose his own text. I was, however, bound by my promise. Accompanied by many other thoughts, but also by the thought of my promise, I started out on a little outing in Zealand. When I reached the station where I intended to spend the night, I had the servant bring all the books the landlord could muster up, a practice I never omit, and from which I have often reaped advantage, because one quite accidentally stumbles on something which otherwise might have escaped one's attention. This was not, however, the case here, for the first book the man brought me was — *The First Love.* It struck me, for one seldom finds a collection of plays in the country. Still, I had really lost faith in first love and no longer believe in the first. In the next town I called upon one of my friends. He was out when I arrived; I was invited to wait, and shown into his study. When I approached his table, I found a book lying open — it was Scribe's *Theater,* and it lay open at *Les premières amours.* Now the lot seemed cast. I resolved to redeem my promise and write a review of this play. To make my resolution unshakeable, it happened strangely enough that my former sweetheart, my first love, who lived there in the country, had come to town, not to the capital, but to the little town where I was. I had not seen her for a long time, and I found her now, engaged, happy, and glad, and it was a pleasure to me to see her. She assured me that she had never loved me, but that her betrothed was her first love, and therewith she told the same story as Emmeline, that only the first love is the true love. Had my resolution not been fixed before, it became so now. I just had to see what "first love" signifies. My theory began to totter, for "my first love" was inexorably insistent that her present love was her first.

There were motives enough; the essay was finished almost to the last point, and there remained only a few intermediate sentences to be introduced here and there. My friend, the editor, pressed me, and held my promise up before me with an obstinacy that would have done honor even to an Emmeline. I explained to him that the essay was ready, that there were lacking only a few trifles, and he expressed his satisfaction. As time went on, however, these gnats changed into elephants, into insurmountable difficulties. Add to this the fact that while I was writing, I had forgotten that it was to be printed. I have written many little essays in this fashion, but have never permitted any of them to be printed. He became tired of this talk about my having finished, when he could not get the manuscript. I became tired of his perpetual demands and wished that the devil might take all promises. Then his periodical folded up for lack of subscribers, and I thanked the gods; I felt easy again, unembarrassed by any promises.

This was the occasion for this criticism coming into the world, as a reality to myself, as a possibility for my friend, the editor, a possibility which later changed into an impossibility. So another year passed, during which I became exactly a year older. There is nothing remarkable about this, for it is with me as it ordinarily is with other people. But one year can sometimes have more significance than another, more significance than that a man becomes a year older. That was the case here. By the end of this year I found myself entering on a new period of my life, into a new world of illusion, something which happens only to a young man. When you belong to the “readers’ sect,” when in one way or another, you get a reputation for being a diligent and attentive reader, the supposition grows among other people that you probably will become an author of sorts, for, as Hamann says: “Out of children grow people, out of virgins grow brides, out of readers grow writers.”

Now there begins a rose-colored life, which has a great similarity to a girl’s early youth. Editors and publishers begin to pay court. It is a dangerous period, for editors’ talk is very seductive, and one is soon in their power, but they only deceive us poor children, and then, aye, then, it is too late. Watch your step, young men, go not too often to the coffee-houses and restaurants; for there the editors spin their web. And then when they see an innocent young man who freely speaks his mind about all sorts of things, with no idea as to whether what he says is worth while or not, but only for the pleasure of talking freely, of hearing his heart beating as he talks, throbbing at the ideas expressed, then a dark figure approaches him, and this figure is an editor. He has a discriminating ear, he can tell immediately whether what is said would look well in print or not.

Then he tempts the youngster, he shows him how inexcusable it is thus to cast his pearls away; he promises him money, power, influence, even with the fair sex. His courage weakens, the editor’s words are attractive, and soon he is caught. Now he haunts no more the solitary places to breathe out his sighs; no more does he hasten joyously to the happy hunting grounds of youth in order to intoxicate himself with talk; he is silent, for he who writes does not talk. He sits pale and cold in his study, his color changes not at the kiss of the idea, nor does he blush like the young rose when the dew falls in its chalice; he neither smiles nor weeps; calmly his eye follows the pen across the paper — for he is an author, and no longer young.

I, too, in my youth had been exposed to temptations of this kind. Still, I believe I dare testify that my courage had been undaunted. What helped me there was the fact that the experience had come when I was much younger. The editor who received my first promise was very friendly toward me, and yet it invariably seemed to me as if it were a favor, an honor conferred upon me, that anyone would accept an article from my hand, as if someone pointed me out among the young men and said: “With time we may be able

to make something of him. Let him try it, it encourages him to show him this honor." At that time the temptation was not so great, and yet I learned to know all the harrowing results of a promise. Being uncommonly well-armed against temptation from my early manhood, I therefore dared to frequent coffee-shops and restaurants rather often. The danger must come, then, from another direction, and it was not wanting. It happened that one of my coffee-shop acquaintances decided to become an editor. One will find his name upon the title page of this periodical. He had no sooner formulated this idea and made the necessary arrangements with the publisher, than he sat down at the writing-table one evening, and wrote the whole night through — letters to every possible man about contributions. Such a letter, composed in the most obliging terms and filled with the most glowing prospects, I, too, received. However, I raised stout opposition, but promised, on the other hand, to serve him in every way in editing the articles submitted. He himself worked assiduously on the first article which was to launch the publication. He was as good as finished with it, and now was kind enough to show it to me. We spent a very pleasant forenoon; he seemed satisfied with my suggestions and made several changes. Our mood was excellent, we ate fruit and confectionery, and drank champagne; I was pleased with his article, and my comments seemed to satisfy him, when my unlucky star willed that just as I bent over to take an apricot, I should upset the inkhorn over the entire manuscript. My friend was infuriated. "The whole thing is ruined; the first number of my periodical will not come out at the appointed time, my credit is destroyed, the subscribers will fall away; you do not know how much work it takes to get subscribers, and when one has got them, they are like all mercenary troops, faithless, seizing every opportunity to desert. Everything is lost, there is nothing else to do, you will have to supply an article. I know you have manuscripts ready, why will you not print them? You have your critique of *The First Love,* let me have it, I

will get it ready; I beg you, I adjure you by our friendship, by my honor, by the future of my periodical!"

He accepted the article, and my inkhorn became the occasion for my little critique's becoming a reality, which now is — I say it with horror — *publici juris.*

If one would indicate briefly the merit of modern comedies, particularly those of Scribe, in comparison with the older, one might perhaps express it thus: The personal substance and value of the poetic figure is commensurable with the dialogue, the outpourings of the monologue are rendered superfluous; the substance and value of the dramatic action is commensurate with the situation, novelistic explanations are made superfluous; the dialogue finally becomes audible in the transparency of the situation. Hence, no explanations are necessary to orient the spectator, no retardation of the drama is necessary to give suggestions and statements. That is the way it is in life, where we constantly need explanatory notes; but it ought not to be so in poetry. The spectator should be carefree, able to enjoy undisturbed the dramatic unfolding. But while the modern drama thus seems to require less self-activity on the part of the spectator, it demands more perhaps in another way, or to speak more correctly, it does not demand it, but it avenges the forgetting of it. The more imperfect the dramatic form or construction of a drama is, the more frequently the spectator is stirred up out of his sleep, provided he is sleeping. When one is shaken up on an indifferent country road whenever the wagon strikes against a stone, or the horses are caught in a thicket, there is not much opportunity to sleep. On the other hand, if the road is a leisurely one, then you easily have time and opportunity to look about you, but, also, you may more unconcernedly fall asleep. So it is with the modern drama. Everything moves along so quickly and easily, that the spectator, if he does not pay a little attention, misses much. It is indeed true that a five-act play of the older comedy and a five-

act play of the modern are equally long, but the question is always whether as much happens.

To carry this inquiry further could indeed have its own interest, but not for this review; more explicitly to point it out in Scribe's theater might well be important, but I believe that the more detailed report on the little masterpiece, which is the object of the present consideration, will be sufficient. I dwell the more willingly on the present play, since one cannot deny that in some of Scribe's other dramas we sometimes miss the complete perfection, and the situation becomes drowsy, and the dialogue monotonously garrulous. *The First Love,* on the contrary, is a play without a fault, so perfect that it alone should make Scribe immortal.

We shall first examine each of the persons in this play a little more closely, in order to see later how well the poet has known how to let their characters become revealed in speech and situation, and this despite the fact that the whole play is only a sketch.

Dervière, a wealthy iron-founder and widower, has an only daughter, "a little maiden of sixteen years." His every reasonable claim to be regarded as a worthy and honorable man, who is very rich, must no doubt be respected; on the other hand, all his attempts at being a man, at being a father, "who cannot take a joke," must be regarded as a failure. He is also frustrated by his daughter, without whose consent and approval he hardly dares regard himself as a rational being. "She has the run of the house and walks all over him," and he shows an uncommon aptitude for understanding a joke, since her humor incessantly plays blind man's buff with his paternal dignity.

His only daughter Emmeline is now sixteen years old, a nice, fascinating little girl, but a daughter of Dervière, and brought up by Aunt Judith. She has brought her up and educated her on romances, and her father's wealth has made it possible to preserve these refinements undisturbed by the reality of life. Everyone in the house obeys her caprice; and her instability, among

other things, one can see in the monologue of Lapierre, the servant, in the third scene. Through Judith's training she has lived in her father's house with no particular knowledge of the world, and has not lacked the opportunity to weave about herself a web of sentimentality. She was brought up with her cousin Charles; he was her playmate, her all, the necessary supplement to the aunt's romances. With him she had read the novels, with him she has associated everything since he parted from her at a very early age. Their ways were separated; they now live at a distance from each other, united only by "a sacred promise."

Being brought up on novels was something Charles had had in common with his cousin; otherwise the circumstances of his life were different. At a very early age he was sent out into the world; he had only 3,000 francs a year, and he soon saw that it was necessary, if possible, to make his education profitable in the world. His efforts in this direction seem not to have been very successful; reality soon reduced him and his theories in absurdum: the promising Charles has become a dissolute fellow, a bad lot, an unsuccessful genius. Such a figure in itself is so dramatically effective that it is inconceivable that one so seldom sees it used. A bungling playwright would, however, be easily tempted to interpret it entirely abstractly: a black sheep out and out. It is not so with Scribe, for he is no bungler but a virtuoso. In order that such a figure can arouse interest, we must constantly surmise how it happened; for he has, in a stricter sense than other men, a pre-existence. This, one must discern even in his failure, and thus see the possibility of his depravity. However, it is not so easily done as said, and we cannot sufficiently admire the virtuosity with which Scribe knows how to let it come out, not in an endless monologue, but in the situation. Charles is perhaps on the whole one of the most ingenious characters Scribe has given to the stage; every one of his speeches is worth its weight in gold, and yet the poet has given him no more than a rough

sketch. Charles is no abstraction, not a new Charles, but you apprehend immediately how it happened; you see in him the consequences of his life's premises.

The result of an education by novels and romances can be two-fold. Either the individual sinks deeper and deeper into illusion, or he emerges from it and loses faith in the illusion, but gains a belief in mystification. In illusion the individual is hidden from himself; in mystification, he is hidden from others, but both cases are results of a romantic training. In the case of a girl, she will probably sink into illusion; thus the poet has let it happen with Emmeline, and her life in this respect is fortunate. Otherwise with Charles. He has lost the illusion; but although in many ways he has felt the pinch of reality, he has not quite outgrown his romantic training. He believes he can mystify. When therefore Emmeline talks about sympathies, which goes far over her father's head, you hear immediately the fair reader of romances; but you find in Charles's speeches no less accurate reminders of his education. He has great faith in his extraordinary talents for mystifying, but this belief in mystification is just as romantic as Emmeline's ecstasies. "After eight years of wandering, he comes back incognito; he has common sense and is well-read, and he knows that there are five or six ways whereby one can move an uncle's heart; but the principal thing is that one must not be recognized, that is a necessary condition." There we have at once the romantic hero. That Charles should believe himself clever enough to fool such a ninny as his uncle is quite in order; but this is not what Charles means; he is speaking about uncles in general, about five or six methods in general, and about the condition in general for being unrecognized. His faith in mystification is then just as fantastic as Emmeline's illusion, and one recognizes Judith's schooling in both. We get a good idea of Charles's overstraining in this respect from the fact that, in spite of all these excellent theories, he is not able to hit upon the least thing,

but must take the advice of the anything but visionary Rinville. His belief in mystification, then, is just as unfruitful as Emmeline's in illusion, and therefore the poet has let them both come to the same result, namely, to the opposite of what they believe they are working for; for Emmeline's sympathy and Charles's mystification effect exactly the opposite of what they believe they will effect. I shall develop this later.

Although Charles, at the cost of his illusion, has gained belief in mystification, he still has left a little of the illusion, and it is in this remnant that one recognizes in the unfortunate Charles, Judith's pupil and Emmeline's playmate. He knows how to apprehend his own life, in spite of its wretchedness and insignificance, in a romantic transfiguration. He contemplates his youth, when he went out into the world as "a highly attractive cavalier, a young man of the best form, full of fire and life and grace, destined for much attention from the fair sex." Even the affair with Pamela had in his eyes a romantic aspect, although the spectator very rightly suspects that Charles had really been made a fool of. One will easily see why I made mystification predominant in Charles; for the illusion he holds is really an illusion about his gift for mystifying. Here again we see the romantic hero. There is an incomparable truth in Charles. In relation to people in general, such an unsuccessful subject possesses something of distinction; he is affected by the idea; his mind is not unacquainted with fantastic conceptions. Such a figure is therefore rightly comic, because his life succumbs to the commonplace, to wretchedness, and yet he believes that he is accomplishing the extraordinary. He believes that the episode with Pamela is an "affair," and yet one entertains a suspicion that it was rather she who had taken him by the nose. One is almost tempted to believe that he is more innocent than he himself thinks, that Pamela had had other reasons than her injured love for terrifying him "with tailor's shears"; indeed, that these reasons even lay outside his relation to her.

Finally, in the unfortunate subject one recognizes the original Charles, because of a low-comic touch, a softness which believes in great emotions and is moved by them. When he hears that his uncle has paid the note, he exclaims: “Aye, the bonds of blood and nature are sacred.” [If the reader is very conversant with the play, he will have had the opportunity to rejoice over the poetic chance which wills that Rinville, in the first scene where he is supposed to be Charles, reproduces him with such poetic verisimilitude, that his conversation becomes a sort of ventriloquism, with an infinitely comic effect, because it is as if one saw and heard the sentimentally vapid Charles touchingly proclaiming these words: “Is then the call of blood only imagination? Does it not speak to your heart? Does it not say to you, my dear Uncle...” (6th scene)

] He is really moved, his romantic heart is touched, his feelings are given expression, he becomes enthusiastic: “Aye, I thought as much! Either one has an uncle, or one has not.” There is no trace of irony in him, it is the freshest sentimentality; but therefore the comic effect in the play is infinite. When his cousin begs her father for forgiveness for the supposed Charles, he breaks out emotionally, with tears in his eyes, “O, the good cousin!” He has not quite lost faith that there is in life, as in romance, a noble womanly soul whose lofty resignation can only move one to tears. This belief now awakens with its former enthusiasm.

I have purposely given more time to Charles, because as presented by the poet, he is such a perfect character that I believe I could write a whole book about him just by using his speeches. One believes perhaps that Emmeline is sentimental and that Charles, on the contrary, has become worldly-wise. By no means. Therein, precisely, lies Scribe’s infinite cleverness, that Charles in his own way is just as sentimental as Emmeline, so that both of them appear equally vividly as pupils of Aunt Judith.

The old Dervière, his daughter, and Charles together make up an entirely fantastic world, even though in another sense they are all figures taken from life. This world must be brought into relation to reality, and this takes place through Mr. Rinville. Rinville is an educated young man who has traveled abroad. He is at the age when it might seem suitable through marriage to take a step decisive for his whole life. He has considered the matter by himself, and has fixed his eyes on Emmeline. He is too well acquainted with the world to be sentimental; his marriage is a well-considered step which he decides on for a variety of reasons. In the first place the girl is rich and has a prospect of 50,000 francs in annual interest; in the second place, there is a friendly relation between her father and his own; in the third place, he has said in jest that he would make a conquest of this coy little beauty; finally, she is really a lovable girl. This reason comes last, it is an afterthought.

We have thus surveyed the principal characters in the play, and now pass on to inquire how these must be arranged in relation to one another, in order to arouse a dramatic interest. Here we easily have occasion to admire Scribe. The play must be built up about Emmeline, of that there can be no question. Emmeline is altogether accustomed to dominate; it is therefore proper that in the play she should be the dominating force. She has all possible qualifications for being a heroine, yet not substantially, but in a negative sense. She is comical, and through her the play is a comedy. She is accustomed to rule, as befits a heroine, but that which she rules is a fool of a father, the servants, and so on. She has pathos, but since its content is nonsense, her pathos is essentially nonsense; she has passion, but since its content is unreal, her passion is essentially foolishness; she has enthusiasm, but since its content is nothing, her enthusiasm is essentially prittle-prattle; she will make every sacrifice for her passion, that is, she will sacrifice everything for nothing. As a comic heroine she is incomparable. With her,

everything turns upon imagination, and everything external turns about her, and therefore about her imagination. One easily sees how perfectly comical the whole procedure must become; one watches it as one would look down into an abyss of laughter.

Emmeline's imagination terminates in nothing more nor less than that she is in love with her cousin Charles whom she has not seen since she was eight years old. The chief argument with which she attempts to defend her illusion is the following: "The first love is the true love, and one loves only once."

As champion of the absolute validity of first love, Emmeline represents a numerous class of mankind. One thinks indeed that it may be possible to love more than once; but the first love is still essentially different from every other. This cannot be explained in any other way than by assuming that there is a beneficent spirit who has presented mankind with a little gilding with which to embellish life. The proposition that the first love is the true love is very accommodating and can come to the aid of mankind in various ways. If a man is not fortunate enough to get possession of what he desires, then he still has the sweetness of the first love. If a man is so unfortunate as to love many times, each time is still the first love. The proposition is really a sophistical one. If a man loves three times, then he says: "This, my present love, is my first true love, but the true love is the first, ergo, this third love is my first love." The sophistry lies in the fact that the category, first, is at the same time a qualitative and a numerical category. When a widower and a widow join fortunes, and each one brings five children along, then they still assure each other on their wedding day that this love is their first love. Emmeline in her romantic orthodoxy would look upon such a connection with aversion; it would be to her a mendacious abomination, which would be as loathsome to her as a marriage between a monk and a nun was to the Middle Ages. She interprets the category

numerically and with such conscientiousness that she thinks an impression received in her eighth year is decisive for her whole life. In the same way she interprets the other proposition: one loves only once. This proposition is, however, just as sophistical and just as elastic. One loves many times, and each time one denies the validity of the preceding times, and thus one still maintains the correctness of the proposition that one loves only once.

Emmeline, then, holds fast her proposition numerically understood; no one can refute her; for every one who ventures to do so, she pronounces destitute of sympathy. She must now acquire experience and the experience refutes her. The question becomes, how one at this point is to understand the poet. It appears that she loves Rinville, not Charles. The answer to that would be decisive in determining whether the play is infinitely comic, or finitely moralizing. As is well known, the play ends by Emmeline's turning away from Charles, and giving her hand to Rinville, saying: "It was a mistake, I confused the past with the future." If then the play in a finite sense is moralizing, as it is generally understood, then it must be the poet's intention to depict Emmeline as a childish, high-strung, romantic girl who has it firmly fixed in her head that she loved only her Charles, but who now comes to a better understanding, is healed of her sickness, makes a suitable match with Mr. Rinville, and leaves the spectators to hope for the best for her future, that she will become an active housewife, and so on. If this is the intention, *The First Love* is thus changed from a masterpiece to a dramatic insignificance, under the presupposition that the poet had in some measure motivated her amelioration. Since this is not the case, then the play, considered as a whole, becomes a mediocre play, and one must complain that the brilliant details in it are wasted.

That Scribe has in no way motivated her improvement, I shall now prove. Rinville decides to pass himself off for Charles. He succeeds in deceiving Emmeline. He adopts the sentimentality of the assumed Charles,

and Emmeline is beside herself with joy. Consequently it is not in his own person that Rinville fascinates her, but in Charles's Sunday clothes. Even if he had been the real Charles instead of a false one, even if he had looked exactly the same as Rinville, the approach of this figure would not have provided some new motive for her to love him. On the contrary, she loves him with an objective, mathematical love because he conforms to the picture she had herself created. Rinville has then made simply no impression upon Emmeline. How negligible he is appears also from the fact that when he does not have the ring she does not love him; when he gets the ring she loves him again; thus it appears probable that this ring is to Emmeline a magic ring, and that she would love anyone who came bearing this ring. When Emmeline finally comes to know that Charles is married, she decides to marry Rinville. If this step could in some way indicate a change in her, and what is more, a change for the better, then, on the one hand, Rinville must have succeeded in pleasing her by his own attractiveness, which in the play seems to be of a better quality than that of Charles, and on the other hand, he must have succeeded in dissolving and explaining her theoretical obduracy concerning the absolute validity of first love.

Neither of these alternatives is the case. Rinville enters as Charles, and pleases her only so far as he resembles him. And the picture she has of Charles is not that of a proud, romantic character which a poetic figure is needed to satisfy; no, her ideal Charles is recognizable by a multitude of accidentals, especially by the ring upon his finger. Only by his resemblance to Charles does Rinville please her, and he does not succeed in displaying a single attractive quality peculiar to himself which could make an impression on Emmeline. She simply does not see Rinville at all, but only her own Charles. She is at the point where she loves Charles and loathes Rinville; which of them is the more attractive, she does not decide by looking at

them; that was decided long before. When Charles approaches as Rinville, she finds him "loathsome." In this opinion the spectator must agree with her; but it does not seem to be the poet's intention to impute great worth to this; she knows that he is loathsome before she looks at him; she barely looks at him and finds her judgment precisely confirmed. The poet indeed rather wishes to show her judgment on the false Rinville as arbitrary, and therefore lets it constantly be parodied by her father's judgment. The father finds nothing pleasing about the supposed Charles; on the contrary, he finds the supposed Rinville highly attractive, the daughter just the opposite; he finds it so because he wishes it so; she, likewise. That she is right the spectator sees, but her judgment is nevertheless only an arbitrary one, and thereby the situation achieves such a comic power.

Nor does Rinville succeed in overcoming her theory.

Charles is married; consequently, she cannot get him, [Another way out might perhaps be found if one let Emmeline get the idea that she would be satisfied with Charles's divided heart. One has indeed seen such things in romances, and it would not be inconceivable that it might dawn on Emmeline in all its clarity. It is altogether remarkable that the whole of European literature lacks a feminine counterpart to *Don Quixote.* May not the time for this be coming, may not the continent of sentimentality yet be discovered?] unless she would come into conflict with the authorities. She marries Rinville for two reasons, partly to avenge herself upon Charles, partly to obey her father. These reasons do not seem to indicate a change for the better. If she does it to avenge herself upon Charles, it shows that she continues to love him. The motive is quite in accord with the logic of romance, and one can by no means regard her as cured. If she does it in order to obey her father, then either seriousness must have entered her soul, a remorse and repentance over having permitted herself to make fun of a father who had only one weakness, that of being too good to her; but this

would be in contradiction with the whole play — or her obedience is due to the fact that his will is in harmony with her own mood, and thus again she is unchanged.

There is, then, not the least thing discernible in the play to indicate that her choice of Rinville might be more reasonable than anything else she has done. Emmeline's nature is infinite nonsense, she is quite as silly at the end as in the beginning, and therefore one can undividedly amuse himself with the whole comic effect of the play, which comes out in the situation's being constantly against her. She is, then, no better at the conclusion of the play, just as little as is Erasmus Montanus in Holberg's play. She is too much a theorist, too good a dialectician (and everyone who has a fixed idea is a virtuoso on one string), to let herself be convinced empirically. Charles has been untrue to her, she marries Rinville; but her romantic conscience does not reproach her. Tranquilly she could approach Aunt Judith, if she were living; she could say to her: "I do not love Rinville, I have never loved him. I love only Charles, and I still say, one loves only once, and the first love is the true love; but I have respect for Rinville, therefore have I married him, and obeyed my father." Then would Judith answer: "Rightly so, my child, the textbook in a note permits this step. It says, 'When the lovers cannot get each other, it is fitting that they live quietly, and although they do not get each other, their relationship should have the same significance as if they had got each other, and their life should be just as beautiful, and be regarded in all respects as a living together.' That I know of my own experience. My first love was a seminarian, but he could get no living. He was my first love and my last. I died unmarried, and he without a living. When on the other hand, one party becomes faithless to the other, then the other has a right to marry, yet so that she does it on the ground of respect." When one, then, has the choice between reducing Scribe's play to insignificance, by insisting that something is to be found in it which cannot be demonstrated, or taking

pleasure in a masterpiece by being able to explain everything, then the choice seems easy. The play is not moralizing in a finite sense, but witty in an infinite sense; it has no definitive purpose, but is an endless jest about Emmeline. For this reason the play has no end. Since the new love for Rinville is only motivated by a mistake of identity, it is quite arbitrary to let the play end. Now, either this is a fault in the play or a merit. Here again the choice is easy. Just as the spectator believes that the play is over, that he has gained a sure foothold, he suddenly discovers that what he steps on is not something firm, but, as it were, the end of a seesaw, and when he steps on it, he raises the whole play up over himself. There appears to be an infinite possibility of confusion, because Emmeline's aspirations, on account of her romantic education, soar above every limit imposed by reality. That the real Charles was not her Charles, she had learned; but soon, when Rinville becomes Rinville, she will convince herself that he isn't her Charles either. Clothes make the man, and the romantic habit is what she looks at. Then perhaps a new figure will appear, who resembles Charles, and so forth. If one understands the play in this way, her closing speech is even profound, while in the other case, it is, at least for me, impossible to find any meaning in it. She indicates, then, change of movement. Previously, her illusion lay behind her in the past, now she will seek it in the world and in the future, for she has not renounced the romantic Charles; but whether she travels forward or backward, her expedition in search of the first love is comparable to the journey one undertakes in search of health, which, as someone has said, is always one station ahead.

One will also find it in order that Emmeline gives no explanation of her theory, which one might otherwise rightfully demand. When a man changes his belief, one requires an explanation; if he is a theorist, one rightly demands it. Emmeline is no common girl; she is well-read, she has a theory; she has loved Charles in the strength of this theory; she has established the

proposition that the first love is the true one. How will she extricate herself from that? If she should say that she never had loved Charles, but that Rinville is her first love, she contradicts herself, since she actually believes that Rinville is Charles. If she should say that the first love was a childish fancy, that the other love is the true one, one easily sees that she escapes from this only by a sophism. If she says: "I don't stick at numbers, whether it is number one or number two, the true love is something quite different"; then one must ask what attraction she had found in Rinville, since the attentive observer had not discovered anything other than that he had been so courteous as to put on Charles in order to please her. If the piece is really ended, then one must in fairness require an explanation of all this. If it is, on the contrary, the poet's meaning that the play is endless, then it is unfair to demand an explanation of Emmeline, since she has not yet herself attained clearness about it.

The interest then turns about Emmeline and her illusion. To provide a collision is easy enough. I shall now for a moment place the three persons, omitting Charles, in relation to one another, in order to see how far we can get in this manner. The father wishes to see Emmeline married and provided for. She refuses every proposal. Finally he proposes the young Rinville, recommends him more warmly than any of the others, even appears to have made up his mind. Emmeline confesses that she loves another, namely Charles. Rinville comes, receives a letter, conceives the idea of passing himself off as Charles.

So far the play might get along with three characters and still not deprive us of one of the most witty situations in the play, the recognition scene. I can here immediately take occasion to show how Scribe lets everything come to light in the situation. Emmeline never gives her sentimentality expression in the form of a monologue but always in dialogue and situation. One does not hear her mooning about Charles in solitude. Only when her

father brings strong pressure to bear, must she confess, and this is conducive to bringing out her sentimentality better. One does not hear her in monologue repeating to herself the reminiscences of her love; it comes out first in the situation. Her sympathy tells her at once that Rinville is Charles, and with him she goes over all the old memories. A wittier situation is difficult to imagine. Rinville knows the world, and with the aid of some few details about Emmeline's state of mind, he soon sees that her cousin Charles is a very nebulous and mythical figure. Her fantasy has painted a picture of Charles which can pass for anybody, just as one of the portraits among the many painted by Wehmüller passes for any Hungarian. Charles's portrait is just as abstract as this painter's national face. This portrait and some general formulas, not forgetting a little verse, are the results of her romantic training. A deception is thus made tolerably easy for Rinville and is successful beyond all measure.

One might now from these three persons and their relation to one another create a comedy. Rinville had perceived that although as Rinville he was in good favor with her father, it was of still greater importance to please the daughter, whose wish was law in Dervière's house. He would then continue to masquerade as Charles. Thereby he had gained a foothold in the family and had opportunity to win the girl for himself. He dared reckon on Emmeline's dominance over her father, and then when she had extorted her father's consent, he must know how to captivate the girl so that she would not change her mind again.

One easily sees the imperfection of this plan. In order for Dervière to persuade his daughter to confess her secret, he must have brought very strong pressure to bear upon her; for otherwise she could just as well have confessed the first time he had talked to her at all about marriage. Her father consequently has had many reasons for wanting Rinville to be his son-in-law. The more eager he is, the more the relationship is strained, the less

likely it is that he will give his consent to her marrying Charles. On the other hand, there must be a dramatic probability that Emmeline can be mistaken. This the poet has accomplished by the fact that Charles is expected, and he has arranged it so that Emmeline herself brings the news, and at this same moment the supposed Charles comes. Her father's embarrassment and his eagerness to conceal Charles's arrival make her even more certain in believing that it really is Charles.

Now I shall take up the fourth person in order to show the excellence of the plan, and how the one situation overshadows the others in cleverness.

Charles hastens home like the prodigal son, in order to throw himself into his uncle's arms, get rid of his cousin, and get his debts paid. But to achieve all this, he must be incognito. As almost every situation is an infinitely witty mockery of Emmeline's sentimentality, so, too, almost every situation is likewise a witty mockery of Charles's mystification. He comes home full of confidence in his powers of mystifying. He believes it is he who contrives intrigues, he who mystifies, and yet the spectator sees that the mystification was in operation before Charles appears; for Rinville had already passed himself off for Charles. The intrigue then carries Charles along with it, Rinville's mystification forces Charles into his own, and yet Charles believes that it starts from him. With his entrance the play comes completely to life, manifested by a wantonness, an almost insane crossing of the situations. Altogether four persons are mutually mystified. Emmeline wants Charles, Charles wants to be rid of her; Charles the mystifier does not know that Rinville is passing himself off as Charles and is trying in this way to captivate the girl. Rinville does not realize that Charles as Rinville is no recommendation for him; Dervière backs Rinville, but the Rinville he backs is Charles.

Emmeline backs Charles, but the one she backs is Rinville. So the whole operation dissolves in nonsense. That which the play turns on is nothing,

that which comes out of the play is nothing.

Emmeline and Charles work against each other, and yet they both arrive at the opposite of what they wish: she, in getting Rinville; he, who wished to mystify, in giving the whole thing away.

In every theater where *The First Love* is presented, there is no doubt much laughter at the play, but I dare assure the theater-going public that there is never laughter enough. If I, to recall an old story, were to say about a man who laughed very heartily, "Either he is mad, or he has been reading, or perhaps better, he has been seeing *The First Love,*" I believe I should not be saying too much. One sometimes laughs at a thing, and regrets it almost in the same moment; but the situations in this play are of the kind that the more one ponders them, the more laughable, the more crazy they appear. As the situation itself is in the highest degree laughable, speeches, which are witty in themselves, appear to even better advantage.

That Scribe can write dialogue is too well known to require mention. One admires him for it, but one admires him even more for the virtuosity by means of which he knows how to adapt it to the situation, so that the speeches grow out of the situation and also illuminate it. If his dialogue is occasionally a little less apt, then he immediately buys an indulgence by its wit. One must remember, however, that I am not speaking about all the plays of Scribe but only about *The First Love.*

This introducing of the fourth person produces a perfect dramatic ferment in the subject matter. One need not fear that the subject will lack animation, but rather that the activity may become too wanton, and indisposed to obey the rein. Every situation must have its time, and yet in it one must feel the play's inner unrest. That Scribe is a master at this, I shall now show, in conclusion, by analyzing the individual situations. The reader must pardon me if I become a little too long-winded; it has its ground in my jealousy for Scribe and my distrust of the reader. My jealousy for Scribe

whispers to me that he can never be well enough understood; my mistrust of the reader leads me to believe that he does not see everything there is to see in the individual passages. One generally believes that the comic is more transient than the tragic; one laughs at it and forgets it, while one often returns to the tragic, and becomes absorbed in it. The comic and the tragic can either be dialogue or situation. Some men dwell preferably on the dialogue, preserving it in memory and often turning back to it. Others prefer the situation, reconstructing it in memory. These latter are the contemplative natures. Nor will these deny that a comic situation has something just as satisfying for the intuition, aye, that if in other respects it is correct, it tempts one to become more absorbed in it than in the tragic. I have heard and read many tragedies, but can only remember an occasional speech, and this, too, occupies me less. On the other hand, I can sit quietly and become absorbed in the situation. I shall cite an example. When Clärchen in Goethe's *Egmont* learns that Egmont has been taken prisoner, she appears before the Hollanders to incite them to raise a rebellion. She is certain her eloquence will stir them, and yet the Hollanders stand, like true Hollanders, unmoved, only considering how to sneak away from her. I have never been able to remember a word of her speech. The situation, on the contrary, has been unforgettable from the very moment I first saw it. As a tragic situation it is perfect. One would think that the beautiful young girl, poetic in her love for Egmont, inspired by Egmont's whole being, would be able to move the whole world, but no Hollander understands her. The soul broods in infinite sadness over such a situation; but it rests; contemplation is perfectly at peace. The comic situation doubtless affords a similar quiescent state for contemplation, but at the same time reflection is moving within it; and the more it discovers, the more infinitely comic the situation becomes within itself and all the more dizzy does one become, while yet one cannot refrain from gazing into it.

The situations in *The First Love* are precisely of this kind. The first impression of them has already produced a comic effect; yet when we reproduce them for reflection, the laughter becomes quieter but the smile more explicable. We can hardly tear our thoughts away from it because it is as if something still more laughable might come. This quiet enjoyment of the situation, when one looks at it in the same way that one who smokes tobacco watches the rising smoke, is perhaps unknown to one or another reader. Scribe is not to blame for this; if this be the case, the reader himself is at fault and has sinned against Scribe.

Dervière exerts strong pressure upon Emmeline to make her marry Rinville; she admits her love for Charles, confesses the highly innocent understanding she has had with him; by using affectionate words she persuades her father to write a letter to Rinville conveying a refusal. The servant is sent off with the letter. The family refuses to see him. Rinville shows up. Lapierre, instead of giving orders to the servants downstairs that the family is "not at home," has hurried away. Consequently Rinville is admitted. Here Scribe, instead of allowing Mr. Rinville to enter and announce himself, has directly produced a not unwitty situation, which makes Dervière as ridiculous as it does Emmeline. Rinville has received the letter and read it. Here again is situation. It is not, as is so often the case, a letter which requires the reader's close attention in order to get its meaning. It is in Mr. Dervière's house that the future son-in-law gets his refusal. Rinville lays his plan. Dervière enters. Rinville pretends to be Charles.

Here we have a perfectly witty situation. There could naturally not be any guest more unwelcome to Dervière than Charles. Rinville does not suspect this. This makes his whole intrigue look like a very unfortunate idea. The situation does not lie in the fact that Rinville pretends to be Charles, but in the fact that he has chosen the most unfortunate plan possible, although he necessarily believes that he has chosen the most

fortunate. Next to that, the situation lies in the fact that Dervière has the excellent young Rinville in his home without suspecting it. When one comes to notice the dialogue, so poetically correct in itself, then one will repeatedly come to enjoy the situation more intensively, because its ridiculous side becomes clearer and clearer. Rinville begins in a sentimentally pathetic style. Whether this is right or not might seem doubtful. He has no close acquaintance with Charles, consequently he could not know what manner would operate most deceptively. He has, however, some idea of Dervière's household and ventures from this to infer the position of the other members of this family. If one regards the beginning as too incorrect, one cannot deny that Scribe makes up for this weakness by the wittiness of the lines and by the presentiment that is aroused in the spectators about the actual Charles. The incorrectness lies in the fact that Rinville's first speech is so pathetic that it looks as if he feared being unwelcome, whereas Rinville, as a result of the foregoing, ought to believe the exact opposite. Therefore, Rinville resembles a little too much the actual Charles. The uncle seems, in spite of his stupidity in other respects, to have sized Charles up very well; he thinks he may get rid of him with money; he offers him 6,000 francs a year instead of the former 3,000. Here one involuntarily comes to think of the actual Charles. He would have considered himself very lucky and would gladly have accepted this offer. The whole scene would then have ended just as pathetically as it began; he would have thrown himself into his uncle's arms and cried: "Truly the bonds of nature and blood are sacred!" Rinville, however, does not do this; he continues in the way he began, quite as Charles might have done if he had not needed the 6,000 francs. The uncle now decides to use kindness and gain his support; he tells him candidly about the whole matter, eulogizes Rinville, which because of the situation becomes parodical. The situation nears its perfect climax when Dervière confides to Rinville that he has

considered devising some stratagem by which he could make Emmeline acquainted with Rinville without her suspecting it. [Here the play might really end, perhaps some attentive reader thinks. For what would be simpler than that Rinville should reveal himself to old Dervière, and thus sail before a twofold wind: with Emmeline, passing for Charles; with Dervière, for what he really was — for Rinville. However, one cannot find fault with Rinville for preserving his incognito in the presence of Dervière. For merely a word or two from him is sufficient to show that if one wishes to carry on an intrigue, one should never have Dervière for a confidant.] The ironical contradiction is excellent. Dervière will devise a stratagem; this stratagem Rinville has already adopted. Rinville's stratagem creates the situation, and in this one hears Dervière's speech. Dervière himself admits that he is not inventive; his device is very simple, if only Charles will have the goodness to go. If this stratagem is successful, then Dervière has done about the most stupid thing imaginable.

However, Rinville does not go; on the contrary, Emmeline comes in with the news that a certain Mr. Zacharias wishes to talk with her father about Charles, who is momentarily expected. The father's embarrassment betrays everything; she recognizes Charles. By this plan, the poet has gained much. The first person the alleged Charles stumbles on is the uncle; he must be regarded as the one easiest to deceive. He is stupid, uneasy, too, lest Charles come, and so only too inclined to credit the certainty of this sorry event; he would never dream that anyone would pretend to be Charles. As far as he is concerned, therefore, Rinville can be bold enough. As regards Emmeline, however, it would be too boldly daring, since she is always a lot more clever. Moreover, it would be unbecoming if Rinville should entirely ignore decorum, and not less unbecoming from Emmeline's side. On the other hand, she has now in her father's embarrassment the most convincing proof that it is Charles. The recognition takes place before the father's eyes;

Rinville need do nothing; instead of having to be mindful of his role, he can remain quite calm, for now Emmeline has got her eyes open. She practically forces Rinville to be Charles; to this extent he is blameless, and she herself is blameless, since her father is the one who had required her to receive him as such. The poet has then by this plan spread a certain delicacy over the situation, which divests it of all offensiveness, and makes it into an innocent jest.

The situation is not less amusing than the preceding. Dervière is quite perplexed, and still he has himself brought about the whole situation, and helped Rinville over the difficulty, as regards Emmeline, of passing himself off for Charles. The situation also creates a parody on the preceding; the uncle simply could not recognize him immediately. On the contrary, Emmeline can. She explains it by a curious feeling she has for which she cannot account; but it was like a voice which whispered to her: he is there. (This voice is certainly her father's voice, which gave everything away.) She attributes it to sympathies, intuitions, something she cannot explain to her father but can very well explain to her Aunt Judith. Who is now the more clever: Dervière, who did not recognize him, who had no suspicions, but who now recognizes him, or Emmeline who recognized him at once? The more one looks at it, the more laughable it becomes. Here again the dialogue helps the spectator to lose himself in the ridiculous situation. Upon Emmeline's saying that she had such a strange feeling, Dervière replies: "There, I had for my part not the least suspicion, and if he had not told me his name right out..." Such a speech is worth its weight in gold. It is so natural and simple, and yet perhaps not one in ten dramatists would have sense enough and enough of an eye for situation to bring it out. An ordinary dramatist would have permitted the whole attention to rest on Emmeline; after all, in the previous scene he had finished with the recognition between Dervière and Charles. This interplay he would not have generated, and yet

this contributes to making the whole situation so witty. It is comical that Emmeline immediately recognizes Rinville as Charles, but Dervière's presence tends to make the situation ironic. He stands there like a booby who understands nothing. And yet, which is easier to explain, that Emmeline guessed this, or that Dervière did not?

Now follows the recognition scene, one of the most successful situations imaginable. The humor by no means lies in the fact that she confuses Rinville with Charles. One has frequently seen cases of mistaken identity on the stage. Mistaken identity is based on a real resemblance, whether the individual is unconscious of it or has himself achieved it. If this were the case here, then Rinville after having stood the test must have known fairly well how Charles looked; for Charles must have looked about like himself. This, however, is by no means the case; every such inference would be silly. The humor lies in the fact that Emmeline recognizes in Rinville someone she does not know. The wit does not consist in the fact that she recognizes Rinville, but that it shows that she does not know Charles. As it went with Rinville, so would it go with any man under the same circumstances; she would have taken him for Charles. She then confuses Rinville with someone she does not know, and this is undeniably a very witty kind of confusion. Therefore, the situation has a high degree of probability, which one may readily believe was difficult to attain. Rinville is also a fool, in so far as he believes that he has advanced a step forward; Emmeline's Charles is, in fact, an x, a *desideratur*, and one sees revealed here, what ordinarily takes place in privacy, how such a young maiden behaves in creating an ideal for herself. And yet she has loved Charles for eight years, and she will never love another.

If one stumbles at a particular speech which seems a little faulty, Scribe makes up for it with a witticism. Thus Rinville's speech: "God be praised! I was afraid I had gone further than I wish to."

So then, Emmeline recognizes Charles, or rather she discovers him. For while Rinville does not, as one would have expected, learn to know how Charles looks, Emmeline does come to know it, and this is very wisely arranged, since she did not know it before. The situation is so crazy that it becomes doubtful whether one should say that it is Rinville who deceives Emmeline, or Emmeline who deceives Rinville; for he is in a certain sense deceived, in so far as he had believed that there actually was a Charles. But in the course of all this, the infinite gist of the matter is that the scene is a recognition scene. The situation is as crazy as it would be for a man who had never seen his own picture to say on first looking into a mirror: "I immediately recognize myself."

Emmeline and the pseudo-Charles, in the recognition scene, have reached through reminiscence the precise point at which they were interrupted by Charles's departure, when they are again interrupted by the presence of the uncle. He has received from Mr. Zacharias information about Charles which is not particularly pleasing. This recoils on Rinville. The situation is essentially the same as earlier; but we shall see what the poet has gained. Charles's exploits are of such a nature that candidly and correctly described, they could disturb the total impression of the play. It is necessary to give them a certain light touch so that they may not become too serious. This the poet has accomplished in two ways. The first information we get regarding Charles's life is in the ninth scene. Here it is Rinville, who has pretended to be Charles, upon whom it recoils. The spectator's attention is thus diverted from the explicitness of the narration to the mistaken identity. Instead of the individual exploits, one thinks only about stupid antics in general and about Rinville's embarrassment and of the ludicrousness of demanding more explicit details from him. The complete information one gets from Charles's own mouth in the sixteenth scene when Charles passes himself off as Rinville. What would be much too

serious or much too impudent, if Charles told about it in his own person, now gets a comic, almost an exuberant aspect, when he tells it in the person of Rinville, using his incognito to make the narrative as fantastic as possible. If he in his own person had described his life, one would have required from him a consciousness of his exploits, finding it highly immoral if he did not have it. Now, on the contrary, since he tells everything in the person of another and for the express purpose of alarming Emmeline, one finds the fantastic touches in his narration poetically correct in a two-fold respect.

Hence, Dervière has got detailed information; the pseudo-Charles is unable to correct or complete these details. Emmeline discovers that "he is not the same any more." This is a little hasty after her having been completely sure that he was quite as of old. Emmeline appears here right in her element; it's all blather, no matter what she says. The dialogue itself deserves a more careful examination, because it gives occasion for extreme enjoyment of a situation which in all its comicality is illuminated from a new angle. The mere sound of the words, "the same," works like a new stimulating ingredient on the lunacy of the situation; one involuntarily has to laugh because one involuntarily begins to ask himself: "the same" as whom? The same as he appeared to be in the testing scene? This leads one to think how inadequate this test was. The same as whom? As Charles, whom she did not know? Moreover, when I say about someone that he is the same or he is not the same, I may use this expression in either an external or an internal sense, with reference to his outer appearance or to his inner nature. The latter, one might believe, would be of especial importance to lovers. Now, however, one discovers that the test had not taken cognizance of this, and yet he was found to be the same. Quite accidentally Emmeline begins to consider whether Charles's character has not changed, and she now discovers that he is not the same. The denial of his moral

character's being the same contains also an affirmation that in all other respects he is the same. Still, Emmeline explains herself more exactly. She does not seek the alteration in the fact that Charles has become a spendthrift or possibly something even worse, but in that he has not confided everything to her, as he was accustomed to do. Now this must be one of her romantic ideas, which is probably to be understood as deriving from the fact that she has been accustomed, as in the recognition scene, to chatter about everything to him. That Charles was accustomed to confide everything to her, she simply does not know from experience but from romances wherein one learns that lovers should have no secrets from each other. Even if Charles were an escaped convict, that would not disturb her, if only her erotic curiosity was satisfied by his confiding it to her. The attempt Emmeline makes, by observing Charles's character to convince herself of his identity, must be regarded as sheer nonsense, which throws some light partly on her nature, partly on the rest of her chatter. In the same moment, therefore, she abandons this train of reasoning and gets a new, a far more certain proof that he is not the same, when she discovers that he does not have the ring. Now she needs no further evidence against him. She admits that he might have done what he would, the craziest things, or, in other words, have changed as much as he would, he would still remain the same, but that he did not have the ring bears witness against him. Emmeline distinguishes herself by a special kind of abstract thinking. However, what she has left, after and by abstraction, is not so much Charles's essential nature as the ring. Emmeline is to be regarded as the spirit of the ring, who obeys him "who has the ring in his hand."

Lapierre announces a new stranger. It is agreed that it must be Rinville. Emmeline gets orders to dress herself, and bursts out: "How tiresome it is. Must I go and dress myself up for the sake of a strange man whom I cannot abide; I already know that in advance." By this speech the spectator notices

in time the irony in one of the resulting situations. On the whole Emmeline can flatter herself on being irony’s darling. It humors her in every way — and later gets the best of her. She wants the supposed Charles to be a handsome young man. Irony indulges her. Dervière cannot see it, he stands like a fool, Emmeline with flying colors, and yet she is most the fool. She wants the supposed Rinville to be a man she cannot bear, although her father assures her that he is an excellent young man. Irony again indulges her, and yet in such wise that she is made a fool of.

The eleventh scene is a monologue by Rinville. It would seem that this monologue might have been omitted, since the effect of it in every way is disturbing. In so far as it was in order to let Rinville remain in possession of the field and be the first to receive Charles, his monologue could have been shortened. Nor would it then have been without effect. He could then proclaim in the poet’s words: “Bravo! It goes excellently! Quarrels with the father, quarrels with the daughter; I must certainly admit that it is a plan which promises well.” This monologue would then contain a kind of objective reflection on the progress of the play. Should the poet consider it necessary to make the monologue a little longer in order to give Charles time to come, he could allow Rinville to make a little joke with himself over the consideration that in the final analysis he might perhaps have been more clever to have come in his own person and over the drollery involved in his progressing from bad to worse every time new despatches came about Charles. Then it would have been best for him to be interrupted in this deliberation by Charles’s speech from the wings. For as Scribe ends the monologue, one feels too strongly that now the monologue is finished and now a new person must appear. If Rinville’s monologue were thus interrupted, then a new light would be cast on Charles’s fantastic haste, over the importunity in his appearance, by which he always distinguishes

himself, *item* over the short-winded imbecility which the poet has so inimitably stamped upon his first speeches.

Still, this is less important. The main fault in this monologue is that the action which Rinville suggests appears entirely as talk, only as imaginary action. Rinville explains that it is no longer for fun that he plays Charles's role. That was never really the case; on the contrary, he himself in the beginning indicated three substantial reasons for it, so that he might be able to bring about a marriage with Emmeline. Next he explains that he will prevent Emmeline from confusing him with Charles; he will convince himself that it is he whom she loves, not the memory of Charles. This is of utmost importance to the whole play, for it is decisive in determining, as developed above, whether the play is, in a finite sense, moralizing or, in an infinite sense, witty. His procedure must then aim at letting his own characteristic attractiveness become visible through the person of Charles. This, however, does not happen, and had it happened, the play would have become something quite different. With Emmeline everything turns on the ring; when, in the fifteenth scene, he appears with it, she takes him into favor, recognizes him as being the same, and so on. Rinville, for the sake of the total effect of the play, must in no way be regarded as a poetic figure, nor could this be demonstrated by the few gleams of light which fall upon him. He is a man who has reached years of discretion, who has sound reasons for what he does. Off and on he is seen in a comic light, because it appears that his sound reasons and his understanding are of little help to him in captivating such a romantic little gazelle as Miss Emmeline. Even if he were a man absolutely attractive and dangerous to a young girl's heart, he would have no power over Emmeline, she is invulnerable; he can effect this only by appealing to her through her fixed idea, that is, through the ring. But since the main interest of the play requires the nullification of his real attractiveness, it would be wrong to accentuate his attractiveness, for

which reason the poet has not done it save in this one monologue. In the scene where Rinville has most to do with Emmeline, there can naturally be no talk at all about an opportunity for him to display his personal attractiveness. When a young girl fastens herself upon a man as Emmeline did on Rinville, when by her own willingness, she constantly gives him an opportunity to steal into her heart, then must Rinville be an utter bungler if he cannot come to her assistance. So far from being supposed to display Rinville's attractiveness, this scene seems rather to place him in a somewhat comic light. He is manifestly an intelligent man; he has in the foregoing dialogue been a little self-important, letting the spectators as well as his friends in Paris understand that he is man enough to tame a little maiden like this. It is true he succeeds; but if his friends in Paris could see how it was done, they would have no occasion to admire his talents. His discretion teaches him to pass himself off as Charles. To this extent one must give him his due. Now it has happened; now he must show his attractiveness; now, one thinks, he will have plenty to do. Then it appears that he has simply nothing to do; the swift-footed Emmeline, who is hastening back into her youthful memories, takes Mr. Rinville along; and any man who was not a complete blockhead would be able to imitate this masterpiece.

What has here been developed regarding Rinville's character is, in my opinion, of absolute importance for the whole play. There must not be a single figure in it, not a single dramatic relationship which might make claim to survive the destruction which irony, straight from the beginning, has been preparing for everything and everybody in it. When the curtain falls, then everything is forgotten, only nothing remains, and that is the only thing one gets to see; and the only thing one gets to hear is a laughter, which like a sound in nature, does not issue from a single human being, but is the language of a world force, and this force is irony.

Charles enters and meets Rinville. The wittiness in the situation lies in the fact that Charles, this scheming pate, comes too late, not only with respect to Mr. Zacharias, but especially with respect to the intrigue in the play. His lines are here as everywhere masterly, characteristic of him and, at the same time, in conformity with the situation. Rinville suggests to Charles the scheme of passing himself off for Rinville. He has completely outlined the idea for this, when Charles, who could not possibly take advice from another regarding a mystification, interrupts him and makes it look as if it is he himself who invented the whole plan. Yet it appears immediately thereafter that he is not a man who could hit upon the least thing; he would even have overlooked the ring if Rinville had not called his attention to it. Rinville gets the ring.

Charles presents himself to the family as Mr. Rinville. This guarantees his reception. Dervière finds him younger and handsomer than Charles. Emmeline finds him loathsome. Both judgments are equally unreliable, and one ventures to believe that Emmeline had not even found it worth while to look at him but knew it by virtue of inspiration. It is the same way with her father. The situation holds a profound mockery of Charles, who probably ascribes this favorable reception to his own cleverness and hopes that everything will succeed, if only he continues incognito.

Now comes a monologue in which Emmeline communes with her heart and finds out that she will never forget Charles but will marry Rinville.

Rinville comes to take leave and delivers the ring. They are reconciled again. These situations we are already acquainted with.

Now follows the most brilliant situation in the whole play. There rests a nimbus over it, a transfiguration, which has a solemnity of its own, so that one might almost wish to see Aunt Judith in the background as a spirit looking down upon her two pupils. Emmeline resolves to confide in the assumed Rinville and reveal all. This situation throws a perfect light on

Emmeline and Charles. Emmeline's fidelity becomes altogether parodical. For no price will she give him up. She fears neither fire nor water. Charles's embarrassment becomes greater and greater, since he wishes to get rid of her. Such a loyalty is quite in order, for a little maiden like Emmeline always tends to be most loyal when the one loved wishes to be rid of her. Charles who, since he had learned that Mr. Zacharias had not divulged the worst, was certain of being able through his adroitness to get himself out of the whole situation, now becomes the one who betrays everything. The opportunity is too tempting. He can become the troubadour of his own life, and he hopes in that way to get rid of his cousin. We were reminded earlier that this gives the situation a lighter touch so that Charles's aberrations take on a comic aspect. We get a vivid conception of his recklessness and his confusion of mind, but we are not indignant as would be the case if in his own character he had told everything in the same way, and yet we suspect that he probably would do so. We surmise it, but we do not hear it. Charles accomplishes nothing, however, he pleases only himself. Emmeline's loyalty knows no bounds. Finally Charles admits that he is married. It is incredible with what sureness the poet knows how to ironize Emmeline. She hears he is married, and she becomes furious. One or another spectator might perhaps think that the reason she became so enraged with Charles was that she had now learned to know all his bad points. By no means, dear friend! You misunderstand her. She'll take Charles if only she can get him. But he is married. She would indeed find it proper, if in the eight years he had not looked at any other girl but had conscientiously gazed at the moon. Still, she knows how to disregard this. Let him have seduced ten girls, she'll take him, she'll take him à tout *prix;* but if he is married, she cannot have him. *Hinc illae lacrimae.* If this were not the poet's meaning, he would have let Emmeline interrupt Charles somewhat earlier. Charles has explained that he had been subject to many persecutions from the fair sex, that he had had

various affairs, that he had perhaps sometimes gone too far in amiability. She does not interrupt him; she promises to do everything possible to reconcile him with her father and get him herself; for it is clear that when she cannot get him (as soon as she hears he is married) she is not one who forgets to alarm the camp. Charles begins on his story of Pamela; she listens quietly to it. Then comes the terrible news that he is married. Down crashed the Kingdom of Norway.

The profound irony in this situation lies, then, in Emmelines inviolable loyalty, which will not relinquish Charles at any price, since it would cost her her life, as well as in Charles's increasing embarrassment at not being able to get rid of her. The whole scene is like a letting of public contracts, where the ideal Charles is awarded to Emmeline as lowest bidder. Finally, the whole thing ends at the point where it appears that she cannot get Charles, and Charles cannot escape from his stupid folly.

Emmeline raises an outcry; the father comes in and promises he will never forgive Charles.

Now the pseudo-Charles comes forward. Emmeline has begged her father not to lose his temper; she herself will hear his confession. We must here as always admire the poet's tactics. For the scene must remain ridiculous and the situation ironical when we see on the assumed Rinville the impression the thundering speech is intended to make on the assumed Charles; the real Charles, in other words, has the pleasure of being personally present while he is himself executed in effigy. Had the poet let Dervière make this speech, it would have been a poetic injustice. The uncle has been Charles's benefactor and has a lawful right not to be made a fool of in the presence of Charles. True, the uncle is not as clever as the girl, but his benefactions over a period of years place him at an advantage over Charles, quite different from such a reckless marriage promise as he has given Emmeline. Since, on the other hand, everything else that Emmeline

says seems to be nonsense, including the marriage promise, then it is proper that this philippic should seem so likewise. Her old love for Charles is nonsense, her new love for Rinville is also nonsense; her enthusiasm is nonsense, and likewise her anger; her defiance is nonsense, as well as her good intentions.

Emmeline then gives vent to her anger, and the pseudo-Rinville burlesques the effect of her story by behaving and acting like the pseudo-Charles! It may be regarded as the crowning feature in this situation that she admits that she really has loved Charles. The confusion here is perfect. For the one that by her own admission she has loved these eight years is Rinville, in whom, by the aid of sympathy, she had immediately recognized Charles, and whom, a little after convincing herself that he was not the same, she again recognized through the ring.

At last the confusion is resolved. It appears that she has got Rinville instead of Charles. Herewith the play is finished, or, more correctly, it is not finished. This I have already explained earlier; here I shall only by a word or two throw some light on the proposition. If it is the intention of the play to show that Emmeline has become a reasonable girl, who, when she chooses Rinville, makes a suitable choice, then the accent of the whole play is laid in the wrong place. For in such a case, it would interest us less to know in what sense Charles has failed. What we do demand, on the contrary, is some illumination about Rinville's attractions. Just because Charles has become a lewd popinjay, it by no means follows that Emmeline must therefore choose Rinville, except in so far as one sets Scribe down for a dramatic bungler who respects the dramatic tradition that every young girl must be married, and if she doesn't want the one, then must she take the other. If, however, one understands the play as I have understood it, then the whole play is a perfect joke, the wit infinite, the comedy a masterpiece.

The curtain falls, the play is over, nothing is left except the great outline in which it appears; only the situation's fantastic shadow-play, which irony directs, remains for contemplation. The immediately real situation is the unreal situation; behind this there appears a new situation which is no less absurd, and so forth. In the situation we hear the dialogue; when it is most reasonable, it appears most crazy; and as the situation recedes, so the dialogue follows along, more and more meaningless in spite of its reasonableness.

In order rightly to enjoy the irony in this play contemplatively, you must not read it but see it; you must see it again and again, and when you have the good fortune to be contemporary with the four dramatic artists who in our theater contribute in every way to showing and suggesting the transparency of the situation, then will the enjoyment become greater and greater every time you see it.

Let the dialogue in this play be ever so witty, you will forget it; the situations you cannot possibly forget, when you have once seen them. When you have become familiar with them, then the next time you see the play you will learn to be thankful for the dramatic presentation. I do not know how to give any greater praise to the performance than by saying that it is so highly perfect that it makes one wholly ungrateful the first times you see it, because what you get is the play, neither more nor less. I know a young philosopher who once expounded a part of the doctrine of being to me. The whole was so easy, so simple, so natural, that when he was finished I almost shrugged my shoulders and said: Is this all? When I came home I wanted to reproduce the logical exercise, and it appeared that I could not even start. Then I observed that there must be something else. I felt how great his virtuosity and his superiority over me were, I felt it almost a mockery that he had done it so well that I became ungrateful. He was a philosophical

artist, and as it was with him, so it is with all great artists, our Lord *inclusive.*

As it was with me in the case of my philosophical friend, so it is with me about the performance of *The First Love.* Only when I had seen it performed again and again and on other stages did I become truly grateful to our dramatic artists. If I were therefore to introduce a foreigner to our stage, I should take him to the theater when this play was to be performed, and then, acting on the supposition that he knew the play, I should say to him: “Observe Frydendahl, turn your eyes away from him, shut them; let his image appear before you; these pure noble features, this graceful bearing, how can this be laughable; open your eyes again and see Frydendahl. Observe Madame Heiberg, cast down your eyes, for Emmeline’s attraction might become dangerous to you; listen to the sentimentally languishing voice, the childish and whimsical insinuations of the girl, and if you were as dry and stiff as a book-keeper, you would still have to smile. Open your eyes, how is it possible? Repeat these movements so swiftly that they become almost simultaneous in the moment, and you have a conception of what is being presented. Without irony, an artist can never sketch; a dramatic artist can only produce it through contradiction, for the essence of the sketch is superficiality, and where no delineation of character is required, the art is to transform oneself into a surface, which is a paradox for the scenic presentation, and to only a few is it given to resolve it. An unreflective comedian can never play Dervière, for he has no character. Emmeline’s whole nature is contradiction and therefore cannot be presented immediately. She must be attractive, for otherwise the effect of the whole play is spoiled; she must not be attractive but affected, for otherwise, in another sense, the whole effect of the play is lost. Behold Phister, you almost become ill when you let your glance rest on the infinitely fresh stupidity that is stamped on his countenance. And yet it is

not an immediate dullness; his glance still has an enthusiasm which in its foolishness is reminiscent of the past. No one is born with such a face, it has a history. When I was little I can remember that my nursemaid explained to me that one must not make faces, and as a warning to me and other children, she told a story about a man with a grotesque face, which he himself was to blame for, because he made wry faces. It so happened, curiously enough, that the wind changed, and the man's contorted expression froze on his face. Such an absurd face Phister lets us see; there is even a trace of the romantic grimace, but when the wind changed it became something distorted. Phister's presentation of Charles has less irony but more humor. This is quite correct, for the contradiction in his being is not so evident. He is not to pass for Rinville, except in the eyes of Dervière and Emmeline, who in their own ways are equally biased.

Behold Stage, rejoice over this beautiful manly figure, this refined personality, this easy smile which betrays Rinville's fancied superiority over Dervière's fantastic family, and then see this representative of the intellect whirled along in the confusion which Emmeline's empty passion, like a forward rushing wind, occasions.

THE ROTATION METHOD

An Essay in the Theory of Social Prudence

Chremylos: You get too much at last of everything.
Of love,
Karion: of bread,
Chremylos: of music,
Karion: and of sweetmeats.
Chremylos: Of honor,
Karion: cakes,
Chremylos: of courage,
Karion: and of figs.
Chremylos: Ambition,
Karion: barley-cakes,
Chremylos: high office,
Karion: lentils.
(Aristophanes' *Plutus*, v. 189 *ff*.)

Starting from a principle is affirmed by people of experience to be a very reasonable procedure; I am willing to humor them, and so begin with the principle that all men are bores. Surely no one will prove himself so great a bore as to contradict me in this. This principle possesses the quality of being in the highest degree repellent, an essential requirement in the case of negative principles, which are in the last analysis the principles of all motion. It is not merely repellent, but infinitely forbidding; and whoever has this principle back of him cannot but receive an infinite impetus

forward, to help him make new discoveries. For if my principle is true, one need only consider how ruinous boredom is for humanity, and by properly adjusting the intensity of one's concentration upon this fundamental truth, attain any desired degree of momentum. Should one wish to attain the maximum momentum, even to the point of almost endangering the driving power, one need only say to oneself: Boredom is the root of all evil. Strange that boredom, in itself so staid and stolid, should have such power to set in motion. The influence it exerts is altogether magical, except that it is not the influence of attraction, but of repulsion.

In the case of children, the ruinous character of boredom is universally acknowledged. Children are always well-behaved as long as they are enjoying themselves. This is true in the strictest sense; for if they sometimes become unruly in their play, it is because they are already beginning to be bored — boredom is already approaching, though from a different direction. In choosing a governess one, therefore, takes into account not only her sobriety, her faithfulness, and her competence, but also her aesthetic qualifications for amusing the children; and there would be no hesitancy in dismissing a governess who was lacking in this respect, even if she had all the other desirable virtues. Here, then, the principle is clearly acknowledged; but so strange is the way of the world, so pervasive the influence of habit and boredom, that this is practically the only case in which the science of aesthetics receives its just dues. If one were to ask for a divorce because his wife was tiresome, or demand the abdication of a king because he was boring to look at, or the banishment of a preacher because he was tiresome to listen to, or the dismissal of a prime minister, or the execution of a journalist, because he was terribly tiresome, one would find it impossible to force it through. What wonder, then, that the world goes from bad to worse, and that its evils increase more and more, as boredom increases, and boredom is the root of all evil.

The history of this can be traced from the very beginning of the world. The gods were bored, and so they created man. Adam was bored because he was alone, and so Eve was created. Thus boredom entered the world, and increased in proportion to the increase of population. Adam was bored alone; then Adam and Eve were bored together; then Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel were bored *en famille;* then the population of the world increased, and the peoples were bored *en masse.* To divert themselves they conceived the idea of constructing a tower high enough to reach the heavens. This idea is itself as boring as the tower was high, and constitutes a terrible proof of how boredom gained the upper hand. The nations were scattered over the earth, just as people now travel abroad, but they continued to be bored. Consider the consequences of this boredom. Humanity fell from its lofty height, first because of Eve, and then from the Tower of Babel. What was it, on the other hand, that delayed the fall of Rome, was it not *panis* and *circenses?* And is anything being done now? Is anyone concerned about planning some means of diversion? Quite the contrary, the impending ruin is being accelerated. It is proposed to call a constitutional assembly. Can anything more tiresome be imagined, both for the participants themselves, and for those who have to hear and read about it? It is proposed to improve the financial condition of the state by practicing economy. What could be more tiresome? Instead of increasing the national debt, it is proposed to pay it off. As I understand the political situation, it would be an easy matter for Denmark to negotiate a loan of fifteen million dollars. Why not consider this plan? Every once in a while we hear of a man who is a genius, and therefore neglects to pay his debts — why should not a nation do the same, if we were all agreed? Let us then borrow fifteen millions, and let us use the proceeds, not to pay our debts, but for public entertainment. Let us celebrate the millennium in a riot of merriment. Let us place boxes everywhere, not, as at present, for the deposit

of money, but for the free distribution of money. Everything would become gratis; theaters gratis, women of easy virtue gratis, one would drive to the park gratis, be buried gratis, one's eulogy would be gratis; I say gratis, for when one always has money at hand, everything is in a certain sense free. No one should be permitted to own any property. Only in my own case would there be an exception. I reserve to myself securities in the Bank of London to the value of one hundred dollars a day, partly because I cannot do with less, partly because the idea is mine, and finally because I may not be able to hit upon a new idea when the fifteen millions are gone.

What would be the consequences of all this prosperity? Everything great would gravitate toward Copenhagen, the greatest artists, the greatest dancers, the greatest actors. Copenhagen would become a second Athens. What then? All rich men would establish their homes in this city. Among others would come the Shah of Persia, and the King of England would also come. Here is my second idea. Let us kidnap the Shah of Persia. Perhaps you say an insurrection might take place in Persia and a new ruler be placed on the throne, as has often happened before, the consequence being a fall in price for the old Shah. Very well then, I propose that we sell him to the Turks; they will doubtless know how to turn him into money. Then there is another circumstance which our politicians seem entirely to have overlooked. Denmark holds the balance of power in Europe. It is impossible to imagine a more fortunate lot. I know that from my own experience; I once held the balance of power in a family and could do as I pleased; the blame never fell on me, but always on the others. O that my words might reach your ears, all you who sit in high places to advise and rule, you king's men and men of the people, wise and understanding citizens of all classes! Consider the crisis! Old Denmark is on the brink of ruin; what a calamity! It will be destroyed by boredom. Of all calamities the most calamitous! In ancient times they made him king who extolled most beautifully the praises

of the deceased king; in our times we ought to make him king who utters the best witticism, and make him crown prince who gives occasion for the utterance of the best witticism.

O beautiful, emotional sentimentality, how you carry me away! Should I trouble to speak to my contemporaries, to initiate them into my wisdom? By no means. My wisdom is not exactly *zum Gebrauch für Jedermann,* and it is always more prudent to keep one's maxims of prudence to oneself. I desire no disciples; but if there happened to be someone present at my deathbed, and I was sure that the end had come, then I might in an attack of philanthropic delirium, whisper my theory in his ear, uncertain whether I had done him a service or not. People talk so much about man being a social animal; at bottom, he is a beast of prey, and the evidence for this is not confined to the shape of his teeth. All this talk about society and the social is partly inherited hypocrisy, partly calculated cunning.

All men are bores. The word itself suggests the possibility of a subdivision. It may just as well indicate a man who bores others as one who bores himself. Those who bore others are the mob, the crowd, the infinite multitude of men in general. Those who bore themselves are the elect, the aristocracy; and it is a curious fact that those who do not bore themselves usually bore others, while those who bore themselves entertain others. Those who do not bore themselves are generally people who, in one way or another, keep themselves extremely busy; these people are precisely on this account the most tiresome, the most utterly unendurable. This species of animal life is surely not the fruit of man's desire and woman's lust. Like all lower forms of life, it is marked by a high degree of fertility, and multiplies endlessly. It is inconceivable that nature should require nine months to produce such beings; they ought rather to be turned out by the score. The second class, the aristocrats, are those who bore themselves. As noted above, they generally entertain others — in a certain external sense

sometimes the mob, in a deeper sense only their fellow initiates. The more profoundly they bore themselves, the more powerfully do they serve to divert these latter, even when their boredom reaches its zenith, as when they either die of boredom (the passive form) or shoot themselves out of curiosity (the active form).

It is usual to say that idleness is a root of all evil. To prevent this evil one is advised to work. However, it is easy to see, both from the nature of the evil that is feared and the remedy proposed, that this entire view is of a very plebeian extraction. Idleness is by no means as such a root of evil; on the contrary, it is a truly divine life, provided one is not himself bored. Idleness may indeed cause the loss of one's fortune, and so on, but the high-minded man does not fear such dangers; he fears only boredom. The Olympian gods were not bored, they lived happily in happy idleness. A beautiful woman, who neither sews nor spins nor bakes nor reads nor plays the piano, is happy in her idleness, for she is not bored. So far from idleness being the root of all evil, it is rather the only true good. Boredom is the root of all evil, and it is this which must be kept at a distance. Idleness is not an evil; indeed one may say that every human being who lacks a sense for idleness proves that his consciousness has not yet been elevated to the level of the humane. There is a restless activity which excludes a man from the world of the spirit, setting him in a class with the brutes, whose instincts impel them always to be on the move. There are men who have an extraordinary talent for transforming everything into a matter of business, whose whole life is business, who fall in love, marry, listen to a joke, and admire a picture with the same industrious zeal with which they labor during business hours. The Latin proverb, *otium est pulvinar diaboli,* is true enough, but the devil gets no time to lay his head on this pillow when one is not bored. But since some people believe that the end and aim of life is work, the disjunction, idleness-

work, is quite correct. I assume that it is the end and aim of every man to enjoy himself, and hence my disjunction is no less correct.

Boredom is the daemonic side of pantheism. If we remain in boredom as such, it becomes the evil principle; if we annul it, we posit it in its truth; but we can only annul boredom by enjoying ourselves — ergo, it is our duty to enjoy ourselves. To say that boredom is annulled by work betrays a confusion of thought; for idleness can certainly be annulled by work, since it is its opposite, but not boredom, and experience shows that the busiest workers, whose constant buzzing most resembles an insect's hum, are the most tiresome of creatures; if they do not bore themselves, it is because they have no true conception of what boredom is; but then it can scarcely be said that they have overcome boredom.

Boredom is partly an inborn talent, partly an acquired immediacy. The English are in general the paradigmatic nation. A true talent for indolence is very rare; it is never met with in nature, but belongs to the world of the spirit. Occasionally, however, you meet a traveling Englishman who is, as it were, the incarnation of this talent — a heavy, immovable animal, whose entire language exhausts its riches in a single word of one syllable, an interjection by which he signifies his deepest admiration and his supreme indifference, admiration and indifference having been neutralized in the unity of boredom. No other nation produces such miracles of nature; every other national will always show himself a little more vivacious, not so absolutely stillborn. The only analogy I know of is the apostle of the empty enthusiasm, who also makes his way through life on an interjection. This is the man who everywhere makes a profession of enthusiasm, who cries Ah! or Oh! whether the event be significant or insignificant, the difference having been lost for him in the emptiness of a blind and noisy enthusiasm. The second form of boredom is usually the result of a mistaken effort to find diversion. The fact that the remedy against boredom may also serve to

produce boredom, might appear to be a suspicious circumstance; but it has this effect only in so far as it is incorrectly employed. A misdirected search for diversion, one which is eccentric in its direction, conceals boredom within its own depths and gradually works it out toward the surface, thus revealing itself as that which it immediately is. In the case of horses, we distinguish between blind staggers and sleepy staggers, but call both staggers; and so we can also make a distinction between two kinds of boredom, though uniting both under the common designation of being tiresome.

Pantheism is, in general, characterized by fullness; in the case of boredom we find the precise opposite, since it is characterized by emptiness; but it is just this which makes boredom a pantheistic conception. Boredom depends on the nothingness which pervades reality; it causes a dizziness like that produced by looking down into a yawning chasm, and this dizziness is infinite. The eccentric form of diversion noted above sounds forth without producing an echo, which proves it to be based on boredom; for in nothingness not even an echo can be produced.

Now since boredom as shown above is the root of all evil, what can be more natural than the effort to overcome it? Here, as everywhere, however, it is necessary to give the problem calm consideration; otherwise one may find oneself driven by the daemonic spirit of boredom deeper and deeper into the mire in the very effort to escape. Everyone who feels bored cries out for change. With this demand I am in complete sympathy, but it is necessary to act in accordance with some settled principle.

My own dissent from the ordinary view is sufficiently expressed in the use I make of the word, “rotation.” This word might seem to conceal an ambiguity, and if I wished to use it so as to find room in it for the ordinary method, I should have to define it as a change of field. But the farmer does not use the word in this sense. I shall, however, adopt this meaning for a

moment, in order to speak of the rotation which depends on change in its boundless infinity, its extensive dimension, so to speak.

This is the vulgar and inartistic method, and needs to be supported by illusion. One tires of living in the country, and moves to the city; one tires of one's native land, and travels abroad; one is *europamüde,* and goes to America, and so on; finally one indulges in a sentimental hope of endless journeyings from star to star. Or the movement is different but still extensive. One tires of porcelain dishes and eats on silver; one tires of silver and turns to gold; one burns half of Rome to get an idea of the burning of Troy. This method defeats itself; it is plain endlessness. And what did Nero gain by it? Antonine was wiser; he says: "It is in your power to review your life, to look at things you saw before, from another point of view."

My method does not consist in change of field, but resembles the true rotation method in changing the crop and the mode of cultivation. Here we have at once the principle of limitation, the only saving principle in the world. The more you limit yourself, the more fertile you become in invention. A prisoner in solitary confinement for life becomes very inventive, and a spider may furnish him with much entertainment. One need only hark back to one's schooldays. We were at an age when aesthetic considerations were ignored in the choice of one's instructors, most of whom were for that reason very tiresome; how fertile in invention one then proved to be! How entertaining to catch a fly and hold it imprisoned under a nut shell and to watch how it pushed the shell around; what pleasure from cutting a hole in the desk, putting a fly in it, and then peeping down at it through a piece of paper! How entertaining sometimes to listen to the monotonous drip of water from the roof! How close an observer one becomes under such circumstances, when not the least noise nor movement escapes one's attention! Here we have the extreme application of the method which seeks to achieve results intensively, not extensively.

The more resourceful in changing the mode of cultivation one can be, the better; but every particular change will always come under the general categories of *remembering* and *forgetting.* Life in its entirety moves in these two currents, and hence it is essential to have them under control. It is impossible to live artistically before one has made up one's mind to abandon hope; for hope precludes selflimitation. It is a very beautiful sight to see a man put out to sea with the fair wind of hope, and one may even use the opportunity to be taken in tow; but one should never permit hope to be taken aboard one's own ship, least of all as a pilot; for hope is a faithless shipmaster. Hope was one of the dubious gifts of Prometheus; instead of giving men the foreknowledge of the immortals, he gave them hope.

To forget — all men wish to forget, and when something unpleasant happens, they always say: Oh, that one might forget! But forgetting is an art that must be practiced beforehand. The ability to forget is conditioned upon the method of remembering, but this again depends upon the mode of experiencing reality. Whoever plunges into his experiences with the momentum of hope will remember in such wise that he is unable to forget. Nil admirari is therefore the real philosophy. No moment must be permitted so great a significance that it cannot be forgotten when convenient; each moment ought, however, to have so much significance that it can be recollected at will. Childhood, which is the age which remembers best, is at the same time most forgetful. The more poetically one remembers, the more easily one forgets; for remembering poetically is really only another expression for forgetting. In a poetic memory the experience has undergone a transformation, by which it has lost all its painful aspects. To remember in this manner, one must be careful how one lives, how one enjoys. Enjoying an experience to its full intensity to the last minute will make it impossible either to remember or to forget. For there is then nothing to remember except a certain satiety, which one desires to forget, but which now comes

back to plague the mind with an involuntary remembrance. Hence, when you begin to notice that a certain pleasure or experience is acquiring too strong a hold upon the mind, you stop a moment for the purpose of remembering. No other method can better create a distaste for continuing the experience too long. From the beginning one should keep the enjoyment under control, never spreading every sail to the wind in any resolve; one ought to devote oneself to pleasure with a certain suspicion, a certain wariness, if one desires to give the lie to the proverb which says that no one can have his cake and eat it too. The carrying of concealed weapons is usually forbidden, but no weapon is so dangerous as the art of remembering. It gives one a very peculiar feeling in the midst of one's enjoyment to look back upon it for the propose of remembering it.

One who has perfected himself in the twin arts of remembering and forgetting is in a position to play at battledore and shuttlecock with the whole of existence.

The extent of one's power to forget is the final measure of one's elasticity of spirit. If a man cannot forget he will never amount to much. Whether there be somewhere a Lethe gushing forth, I do not know; but this I know, that the art of forgetting can be developed. However, this art does not consist in permitting the impressions to vanish completely; forgetfulness is one thing, and the art of forgetting is something quite different. It is easy to see that most people have a very meager understanding of this art, for they ordinarily wish to forget only what is unpleasant, not what is pleasant. This betrays a complete one-sidedness. Forgetting is the true expression for an ideal process of assimilation by which the experience is reduced to a sounding-board for the soul's own music. Nature is great because it has forgotten that it was chaos; but this thought is subject to revival at any time. As a result of attempting to forget only what is unpleasant, most people have a conception of oblivion as an

untamable force which drowns out the past. But forgetting is really a tranquil and quiet occupation, and one which should be exercised quite as much in connection with the pleasant as with the unpleasant. A pleasant experience has as past something unpleasant about it, by which it stirs a sense of privation; this unpleasantness is taken away by an act of forgetfulness. The unpleasant has a sting, as all admit. This, too, can be removed by the art of forgetting. But if one attempts to dismiss the unpleasant absolutely from mind, as many do who dabble in the art of forgetting, one soon learns how little that helps. In an unguarded moment it pays a surprise visit, and it is then invested with all the forcibleness of the unexpected. This is absolutely contrary to every orderly arrangement in a reasonable mind. No misfortune or difficulty is so devoid of affability, so deaf to all appeals, but that it may be flattered a little; even Cerberus accepted bribes of honey-cakes, and it is not only the lassies who are beguiled. The art in dealing with such experiences consists in talking them over, thereby depriving them of their bitterness; not forgetting them absolutely, but forgetting them for the sake of remembering them. Even in the case of memories such that one might suppose an eternal oblivion to be the only safeguard, one need permit oneself only a little trickery, and the deception will succeed for the skillful. Forgetting is the shears with which you cut away what you cannot use, doing it under the supreme direction of memory. Forgetting and remembering are thus identical arts, and the artistic achievement of this identity is the Archimedean point from which one lifts the whole world. When we say that we *consign* something to oblivion, we suggest simultaneously that it is to be forgotten and yet also remembered.

The art of remembering and forgetting will also insure against sticking fast in some relationship of life, and make possible the realization of a complete freedom.

One must guard against *friendship.* How is a friend defined? He is not what philosophy calls the necessary other, but the superfluous third. What are friendship's ceremonies? You drink each other's health, you open an artery and mingle your blood with that of the friend. It is difficult to say when the proper moment for this arrives, but it announces itself mysteriously; you feel some way that you can no longer address one another formally. When once you have had this feeling, then it can never appear that you have made a mistake, like Geert Vestphaler, who discovered that he had been drinking to friendship with the public hangman. What are the infallible marks of friendship? Let antiquity answer: *idem velle, idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia*, and also extremely tiresome. What are the infallible marks of friendship? Mutual assistance in word and deed. Two friends form a close association in order to be everything to one another, and that although it is impossible for one human being to be anything to another human being except to be in his way. To be sure one may help him with money, assist him in and out of his coat, be his humble servant, and tender him congratulations on New Year's Day, on the day of his wedding, on the birth of a child, on the occasion of a funeral.

But because you abstain from friendship it does not follow that you abstain from social contacts. On the contrary, these social relationships may at times be permitted to take on a deeper character, provided you always have so much more momentum in yourself that you can sheer off at will, in spite of sharing for a time in the momentum of the common movement. It is believed that such conduct leaves unpleasant memories, the unpleasantness being due to the fact that a relationship which has meant something now vanishes and becomes as nothing. But this is a misunderstanding. The unpleasant is merely a piquant ingredient in the sullenness of life. Besides, it is possible for the same relationship again to play a significant role, though in another manner. The essential thing is never to stick fast, and for

this it is necessary to have oblivion back of one. The experienced fanner lets his land lie fallow now and then, and the theory of social prudence recommends the same. Everything will doubtless return, though in a different form; that which has once been present in the rotation will remain in it, but the mode of cultivation will be varied. You therefore quite consistently hope to meet your friends and acquaintances in a better world, but you do not share the fear of the crowd that they will be altered so that you cannot recognize them; your fear is rather lest they be wholly unaltered. It is remarkable how much significance even the most insignificant person can gain from a rational mode of cultivation.

One must never enter into the relation of *marriage.* Husband and wife promise to love one another for eternity. This is all very fine, but it does not mean very much; for if their love comes to an end in time, it will surely be ended in eternity. If, instead of promising forever, the parties would say: until Easter, or until May-day comes, there might be some meaning in what they say; for then they would have said something definite, and also something that they might be able to keep. And how does a marriage usually work out? In a little while one party begins to perceive that there is something wrong, then the other party complains, and cries to heaven: faithless! faithless! A little later the second party reaches the same standpoint, and a neutrality is established in which the mutual faithlessness is mutually cancelled, to the satisfaction and contentment of both parties. But it is now too late, for there are great difficulties connected with divorce.

Such being the case with marriage, it is not surprising that the attempt should be made in so many ways to bolster it up with moral supports. When a man seeks separation from his wife, the cry is at once raised that he is depraved, a scoundrel, etc. How silly, and what an indirect attack upon marriage! If marriage has reality, then he is sufficiently punished by forfeiting this happiness; if it has no reality, it is absurd to abuse him

because he is wiser than the rest. When a man grows tired of his money and throws it out of the window, we do not call him a scoundrel; for either money has reality, and so he is sufficiently punished by depriving himself of it, or it has none, and then he is, of course, a wise man.

One must always take care not to enter into any relationship in which there is a possibility of many members. For this reason friendship is dangerous, to say nothing of marriage. Husband and wife are indeed said to become one, but this is a very dark and mystic saying. When you are one of several, then you have lost your freedom; you cannot send for your traveling boots whenever you wish, you cannot move aimlessly about in the world. If you have a wife it is difficult; if you have a wife and perhaps a child, it is troublesome; if you have a wife and children, it is impossible. True, it has happened that a gypsy woman has carried her husband through life on her back, but for one thing this is very rare, and for another, it is likely to be tiresome in the long run — for the husband. Marriage brings one into fatal connection with custom and tradition, and traditions and customs are like the wind and weather, altogether incalculable. In Japan, I have been told, it is the custom for husbands to lie in childbed. Who knows but the time will come when the customs of foreign countries will obtain a foothold in Europe?

Friendship is dangerous, marriage still more so; for woman is and ever will be the ruin of a man, as soon as he contracts a permanent relation with her. Take a young man who is fiery as an Arabian courser, let him marry, he is lost. Woman is first proud, then is she weak, then she swoons, then he swoons, then the whole family swoons. A woman's love is nothing but dissimulation and weakness.

But because a man does not marry, it does not follow that his life need be wholly deprived of the erotic element. And the erotic ought also to have infinitude; but poetic infinitude, which can just as well be limited to an hour

as to a month. When two beings fall in love with one another and begin to suspect that they were made for each other, it is time to have the courage to break it off; for by going on they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. This seems a paradox, and it is so for the feeling, but not for the understanding. In this sphere it is particularly necessary that one should make use of one's moods; through them one may realize an inexhaustible variety of combinations.

One should never accept appointment to an official position. If you do, you will become a mere Richard Roe, a tiny little cog in the machinery of the body politic; you even cease to be master of your own conduct, and in that case your theories are of little help. You receive a title, and this brings in its train every sin and evil. The law under which you have become a slave is equally tiresome, whether your advancement is fast or slow. A title can never be got rid of except by the commission of some crime which draws down on you a public whipping; even then you are not certain, for you may have it restored to you by royal pardon.

Even if one abstains from involvement in official business, one ought not to be inactive, but should pursue such occupations as are compatible with a sort of leisure; one should engage in all sorts of breadless arts. In this connection the self-development should be intensive rather than extensive, and one should, in spite of mature years, be able to prove the truth of the proverb that children are pleased with a rattle and tickled with a straw.

If one now, according to the theory of social jurisprudence, varies the soil — for if he had contact with one person only, the rotation method would fail as badly as if a farmer had only one acre of land, which would make it impossible for him to fallow, something which is of extreme importance — then one must also constantly vary himself, and this is the essential secret. For this purpose one must necessarily have control over one's moods. To control them in the sense of producing them at will is

impossible, but prudence teaches how to utilize the moment. As an experienced sailor always looks out over the water and sees a squall coming from far away, so one ought always to see the mood a little in advance. One should know how the mood affects one's own mind and the mind of others, before putting it on. You first strike a note or two to evoke pure tones, and see what there is in a man; the intermediate tones follow later. The more experience you have, the more readily you will be convinced that there is often much in a man which is not suspected. When sentimental people, who as such are extremely tiresome, become angry, they are often very entertaining. Badgering a man is a particularly effective method of exploration.

The whole secret lies in arbitrariness. People usually think it easy to be arbitrary, but it requires much study to succeed in being arbitrary so as not to lose oneself in it, but so as to derive satisfaction from it. One does not enjoy the immediate but something quite different which he arbitrarily imports into it. You go to see the middle of a play, you read the third part of a book. By this means you insure yourself a very different kind of enjoyment from that which the author has been so kind as to plan for you. You enjoy something entirely accidental; you consider the whole of existence from this standpoint; let its reality be stranded thereon. I will cite an example. There was a man whose chatter certain circumstances made it necessary for me to listen to. At every opportunity he was ready with a little philosophical lecture, a very tiresome harangue. Almost in despair, I suddenly discovered that he perspired copiously when talking. I saw the pearls of sweat gather on his brow, unite to form a stream, glide down his nose, and hang at the extreme point of his nose in a drop-shaped body. From the moment of making this discovery, all was changed. I even took pleasure in inciting him to begin his philosophical instruction, merely to observe the perspiration on his brow and at the end of his nose.

The poet Baggesen says somewhere of someone that he was doubtless a good man, but that there was one insuperable objection against him, that there was no word that rhymed with his name. It is extremely wholesome thus to let the realities of life split upon an arbitrary interest. You transform something accidental into the absolute, and, as such, into the object of your admiration. This has an excellent effect, especially when one is excited. This method is an excellent stimulus for many persons. You look at everything in life from the standpoint of a wager, and so forth. The more rigidly consistent you are in holding fast to your arbitrariness, the more amusing the ensuing combinations will be. The degree of consistency shows whether you are an artist or a bungler; for to a certain extent all men do the same. The eye with which you look at reality must constantly be changed. The Neo-Platonists assumed that human beings who had been less perfect on earth became after death more or less perfect animals, all according to their deserts. For example, those who had exercised the civic virtues on a lower scale (retail dealers) were transformed into busy animals, like bees. Such a view of life, which here in this world sees all men transformed into animals or plants (Plotinus also thought that some would become plants), suggests rich and varied possibilities. The painter Tischbein sought to idealize every human being into an animal. His method has the fault of being too serious, in that it endeavors to discover a real resemblance.

The arbitrariness in oneself corresponds to the accidental in the external world. One should therefore always have an eye open for the accidental, always be *expeditus,* if anything should offer. The so-called social pleasures for which we prepare a week or two in advance amount to so little; on the other hand, even the most insignificant thing may accidentally offer rich material for amusement. It is impossible here to go into detail, for no theory can adequately embrace the concrete. Even the most completely developed

theory is poverty-stricken compared with the fullness which the man of genius easily discovers in his ubiquity.

DIARY OF THE SEDUCER

Sua passion' prédominante è la *giovin principiante*
DON GIOVANNI, ARIA NO. 4

I CANNOT CONCEAL from myself, scarcely can I master the anxiety which grips me at this moment, when I decide for my own satisfaction to make a clear and accurate copy of the rough transcript which I was able at the time to secure only in the greatest haste and with much disquietude. The situation stands out before me just as alarmingly, but also as reprehensibly, as it did at that time. Contrary to his custom, he had not locked his secretary, so its whole content was at my disposal; but it is futile for me to try to extenuate my behavior by reminding myself that I did not open the drawer. One drawer was pulled out. In it I found a number of loose papers, and on top of them lay a book in broad quarto, tastefully bound. On the upper side was placed a vignette of white paper on which he had written in his own hand: *Commentarius perpetuus No. 4.* Vainly, however, have I tried to make myself believe that if the face of the book had not been turned up, and if the strange title had not tempted me, I should not have fallen into temptation, or I should at least have resisted it. The title was peculiar, not so much in itself as because of its surroundings. From a hasty glance at the loose papers I learned that these contained interpretations of erotic situations, a few hints about one and another relationship, outlines for letters of a very peculiar character, which I later learned to know in their artistically perfected, calculated carelessness. When now, after having looked into the scheming mind of this depraved personality, I recall my situation; when, with my eye alert for every subtlety, I in thought approach that drawer, it makes the same impression upon me as it must make upon a police officer when he enters the room of a forger, opens his belongings,

and finds in a drawer a number of loose papers, samples of handwriting; on one there is a piece of tracing, on another a monogram, on a third a line of reversed writing. It clearly proves to him that he is on the right track, and his satisfaction over this is mingled with a certain admiration for the study and industry which is here evidenced.

In my case it might have turned out a little differently, since I am less accustomed to tracking down criminals, and am not armed — with a policeman's badge. I should have felt with double weight the truth that I was following unlawful ways. At that time I was no less deficient in thoughts than in words, as is usually the case. One is overawed by an impression until reflection again reasserts itself and, swift and manifold in its movements, insinuates itself with the unknown stranger and coaxes him around. The more reflective thought is developed, the sooner it knows how to pull itself together; it becomes, like a passport clerk dealing with foreign travelers, so accustomed to seeing eccentric figures that it is not easily disconcerted. But although my reflective thought is certainly now very strongly developed, still at first I was greatly astonished. I remember very well that I turned pale, that I almost fell over, and how alarmed I was about it. Suppose he had come home, had found me swooning, with the drawer in my hand — a bad conscience can still make life interesting.

The title of the book did not strike me in itself; I thought it was a collection of excerpts which seemed quite natural to me since I knew that he had always pursued his studies with enthusiasm. It contained, however, something quite different. It was neither more nor less than a diary, carefully kept; and as I, from what I had formerly known about him, had not found that his life particularly needed a commentary, so now I do not deny, after that first glimpse, that the title was selected with much taste and understanding, with a true, aesthetically objective superiority over himself and over the situation. The title harmonizes perfectly with the whole content

of the Diary. His life had been an attempt to realize the task of living poetically. With a keenly developed talent for discovering the interesting in life, he had known how to find it, and after finding it, he constantly reproduced the experience more or less poetically. His Diary is therefore neither historically exact nor simply fiction, not indicative but subjunctive. Although the experience is recorded, naturally, after it has happened — sometimes, perhaps, a long time after — yet it is often described with the dramatic vividness of an action taking place before one's very eyes. That he should have done this because he had any ulterior purpose in writing the Diary is highly improbable; that, considered in the strictest sense, it merely had significance for himself personally is obvious; and the whole production as well as the individual parts forbids the assumption that I have before me a poetical work, one perhaps intended for publication. He did not need to fear anything personally in publishing it, for most of the names are so unusual that there is absolutely no probability of their being authentic, except that I have suspected that the Christian name was historically correct, so that he might always be sure of identifying the actual person, while every outsider would be misled by the surname. Such at least was the case with Cordelia, the girl I knew, around whom the chief interest centers; she was rightfully called Cordelia, but not, however, Wahl.

Still, how can we account for the fact that the Diary has acquired such a poetic coloring? The answer to this is not difficult; it is explained by the fact of his poetic temperament, which, we might say, is not rich enough, or, perhaps, not poor enough, to distinguish poetry and reality from one another. The poetical was the *more* he himself brought with him. This *more* was the poetical he enjoyed in the poetic situation of reality; he withdrew this again in the form of poetic reflection. This afforded him a second enjoyment, and his whole life was motivated by enjoyment. In the first instance he enjoyed the aesthetic personally, in the second instance he

enjoyed his own aesthetic personality. In the first instance the point was that he enjoyed egoistically and personally what in part was reality's gift to him and in part was that with which he himself had impregnated reality; in the second instance his personality was effaced, and he enjoyed the situation, and himself in the situation. In the first instance he constantly needed reality as occasion, as factor; in the second instance, reality was submerged in the poetic. The fruit of the first stage is thus the mood from which the Diary emerges as the fruit of the second stage, this word being used in the latter instance in a somewhat different sense from that in the first. Thus the poetic was constantly present in the ambiguity in which he passed his life.

Back of the world in which we live, far in the background, lies another world. The relation between the two is not unlike the relation we sometimes see in the theater between the forestage scene in the regular acting area and a scrim scene projected behind it. Through a thin gauze we see, as it were, a world of gauze, lighter, more ethereal, qualitatively different from the actual world. Many people who appear bodily in the actual world do not belong in it but in that other. But the fact that a man can thus dwindle away, aye, almost vanish from reality, may be a symptom of health or of sickness. The latter was the case with this man I had once known without knowing him. He did not belong to reality, and yet he had much to do with it. He was constantly rushing around, but even when he most completely devoted himself to it, he was already beyond it. But it was not the good which beckoned him away, nor was it precisely the bad; even at this moment I dare not say that about him. He had suffered from an *exacerbatio cerebri,* for which reality did not afford a sufficient stimulus, at most only a temporary one. He was not unequal to the pressure of reality; he was not too weak to bear it, not at all, he was too strong; but this strength was really a sickness. As soon as reality had lost its significance as a stimulus, he was

disarmed, and this constituted the evil in him. He was conscious of this even in the moment of stimulation, and the evil lay in this consciousness.

I had known the girl whose story makes up the principal part of the Diary. Whether he had seduced others I do not know; it would seem so from his papers. He seems also to have been expert in another kind of practice wholly characteristic of him, for he was far too intellectually inclined to be a seducer in the ordinary sense of the word. One learns too from the Diary, that it was sometimes something altogether arbitrary that he sought, a mere greeting for example, and under no circumstances would he accept more, because this was the most beautiful thing about the person concerned. By the aid of his intellectual endowments he had known how to tempt a young girl and attract her to himself, without really caring to possess her. I can imagine that he knew how to excite a girl to the highest pitch, so that he was certain that she was ready to sacrifice everything. When the affair reached this point, he broke it off without himself having made the slightest advances and without having let fall a single word of love, let alone a declaration, a promise. And still it had happened, and the consciousness of it was doubly bitter for the unhappy girl because there was not the slightest thing to which she could appeal, because she was constantly tossed about by her varying moods in a terrible witches' dance, in which she alternately reproached herself and forgave him, then presently reproached him, and then, since the relationship had had reality only in a figurative sense, she must constantly struggle with the doubt as to whether the whole affair was not a figment of the imagination. She could not confide in anyone, for she had nothing definite to confide. When one has had a dream one can tell it to another person, but this which she had to tell was no dream, it was real, and yet when she wished to speak of it and relieve her troubled mind, there was nothing to tell. She felt it very keenly. No one could grasp it. Scarcely could she herself do so, and yet it rested upon her with an alarming weight.

Such victims were of a quite distinct nature. They were not the unfortunate girls who, cast out, or believing that they would be cast out of society, wailed loudly and wholeheartedly, who now and then, when the heart became overcharged, found relief in hate or forgiveness. There was no visible change in their appearance; they maintained their customary relationships, as respected as ever, and yet they were changed, almost inexplicably to themselves, incomprehensibly to others. Their lives were not like those snapped off or broken, but they had become introspective; lost to others, they vainly sought to find themselves. In the same way as one might say that his way through life was untraceable (for his feet were so formed that he left no footprints, thus I best picture to myself his infinite self-reflection), in that same sense one might say that no victim surrendered to him. He lived far too intellectually to be a seducer in the common understanding of the word. Sometimes, however, he assumed a parastatic body, and was then sheer sensuality. Even his affair with Cordelia is so complicated that it was possible for him to appear as the one seduced; indeed, even the unfortunate girl herself was sometimes bewildered about it; here, too, his footprints are so indistinct that any certainty is impossible. The individuals were merely a stimulus to him; he cast them off as a tree sheds its leaves — he bourgeons again, the leaves wither.

But how, I wonder, does he regard himself? As he has led others astray, so he ends, I think, by going astray himself. The others he perverted not outwardly, but in their inward natures. There is something revolting when a man directs a traveler, perplexed about his way, to the wrong road, and then leaves him alone in his error; but what is that compared with causing a man to go astray inwardly? The lost wayfarer always has the consolation that the scene is constantly changing before him, and with every change there is born the hope of finding a way out. He who goes astray inwardly has not so great a range; he soon discovers that he is going about in a circle from

which he cannot escape. I think it will be this way with him later, to a still more terrible extent. I can imagine nothing more excruciating than an intriguing mind, which has lost the thread of its continuity and now turns its whole acumen against itself, when conscience awakens and compels the schemer to extricate himself from this confusion. It is in vain that he has many exits from his foxhole; at the moment his anxious soul believes that it already sees daylight breaking through, it turns out to be a new entrance, and like a startled deer, pursued by despair, he constantly seeks a way out, and finds only a way in, through which he goes back into himself. Such a man is not always what we might call a criminal, he is even frequently disappointed by his intrigues, and yet a more terrible punishment overtakes him than befalls a criminal; for what is even the pain of remorse in comparison with this conscious madness? His punishment has a purely aesthetic character; for even to say that his conscience awakens is too ethical an expression to use about him. Conscience exists for him only as a higher degree of consciousness, which expresses itself in a disquietude that does not, in a more profound sense, accuse him, but which keeps him awake, and gives him no rest in his barren activity. Nor is he mad; for the multitude of finite thoughts are not petrified in the eternity of madness.

Poor Cordelia! For her too it will be difficult to find peace. She forgives him from the bottom of her heart, but she finds no rest, for then doubt awakens: it was she who broke the engagement, she who was the cause of the disaster, it was her pride which craved the uncommon. Then she repents, but she finds no rest; for then the accusing thoughts acquit her: it was he who so subtly put this plan in her mind. Then she hates, her heart finds relief in curses, but she finds no rest; she again reproaches herself, reproaches herself because she has hated when she herself is a sinner, reproaches herself because, however crafty he has been, she always remains guilty. It is hard for her that he has deceived her, even harder, one might

almost be tempted to say, that he has developed the many-tongued reflection within her, that he has developed her aesthetically so far that she no longer listens humbly to one voice but is able to hear many voices at one time. Then memory awakens within her, she forgets the fault and the guilt, she remembers the beautiful moments, and she is stimulated to an unnatural exaltation. In such moments she not only remembers him, she understands him with a clairvoyance which only shows how greatly she has developed. Then she sees him neither as criminal nor as a high-minded person, she feels him only aesthetically. She had once written me a letter in which she expressed her feeling about him. "Sometimes he was so intellectual that I felt myself annihilated as woman. At other times he was so wild and passionate, so filled with desire, that I almost trembled before him. Sometimes he was like a stranger to me, sometimes he was devotion itself; when I then flung my arms about him, sometimes everything was suddenly changed, and I embraced the cloud. I knew this expression before I knew him, but he taught me to understand it. When I use it, I always think of him, just as I think all my thoughts in connection with him. I have always loved music; he was a matchless instrument, always responsive; he had a range such as no musical instrument has; he was the epitome of all feelings and moods, no thoughts were too lofty for him, none too despairing, he could roar like an autumn gale, he could whisper soundlessly. No word of mine was without effect, and yet I cannot say that my word did not fail of its effect; for it was impossible for me to know what effect it would have. With an indescribable but mysterious, blissful, inexpressible dread I listened to this music I had myself evoked, and yet did not evoke; always there was harmony, always I was carried away by him."

Terrible as this is for her, it will be more terrible for him; this I can infer from the fact that even I am never quite able to control the anxiety that grips me every time I think about the case. I, too, am carried away into that

nebulous realm, that dream world, where every moment one is afraid of his own shadow. Often I seek in vain to tear myself away; I follow along like a menacing shadow, an accuser who is mute. How strange! He has spread the deepest secrecy over everything, and yet there is an even deeper secret, and that is the fact that I am privy to it and that I became such in a reprehensible manner. To forget the whole affair would not be possible. I have sometimes thought of speaking to him about it. Still, how would that help? He would either deny everything, insist that the Diary was a poetic experiment, or he would impose silence upon me, something I could not refuse to promise, considering the manner in which I became aware of his secret. There is really nothing else which involves so much seduction and so great a curse as a secret.

I have received from Cordelia a collection of letters. Whether it includes all of them I do not know, although it seems to me she once intimated that she had confiscated some of them. I have made a copy of them, and will now introduce them into my manuscript. It is true that the dates are lacking, but even if I had them it would not help much, since the Diary as it progresses becomes more and more sparing of dates, until at last it is a marked exception when one is given, as if the story in its progress becomes qualitatively significant to such a degree that, although historically real, it comes nearer to being idea, and for this reason the time-designations become a matter of indifference. What did help me, however, is the fact that at different places in the Diary is found a word or two, whose significance I did not at first understand. By comparing them with the letters, I finally realized that they furnish the motive for the letters. It will therefore be a simple matter to insert them in the right places, as I shall always introduce them where the motives seem to suggest them. Had I not found these suggestive leads, I should have been guilty of a misunderstanding; for it would not have occurred to me, as now from the Diary seems probable, that

at times the letters followed one another so frequently that she seems to have received several in one day. Had I followed my original intention, I should have distributed them more evenly, not suspecting what an effect he had produced by the passionate energy with which he had employed this, like all other means, to keep Cordelia at the highest point of passion.

In addition to the complete revelation of his relationship to Cordelia, the Diary also contained, interspersed here and there, several little occasional sketches. Wherever these were found, there appeared the marginal notation, N.B. These sketches have absolutely nothing to do with Cordelia's story, but they have given me a vivid conception of the meaning of an expression he often used, which I formerly understood in a different way: "One ought always to have a little extra line out." Had an earlier volume of the Diary fallen into my hands, I should probably have come across a number of these, which he somewhere on the margin characterized as *actiones in distans*; for he himself says that Cordelia occupied him too much for him really to have time to look around.

Shortly after he had deserted Cordelia, he received from her two letters which he returned unopened. These were among the letters Cordelia turned over to me. She had herself broken the seal, and so I ventured to copy them. She has never mentioned their content to me; on the other hand, when she referred to her relationship to Johannes, she usually recited a little verse, which, of course, I recognized as Goethe's, which seemed to mean something different according to the diversity of her moods and the different expressions conditioned by these:

Gehe,
Verschmähe Die Treue,
Die Reue Kommt nach.

The letters run as follows:

Johannes!

I do not call you mine, I realize very well that you have never been mine, and I am severely enough punished in that this thought once delighted my soul; and yet I call you mine; my seducer, my deceiver, my enemy, my murderer, the cause of my unhappiness, the grave of my joy, the abyss of my destruction. I call you mine, and I call myself yours, and as it once flattered your ear which proudly bent to receive my adoration, so shall it now sound like a curse upon you, a curse to all eternity. Rejoice not at the thought that it might be my intention to pursue you, or to arm myself with a dagger to incite your ridicule! Flee where you will, I am still yours; go to the uttermost parts of the earth, I am still yours; love a hundred others, I am still yours; aye, even in the hour of death I am yours. The very language I use against you must prove that I am yours. You have presumed to deceive a human being so that you became everything to me, so now will I find all my pleasure in being your slave — I am *thine,* thine, thine, thy curse.

Thy Cordelia.

Johannes!

There was a rich man, he had great herds, and many cattle, small and great; there was a poor little maiden, she had only a single lamb, which ate from her hand and drank of her cup. You were the rich man, rich in all the glories of the earth; I was the poor maiden who had only her love. You took it; you rejoiced in it; then passion beckoned you, and you did sacrifice the little I possessed; of your own would you sacrifice nothing. There was a rich man who owned great herds, and many cattle great and small; there was a poor little maiden who had only her love.

Thy Cordelia.

Johannes!

Is there then no hope at all? Will your love never awaken again? For I well know that you did love me, even if I do not know what it is that assures me of it. I will wait, however long the time may be, I will wait, wait till you are weary of the other loves, then shall your love for me rise up from its grave, then will I love you as before, thank you as before, as before, O Johannes, as before! Johannes! is your heartless coldness against me, is it your true nature? Was your love, your rich love, base and untruthful? Are you now again your true self? Have patience with my love, forgive me for continuing to love you. I well know that my love is a burden to you, but there will come a day when you will return to your Cordelia. Your Cordelia! Hear that pleading word! Your Cordelia! Your Cordelia!

Thy Cordelia.

If Cordelia did not possess the compass she admired in her Johannes, one still sees clearly that she was not without modulation. Her mood is plainly stamped upon each of her letters, even though she lacked a certain clearness in the presentation. This is especially the case with the second letter, where one rather suspects than understands her meaning, but to me this imperfection makes it very touching.

April 4.

Caution, my beautiful unknown! Caution! To step out of a carriage is not so simple a matter. Sometimes it is a decisive step. I might lend you a novel of Tieck's in which you would read about a lady who in dismounting from her horse involved herself in an entanglement such that this step became definitive for her whole life. The steps on carriages, too, are usually so badly arranged that one almost has to forget about being graceful and risk a desperate spring into the arms of coachman and footman. Really, coachmen and footmen have the best of it. I really believe I shall look for a job as footman in some house where there are young girls; a servant easily

becomes acquainted with the secrets of a little maid like that. — But for heaven's sake, don't jump, I beg of you! To be sure, it is dark; I shall not disturb you; I only pause under this street lamp where it is impossible for you to see me, and one is never embarrassed unless one is seen, and of course if one cannot see, one cannot be seen. — So out of regard for the servant who might not be strong enough to catch you, out of regard for the silk dress with its lacy fringes, out of regard for me, let this dainty little foot, whose slenderness I have already admired, let it venture forth into the world, dare to trust that it will find a footing. Should you tremble lest it should not find it, or should you tremble after it has done so, then follow it quickly with the other foot, for who would be so cruel as to leave you in that position, who so ungracious, so slow in appreciating the revelation of beauty? Or do you fear some intruder? Not the servant of course, nor me, for I have already seen the little foot, and since I am a natural scientist, I have learned from Cuvier how to draw definite conclusions from such details. Therefore, hurry! How this anxiety enhances your beauty! Still anxiety in itself is not beautiful; it is so only when one sees at the same time the energy which overcomes it. Now! How firmly this little foot stands. I have noticed that girls with small feet generally stand more firmly than the more pedestrian large-footed ones.

Now who would have thought it? It is contrary to all experience; one does not run nearly so much risk of one's dress catching when one steps out of a carriage as when one jumps out. But then it is always risky for young girls to go riding in a carriage, lest they finally have to stay in it. The lace and ribbons got caught and are torn in shreds, and that's the end of the matter. No one has seen anything. To be sure a dark figure appears, wrapped to the eyes in a cloak. The light from the street lamp shines directly in your eyes so you cannot see whence he came. He passes you just as your are entering the door. Just at the critical second, a side glance falls upon its

object. You blush, your bosom becomes too full to relieve itself in a single sigh; there is exasperation in your glance, a proud contempt; there is a prayer, a tear in your eye, both are equally beautiful, and I accept both as my due; for I can just as well be the one thing as the other.

But I am malicious — what is the number of the house? What do I see? A window display of trinkets; my beautiful unknown, perhaps it may be outrageous in me, but I follow the gleam.... She has forgotten the incident. Ah, yes, when one is seventeen years old, when at that happy age one goes shopping, when every object large or small that one handles gives one unspeakable pleasure, then one easily forgets. She has not even seen me. I am standing at the far end of the counter by myself. A mirror hangs on the opposite wall; she does not reflect on it, but the mirror reflects her. How faithfully it has caught her picture, like a humble slave who shows his devotion by his faithfulness, a slave for whom she indeed has significance, but who means nothing to her, who indeed dares to catch her, but not to embrace her. Unhappy mirror, that can indeed seize her image, but not herself! Unhappy mirror, which cannot hide her image in its secret depths, hide it from the whole world, but on the contrary must betray it to others, as now to me. What agony, if men were made like that! And are there not many people who are like that, who own nothing except in the moment when they show it to others, who grasp only the surface, not the essence, who lose everything if this appears, just as this mirror would lose her image, were she by a single breath to betray her heart to it?

And if a man were not able to hold a picture in memory even when he is present, then he must always wish to be at a distance from beauty, not so near that the earthly eye cannot see how beautiful that is which he holds, and which is lost to sight in his embrace. This beauty he can regain for the outward sight by putting it at a distance, but he may also keep it before the eyes of his soul, when he cannot see the object itself because it is too near,

when lips are closed on lips.... Still, how beautiful she is! Poor mirror, it must be agony! It is well that you know no jealousy. Her head is a perfect oval, and she bends it a little forward, which makes her forehead seem higher, as it rises pure and proud, with no external evidence of intellectual faculties. Her dark hair wreathes itself softly and gently about her temples. Her face is like a fruit, every plane fully rounded. Her skin is transparent, like velvet to the touch, I can feel that with my eyes. Her eyes — well, I have not even seen them, they are hidden behind lids armed with silken fringes which curve up like hooks, dangerous to whoever meets her glance. Her head is a Madonna head, pure and innocent in cast; like a Madonna she is bending forward, but she is not lost in contemplation of the One. A variety of emotions finds expression in her countenance. What she considers is the manifold, the multitude of things over which worldly pomp and splendor cast their glamor. She pulls off her glove to show the mirror and myself a right hand, white and shapely as an antique, without adornment, and with no plain gold ring on her fourth finger. Good! — She looks up, and how changed everything is, and yet the same; the forehead seems lower, the oval of her face a little less regular, but more alive. She is talking now with the salesman, she is merry, joyous, chatty. She has already chosen two or three things, she picks up a fourth and holds it in her hand, again she looks down, she asks what it costs. She lays it to one side under her glove, it must be a secret, intended for — a lover? But she is not engaged. Alas, there are many who are not engaged and yet have a lover; many who are engaged, and who still do not have a lover.

Ought I to give her up? Ought I to leave her undisturbed in her happiness?... She is about to pay, but she has lost her purse.... She probably mentions her address, I will not listen to it, for I do not wish to deprive myself of surprise; I shall certainly meet her again in life, I shall recognize her, and perhaps she will recognize me; one does not forget my side glance

so easily. Her turn will come when I am surprised at meeting her in circles where I did not expect to. If she does not recognize me, if her glance does not immediately convince me of that, then I shall surely find an opportunity to look at her from the side. I promise that she will remember the situation. No impatience, no greediness, everything should be enjoyed in leisurely draughts; she is marked out, she shall be run down.

5th day.

I like that! Alone in the evening on Eastern Street! Yes, I see the footman is following you. Do not believe I think so ill of you as to think you would go out quite alone; do not believe that I am so inexperienced that in my survey of the situation, I did not notice this sober figure. But why in such a hurry? You are still a little anxious, you can feel your heart beating; this is not because of an impatient longing to get home, but because of an impatient fear streaming through your entire body with its sweet unrest, and hence the swift rhythm of your feet. But still it is a splendid, priceless experience to go out alone — with the footman behind.

...You are sixteen years old, you are a reader, that is to say, you read novels. You have accidentally, in going through your brothers' room, caught a word or two of a conversation between them and an acquaintance, something about Eastern Street. Later you whisked through several times, in order, if possible, to get a little more information. All in vain. One ought, it would seem, if one is a grown-up girl, to know a little something about the world. If without saying anything, one could only go out with the servant following. No, thank you. What kind of face would Father and Mother make, and, too, what excuse could one give? If one were going to a party, it would afford no opportunity, it would be a little too early, for I heard August say, between nine and ten o'clock. Going home it would be too late, and then one must usually have an escort to drag along with one. Thursday evening when we return from the theater would seem to offer a splendid

opportunity, but then we always go in the carriage and have Mrs. Thomsen and her worthy cousins packed in with us. If one ever had a chance to drive alone, then one could let down the window and look around a bit. Still, it is always the unexpected that happens. Today my mother said to me: “You have not yet finished your father’s birthday present; to give you time to work undisturbed, you may go to your Aunt Jette’s and stay until tea time, and I’ll send Jens to fetch you!” It was really not a very pleasing suggestion, for Aunt Jette is very tiresome; but this way I shall be going home alone with the servant at nine o’clock. Then when Jens comes he will have to wait till a quarter of ten before leaving. Only I might meet my brother or August — that wouldn’t be so good, for then I should probably be escorted home — Thanks, but I prefer to be free — but if I could get my eye on them, so that they did not see me....

Now, my little lady, what do you see, and what do you think I see? In the first place, the little cap you have on is very becoming, and quite harmonizes with the haste in your appearance. It is not a hat, neither is it a bonnet, but rather a kind of hood. But you cannot possibly have worn that when you went out this morning. Could the servant have brought it, or could you have borrowed it from your Aunt Jette? — Perhaps you are incognito. — You should not lower the veil completely if you are going to make observations. Or perhaps it is not a veil, but only a piece of lace. It is impossible to tell in the dark. Whatever it is, it conceals the upper part of your face. Your chin is really pretty, a little too pointed; your mouth is small, open a trifle; that is because you have gone so fast. Your teeth — white as snow. That is the way it should be, teeth are of the utmost importance; they are a life-guard, hiding behind the seductive softness of the lips. The cheeks glow with health. If one tips one’s head a little to the side, it might be possible to get a glimpse under the veil or lace.

Look out! An upward glance like that is more dangerous than a direct one. It is as in fencing; and what weapon is so sharp, so penetrating, so flashing in action, and hence so deceptive, as the eye? You feint a high quart, as fencers say, and attack in second; the swifter the attack follows the feint, the better. The moment of the feint is indescribable. The opponent, as it were, feels the slash, he is touched! Aye, that is true, but in quite a different place from where he thought.... Indefatigable she goes on, without fear and without reproach. Look out! Yonder comes a man; lower your veil, let not his profane glance besmirch you. You have no idea — it will perhaps be impossible for you for a long time to forget the disgusting fear with which it touched you — you did not notice, as I did, that he had sized up the situation. Your servant is set upon as the nearest objective. — There, now you see the consequences of going out alone with a servant. The servant has fallen down. At bottom it is laughable, but what will you do now? That you should turn back and assist him in getting to his feet is impossible, to go on with a mud-stained servant is disagreeable, to go alone is dangerous. Look out! the monster approaches.... You do not answer me. Just look at me, is there anything about me to frighten you? I simply make no impression at all upon you. I seem to be a good-natured person from quite a different world. There is nothing in my speech to disturb you, nothing to remind you of the situation, no movement that in the least approaches too near you. You are still a little frightened, you have not yet forgotten the attempt of that sinister figure against you. You feel a certain kindliness toward me, the embarrassment that keeps me from looking directly at you makes you feel superior. It pleases you and makes you feel safe. You are almost tempted to poke a little fun at me. I wager that at this moment you would have the courage to take my arm, if it occurred to you.... So you live on Storm Street. You curtsy to me coldly and indifferently. Have I deserved this, I who rescued you from the whole unpleasantness? You regret your coldness, you

turn back, thank me for my courtesy, offer me your hand — why do you turn pale? Is not my voice unchanged, my bearing the same, my glance as quiet and controlled? This handclasp? Can then a handclasp mean anything? Aye, much, very much, my little lady; within a fortnight I shall explain it all to you, until then you must rest in the contradiction that I am a good-natured man who, like a knight of old, came to the assistance of a young girl, and that I can also press her hand in a no less good-natured manner.

April 7.

"All right! Monday at one o'clock at the Exhibition." Very well, I shall have the honor of appearing at a quarter of one. A little rendezvous. Last Saturday I finally put business aside and decided to call upon my much-traveled friend, Adolph Bruun. Accordingly I set out about seven o'clock for Western Street where someone had told me he was living. However, I did not find him, not even on the fourth floor after I had puffed my way up. When I turned to go downstairs, my ear caught the sound of a melodious feminine voice saying, "All right! Monday at one o'clock at the Exhibition, when everybody is out, for you know I never dare to see you at home." The invitation was not for me, but for a young man who was out of the door in a jiffy, so fast that my eyes could not even follow him, to say nothing of my feet. Why do they not have light on stairways? Then I might perhaps have found out whether it would be worth while to be so punctual. Still, if there had been a fight, I probably should not have heard anything. What is is rational, and I am and remain an optimist.... Now which one is she? The place swarms with girls, to use Donna Anna's expression. It is exactly a quarter of one. My beautiful unknown! I wish your intended were as punctual as I am, or perhaps you would rather not have him come fifteen minutes too early. As you will, I am at your service in every way.... "Charming enchantress, witch or fairy, let your cloud vanish," reveal yourself; you are probably already here but invisible to me; betray yourself,

for otherwise I dare not expect a revelation. Could there perhaps be several here on a similar errand? Possibly so, for who knows the way of a man, even when he goes to an exhibition? — There comes a young girl through the front room, hurrying faster than a bad conscience after a sinner. She forgets to give up her ticket, the doorkeeper detains her. Heaven preserve us! Why is she in such a hurry? It must be she. Why such unseemly impetuosity? It is not yet one o'clock. Do but remember that you are to meet your beloved. Are you on such occasions entirely indifferent as to how you look, or is this not a time for putting your best foot forward? When such an innocent young damsel goes to a rendezvous, she goes about the matter like a madwoman. She is all of a flutter. Meanwhile I sit here comfortably in my chair and contemplate a delightful bucolic landscape.

She is the child of the devil, the way she storms through all the rooms. You must learn to conceal your eagerness a little. Remember the advice given to the young Lisbeth: "Is it becoming for a young girl to let it be seen how eager she is to be mated?" But of course your meeting is one of the innocent ones.... A rendezvous is generally regarded by lovers as a most beautiful moment. I myself still remember as clearly as if it were yesterday the first time I hastened to the appointed place, with a heart as full as it was ignorant of the joy that awaited me, the first time I knocked three times, the first time a window opened, the first time a little wicket gate was unfastened by the unseen hand of a girl who hid herself as she opened it, the first time I hid a girl under my cloak in the light summer night. But there is much illusion blended in this judgment. The dispassionate third party does not always find the lovers most beautiful at this moment. I have witnessed rendezvous where, although the girl was charming and the man handsome, the total impression was almost disgusting and the meeting itself was far from being beautiful, although I supposed it seemed so to the lovers. As one becomes more experienced, he gains in a way; for though one loses the

sweet unrest of impatient longing, he gains ability in making the moment really beautiful. I am vexed when I see a man with such an opportunity so upset that mere love gives him delirium tremens. It is caviar to the general. Instead of having enough discretion to enjoy her disquiet, to allow it to enhance and inflame her beauty, he only produces a wretched confusion, and yet he goes home joyously imagining it to have been a glorious experience.

But where the devil is the fellow? It is nearly two o'clock. He surely is a fine fellow, this lover! Such a scoundrel, to keep a lady waiting for him! Now I, on the contrary, am a very trustworthy man! It might indeed be best to speak to her as she now passes me for the fifth time. "Pardon my boldness, fair lady. You doubtless are looking for your family. You have hurried past me several times, and as my eyes followed you, I noticed that you always stop in the next room; perhaps you do not know that there is still another room beyond that. Possibly you might find your friends there." She curtsied to me, a very becoming gesture. The occasion is favorable. I am glad the man has not come; one always fishes best in troubled waters. When a young girl is emotionally disturbed, one can successfully venture much which would otherwise be ill-advised. I bow to her as politely and distantly as possible; I sit back again in my chair, look at my landscape, and watch her out of the corner of my eye. To follow her immediately would be too risky; it might seem intrusive to her and put her on her guard. At present she believes that I addressed her out of sympathy, and I am in her good graces. — I know very well that there is not a soul in that inner room. Solitude will be beneficial to her. As long as she sees many people about, she is disturbed; when she is alone, she will relax. Quite right that she should stay in there. After a little I shall stroll by; I have earned a right to speak to her, she owes me at least a greeting.

She has sat down. Poor girl, she looks so sad, I believe she has been crying, at least she has tears in her eyes. It is outrageous — to make such a girl cry. But be calm, you shall be avenged, I will avenge you, he shall learn what it means to wait. — How beautiful she is, now that her conflicting emotions have subsided and her mood is relaxed. Her being is a harmony of sadness and pain. She is really captivating. She sits there in a traveling dress, and yet she was not going to travel; she wandered out in search of joy, and it is now an indication of her pain, for she is like one from whom gladness flees. She looks like one who had forever said farewell to the beloved. Let him go! The situation is favorable, the moment beckons. The important thing now is to express myself so that it will seem as if I think she is looking for her family, or a party of friends, and yet warmly enough to make every word significant to her feelings. Thus I get a chance to insinuate myself into her thoughts.... Now may the devil take the scoundrel! There is a man approaching, who undoubtedly is he. Now write me down as a bungler if I cannot shape the situation as I want it. Yes, indeed, a little finesse brings one well out of it. I must find out their relationship, bring myself into the situation. When she sees me she will involuntarily have to smile at my believing that she was looking for someone quite different. That smile makes me an accomplice, which is always something. — A thousand thanks, my child, that smile is worth much more to me than you realize; it is the beginning, and the beginning is always the hardest. Now we are acquainted, and our acquaintance is based on a piquant situation; it is enough for me until later. You will hardly remain here more than an hour; in two hours I shall know who you are, why else do you think the police maintain a directory?

9th day.

Have I gone blind? Has the inner eye of my soul lost its power? I have seen her, but it is as if I had seen a heavenly vision, so absolutely has her

image again vanished from me. Vainly have I exerted all the power of my soul to recall this image. If I were to meet her again, then I should recognize her instantly, even among a hundred other girls. Now she has fled away, and my soul's eye vainly seeks to overtake her with its longing. — I was walking along the esplanade, apparently unconcerned and indifferent to my surroundings, although my roving eye let nothing pass unnoticed, when I saw her. My eye fixed itself steadfastly upon her, it paid no attention to its master's will. It was impossible for me to direct its attention to the object I wished to look at, so I did not look, I stared. Like a fencer who becomes frozen in his pass, so was my eye fixed, petrified in the one appointed direction. It was impossible for me to look away, to withdraw my glance, impossible for me to see because I saw too much. The only thing I have retained is that she wore a green cloak; that is all, that is what one may call catching the cloud instead of Juno; she slipped away from me as Joseph did from Potiphar's wife, and left only her cloak behind. She was accompanied by a middle-aged lady, presumably her mother. I can describe her from top to toe, and that although I glanced at her only *en passant.* So it goes. The girl made an impression upon me, and I have forgotten her; the other made no impression upon me, and I can remember her.

11th day.

My soul is still ensnared in the same contradiction. I know that I have seen her, but I also know that I have forgotten her again, so that what memory retains carries no refreshment with it. With a violent unrest, as if my welfare were at stake, my soul demands that picture, and yet it does not appear; I could tear out my eyes to punish them for their forgetfulness. Then when I have raged in impatience and have at length recovered my calm, it is as if anticipation and memory wove a picture; but it will not take on definite form, because I cannot fix it in its proper context. It is like a pattern in a fine loom; the pattern is lighter than the ground; by itself it cannot be seen

because it is too light. This is a peculiar state for me to be in, and yet it is not altogether unpleasant because it proves to me that I am still young. This is also to be learned from the consideration that I constantly seek my prey among young girls, not among young women. A woman is less natural, more coquettish; an affair with her is not beautiful, not interesting; it is piquant, and the piquant is always the last stage — I had never expected to be able again to taste the first fruits of infatuation; I am submerged in love, I have been given what swimmers call a ducking; no wonder that I am a little dazed. So much the better, so much the more I promise myself from this affair.

14th day.

I scarcely recognize myself. My mind is like a turbulent sea, swept by the storms of passion. If another could see my soul in this condition, it would seem to him like a boat that buried its prow deep in the sea, as if in its terrible speed it would rush down into the depths of the abyss. He does not see that high on the mast a lookout sits on watch. Roar on, ye wild forces, ye powers of passion! Let your dashing waves hurl their foam against the sky. You shall not engulf me. Serene I sit like the king of the cliff.

I can hardly find a footing. Like a water-bird I seek in vain to alight on my mind's turbulent sea. And yet such turbulence is my element; I build upon it as *Alcedo ispida* builds its nest on the sea.

Turkey gobblers flare up when they see red; so it is with me when I see green, every time I see a green cloak; and since my eyes often deceive me, sometimes all my hopes are frustrated by the livery of a porter from Frederik's Hospital.

20th day.

I must have more restraint, it is the chief requisite for all enjoyment. It does not look as if I shall very soon get any information about the girl who fills my soul and my thoughts so completely that the want is kept alive. I shall now keep very quiet, for this condition, this vague, indefinite, but still strong disquiet, has a sweetness of its own. I have always loved to lie in a boat on a moonlit night, out on one or another of our beautiful lakes. I haul in the sails, take in the oars and the rudder, stretch myself out full length, and gaze up at the blue vault of the heavens. When the waves rock the boat on their bosom, when the clouds scud fast before the wind so that the moon constantly vanishes and reappears, then I find rest in this unrest. The motion of the waves lulls me, their lapping against the boat is a monotonous cradle song; the swift flight of the clouds, the shifting lights and shadows all intoxicate me, so that I am in a waking dream. So now I lie here with sails furled and rudder up, longing and impatient expectation toss me about in their arms; longing and expectation become more and more quiet, more and more blissful: they fondle me like a child, the heaven of hope arches over me, and her image floats across my vision like the moon's, indistinct, now dazzling me with its light, now with its shadow. How much enjoyment in thus drifting on moving water — how much enjoyment in being moved within oneself.

21st day.

The days go by, and yet I am no nearer. Young girls please me more than ever, and still I have no desire to enjoy them. I seek her everywhere. It often makes me unreasonable, dims my vision, enervates my pleasure. That beautiful season is now approaching when in the public life on the streets and in the lanes one buys up those petty claims which in the social life of winter cost dearly enough; for a young girl may forget many things, but not a situation. Social intercourse, it is true, brings one into contact with the fair sex, but there is no artistry in beginning an affair in such surroundings. In

society every young girl is armed, the occasion is poor and, encountering it repeatedly, she gets no sensuous thrill. On the street she is on the open sea, everything acts more strongly upon her, everything seems more mysterious. I would give a hundred dollars for a smile from a girl I met on the street, not ten dollars for a pressure of the hand at a party; that is an entirely different kind of currency. When the affair is under way, then you may openly seek out in society the person involved. You carry on a cryptic conversation with her which excites her pleasantly; it is the most effective incitement I know. She does not dare to talk about it, and yet she keeps thinking about it; she does not know whether you have forgotten it or not; now you delude her in one way, now in another. This year I shall probably not collect much; this girl absorbs too much of my attention. In a certain sense my returns are poor, but then I have the prospect of the grand prize.

5th day.

Accursed Chance! Never have I cursed you because you have appeared; I curse you because you do not appear at all. Or is this perhaps a new invention of yours, unfathomable being, barren mother of all, sole remnant of the past, when necessity gave birth to freedom, when freedom was again lured back into its mother's womb? Accursed Chance! You, my only confidante, the only being whom I consider worthy of being my ally and my enemy, always the same by forever being different, always incomprehensible, always a riddle! You whom I love with all my soul, in whose image I mold myself, why do you not show yourself? I do not beg you, I do not humbly entreat you to show yourself in this manner or that; such worship would be idolatry, not acceptable unto you. I challenge you to battle, why do you not appear? Or has the pendulum of the world system stopped, is your riddle solved, so that you too have hurled yourself into the sea of eternity? Terrible thought, for thus the world comes to a standstill from boredom! Accursed Chance! I await you. I shall not overcome you

with principles nor with what foolish people call character; no, I will be your poet! I will not be a poet for others; show yourself! I will be your poet. I consume my own verse, and that will sustain me. Or do you think I am not worthy? Like a Bayadère dancing to the honor of her gods, so have I devoted myself to your service. Nimble, thinly clad, agile, unarmed, I renounce everything for you. I own nothing, I desire to own nothing, I love nothing, I have nothing to lose, but I am not therefore more worthy of you, you who long ago must have wearied of tearing human beings away from what they love, tired of their cowardly sighs and cowardly petitions. Take me by surprise, I am ready. No stakes, let us fight for honor. Show her to me, show me a possibility which seems an impossibility; show her to me among the shades of the underworld, I shall fetch her up; let her hate me, despise me, be indifferent to me, love another, I am not afraid; only let the waters be troubled, the silence be broken. To starve me in this way is paltry of you, you who imagine that you are stronger than I am.

May 6th.

Spring is at hand. Everything is in bloom, including the young girls. Coats are laid aside, probably my green one too is put away. This is what comes of making a girl's acquaintance on the street instead of in society where one may learn immediately what her name is, who her family is, where she lives, whether she is betrothed. This last is very important information for all sedate and constant suitors who would never think of falling in love with an engaged girl. Such a slow-poke would be fatally embarrassed if he were in my place; he would be entirely devastated if he succeeded in getting information and learned in addition that she was engaged. This, however, would not worry me very much. An engagement is only a comic difficulty. I fear neither comic nor tragic difficulties; the only one I fear is the tedious one. Not yet have I obtained a single bit of

information, despite the fact that I have left nothing untried, and have often felt the truth of the poet's words:

Nox et hiems longaeque viae, saevique dolores mollibus his castris, et labor omnis inest.

Perhaps after all she does not live here in town, perhaps she is from the country, perhaps, perhaps — I could become furious over all these perhapses, and the more furious I become, the more perhapses. I always have money in readiness for a journey. I seek her in vain at the theater, at concerts, balls, and on the promenades. In a certain way it pleases me; a young girl who participates too much in such recreations is usually not worth making a conquest of. She very often lacks the primitiveness which for me is always *conditio sine qua non.* It is less inconceivable to think of finding a Preciosa among the gypsies than in the assembly halls where young girls are offered for sale — in all innocence, of course, the Lord preserve us, who says otherwise!

12th day.

Really, my child, why do you not stand quietly in the doorway? There is nothing to criticize about a young girl's stopping in a doorway out of the rain. I do the same myself when I have no umbrella, sometimes even when I have one, as now, for instance. Besides, I could mention a number of married ladies who have not hesitated to do so. One has only to stand quietly, turn her back to the street, so that passers-by may not know whether she is standing there or is about to enter the house. On the other hand, it is incautious to hide behind the half-opened door, principally on account of the consequences, for the more you conceal yourself, the more unpleasant it is to be surprised. If, however, you do try to hide, you should stand quite still, committing yourself to the care of your good genius and guardian

angel; especially should you refrain from peeping out — to see if it has stopped raining. If you really want to know, then you should step boldly out and look earnestly up at the sky. But if you poke your head out a little curiously, bashfully, anxiously, uncertainly, and then hurriedly draw it back — then every child understands it, they call it playing hide-and-seek. And I who am never absent from a game, should I hold back and not answer when you call!... Don't think for a moment that I'm getting ideas. You had no ulterior motive in sticking your head out. It was the most innocent action in the world. In return you mustn't get ideas about me; my good name and reputation couldn't stand it. After all it was you who started this. I advise you never to tell anyone about this affair; you were really in the wrong. What have I proposed to do other than any gentleman would — to offer you my umbrella? — Now where has she gone? Excellent, she has hidden herself in the porter's doorway. — She is a most charming little girl, merry and happy. "Perhaps you could tell me about a young lady who just this blessed moment was looking out of the door, evidently in need of an umbrella. I am looking for her, I and my umbrella." — You laugh. — Perhaps you allow me to send my servant in the morning to fetch it, or you suggest that I should call a cab. — Nothing to thank me for, it is only a simple courtesy. — She is certainly the most pleasing little maiden I have seen in a long time, her glance is so childlike and yet so fearless, her personality is charming, so pure, and yet she is curious. — Go in peace, my child; if it were not for a certain green cloak, I might have desired to establish a closer acquaintance. — She starts down Market Street. How guileless and confident she was, not a trace of prudery. See how lightly she walks, how gaily she tosses her head. The green cloak certainly demands self-denial.

15th day.

Thank you, kind Chance, accept my gratitude! Straight was she and proud, mysterious and thought-provoking as a spruce tree, a shoot, a thought, which from the depths of earth shoots up toward heaven, unexplained and inexplicable, an undivided unity. The beech tree forms a crown; its leaves whisper about what is taking place down beneath it. The spruce has no crown, no story, itself mysterious — as she was. She was hidden in herself, she rose up out of herself, a serene pride was hers, like the daring spirit of the spruce, even though rooted to earth. A sadness enveloped her like the mournful cooing of the stock-dove, a profound longing which wanted nothing. A riddle she was, mysteriously possessed of her own solution, a secret mystery, and what are all the secrets of the diplomats in comparison with this enigma, and what in all the world is so beautiful as the word which solves it? How significant, how pregnant, our Danish language is: *to solve [at lose],* what an ambiguity it implies, how beautiful and how strong are all the combinations where this word appears. As the wealth of the soul is a riddle as long as the string of the tongue is not loosed *[l0st],* by which the riddle would be solved *[lost],* so, too, a young girl is a riddle. Thanks, kind Chance, accept my gratitude! If I had seen her in winter, she would have been enveloped in the green cloak, cold perhaps, and the inclemency of the weather might have made her less beautiful. Now, however, what luck! I get to see her first in the most beautiful time of the year, in the spring, in the light of late afternoon. True, winter also has its advantages. A brilliantly lighted ballroom can indeed be a flattering setting for a young lady in evening dress; but she seldom appears to the best advantage here, partly because so much is required of her, and this requirement acts disturbingly upon her whether she gives way to it or resists it; partly because everything suggests vanity and the transitory, and produces an impatience which makes the enjoyment less refreshing. There are certain times when I should not wish to dispense with the ballroom, to

dispense with its costly luxury, its priceless abundance of youth and beauty, its manifold play of forces. But I do not so much enjoy as I revel in its possibilities. It is not a single beauty who captivates me, but a totality; a vision floats past me in which all these feminine natures blend into one another, and all these emotions seek something, seek rest in one composite picture which is not seen.

It was on the path between the north and east gates, about half past six. The sun had lost its intensity, only the memory of it remained in a mild radiance spreading over the landscape. Nature breathed more freely. The lake was calm, smooth as a mirror, the comfortable houses on Bleachers' Green were reflected in the water, which farther out was dark as metal. The path and buildings on the other side were lighted up by the faint rays of the setting sun. The sky was clear and bright, only a single fleecy cloud floated unnoticed across it, best seen by looking at the lake, beyond whose shining surface it was lost to view. Not a leaf moved. — It was she! My eye had not deceived me, even if the green coat had done so. Although I had long been prepared for this moment, it was still impossible for me to control a certain excitement, a rising and falling, like the song of the lark soaring above the adjacent fields. She was alone. Again have I forgotten how she was dressed, and yet now I have a picture of her. She was alone, preoccupied, manifestly not with herself but with her thoughts. She was not thinking, but the quiet play of her thoughts wove a picture of longing before her soul, a picture which held a certain foreboding, unclarified as a young girl's many sighs. She was at her most adorable age. A young girl does not develop in the sense that a boy does; she does not grow, she is born. A boy begins to develop at once, and takes a long time for the process; a young girl takes a long time in being born, and is born full-grown. Therein lies her infinite richness; at the moment she is born she is full-grown, but this moment of birth comes late. Hence she is twice born, the second time when she

marries, or, rather, at this moment she ceases being born, at that moment she *is* born. It is not only Minerva who sprang full-grown from the head of Jupiter, not only Venus who rose in all her beauty from the depths of the sea; every young girl is like this if her womanliness has not been destroyed by what men call development. She does not awaken by degrees, but all at once; meantime she dreams all the longer, provided that people are not so inconsiderate as to arouse her too early. But her dream has infinite richness.

She was preoccupied not with herself, but in herself, and this preoccupation afforded infinite rest and peace to her soul. Thus is a young girl rich; to encompass this richness makes one rich. She is rich although she does not know that she possesses anything; she is rich, she is a treasure! Quiet peace broods over her, and a little melancholy. She was light to look upon, as light as Psyche who was carried away by Zephyr, even lighter, for she carried herself away. Let the theologians dispute about the assumption of the Madonna; that does not seem inconceivable to me, for she no longer belonged to the world; but a young girl's lightness is incomprehensible and makes sport of the law of gravity. — She noticed nothing, and for that reason believed herself unnoticed. I kept my distance from her, and absorbed her image. She walked slowly, no precipitancy disturbed her peace or the quiet of her surroundings. A boy sat by the lake fishing. She stood still and watched the cork floating on the water. She had not walked very fast, but she wanted to cool off. She loosened a little scarf that was fastened about her neck under her shawl; a soft breeze from the water fanned her bosom, white as snow, and yet warm and full. The boy did not seem to like to have anyone watch his catch, he turned around and regarded her with a rather phlegmatic glance. He really cut a ridiculous figure, and I did not wonder that she began to laugh at him. How youthfully she laughed! If she had been alone with the boy, I do not believe she would have been afraid to fight with him. Her eyes were large and radiant; when one looked into them

they had a dark luster which suggested an infinite depth, impossible to fathom; pure and innocent it was, gentle and quiet, full of mischief when she smiled. Her nose was finely arched; when I saw her profile, her nose seemed to merge into her forehead, which made it look a little shorter, a little more spirited.

She walked on, I followed. Fortunately there were many strollers on the path. While I exchanged a word or two with one and another of my acquaintance, I let her gain a little on me, and then soon overtook her again, thus relieving myself of the necessity of walking as slowly as she did, while keeping my distance. She went toward Eastgate. I was anxious to get a nearer view without being seen. On the corner stood a house from which I might be able to do so. I knew the family, and consequently needed only to call upon them. I hurried past her at a rapid pace as if I had not noticed her in any way. I got a long way ahead of her, greeted the family right and left, and then took possession of the window that looked out upon the path. She came, I looked and looked, while at the same time I carried on a conversation with the tea party in the drawingroom. Her walk readily convinced me that she had not taken many dancing lessons, and yet there was a pride in it, a natural nobility, but a lack of self-consciousness. I got to see her one more time than I had counted on. From the window I could not see very far along the path, but I could see a pier extending out into the lake, and to my great surprise I caught sight of her again out there. It occurred to me that perhaps she lives out here in the country, that maybe her family has a summer home here.

I was on the point of regretting my call, for fear that she might turn back and I thus lose sight of her, indeed the fact that she was already at the far end of the pier indicated that she would soon turn back and disappear, when she reappeared close by. She was walking past the house. In great haste I seized my hat and stick in order, if possible, to pass her and then again fall

behind as many times as might be necessary, until I found out where she lived — when in my haste I happened to jostle the arm of a lady who was just about to serve tea. A frightful screaming arose. I stood there with my hat and stick, anxious only to get away. To turn the incident off and motivate my retreat, I exclaimed pathetically: "Like Cain, I shall be banished from the place where this tea was spilled!" But as if everything had conspired against me, my host conceived the preposterous idea of continuing my remarks, and declared loudly and solemnly that I should not be allowed to go a single step until I had enjoyed a cup of tea, and had also served the ladies with tea in place of that which was spilled, thus setting everything right again. Since I was perfectly certain that my host under the circumstances would consider it courteous to detain me by force, there was nothing I could do except to stay. — She had vanished!

16th day.

How beautiful it is to be in love, how interesting to know that one is in love. Lo, that is the difference. I could become embittered at the thought that for a second time I have lost sight of her, and yet in a certain sense it pleases me. The image I now have of her shifts uncertainly between being her actual and her ideal form. This picture I now summon before me; but precisely because it either is reality, or the reality is the occasion, it has a peculiar fascination. I am not impatient, for she certainly lives in the town, and that is enough for me at present. This possibility is the condition of her image appearing so clearly — everything should be savored in slow draughts. And should I not be content, I who regard myself as a favorite of the gods, I who had the rare good fortune to fall in love again? That is something that no art, no study can effect, it is a gift. But having been fortunate enough to start a new love affair, I wish to see how long it can be sustained. I coddle this love as I never did my first. The opportunity falls to one's lot seldom enough, so if it does appear, then it is in truth worth

seizing; for the fact is enough to drive one to despair, that it requires no art to seduce a girl but good fortune to find one worth seducing. — Love has many mysteries, and this first falling in love is also a mystery, even though a minor one — most people who rush into it become engaged or commit some other foolishness, and in the twist of a wrist it is all over, and they neither know what they have gained nor what they have lost. Twice now has she appeared before me and vanished; that signifies that she will soon appear again. When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he added: "And the fact that thou didst dream this twice, signifies that it will soon be fulfilled."

Still, it would be interesting if one could see a little in advance the forces whose coming makes up life's content. She lives now in her quiet peace; she does not even suspect that I exist, even less what goes on in my inner consciousness, still less the certainty with which I peer into her future; for my soul demands more and more reality, it becomes stronger and stronger. When a girl at first sight does not produce a deep enough impression upon one to arouse the ideal, then the reality is generally not particularly desirable; on the other hand, if she does arouse the ideal, then however experienced one may be, he is usually a little overwhelmed. I always advise anyone who is not certain of his hand, his eye, his victory, to risk the attack at this first stage, just because he is so overwhelmed that it gives him supernatural powers; for this excessive emotion is a curious blending of love and egoism. He will, however, miss some of the enjoyment; for he is too much involved in the situation to enjoy it. Which is the more attractive choice is difficult to decide, which the more interesting, is easy. However, it is always well to come as near the dividing line as possible. This affords me the real enjoyment, but what others may enjoy, I do not know with certainty. Mere possession is not worth much, and the means which such lovers employ are generally wretched enough. They do not disdain the use of

money, power, influence, soporifics, and so on. But what enjoyment can there be in love if there is not the most absolute self-surrender, at least on one side? But such submission as a rule requires spirit, and such lovers are usually destitute of spirit.

19th day.

So her name is Cordelia. Cordelia! That is a lovely name, and that, too, is of importance, since it is often very disconcerting to have to use an ugly name in connection with the tenderest predicates. I recognized her a long way off; she was walking with two other girls on the left side. Their pace seemed to indicate that they would soon stop. I stood on a street corner and read a poster, while constantly keeping an eye on my unknown. They took leave of each other. The two had evidently gone a little out of their way, for they took an opposite direction. She came on toward my corner. When she had taken a few steps, one of the other girls came running after her, calling loudly enough for me to hear: Cordelia! Cordelia! Then the third girl came up, and they stood with their heads together for a secret conference, which I tried in vain to hear. Then all three laughed and went away somewhat more hastily in the direction the two had taken before. I followed them. They went into a house on the Strand. I waited a long time since it seemed probable that Cordelia might soon return alone. However that did not happen.

Cordelia! That is a really excellent name, and it was also the name of King Lear's third daughter, that remarkable girl who did not carry her heart on her lips, whose lips were silent while her heart beat warmly. So it is with my Cordelia. She resembles her, I am certain of that. But in another way she does wear her heart on her lips, not in the form of words, but more cordially in the form of a kiss. How healthily full her lips were! Never have I seen prettier ones.

That I am really in love I can tell among other things by the reticence with which I deal with this matter, even to myself. All love is secretive, even faithless love, when it has the proper aesthetic factor in it. It never occurred to me to desire a confidant or to boast of my affairs. So I am almost glad that I did not find out where her home is, but only a place where she often comes. Perhaps on account of this I have also come a little nearer to my goal. I can, without attracting her attention, start my investigations, and from this fixed point it will not be difficult to secure an approach to her family. Should this circumstance, however, appear to be a difficulty — *eh bien!* It is all in the day's work; everything I do, I do *con amore;* and so too I love *con amore.*

20th day.

Today I got some information about the house into which she disappeared. It belongs to a widow by the name of Jansen, who is blessed with three daughters. I can get an abundance of information there, that is to say, in so far as they have any. The only difficulty is in understanding this information when raised to the third power, for all three talk at once. Her name is Cordelia Wahl, and she is the daughter of a Navy captain. He died some years ago, and her mother also. He was a very hard and austere man. She now lives with an aunt, her father's sister, who resembles her brother, but who otherwise is a very respectable woman. This is good as far as it goes, but for the rest, they know nothing about the house. They never go there, but Cordelia often visits them. She and the two girls are taking a course in cooking at the Royal Kitchen. For this reason she usually comes there early in the afternoon, sometimes in the morning, but never in the evening. They live a very secluded life.

Thus her story ends. There appears to be no bridge by which I can slip over into Cordelia's house.

She has then some understanding of the sorrows and of the dark side of life. Who would have suspected it? Still, these recollections belong to her earlier years; they are a shadow on her horizon, under which she has lived, but which she has never really noticed. It really is a very good thing; it has saved her womanliness, she is not spoiled. On the other hand, it will be important in raising her to a higher level, if one really understands how to bring it out. All such circumstances usually develop pride if they do not crush, and she is certainly far from being crushed.

21st day.

She lives near the ramparts. The location is not of the best for me, no neighbors whose acquaintance I might make, no public places where I might make my observations unnoticed. The ramparts themselves are little suitable, one is too conspicuous. If one descends to the street, one can hardly cross over to the side which extends along the base of the ramparts, for no one goes there and it would be very noticeable; if one walks along the side on which the houses front, one can see nothing. It is a corner house. From the street one can also see the windows overlooking the courtyard, there being no house next door. That is probably where her bedroom is.

22nd day.

Today I saw her for the first time at Mrs. Jansen's. I was introduced to her. She did not seem to care much about it, or to pay any attention to me. I made myself as inconspicuous as possible in order to observe her the better. She stayed only a moment, she had merely called for the daughters on the way to cooking school. While the two Jansen girls were getting their wraps, we two were alone in the room. With a cold, almost supercilious indifference, I made some remark to her, to which she replied with a courtesy altogether undeserved. Then they left. I could have offered to accompany them, but that might have set me down as a ladies' man, and I

am convinced that she is not to be won that way. — On the contrary, I preferred to leave a moment after they had gone, but to go more rapidly than they, and by another street, but likewise in the direction of the cooking school, so that just as they turned into Great Kingstreet, I passed them in the greatest hurry, without even a greeting or other recognition, to their great astonishment.

23rd day.

It is necessary for me to gain entrance to her home, and, in military parlance, I am ready. It promises to be, however, a rather complicated and difficult problem. I have never known a family so isolated. There are only herself and her aunt. No brothers, no cousins, not a thread to get hold of, no relatives however distant that one might lock arms with. I constantly go about with one arm hanging free. Not for anything in the world would I at this time go arm in arm with anyone; my arm is a grappling-hook always in readiness; it is designed for the uncertain returns, on the chance that there might appear in the distance, a long lost relative or friend from far away, from whom I might get a helping hand — and so clamber aboard. Anyway it is entirely wrong for a family to live so isolated; it deprives the poor girl of every opportunity of getting to know the world, to say nothing of other dangerous consequences. It always defeats itself. It is true about suitors also. By such isolation one may guard against petty thievery. In a very hospitable house the opportunities for theft are greater. That, however, doesn’t amount to much, for with girls from such homes there is not much to steal; when they are sixteen years old, their hearts are already completely filled samplers, and I never care about writing my name where many have already written. It never occurs to me to scratch my name on a windowpane or in an inn or upon a tree or a bench in Frederiksberg Park.

27th day.

The more I see of her the more I am convinced that she is a very isolated figure. A man ought never to be so, not even a young man; for since his development essentially depends upon reflection, he must therefore be in touch with others. A young girl should never try to be interesting, for the interesting always implies a reflection upon itself, just as in art the interesting always reflects the artist. A young girl who wishes to please by being interesting usually succeeds only in pleasing herself. From the aesthetic side this is the objection to all forms of coquetry. The case is quite different when it comes to the incidental coquetry, supplied by nature's own movement, as for instance, the feminine blush of modesty, which is always coquetry in its most lovely form.

It may indeed happen that an interesting girl is also pleasing, but just as she herself has renounced her femininity, so also the men she pleases are usually the effeminate ones. Such a young girl really first becomes interesting through her relationship to men. Woman is the weaker sex, and yet she needs far more essentially to be alone in her youth than a man does; she must be self-contained, but that in which and through which she is self-contained is an illusion; this illusion is the dowry Nature has bestowed upon her, like that of a king's daughter. But this resting in illusion is just what isolates her. I have often wondered how it happens that there is nothing more demoralizing for a young girl than constant association with other young girls. This is evidently due to the fact that this companionship is neither the one thing nor the other; it disturbs the illusion, but it does not clarify it. Woman's most profound destiny is to be a companion to man, but through association with her own sex her reflection becomes centered on this association, and instead of becoming a companion, she becomes a lady's companion. The language itself is significant in this respect. Man is called master, but woman is not called maidservant or the like; no, the category of the essential is used; she is companion, not "companioness."

If I were to imagine my ideal girl, she would always be alone in the world, and thereby be self-contained, and especially she would not have girl friends. It is indeed true that there were three Graces, but it certainly has never occurred to anyone to imagine them talking together; they formed in their silent trinity a beautiful feminine unity. In this respect I would almost be tempted to recommend reviving the lady's bower, if this restraint were not also injurious. It is always highly desirable that a young girl be permitted liberty, but that no opportunities be offered her. Thus she becomes beautiful, but she is saved from becoming interesting. It is in vain that one would give a bridal veil to a young girl who has been much in the company of other young girls; but a man with true aesthetic appreciation always finds that a girl who is innocent in the deepest and truest sense is brought to him veiled, even if bridal veils are not in fashion.

She has been strictly brought up, for which I honor her parents even in their graves; she lives a very secluded existence, for which I could fall on her aunt's neck in gratitude. She has not learned to know the pleasures of the world, she has not a surfeit of small talk. She is proud, she disregards that which other young girls enjoy, and this is as it should be. That is a contradiction that I shall know how to profit by. Pomp and ceremony do not please her in the same sense that they please other girls; she is a little polemic, but this is necessary for a young girl with her enthusiasm. She lives in a world of fantasy. If she fell into the wrong hands, it might bring out something very unfeminine in her, precisely because she is so very feminine.

30th day.

Everywhere our paths cross. Today I met her three times. I am conscious of her slightest movement, when and where I shall meet her; but this knowledge is not used to secure a meeting with her; on the contrary, I squander my opportunities on a frightful scale. A meeting which has cost

me many hours of waiting is thrown away like a mere bagatelle. I do not meet her, I touch only the periphery of her existence. If I know that she is going to Mrs. Jansen's, then my arrival does not coincide with hers, unless I have some important observation to make. I prefer to arrive a little early at Mrs. Jansen's, and then to meet her, if possible, at the door or upon the steps, as she is coming and I am leaving, when I pass her by indifferently. This is the first net in which she must be entangled. I never stop her on the street; I may bow to her, but I never come close to her, but always keep my distance. Our continual encounters are certainly noticeable to her; she does indeed perceive that a new body has appeared on her horizon, whose orbit in a strangely imperturbable manner affects her own disturbingly, but she has no conception of the law governing this movement; she is rather inclined to look about to see if she can discover the point controlling it, but she is as ignorant of being herself this focus as if she were a Chinaman. It is with her as with my associates in general: they believe that I have a multiplicity of affairs, that I am always on the move, and that I say with Figaro, "one, two, three, four intrigues at the same time, that is my delight." I must first know her and her entire intellectual background before beginning my assault. Most men enjoy a young girl as they do a glass of champagne in a single frothing moment. Oh, yes, that is all right, and in the case of many young girls it is really the most one can manage to get; but here there is more. If the individual is too frail to endure clearness and transparency, O well, then one enjoys the obscurity, but she can evidently endure it. The more one can sacrifice to love, the more interesting. This momentary enjoyment is, if not in a physical yet in a spiritual sense, a rape, and a rape is only an imagined enjoyment; it is like a stolen kiss, a thing which requires no art. No, when one can so arrange it that a girl's only desire is to give herself freely, when she feels that her whole happiness depends on this, when she almost begs to make this free submission, then

for the first time there is true enjoyment, but this always requires spiritual influence.

Cordelia! What a glorious name! I sit at home and practice repeating it parrot-like. I say: Cordelia, Cordelia, my Cordelia, my own Cordelia. I can hardly keep from smiling at the thought of how I, by means of this routine, shall be able to say these words when the decisive moment comes. One should always make preliminary studies, everything must be properly planned. It is no wonder that poets always describe as the most beautiful moment the one when the lovers first call each other by their first names, when the lovers, not by sprinkling (although many never come any further than that), but by immersing themselves in the waters of love, rise from that baptism and now for the first time know each other as old friends, although they are but a minute old. To a young girl that moment is always the most beautiful, and in order to enjoy it rightly, one ought always to transcend it a little, so as to be not only baptismal candidate but also priest. A little irony makes the next moment the interesting one, it is a spiritual disrobing. One must be poet enough not to disturb the ceremony, and yet rogue enough to be on the lookout.

June 2nd.

She is proud, I have seen that for a long time. When she is in the company of the three Jansens she talks very little, their chatter evidently bores her, and certainly the smile on her lips seems to indicate it. I am relying on that smile. At other times she can let herself go in almost boyish wildness, to the great surprise of the Jansens. It is not inexplicable to me when I consider her childhood. She had only one brother, who was a year older. She knew only her father and brother, had been a witness to very serious scenes, which gave her a distaste for gossip in general. Her father and mother had not lived happily together; that which usually appeals to a young girl more or less clearly or vaguely has no attraction for her. It may

possibly be that she is puzzled about what it means to be a woman. Perhaps she may wish that she had been a boy instead of a girl.

She has imagination, spirit, passion, in short, all the substantialities, but is unaware of possessing them. I learned that by chance today. I know from Jansen & Company that she does not play, that it is against her aunt's principles.

I regret this, for music is always a good means of communicating with a girl, when one, mark this well, is prudent enough not to pose as a connoisseur. Today I went to Mrs. Jansen's. I had half opened the door without knocking, an effrontery that has often served me well, and which, when necessary, I turn into a jest by knocking on the open door. She sat alone at the piano — she seemed to be playing by stealth — it was a little Swedish melody; she did not play it very well, she became impatient, and then again, she played more softly. I closed the door and stood outside, listening to the change in her moods; there was sometimes a passion in her playing which reminded one of the maiden *Mettelil,* who smote the golden harp so passionately that milk gushed from her breasts. There was some sadness but also something dithyrambic in her execution. — I might have rushed in, seized the moment — that would have been foolish. — Memory is not only a means of preserving but also of enhancing; what is permeated by memory has a two-fold effect. — One often finds in books, especially in psalters, a little flower — there had been a beautiful moment which had furnished the occasion for keeping this, and yet the memory is even more beautiful. She is evidently concealing the fact that she plays, or perhaps she plays only this little Swedish melody — has it perhaps a special interest for her? All this I do not know, but therefore this incident is very important to me. When sometime I can talk more confidentially with her, I shall slyly lead her to this point and let her fall into the trap.

June 3rd.

Even yet I cannot decide how she is to be understood. Therefore I wait very quietly, very inconspicuously — aye, like a soldier on vidette duty who throws himself on the ground and listens for the faintest sound of an approaching enemy. I really do not exist for her in any real sense, not only not in a negative relationship, but simply not at all. Even yet I have not dared to experiment. — To see her was to love her, that is the way it is described in novels — aye, it is true enough, if love had no dialectic; but what does one really learn about love from novels? Sheer lies, which help to shorten the task.

When now after what I have learned, I think back upon the impression that first meeting made upon me, I find my ideas about her are considerably modified, to her advantage as well as to my own. It is not quite usual for a young girl to go out alone or for a young girl to be so introspective. I subjected her to my strict criterion: charming. But charm is a very fleeting factor, which is as yesterday when it is past. I had not imagined her in the environment in which she lives; least of all had I pictured her so unreflectingly familiar with the stormy side of life.

I wonder how it is with her emotions. She has certainly never been in love, for her spirit is too free-soaring for that, nor is she by any means one of those theoretically experienced maidens, who, long before their time, are so familiar with the thought of being in the arms of the loved one. The figures she has met in real life have hardly been able to bring her to confusion about the relation of dreams to reality. Her soul is still nourished by the divine ambrosia of ideals. But the ideal which hovers before her is not exactly a shepherdess or a heroine of romance, a mistress, it is someone like a Jeanne d’Arc.

The question is always whether her femininity is strong enough to make her reflective, or whether it is only to be enjoyed as beauty and charm; the

question is whether one dares to tense the bow more strongly. Certainly it is a wonderful thing to find a pure immediate femininity, but if one dares to attempt a change, then one gets the interesting. In such a case it is best simply to provide her with a suitor. Some people are superstitious enough to believe that this would be injurious for a young girl. — Indeed, if she is a very fine and delicate plant whose charm is her one outstanding quality, it would always be best for her never to have heard of love; but if this is not the case, it is an advantage, and I should never hesitate to bring forward a suitor, were none at hand. This suitor must not be a mere caricature either, for then nothing is gained; he must be a respectable young man, even attractive if possible, but not a man big enough for her passion. She looks down on such a man, she gets a distaste for love, she almost doubts her own reality when she feels what her destiny might be and sees what reality offers. If this is love, she says, it is nothing to get excited about. Her love makes her proud, this pride makes her interesting, it penetrates her being with a higher incarnation; but she is also approaching her downfall — all of which only makes her increasingly more interesting. However, it is best to find out about her acquaintances first, to see whether or not there might be such a suitor. Her own home furnishes no opportunity, or as good as none, but still she does go out, and so such a one might be found. To provide a suitor before knowing this is altogether inadvisable. To allow her to compare two equally insignificant suitors would be bad for her. I must find out whether there may not be such a lover in the offing, one who lacks the courage to storm the citadel, a chicken thief, who sees no opportunity in such a cloistered house.

Consequently, the strategic principle, the law governing every move in this campaign, is always to work her into an interesting situation. The interesting is the field on which the battle must be waged; the potentialities of the interesting must be exhausted. Unless I am mistaken, her whole

nature is designed for this, so that what I require is exactly what she gives, indeed, what she herself requires. Everything depends on finding out what the individual can give and therefore what she must demand in return. For this reason my love affairs always have a reality for myself, they mark a factor in my life, a creative period, of which I am fully aware; often they are bound up with one or another acquired skill. For the sake of the first girl I loved, I learned to dance; I learned to speak French for the sake of a little dancer. At that time, like all simpletons, I went to the public market, and I often made a fool of myself. Now I go in for the black market. Perhaps, however, she has exhausted one phase of the interesting; her secluded life seems to indicate that. It is now wise to find another phase, which at first sight may not seem so interesting to her, but which, just on account of this resistance, may become so to her. For this purpose I do not select the poetic but the prosaic. This is just the beginning. First her femininity is neutralized by prosaic reason and ridicule, not directly but indirectly, and at the same time by an absolutely colorless intellectuality. She almost loses her sense of the feminine, but in this condition she cannot stand by herself, she throws herself into my arms, not as if I were a lover, no, still quite neutrally. Then her femininity awakens, one arouses her to the highest pitch, one allows her to offend against one or another validity, she vents her rage upon it, her femininity reaches almost supernatural heights, she belongs to me with the force of a world-passion.

5th day.

I did not have to go far after all. She visits at the home of a wholesale merchant, Baxter by name. Here I found not only Cordelia, but also a man who appears very opportunely. Edward, the son of the house, is dead in love with her. To see that, one needs only half an eye, when one looks at his two eyes. He is in business with his father; a good-looking young man, quite

pleasant, somewhat bashful, which last I think does not hurt him in her eyes.

Poor Edward! He simply does not know how to go about his courtship. When he knows that she is to be there in the evening, then he dresses for her sake alone, puts on his new dark suit with collar and cuffs, just for her sake, and cuts an almost ridiculous figure among the quite commonplace company in the drawing-room. His embarrassment is almost incredible. If it were a pose, Edward would become a very dangerous rival to me. Embarrassment needs to be used very artistically, but it can be used to great advantage. How often have I not used it to fool some little maiden. Girls generally speak very harshly about bashful men, and yet they secretly like them. A little embarrassment always flatters a young girl's vanity, she feels her superiority, it is earnest money. When you have lulled them to sleep, when they believe that you are ready to die from embarrassment, then you have an opportunity to show that you are very far from that, that you are very well able to shift for yourself. By means of bashfulness, you lose your masculine significance, and therefore it is a relatively good means of neutralizing sexuality. Then when they notice that this shyness was only assumed, they are ashamed, they blush inwardly, and feel very strongly that they have certainly gone too far. It is the same as when people continue too long to treat a boy as a child.

7th day.

We are fast friends now, Edward and I; a true friendship, a beautiful relationship, exists between us, such as has not been seen since the palmiest days of Greece. We soon became intimates when, after having lured him into many conversations about Cordelia, I got him to confess his secret. It goes without saying that when all secrets are being revealed, this one is included with the others. Poor fellow, he has already sighed a long time. He

dresses up every time she comes, then accompanies her home in the evening; his heart beats fast at the thought of her arm resting on his, they walk home, gaze at the stars, he rings her bell, she disappears, he despairs, but hopes for better luck next time. He has not yet had the courage to set foot over her threshold, he who has had such excellent opportunities. Although inwardly I cannot refrain from making fun of Edward, there is still something really beautiful in his childishness. Although I ordinarily imagine myself to be fairly familiar with the very quintessence of the erotic, I have never observed this condition in myself, this fear and trembling, that is, to the degree that it takes away my self-possession, for otherwise I know it well enough, but only as tending to make me stronger. Perhaps someone will say that I have never been in love. Perhaps. I have told Edward a few home truths; I have encouraged him to rely on my friendship. Tomorrow he is going to take a decisive step; go in person and invite her out. I have led him to the desperate idea of inviting me to go with him; I have promised to do so. He regards this as an extraordinary display of friendship. The occasion is exactly as I would have it: we burst in and blurt it all out. Should she have the slightest doubt as to the meaning of my appearing on the scene, my appearance itself will confuse everything.

I have never before been accustomed to prepare myself for my part in a conversation; now this becomes necessary in order to entertain the aunt. I have shouldered the disinterested task of a tête-à-tête with her, thereby covering Edward's amorous advances toward Cordelia. The aunt formerly lived in the country, and by my own prodigious studies of agronomic literature, coupled with the aunt's sententious comments based on experience, I am making definite progress in insight and efficiency.

I have made myself very acceptable to the aunt; she regards me as a steady, reliable man whom it is a pleasure to entertain, not like some of our

fashionable young gentlemen. I do not seem to be particularly in Cordelia's favor. She is indeed too innocent and unspoiled to expect every man to dance attendance upon her, but still she is very conscious of the rebel in my nature.

When I sit thus in the comfortable living room, while she like a good angel diffuses her charm everywhere, over everyone with whom she comes in contact, over good and evil alike, then I sometimes get out of patience with myself; I am tempted to rush forth from my hiding place; for though I sit there, visible to everyone in the living room, still I am really lying in ambush. I am tempted to grasp her hand, to take her in my arms, to hide her in myself, for fear someone else should take her away from me. Or when Edward and I leave in the evening, when in taking leave she offers me her hand, when I hold it in mine, it sometimes becomes very difficult to let the bird slip out of my hand. Patience — *quod antea fuit impetus, nunc ratio* est — she must be quite otherwise ensnared in my web, and then suddenly I let the whole power of my love rush forth. We have not spoiled that moment for ourselves by billing and cooing, by unseemly anticipation, for which you must thank me, my Cordelia. I work to develop the contrast, I tense the bow of love to wound the deeper. Like an archer, I release the string, tighten it again, listen to its song, my battle ode, but I do not aim it yet, I do not even lay the arrow on the string.

When a small number of people are frequently together in the same room, a sort of easy pattern soon develops, in which each one has his own place and chair; thus a picture of the room is formed which one can easily reproduce for himself at will, a chart of the terrain. It was that way with us in the Wahl home; we united to form a picture. In the evening we drink tea there. Generally the aunt who previously has been sitting on the sofa, moves over to the little worktable, which place Cordelia in turn vacates. She goes over

to the tea table in front of the sofa, Edward follows her, I follow the aunt. Edward tries to be secretive, he talks in a whisper; usually he does it so well that he becomes entirely mute. I am not at all secretive in my outpourings to the aunt — market prices, a calculation of the quantity of milk needed to produce a pound of butter; through the medium of cream and the dialectic of buttermaking, there comes a reality which any young girl can listen to without embarrassment, but, what is far rarer, it is a solid, reasonable, and edifying conversation, equally improving for mind and heart. I generally sit with my back to the tea table and to the ravings of Edward and Cordelia. Meanwhile, I rave with the aunt. And is not Nature great and wise in her productivity, is not butter a precious gift, the glorious result of Nature and art! I had promised Edward that I would certainly prevent the aunt from overhearing the conversation between him and Cordelia, providing anything was really said, and I always keep my word. On the other hand, I can easily overhear every word exchanged between them, hear every movement. This is very important to me, for one cannot always know how far a desperate man will venture to go. The most cautious and faint-hearted men sometimes do the most desperate things. Although I have nothing at all to do with these two people, it is readily apparent that Cordelia constantly feels that I am invisibly present between her and Edward.

We four together make a peculiar picture. If I wished to find an analogy in a familiar picture, I might think of myself as Mephistopheles; but the difficulty is, however, that Edward is no Faust. If I were to be Faust, there again arises the difficulty, that Edward is certainly no Mephistopheles. Neither am I a Mephistopheles, least of all in Edward's eyes. He regards me as the guardian angel of his love, and he is right in that, for at least he can be certain that no one watches more solicitously over his love than I. I have promised him that I would talk with the aunt, and I discharge this honorable task with all seriousness. The aunt vanishes, almost before our eyes, in pure

agricultural economics. We go into the kitchen and cellars, we go up into the attic, we look at the chickens, ducks, and geese, and so on. All this offends Cordelia. She naturally cannot understand what it really is that I am after. I am a riddle to her, a riddle she has no temptation to solve, but which provokes her, and almost makes her indignant. She feels very strongly that her aunt is making herself ridiculous, and yet her aunt is a very respectable lady who certainly does not deserve to be made fun of. But I do this so skillfully that she knows very well that it would be useless for her to try to stop me. Sometimes I carry it so far that Cordelia almost has to smile secretly at her aunt. These are studies that must be made. Not as if I did this in cooperation with Cordelia; far from it, I would never make her smile at her aunt. My expression does not change, I am profoundly earnest, but Cordelia cannot keep from smiling. It is the first lesson in deception: she must learn to smile ironically; but this smile is aimed almost as much at me as at her aunt, for she simply does not know what to think of me. It is barely possible that I am one of those prematurely-old young men, it is possible; there might also be a second possibility, or even a third, and so on. When she becomes indignant with herself for having smiled at her aunt, then I turn around, and without interrupting my conversation with the aunt, I look at her very seriously, then she smiles at me and at the situation.

Our relationship is not the tender and loyal embrace of understanding, not attraction; it is the repulsion of misunderstanding. My relationship to her is simply nil; it is purely intellectual, which means it is simply nothing to a young girl. The method I am following has extraordinary advantages. A man who approaches as a gallant awakens mistrust and encounters resistance. I escape all such suspicions. She is not on guard against me; instead she regards me as a trustworthy man who is fit to watch over a young girl. The method has but one drawback, namely, it is tedious, but it

can, therefore, only advantageously be used against an individual when the interesting is to be the reward.

What a rejuvenating power a young girl has! Not the cooling freshness of a morning breeze, not the sigh of the wind, not the cooling breath of the sea, not the fragrance of wine with its delicious bouquet — nothing else in all the world has this rejuvenating power.

Soon I hope that I shall have brought her to the point of hating me. I have presented a perfect picture of a confirmed bachelor. All I talk about is sitting at my ease, being comfortably lodged, having a competent servant, friends of good standing whom I can rely upon as intimates. Now if I can induce the aunt to abandon her agronomic interests, then I can interest her in these, in order to get a more direct occasion for irony. One can laugh at a bachelor, even have sympathy for him, but a young man, who has any spirit at all, shocks a young girl by such conduct; the entire significance of sex, its beauty, and its poetry, are destroyed.

So the days go on, I see her, but I do not talk with her, I talk with the aunt in her presence. Occasionally at night it occurs to me to give my love air. Then wrapped in my cloak, with my hat pulled down over my eyes, I go and stand outside her window. Her bedroom looks out over the yard, but since it is a corner house, it can be seen from the street. At times she stands a moment at the window, or she opens it, looks up at the stars, unseen by anyone except the one she would least of all believe was watching her. In these hours of the night I steal about like a wraith, like a wraith I haunt the place where she lives. Then I forget everything, I have no plans, no calculations, I throw reason overboard, I expand and strengthen my chest by deep sighs, an exercise which I need in order not to suffer from the systematized routine of my life. Some are virtuous by day, sinful at night; I

dissemble by day, at night I am sheer desire. If she could see me here, if she could look into my soul — if!

If this girl would only understand herself, she would have to admit that I am the man for her. She is too intense, too deeply emotional to be happy in marriage; it would not be enough for her to yield to an ordinary seducer; if she yields to me, then she will save the interesting out of the shipwreck. In relation to me, she must *zu Grunde gehn,* as the philosophers say with a play on words.

She is really tired of listening to Edward. So it always is; where narrow limits are set for the interesting, one discovers all the more. Sometimes she listens to my conversation with her aunt. When I notice this, there comes a flash on the distant horizon, intimations of a very different world, to the amazement of her aunt as well as of Cordelia. The aunt sees the flash, but hears nothing, Cordelia hears the voice, but sees nothing. Suddenly everything is again as before. The conversation between the aunt and myself pursues its monotonous way, like the hoofs of post horses in the stillness of the night. It is accompanied by the melancholy singing of the samovar. At such times there sometimes seems to be something uncanny in the atmosphere of the living room, especially to Cordelia. She has no one she can talk with or listen to. If she turns to Edward, she faces the danger of his doing something foolish, just because of his embarrassment. If she turns to the other side, to her aunt and me, then the certainty which here prevails, the monotonous hammerblows of our steady conversation, makes a very disagreeable contrast to Edward's uncertainty. I can well understand that Cordelia must consider her aunt bewitched, so completely does she follow the tempo of my thought. Nor can she take part in our conversation; for this, too, is one of the ways I have used to provoke her, that is, by always treating her like a child. Not that I would permit myself any liberties with

her, far from it. I know too well how disturbingly such things can work, and it is especially worth while that her womanliness should rise up again pure and lovely. On account of the intimate footing I maintain with the aunt, it is easy for me to treat her like a child who is ignorant of the world. Thereby her femininity is not offended, but only neutralized; for it cannot offend her femininity that she is ignorant of market prices, but it can irritate her that such things should be regarded as of chief importance in life. By means of my cunning assistance, her aunt overbids herself in this direction. She becomes almost fanatical on the subject, something for which she has to thank me. The only thing about me that she cannot stand is that I am nothing. Accordingly I have formed the habit, every time something is said about a position which is vacant, of exclaiming, “That is the job for me!” and then I discuss it very seriously with her. Cordelia always notices the irony, which is exactly as I wish.

Poor Edward! Too bad he is not called Fritz. Whenever I think of him in my quiet deliberations, I am reminded of Fritz and his sweetheart. Edward, like his prototype, is also a corporal in the militia. To tell the truth, Edward is also very boring. He does not go about the matter in the right way, and he is always too well dressed. Just between ourselves, as a favor to him, I always go dressed as carelessly as possible. Poor Edward! The only thing that almost makes me sorry for him is that he is so everlastingly grateful to me that he hardly knows how to thank me. To allow him to thank me, that is really too much!

Why can you not be quiet and well behaved? You have done nothing the entire morning except to shake my awning, pull at my window mirror and the string by which it hangs, play with the bell-rope from the third story, rattle the windowpanes, in short, in every possible way impress me with your existence, as if you would beckon me to come out with you. Yes, it is a

fine day, but I have no inclination, let me stay at home.... Ye merry, wanton zephyrs, ye happy children, go ye alone; have your pastime as always with the young maidens. Yes, I know no one can embrace a maiden so seductively as you; in vain would she try to slip away from you, she cannot twist herself out of your arms — nor does she wish to; for you are cool and refreshing, you do not inflame.... Go your own way, leave me out.... But then you take no satisfaction in it, you say, you do not do it for your own sake... very well, then, I go with you; but on two conditions. In the first place. There lives on King's Newmarket a young maiden; she is very pretty, but she has the impudence to refuse to love me, and what is worse still, she loves another, and it has come to such a pass that they go out walking together arm in arm. At one o'clock I know that he goes to fetch her. Now promise me that the strongest blowers among you will conceal yourselves somewhere in the neighborhood until the moment when he steps out of the door with her. That moment, just as he is about to turn down Great Kingstreet, let this detachment rush forward, take his hat from his head in the politest manner possible, and carry it at an even speed at precisely a yard's distance in front of him; not faster than that, for then he might turn back home again. Let him always believe that he is on the point of catching it the next second, so that he does not even let go of her arm. In that manner you will bring them through Great Kingstreet, along the wall as far as Northport, as far as Highbridge Place.... Let me see, how long will that take? I think about half an hour. At half-past one exactly, I approach from Eastern Street. When the detachment in question has brought the lovers out into the middle of the Place, let a violent attack be made upon them, during which you will also tear her hat from her head, tangle her curls, carry away her shawl, while all the time his hat floats jubilantly higher and higher into the air; in short, you will bring about a confusion so that not I alone, but the entire public will break out in a roar of laughter, the dogs begin to bark, and

the watchman clang his bell in the tower. You will arrange it so that her hat flies over to me, and thus I become the happy individual privileged to restore it to her. In the second place. The section that follows me must obey my every hint, must keep within the bounds of seemliness, offer no affront to any pretty maiden, permit itself to take no liberty greater than will allow her to preserve her joy in the jest, her lips their smile, her eye its tranquillity, and her to remain without anxiety. If a single one of you dares to behave differently, let your name be accursed. — And now away to life and joy, to youth and beauty; show me what I have often seen, and what I never weary of seeing, show me a beautiful young woman, unfold her beauty for me in such a way that she becomes herself more beautiful; subject her to an examination of such a kind that she derives happiness from that examination!... I choose Broad Street, but, as you know, I can only dispose of my time until half-past one....

There comes a young woman, all stiff and starched; of course, it is Sunday today....Fan her a little, waft over her the cool air, glide in a gentle stream about her, embrace her with your innocent contact! How I sense the heightened color of the cheek, the reddening of the lips, the bosom's lifting.... Is it not so, my dear, it is indescribable, it is a blessed delight to breathe this refreshing air? The little collar quivers like a leaf. How full and sound her breathing! Her pace slackens, she is almost carried along by the gentle breeze, like a cloud, like a dream.... Blow a little stronger, with a longer sweep!... She draws herself together; she folds her arms a little closer to her bosom, which she covers more carefully, lest a gust of wind should prove too forward, and insinuate itself softly and coolingly under the light covering.... Her color is heightened, her cheeks become fuller, her eye clearer, her step firmer. A little opposition tends to make a person more beautiful. Every young woman ought to fall in love with the zephyrs; for no man can rival them in enhancing her beauty, as they struggle against

her....Her body bends a little forward, she looks down toward the tips of her shoes.... Stop a little! It is too much, her body broadens, loses its pretty slenderness.... Cool her a little!... Is it not true, my dear, it is refreshing after being warm, to feel those invigorating shivers; it is enough to make one fling open his arms in gratitude, in joy over existence.... She turns her side to the breeze.... Now quick! a powerful gust, so that I can guess the beauty of her form!... A little stronger! to bring the draperies more closely about her.... It is too much. Her posture becomes awkward, the lightness of her step is interfered with.... She turns again.... Blow, now, blow, let her try her strength!... Enough, it is too much! One of her curls has fallen down... will you be so good as to keep yourselves in check! — There comes a whole regiment on the march:

Die eine ist verliebt gar sehr;
Die andre wäre es gerne.

Yes, it cannot be denied, it is a very poor engagement in life to have to walk with one's future brother-in-law, on his left arm. For a woman this is about the same as for a man to be an extra clerk on the waiting list.... But the clerk may be advanced: he has, too, his place in the office, and is called in on extraordinary occasions, which do not fall to the sister-in-law's lot; but then, on the other hand, her advancement is not so slow — when she is advanced and is moved over into another office.... Blow now a little briskly! When you have something firm to hold fast to, it is easy enough to offer resistance.... The center advances vigorously, the wings are unable to follow.... He stands firm enough, the winds cannot move him for he is too heavy — but also too heavy for the wings to lift from the earth. He hurls himself forward in order to show — that he is a heavy body; but the more unmoved he stands, the more do the lassies suffer under it.... My beautiful young ladies, may I not offer a piece of good advice: leave the future

husband and brother-in-law out of it, try to walk alone, and you will find that it will be much more satisfactory.... Now blow a little more softly!... How they are tumbled about by the billowing breezes; soon they will be striking attitudes before one another down the street — could any dance music produce a more frolicsome gaiety? And yet the wind does not exhaust, it strengthens.... Now they sweep along side by side, in full sail down the street — could any waltz carry a young woman away more seductively? And yet the wind does not weary, it supports.

... Now they turn around to face the husband and brother-in-law.... Is it not so, a little opposition is pleasant, one is glad to struggle for possession of what one loves; and the struggle will doubtless be successful; there is a Providence which comes to the aid of love, that is why the man has the wind in his favor.... Have I not arranged it well: when you have the wind at your back, it can easily happen that you pass the beloved, but when it blows against you, you are pleasantly excited, then you seek refuge near him, and the gust of wind makes you sounder and more tempting, and more fascinating, and it cools the fruit of your lips which should preferably be enjoyed cold, because it is so hot, just as champagne heats when it is icy cold.... How they laugh and talk — and the wind carries the words away — and is there anything here to talk about? — and they laugh again and bend before the wind, and hold on to their hats, and watch their feet.... Stop now, lest the young women become impatient and angry at us, or afraid of us! — Just so, resolutely and vigorously, the right foot before the left....

How bravely and challengingly she looks about in the world.... Can I be mistaken? She hangs on a man’s arm, hence she must be engaged. Let me see, my child, what kind of a present you have received on life’s Christmas tree.... Oh, so! he seems to be a very substantial fellow. She is in the first stage of the engagement, she loves him — possibly so, but yet her love flutters wide and spacious, loose about him; she still has the cloak of

chastity, which suffices to cover many.... Blow up a little!... When one walks so fast, it is no wonder the ribbons on her hat stiffen in the wind, so that it looks as if they were wings bearing this light body — and her love — that too follows like a fairy veil that the wind plays with. When you look at love in this manner, it seems so spacious; but when you are about to put it on, when the veil must be made into an everyday dress — then there is not cloth enough for many puffs.... Heaven preserve us! When one has courage enough to dare to take a step decisive for one's entire life, one surely has the courage to walk straight against the wind. Who doubts it? Not I; but no temper, my little miss, no temper. Time is a hard schoolmaster, and the wind is not so bad either.... Tease her a little!... What became of the handkerchief?... Oh, you recovered it all right.... There went one of the hat ribbons... it is really quite embarrassing, in the presence of the intended.... There comes a girl friend who must be greeted. It is the first time she has seen you since the engagement; of course it is for the sake of showing yourself as an engaged girl that you are here on Broad Street, and are intending furthermore to go on the esplanade. As far as I know it is the custom for a newly wedded couple to go to church the first Sunday after the wedding; engaged couples, on the other hand, show themselves on the esplanade.... And an engagement really has something in common with the esplanade.... Be careful now, the wind takes hold of your hat, hold on to it a little, bend your head down.... How unfortunate that you did not get a chance to greet your girl friend at all, it was not calm enough to greet her with the superior air that an engaged girl ought always to assume before the unengaged.... Blow now a little more softly!... and now come the better days... how she clings to the beloved; she is far enough ahead of him so that she can turn her head back and look up into his face, and be glad in him, her wealth, her happiness, her hope, her future.... O my girl, you make too much of him.... Or does he not owe it to me and the wind that he looks so

strong? And do you yourself not owe it to me and to the soft breezes that now bring you healing, and turn the pain into forgetfulness, that you look so full of vitality, so full of longing, so expectant?

> And I will not have a student
> Who lies and reads all night,
> But I will have an officer
> With feathers on his hat.

That is evident at once, my girl, there is something in your look.... No, you are by no means satisfied with a student.

... But just why an officer? A graduate now, one who has finished his studies, would he not do just as well?... At the moment, however, I cannot furnish you with an officer or with a graduate either. But I can serve you some cool and tempering breezes.... Now blow a little!... That's right, throw the silk shawl back over your shoulder; walk very slowly, that will make the cheek a little paler, and the eyes to shine not quite so brightly.... So. A little exercise, especially on a fine day like this, and then a little patience, and you will doubtless get your officer.... There is a couple who seem predestined for one another. What firmness in the step, what sureness in the entire bearing, based upon mutual confidence; what a pre-established harmony in all their movements, what sufficing thoroughness. Their attitudes are not light and graceful, they do not dance together, no, there is a permanency in them, a boldness, which awakens a hope that cannot be betrayed, which commands mutual respect. I will wager that their view of life is this: life is a way. And they seem destined to walk with one another, arm in arm, through the joys and sorrows of life. They harmonize to such a degree that the lady has even given up the privilege of walking on the flagstones.

... But, my dear zephyrs, why so busy with that couple? They hardly seem to be worth so much attention. Can there be anything special to take

note of?... But it is half-past one, off to Highbridge Place.

One would not believe it possible to calculate the developmental history of a soul so accurately. It shows how wholesome Cordelia is. She is in truth a remarkable girl. She is quiet and modest, unpretentious, but unconsciously there is in her a prodigious demand. This was evident to me today when I saw her enter the house. The slight resistance that a gust of wind can offer awakens, as it were, all the energy within her, without arousing any internal conflict. She is not a little insignificant girl who slips between your fingers, so fragile that you almost fear that she will go to pieces if you look at her; but neither is she a showy ornamental flower. Like a physician, I can therefore take pleasure in observing all the symptoms in her case history.

Gradually I am beginning to approach her in my attack, to go over to more direct action. Were I to indicate this change on my military map of the family, I should say that I have turned my chair so that my side is toward her. I have more to do with her, I address remarks to her, and elicit an answer from her. Her soul has passion, intensity, and without being foolish or vain, her reflections are remarkably pointed, she has a craving for the unusual. My irony over the foolishness of human beings, my ridicule of their cowardice, of their lukewarm indolence, fascinate her. She likes well enough to drive the chariot of the sun across the arch of heaven, to come near enough to earth to scorch people a little. However, she does not trust me; hitherto I have discouraged every approach on her part, even intellectually. She must be strong in herself before I let her take rest in me. By glimpses it may indeed look as if it were she whom I would make my confidante in my freemasonry, but this is only by glimpses. She must be developed inwardly, she must feel an elasticity of soul, she must learn to evaluate the world. What progress she is making, her conversation and her eyes easily show me. I have only once seen a devastating anger in her. She must owe me nothing; for she must be free; love exists only in freedom,

only in freedom is there enjoyment and everlasting delight. Although I am aiming at her falling into my arms, as it were, by a natural necessity, yet I am striving to bring it about so that as she gravitates toward me, it will still not be like the falling of a heavy body, but as spirit seeking spirit. Although she must belong to me, it must not be in the unlovely sense of resting upon me like a burden. She must neither hang on me in the physical sense, nor be an obligation in a moral sense. Between the two of us only the proper play of freedom must prevail. She must be mine so freely that I can take her in my arms.

Cordelia occupies me almost too much. I lose my balance again, not in her presence, but when in the strictest sense I am alone with her. I long after her, not in order to talk with her, but only to let her picture float past me. I steal after her when I know that she is out walking, not to be seen, but to see. The other evening we all left the Baxter house together; Edward accompanied her. I parted from them in greatest haste, hurried off to another street where my servant was waiting for me. In a trice I had changed my clothes, and I met her once more without her suspecting it. Edward was silent as usual. I am certainly in love, but not in the ordinary sense, and for that reason I must be very cautious, since it may always have some dangerous consequences; and one is that way only once. Still, the god of love is blind; if one is clever, one can fool him easily enough. The trick, as regards an impression, consists in being as sensitive as possible, both in knowing what impression one makes upon the girl, and what impression each girl makes upon one. In this way one can be in love with many girls at once, because one loves each girl differently. To love only one is too little; to love all of them is a surfeit; to know one's self and to love as many as possible, to let one's soul conceal all the power of love in itself, so that each girl gets her own proper nourishment, while the consciousness embraces the whole — that is enjoyment, that is really living.

July 3rd.

Edward cannot really complain of me. Indeed I wish Cordelia would fall in love with him, so that through him she might get a distaste for ordinary love, and thereby go beyond her own limitations; but just for this reason it is necessary that Edward should not be a caricature, for that would not help. Now Edward is a good match, not only in the usual sense of the word, which is of no importance in her eyes, since a seventeen-year-old girl does not consider such things; but personally he has a number of attractive qualities which I try to help him exhibit in the most advantageous light. Like a lady's-maid or a decorator, I fit him out as well as possible, according to the resources of the house. Indeed, I sometimes hang a little borrowed finery on him. Then when we go to Cordelia's, I, strange to say, go with him. He is, as it were, my brother, my son, and yet he is my friend, my contemporary, my rival. He can never become dangerous to me. The higher I raise him, since he is bound to fall, the better; the more it arouses a consciousness in Cordelia of what she dislikes, the more intense become her ideas of what she desires. I help him in this direction, I commend him, in short I do everything a friend can do for a friend. In order to make up for my own coldness, I almost rave about Edward. I describe him as a visionary. Since Edward does not know how to help himself, I must push him forward.

Cordelia both hates and fears me. What does a young girl fear? Intellectuality. Why? Because it constitutes a negation of her whole feminine existence. Masculine good looks and a pleasing personality and so forth are good mediators. One can make a conquest by their aid, but can never win a complete victory. Why? Because one is making war upon a girl within her own potentialities, and in these she is always the stronger. Through these methods one can make a girl blush, can put her out of

countenance, but can never call forth the indescribable, fascinating anxiety which makes her beauty interesting.

Non formosus erat, sed erat facundus Ulixes, et tamen aequoreas torsit amore Deas.

Everyone ought to know his own powers. But this is something that has often disturbed me, that even those who have natural endowments behave so awkwardly. Really a man ought to be able to see in any young girl, who has become the victim of another's, or rather of her own love, just how she has been deceived. The confirmed murderer uses a definite technique, and the experienced policeman knows the perpetrator as soon as he sees the wound. But where does one meet such a systematic seducer, such a trained psychologist? The seduction of a girl means to most men the seduction of a girl, and that is the end of it. And there is a whole language concealed in this thought.

As a woman, she hates me; as an intelligent woman, she fears me; as having a good mind, she loves me. Now for the first time I have produced this conflict in her soul. My pride, my defiance, my cold ridicule, my heartless irony, all tempt her, not as if she might wish to love me; no, there is certainly not a trace of such feeling in her, least of all toward me. She would emulate me. What tempts her is a proud independence in the face of men, a freedom like that of the Arabs of the desert. My laughter and singularity neutralize every erotic impulse. She is fairly at ease with me, and in so far as there is any reserve, it is more intellectual than feminine. She is so far from regarding me as a lover, that our relation to each other is that of two able minds. She takes my hand, presses it a little, laughs, pays some attention to me in a purely Platonic sense. Then when irony and ridicule have duped her long enough, I shall follow that suggestion found in an old verse: "The knight spreads out his cape so red, and begs the beautiful maiden to sit thereon." However, I do not spread out my cape in order to sit

with her on the greensward, but to vanish with her into the air in a flight of thought. Or I do not take her with me, but set myself astride a thought, wave farewell to her, blow her a kiss, and vanish from her sight, audible to her only in the whistling of the winged words, not, like Jehovah, becoming more and more manifest through the voice, but ever less so, because the more I speak, the higher I mount. Then she wishes to go with me on the venturesome flight of thought. Still, this lasts only a single instant; the next moment I am cold and prosaic.

There are different kinds of feminine blushes. There is the coarse brick-red blush which romantic writers always use so freely when they let their heroines blush all over. There is the delicate blush; it is the blush of the spirit's dawn. In a young girl it is priceless. The passing blush produced by a happy idea is beautiful in a man, more beautiful in a young man, charming in a woman. It is a gleam of lightning, the heat lightning of the spirit. It is most beautiful in the young, charming in a girl because it appears in her girlishness, and therefore it has also the modesty of surprise. The older one becomes, the more rarely one blushes.

Sometimes I read aloud to Cordelia something important; usually, something very inconsequential. Edward must as usual hold the spotlight. I have accordingly called his attention to the fact that a very good way to get into a young girl's good graces is to lend her books. He has made good headway thereby, for it puts her under obligations to him. I am the chief gainer; for I dictate the choice of books but otherwise keep out of it. This gives me a wide arena for my observations. I can give Edward whatever books I wish, since he is no judge of literature. Hence I dare go to any extreme I wish. Then when I visit her in the evening, I casually pick up a book, turn over a few pages in it, read half aloud, commend Edward for his attentiveness. Last night I wished to test the vigor of her mind by an experiment. I was puzzled whether to let Edward lend her Schiller's Poems,

so that I might accidentally open it to Thekla's song, which I would recite, or Burger's Poems. I chose the latter, particularly because his "Lenore" is a little extravagant, however beautiful it otherwise is. I opened it at "Lenore," read this poem solemnly, with all the pathos of which I was capable. Cordelia was moved; she sewed with a nervous energy, as if it were she William had come to fetch. I paused. The aunt had listened without any apparent sympathy. She feared no Wilhams living or dead; nor, in addition, is her knowledge of German very good. However, she found herself quite in her element when I showed her the beautiful example of bookbinding, and began a conversation with her about the bookbinding profession. My purpose was to destroy in Cordelia the impression of the pathetic in the very moment of its inception. She became a little anxious, but it was clear to me that this anxiety did not tempt her, but made her uncomfortable.

Today my eyes have for the first time rested upon her. Someone has said that sleep can make the eyelids so heavy that they close of themselves; perhaps my glance has a similar effect upon Cordelia. Her eyes close, and yet an obscure force stirs within her. She does not see that I am looking at her, she feels it, feels it through her whole body. Her eyes close, and it is night; but within her it is luminous day.

Edward must go; he has reached the very end. At any moment I may expect him to go to her, and make a declaration of love. There is no one who knows this better than myself, who am his confidant, and who assiduously keep him over-excited so that he can have a greater effect upon Cordelia. To allow him to confess his love is still too risky. I know very well that she will refuse him, but that will not end the affair. He will certainly take it very much to heart. This would perhaps move and touch Cordelia. Although in such a case I do not need to fear the worst, that she might start over again,

still her self-esteem would possibly suffer out of pure sympathy. If this should happen, it frustrates my whole plan concerning Edward.

My relation to Cordelia is beginning to run dramatically. Something must happen, whatever it may be; I can no longer remain a mere observer without letting the moment slip. She must be taken by surprise, that is necessary; but if one would surprise her, one must be on the alert. That which might surprise someone in general would perhaps have no such effect on her. She must really be surprised in such a way that that which first causes her surprise is something that happens quite commonly. Then it must gradually appear that this something surprising was implied in this. This is always the law for the interesting, and this law again controls all my actions with regard to Cordelia. If you always know how to surprise, you always win the game. You suspend for an instant the energy of the one concerned, make it impossible for her to act, and that, whether one uses the ordinary or the extraordinary as means. I recollect with a certain degree of self-satisfaction a foolhardy experiment upon a lady of distinguished family. For some time I had been hanging around her in order to find an interesting contact, but in vain; then one day I met her on the street. I was certain that she did not know me, nor know that I belonged here in town. She was walking alone. I stole past her so that I could meet her face to face. Approaching her, I stepped aside; she kept to the narrow sidewalk. At this moment I cast a sorrowful glance at her, I almost had tears in my eyes. I took off my hat. She paused. In a voice shaken with emotion, and with a dreamy look, I said: “Do not be angry, gracious lady; there is such an extraordinary resemblance between you and a person I love with all my soul, but who lives far away from me, that you must forgive my strange behavior.” She thought I was quixotic, and a young girl can well endure a little extravagance, especially when she feels superior and dares to smile at one. Just as I expected, she smiled, and this smile was indescribably becoming to her. With aristocratic

condescension she bowed to me and smiled. She resumed her walk, I walked a few steps by her side. A few days later, I met her, I presumed to bow. She laughed at me.... Patience is still an excellent virtue, and he who laughs last, laughs best.

One could think of several methods by which to surprise Cordelia. I might attempt to raise an erotic storm, powerful enough to tear up trees by the roots. By its aid I might try, if possible, to sweep her off her feet, snatch her out of her historic continuity; attempt, in this agitation, by stealthy advances to arouse her passion. It is not inconceivable that I could do this. A man could make a girl with her passion do anything he wished. However, that would be all wrong from the aesthetic standpoint. I do not enjoy giddiness, and this condition is to be recommended only when one has to do with girls who can acquire poetic glamor in no other way. Besides, one misses some of the essential enjoyment, for too much confusion is also bad. Its effect upon Cordelia would utterly fail. In a couple of draughts I should have swallowed what I might have had the good of for a long time, indeed, even worse, what with discretion I might have enjoyed more fully and richly. Cordelia is not to be enjoyed in over-excitement. I might perhaps take her by surprise at first, if I went about it right, but she would soon be surfeited, precisely because this surprise lay too close to her daring soul.

A simple engagement is the best of all the methods, the most expedient. If she hears me make a prosaic declaration of love, *item* asking for her hand, she will perhaps believe her ears even less than if she listened to my heated eloquence, absorbed my poisonous intoxicants, heard her heart beat fast at the thought of an elopement.

The cruse of an engagement is always on its ethical side. The ethical is just as tiresome in philosophy as in life. What a difference! Under the heaven of the aesthetic, everything is light, beautiful, transitory; when the ethical comes along, then everything becomes harsh, angular, infinitely

boring. An engagement, however, does not have ethical reality in the stricter sense, as marriage does; it has validity only *ex consensu gentium.* This ambiguity can be very serviceable to me. It has enough of the ethical in it so that in time Cordelia will get the impression that she has exceeded the ordinary bounds; however, the ethical in it is not so serious that I need fear a more critical agitation. I have always had a certain respect for the ethical. I have never given any girl a marriage promise, not even in jest. In so far as it might seem that I have done it here, that is only a fictitious move. I shall certainly manage it so that she will be the one who breaks the engagement. My chivalrous pride scorns to give a promise. I despise a judge who by the promise of liberty lures an offender into a confession. Such a judge belittles his own power and ability.

Practically, I have reached the point where I desire nothing which is not, in the strictest sense, freely given. Let common seducers use such methods. What do they gain? He who does not know how to compass a girl about so that she loses sight of everything which he does not wish her to see, he who does not know how to poetize himself in a girl's feelings so that it is from her that everything issues as he wishes it, he is and remains a bungler; I do not begrudge him his enjoyment. A bungler he is and remains, a seducer, something one can by no means call me. I am an aesthete, an eroticist, one who has understood the nature and meaning of love, who believes in love and knows it from the ground up, and only makes the private reservation that no love affair should last more than six months at the most, and that every erotic relationship should cease as soon as one has had the ultimate enjoyment. I know all this, I know, too, that the highest conceivable enjoyment lies in being loved; to be loved is higher than anything else in the world. To poetize oneself into a young girl is an art, to poetize oneself out of her is a masterpiece. Still, the latter depends essentially upon the first.

There is another method possible. I might arrange everything so as to have her become engaged to Edward. I become, thus, a friend of the family. Edward would trust me unconditionally — for I'm the one, after all, to whom he owes much of his happiness. In this way I have won the advantage of being better concealed. — No, that is no good. She cannot become engaged to Edward without more or less belittling herself. That would make my relation to her more piquant than interesting. The everlasting prosaism that lies in an engagement is precisely the sounding-board of the interesting.

Everything is assuming greater significance in the Wahl household. One clearly notes that a mysterious animation is stirring beneath the daily routine, which must soon proclaim itself in a corresponding revelation. The Wahl household is preparing for an engagement. One who was only a superficial observer might perhaps anticipate a match between the aunt and myself. What an extension of agricultural knowledge in the following generation might not come of such a match! Thus I would become Cordelia's uncle. I am a friend of freedom of thought, and no idea is too preposterous for me to lack courage to entertain it. Cordelia fears a declaration of love from Edward, Edward hopes that such a proposal will decide everything. And of that he may be sure. However, in order to spare him the unpleasant consequences of such a step, I shall try to forestall him. I am hoping soon now to be rid of him; he is very much in my way. I really felt it today. He looks so dreamy, so drunk with love, that one almost fears that he will suddenly arise like a somnambulist and, in the presence of the whole congregation, confess his love with such objective detachment that he does not even approach Cordelia. I looked daggers at him today. As an elephant catches an object with his trunk, so I caught Edward with my eyes, big as he is, and threw him over backward. Although he remained seated in

his chair, I still believe that he had a corresponding sensation through his whole body.

Cordelia is not so assured in her manner toward me as she has been. She always approached me with a womanly assurance, now she vacillates a little. It has, however, no great significance, and I should not find it hard to bring everything back to the old footing. Still, I shall not do so. Only one more investigation, and then the engagement. There can be no difficulties about this. Cordelia in her surprise says yes, the aunt gives a hearty Amen. She will be beside herself with joy over such an agriculturally inclined son-in-law. Son-in-law! How we all become thick as thieves when we enter into this territory. I do not really become her son-in-law, but only her nephew, or, rather, *volente deo,* neither.

23rd day.

Today I harvested the fruit of a rumor I had caused to circulate, that I was in love with a young girl. By the aid of Edward it had also reached Cordelia's ears. She is curious, she watches me, but she does not, however, dare to question me; and yet it is not unimportant to her to make certain, partly because it seems incredible to her, partly because she might see in this a precedent for herself; for if such a cold-blooded scoffer as myself could fall in love, then there could be no disgrace in her doing the same. Today I introduced the subject. I believe I can tell a story so that the point is not lost, *item,* so that it is not revealed too soon. To keep those who listen in suspense, by means of small incidents of an episodic character, to ascertain what they wish the outcome to be, to trick them in the course of the narration — that is my delight; to make use of ambiguities, so that the listeners understand one thing in the saying, and then suddenly notice that the words could also be interpreted otherwise — that is my art. If one desires an opportunity to make certain investigations, one should always

make a speech. In conversation, the one concerned can better escape from one, can, by means of questions and answers, better conceal the impression the words produce.

I began my speech to the aunt with intense seriousness: “Am I to impute this rumor to the good will of my friends, or to the malice of my enemies, and who is there among us who does not have too many of both?” Here the aunt made a remark which I helped her with all my might to spin out, so as to keep Cordelia, who was listening, in suspense, a suspense she could not put an end to, since I was talking with her aunt, and my mood was serious. I continued: “Or shall I ascribe it to an accident, a rumor’s *generatio aequivoca*” (Cordelia evidently did not understand this word; it only confused her, all the more because I laid a false emphasis upon it, winking at the aunt significantly as I did so, as if the point lay here), “that I who am accustomed to live in seclusion from the world, am become the object of gossip, in that they insist that I am engaged.” Cordelia now quite openly wanted to hear my explanation. I continued: “It might be attributed to my friends, since it must be regarded as good fortune to fall in love (she started); to my enemies, since it would be considered very ridiculous if this happiness should fall to my lot (movement in the opposite direction); or to accident, since there is not the slightest foundation for it; or to rumor’s *generatio aequivoca,* since the whole thing must have originated in an empty head’s thoughtless intercourse with itself.” The aunt with true feminine curiosity was quick to try to find out who the lady might be to whom gossip had been pleased to link me. Every question in this direction was waved aside. The whole story made quite an impression upon Cordelia; I almost believe Edward’s stock rose a few points.

The decisive moment is approaching. I might address myself to the aunt in writing, asking for Cordelia’s hand. This is indeed the customary procedure in affairs of the heart, as if it were more natural for the heart to write than to

speak. What might decide me to choose this method is just the philistinism in it. But if I choose this, then I lose the essential surprise, and that I cannot give up. — If I had a friend, he might perhaps say to me: “Have you considered well this most serious step you are taking, a step which is decisive for all the rest of your life, and for another being’s happiness?” Now that is the advantage that comes from having a friend. I have no friend; whether that is an advantage, I shall leave undecided; but I consider being free from his advice an absolute advantage. As to the rest, I have certainly considered the whole matter, in the strictest sense of the word.

On my side there is nothing now to obstruct the engagement. Consequently, I go ahead with my wooing, though no one realizes it but myself. Soon will my humble person be seen from a higher standpoint. I cease to be a person and become — a match; yes, a good match, the aunt will say. She is the one I am most sorry for; she loves me with such a pure and sincere agricultural love, she almost worships me as her ideal.

It is true that in my time I have made many declarations of love, and yet all my experience does not help me in the least here; for this declaration must be made in a very peculiar manner. What I must principally impress upon my mind is that the whole affair is only a fictitious move. I have held several rehearsals in order to discover which one would be the best approach. To make the moment erotic would be hazardous, since it would really anticipate that which will come later and unfold itself gradually. To make it very serious is dangerous; such a moment has great significance for a young girl, so that her soul can become as fixed in it as a dying man’s in his last will. To make it frankly low-comic would be out of character with the mask I have hitherto used, and with the one I intend to assume. To make it witty and ironic is risking too much. If it were with me as with people in general on such occasions, so that the chief thing is to elicit a little yes, then it would be as easy as falling off a log. This is indeed important, but not of

supreme importance; for although I have picked out this girl, although I have centered much attention, indeed my whole interest upon her, yet there are certain conditions under which I would not accept her yes. I simply do not care to possess a girl in the mere external sense, but to enjoy her in an artistic sense. Therefore my approach must be as artistic as possible. The beginning must be as vague as possible and open to every possibility. If she immediately looks on me as a deceiver, then she misunderstands me; for I am not a deceiver in the ordinary sense; if she sees me as a faithful lover, then she is also mistaken in me. The point is, that in this scene her soul should be as little predetermined as possible. A girl's soul at such a moment is as prophetic as a dying man's. This must be prevented. My beloved Cordelia! I cheat you out of something beautiful, but it cannot be otherwise, and I shall compensate you as best I can. The whole episode must be kept as insignificant as possible, so that when she has accepted me, she will not be able to throw the least light upon what may be concealed in this relationship. The infinite possibility is precisely the interesting. If she is able to predict anything, then I have failed very badly, and the whole relationship loses its meaning. That she might say yes because she loves me is inconceivable, for she does not love me at all. The best thing is for me to transform the engagement from an act to an event, from something she does to something which happens to her, concerning which she must say: "God only knows how it really happened."

31st day.

Today I have written a love-letter for a third party. This I am always delighted to do. In the first place it is always interesting to enter into a situation so vividly, and yet in all possible comfort. I fill my pipe, hear about the relationship, and the letters from the intended are brought out. The way in which a young lady writes is always an important study to me. The lover sits there like a fathead, he reads her letters aloud, interrupted by my

laconic comments: She writes well, she has feeling, taste, caution, she has certainly been in love before, and so on. In the second place I am doing a good deed. I am helping to bring a couple of young people together; after that I balance accounts. For every pair I make happy, I select one victim for myself; I make two happy, at the most only one unhappy. I am honorable and trustworthy. I have never deceived anyone who has taken me into his confidence. This entails always a few high jinks — but these, after all, are lawful perquisites. And why do I enjoy this confidence? Because I know Latin and attend to my studies, and because I always keep my little affairs to myself. And do I not deserve this confidence? Indeed I never misuse it.

August 2.

The moment came. I caught a glimpse of the aunt on the street, and so I knew she was not at home. Edward was at the custom-house. Consequently there was every likelihood of Cordelia's being at home alone. And so it was. She sat by her worktable occupied with some sewing. I have very rarely visited the family in the forenoon, and she was therefore a little disturbed at seeing me. The situation became almost emotional. She was not to blame for this, for she controlled herself fairly well; but I was the one, for in spite of my armor, she made an uncommonly strong impression upon me. How charming she was in a simple, blue-striped calico house-dress, with a fresh-picked rose at her bosom — a fresh-picked rose, nay the girl herself was like a freshly picked blossom, so fresh she was, so recently arrived; and, too, who knows where a young girl spends the night? In the land of illusions, I believe, but every morning she comes back, and hence her youthful freshness. She looked so young, and yet so fully developed, as if Nature, like a tender and opulent mother, had just now let go her hand. It was as if I had witnessed the farewell scene. I saw how the loving mother embraced her in farewell. I heard her saying: "Go out into the world, my child, I have made everything ready for you. Take this kiss as a seal upon

your lips, it is a seal which guards the sanctuary; no one can break it, unless you yourself will it, but when the right one comes, then you will know him.” And she pressed a kiss upon her lips, a kiss unlike a human kiss which always takes something, but a sacred kiss which gives everything, which gives the girl the power of the kiss.

Wonderful Nature, how profound and mysterious thou art; thou givest words to a man, and to a woman the eloquence of the kiss! This kiss was upon her lips, and the farewell blessing on her forehead, and the joyous salutation in her eyes; therefore she looked at once so much at home, for she was indeed the child of the house, and so much a stranger, for she did not know the world, but only the loving mother who unseen watched over her. She was really charming, childlike, and yet adorned with a noble maidenly dignity that inspired respect. — However, I was soon again dispassionate and solemnly stolid, as is proper when one would do the significant as if it were the insignificant. After a few general remarks, I moved a little nearer to her and began my petition. A man who talks like a book is exceedingly tiresome to listen to; sometimes, however, it is quite appropriate to speak in that way. For a book has the remarkable quality that you may interpret it as you wish. One’s conversation also acquires the same quality, if one talks like a book. I kept quite soberly to general formulas. It cannot be denied that she was as surprised as I had expected. To describe how she looked is difficult. Her expressions were so variable, indeed much like the still unpublished but announced commentary to my book, a commentary which has the possibility of any interpretation. One word, and she would have laughed at me, one word, and she would have been moved, one word, and she would have fled from me; but no word crossed my lips, I remained stolidly serious, and kept exactly to the ritual. “She had known me so short a time.” Good heavens! such difficulties are encountered only in the narrow path of an engagement, not in the primrose path of love.

Curiously enough. When in the days preceding I surveyed the affair, I was rash enough and confident enough to believe that taken by surprise, she would say yes. That shows how much thorough preparation amounts to. The matter is not settled, for she said neither yes nor no, but referred me to her aunt. I should have foreseen this. However, I am still lucky, for this outcome is even better than the other.

The aunt gives her consent, about that I never had the slightest doubt. Cordelia accepts her advice. As regards my engagement, I do not boast that it is poetic, it is in every way philistine and bourgeois. The girl doesn't know whether to say yes or no; the aunt says yes, the girl also says yes, I take the girl, she takes me — and now the story begins.

3rd day.

So now I am engaged; so is Cordelia, and that is about all she knows about the whole matter. If she had a girl friend she could talk freely with, she might perhaps say: "I don't really understand what it all means. There is something about him that attracts me, but I can't really make out what it is. He has a strange power over me, but I do not love him, and perhaps I never shall; on the other hand, I can stand it to live with him, and can therefore be very happy with him; for he certainly will not demand so much if one only bears with him." My dear Cordelia! Perhaps he may demand more — and to make up for that, require less forbearance. — Of all ridiculous things imaginable, an engagement is the most ridiculous. Marriage, after all, has a meaning, even if this meaning does not please me. An engagement is a purely human invention which by no means reflects credit upon its inventor. It is neither one thing nor the other, and it has as much to do with love as the scarf which hangs down a beadle's back has to do with a professor's hood. Now I am a member of this honorable company. That is not without significance, for, as Trop says, it is only by first being an artist that one

acquires the right to judge other artists. And is not a fiancé also a carnival artist?

Edward is beside himself with rage. He is letting his beard grow, he has hung away his dark suit, which is very significant. He insists on talking with Cordelia in order to describe my craftiness to her. It will be an affecting scene: Edward unshaven, carelessly dressed, shouting at Cordelia.

Only he cannot cut me out with his long beard. Vainly I try to bring him to reason. I explain that it is the aunt who has brought about the match, that Cordelia perhaps still cherishes him, that I am willing to step back if he can win her. For a moment he wavers, wonders whether he should not shave his beard in a new way, buy a new black suit, then the next instant he abuses me. I do everything to keep on good terms with him; however angry he is with me, I am certain he will take no step without consulting me; he does not forget how helpful I have been to him in my role as mentor. And why should I wrest his last hope from him, why break with him? He is a good man; who knows what may happen in the future?

What I now have to do is, on the one hand, to get everything in order for getting the engagement broken, thus assuring myself of a more beautiful and significant relation to Cordelia; on the other hand, I must improve the time to the uttermost by enjoying all the charm, all the loveliness with which nature has so abundantly endowed her, enjoying myself in it, still with the self-limitation and circumspection that prevents any violation of it. When I have brought her to the point where she has learned what it is to love, and what it is to love me, then the engagement breaks like an imperfect mold, and she belongs to me. This is the point at which others become engaged, and have a good prospect of a boring marriage for all eternity. Well, let others have it.

As yet everything is *in statu quo;* but how can any fiancé be luckier than I? No miser who has found a piece of gold is happier than I am. I am

intoxicated with the thought that she is in my power. A pure, innocent femininity, transparent as the sea and as profound, with no clear idea of what love is! Now she is to learn its power. Like a king's daughter who has been raised from the dust to the throne of her forefathers, so shall she be installed in the kingdom where she belongs. But this must happen through me; and when she learns to love, she learns to love me; and as she extends her domain, the paradigm by which she herself is governed increasingly grows in power, and this is myself.

When through love she becomes aware of her full significance, she expends this in loving me; and when she suspects that she has learned this from me, then her love for me is doubled. The thought of my joy so overwhelms me that I almost lose my senses.

Her soul is not dissipated nor relaxed by the undefined emotions of love, a thing which keeps many young girls from ever learning to love, that is to say, to love decisively, energetically, totally. They hold in their consciousness an indefinite, nebulous image which is supposed to be an ideal, according to which the actual is to be tested. From such half-measures something emerges wherewith one may manage one's Christian way through the world. — Now as love awakens in Cordelia's soul, I scrutinize it, listen to it as it issues from her in all its varied moods. I ascertain how it has taken shape in her, and fashion myself into likeness with it. And though I am even now immediately engrossed with the story of the love pulsing through her heart, yet outwardly I comply with her wishes, as deceptively as possible. After all, a girl loves only once.

Now I am in lawful possession of Cordelia, I have the aunt's consent and blessing, the congratulations of friends and relatives; that ought to be enough. So now all the hardships of war are over, the blessings of peace begin. How silly! As if the aunt's blessing and the congratulations of friends could put me in possession of Cordelia in the more profound sense; as if

love made such a difference between war and peace, and did not rather, as long as it lasts, itself proclaim a combat, even if the weapons are different. The difference really depends on whether it is fought *cominus* or *eminus,* The more a love affair has been fought *eminus,* the more regrettable; for it makes the hand to hand contest less important. A hand-clasp, a touch of the foot, belongs to the close combat, something which it is well known Ovid both warmly commends and jealously disparages — to say nothing of a kiss, an embrace. He who fights *eminus* generally must rely on his eye alone, and yet if he is an artist, he will know how to use this weapon with such virtuosity that he achieves almost the same results. He can let his eye rest upon a girl with a desultory tenderness which affects her as if he had accidentally touched her; he will be able to hold her as firmly with his eye as if he held her fast in his embrace. However, it is a fault or a misfortune for one to fight too long *eminus,* for such a struggle is constantly only a symbol, not the enjoyment. Only when the struggle is fought *cominus* does everything attain its true importance. When love no longer fights, then it has ceased. I have virtually never fought *eminus* and therefore I am not at the end, but at the beginning; I am bringing out my weapons. It is true I am in possession of her, that is, in a legal and bourgeois sense; but that means nothing at all to me, I have far higher ideals. It is true that she is engaged to me; but if I were to infer from this that she loved me, it would be a deception, for after all she is not in love. I am in lawful possession of her, and yet I do not possess her, just as I can possess a girl without being in lawful possession of her.

> *Auf heinlich erröthender Wange*
> *Leuchtet des Herzens Glühen.*

She sits on the sofa by the tea table, I in a chair by her side. This position has the advantage of being intimate and yet detached. So tremendously

much depends upon the position, that is, for one who has an eye for it. Love has many positions, this is the first. How regally Nature has endowed this girl; her pure soft form, her deep feminine innocence, her clear eyes — all these intoxicate me. I pay her my respects. She cheerfully greets me as usual, still a little embarrassed, a little uncertain; the engagement, after all, ought to make our relationship somewhat different, just how she does not know. She shook hands with me, but not with her usual smile. I returned the greeting with a slight, almost imperceptible pressure. I was gentle and friendly without being erotic. — She sits on the sofa by the tea table. I sit in a chair by her side. A glorified solemnity diffuses itself over the situation, a soft morning radiance. She is silent; nothing disturbs the stillness. My eyes steal softly over her, not with desire, in truth that would be shameless. A delicate fleeting blush passes over her, like a cloud over the meadow, rising and receding. What does this blush mean? Is it love? Is it longing, hope, fear; for is not the heart's color red? By no means. She wonders, she is surprised — not at me, that would be too little to offer her; she is surprised, not at herself, but in herself, she is transformed within. This moment demands stillness, therefore, no reflection shall disturb it, no intimation of passion interrupt it. It is as if I were not present, and yet it is just my presence that furnishes the condition for her contemplative wonder. My being is in harmony with hers. When she is in this condition, a young girl is to be worshipped and adored in silence, like some deities.

It is indeed fortunate that I have my uncle's house. If I wished to give a young man a distaste for tobacco, I should take him to a smoker. If I wish to give a girl a distaste for being engaged, I need only bring her here. As in a tailors' guildhall one looks only for tailors, so here one looks only for engaged couples. It is a terrible company to fall into, and I cannot blame Cordelia for becoming impatient with it. When we are assembled en masse, I believe we muster ten couples, besides the extra battalions which great

festival days bring to the capital. Then we engaged couples can thoroughly enjoy the pleasures of engagements. I meet with Cordelia at the alarm post in order to disgust her with this love-smitten obviousness, this love-sick awkwardness of tradesmen. Incessantly throughout the evening one hears a sound as if someone were going around with a fly-swatter — it is the lovers kissing. There is a genial unrestraint in this house; no one even seeks a dark corner. No, they all sit about a big round table. I make as if to treat Cordelia the same way. To do this, I must do violence to my own feelings. It would really be outrageous of me if I were to allow myself to offend her innate femininity in this way. I would more reproach myself for doing this than I would when deceiving her. Generally I can assure any girl who entrusts herself to me a perfect aesthetic conduct: only it ends with her being deceived; but this is consistent with my aesthetics, for either the girl deceives the man, or the man deceives the girl. It would certainly be interesting if we might get some literary hack to tabulate in fairy stories, sagas, ballads, and mythologies whether it is the man or the girl who is more frequently faithless.

I cannot regret the time that Cordelia has cost me, although it is considerable. Every meeting has demanded long preparation. I am watching the birth of love within her. I am even almost invisibly present when I visibly sit by her side. My relation to her is that of an unseen partner in a dance which is danced by only one, when it should really be danced by two. She moves as in a dream, and yet she dances with another, and this other is myself, who, in so far as I am visibly present, am invisible, in so far as I am invisible, am visible. The movements of the dance require a partner, she bows to him, she takes his hand, she flees, she draws near him again. I take her hand, I complete her thought as if it were completed in herself. She moves to the inner melody of her own soul; I am only the occasion for her

movement. I am not amorous, that would only awaken her; I am easy, yielding, impersonal, almost like a mood.

What does an engaged couple usually talk about? So far as I know they busy themselves in getting mutually acquainted with the tiresome family connections of their respective families. What wonder then that the erotic is lost to sight. If one does not understand making love the absolute, in comparison with which all other topics are lost sight of, one should never get involved with love even if one gets married ten times. Even if I do have an aunt called Marion, an uncle named Christopher, a father who was a major, and so forth, all such information is irrelevant to the mysteries of love. Aye, even one's own past life is nothing. A young girl usually does not have much of importance to reveal in this respect; if she has, then it may perhaps be worth while to listen to her, but, as a rule, not to love her. Personally I want no histories; I have seen enough of them; I seek the immediate. It is the eternal element in love that the individuals first exist for one another in the moment of love.

A little confidence must be aroused in her, or, rather, a doubt must be removed. I do not really belong to the class of lovers who love one another out of respect, marry each other out of respect, bear children out of respect, and so on; but yet I well understand that love, especially as long as passion is not aroused, demands that the one who is its object should not aesthetically offend against the moral sense. In this respect love has its own dialectic. Thus, while from the moral standpoint my relation to Edward was far more reprehensible than my behavior toward the aunt, I should find it far easier to justify the former to Cordelia than the latter. She has as yet said nothing, but still I have found it best to explain to her the necessity for my having approached her in this manner. The circumspection I used flatters her pride, the secretiveness with which I managed everything fascinates her. It might seem that I have here betrayed too much erotic knowledge, so that I

contradict myself when later I find it necessary to imply that I have never been in love before. However, that is nothing. I am not afraid to contradict myself as long as she does not notice it, and I gain what I want. Let scholarly disputants take pride in avoiding every contradiction; a young girl's life is too exuberant not to have contradictions in it, and consequently it makes contradiction necessary.

She is proud, and at the same time she has no real conception of the erotic. Whereas she now, to a certain degree, defers to me intellectually, yet it is conceivable that when the erotic begins to assert itself, she may take it into her head to turn her pride against me. So far as I can make out, she is uncertain about her own significance as woman. That is why it was easy to arouse her pride against Edward. This pride, however, was entirely eccentric because she had no conception of love. If she acquires this, then she will have acquired true pride; but a residue of this eccentric pride might easily disturb her. It is then conceivable that she might turn against me. Although this might not make her regret having assented to our engagement, she would readily see that I had made a fairly good bargain; she would realize that it was not a proper beginning on her part.

Should this dawn upon her, she might ventrue to defy me. That is the way it should be. That proves to me how deeply she is moved.

Sure enough. Even from far down the street I see this charming, attractive, little head stretching as far as possible out of the window. It is the third day that I have noticed it.... A young girl certainly does not stand at the window for nothing, she probably has her own good reasons.... But, for heaven's sake, I beg you not to stretch so far out of the window; I bet you are standing on a chair round; I infer that from your position. Think how terrible it would be if you fell down on your head, not for me, of course, for I hold myself outside the case, but for him, him, for there certainly must be

a him.... Well, of all things! Away down there comes my friend, Licentiate Hansen, walking in the middle of the street. There is something unusual in his appearance, an uncommon haste; if I am right he is being borne on the wings of longing. Can he be coming to this house, and I not know it?... My pretty maiden, you have disappeared. I imagine that you have gone to open the door for him.... You might as well come back again, for he really is not coming into the house.... How do I know that? I can tell you how.... He said so himself. If the wagon that drove past had not been so noisy, you could have heard him yourself. I said to him just *en passant:* "Are you going in here?" He replied plainly: "No."... Now you can really say farewell, for the licentiate and I are going for a walk. He is embarrassed, and embarrassed people are usually garrulous. Now I shall talk with him about the ecclesiastical preferment he is seeking.... Farewell, my pretty maiden, we are going to the custom-house. When we have reached it, I shall say to him: "Confound you, you have taken me out of my way. I ought to be up on Western Street." — Well look, here we are again.... What constancy! she is still standing by the window. Such a girl ought to make a man happy.... And why am I doing all this? you ask. Because I am a black-hearted fellow who takes pleasure in teasing others? By no means. I do it out of regard for you, my worthy maiden. In the first place. You have waited for the licentiate, longed for him, and so when he finally comes he is doubly welcome. In the second place. When the licentiate now comes into the house, he will say: "We were almost caught that time by that accursed fellow standing by the door when I wanted to come in. But I was clever, I lured him into a long talk about the living I am trying to get, and I walked him up and down, here and there, and finally clear out to the custom-house. I can promise you he noticed nothing." So what? So you think more of the licentiate than ever. For you have always thought that he had a remarkable mind, but that he was clever... aye, now you see it yourself. And you have me to thank for it. —

But now something else occurs to me. Their engagement cannot yet have been announced, otherwise I should have heard of it. The girl is beautiful and pleasing to look at, but she is young. Perhaps her insight is not yet mature. Is it not conceivable that she is thoughtlessly planning to take a very serious step? It must be prevented; I must talk with her. I owe her that, for she is certainly a very attractive girl. I owe it to the licentiate, for he is my friend. So far as that goes, I owe it to her, for she is my friend's intended. I owe it to her family, for it is certainly a very respectable one. I owe it to the whole human race, for it is a good deed. The whole human race! Great thought, inspiring deed, to act in the name of the whole human race, to possess such general authority! Now for Cordelia. I can always make use of a mood, and the girl's beautiful yearning has really affected me.

So now the first war with Cordelia begins, in which I flee, and thereby teach her to triumph in pursuing me. I constantly retreat before her, and in this retreat, I teach her through myself to know all the power of love, its unquiet thoughts, its passion, what longing is, and hope, and impatient expectation. As I thus set all this before her in my own person, the same power develops correspondingly in her. It is a triumphal procession in which I lead her, and I myself am just as much the one who dithyrambically sings praises for her victory as the one who shows the way. She will gain courage to believe in love, to believe that it is an eternal power, when she sees its mastery over me, sees my emotions. She will believe me, partly because I have confidence in my art, and partly because fundamentally there is truth in what I am doing. If this were not the case, then she would not believe me. With every movement of mine, she becomes stronger and stronger; love is awakening in her soul, she is becoming initiated into her significance as a woman. Hitherto I have not set her free in the ordinary meaning of the word. I do it now, I set her free, for only thus will I love her.

She must never suspect that she owes this freedom to me, for that would destroy her self-confidence. When she at last feels free, so free that she is almost tempted to break with me, then the second war begins. Now she has power and passion, and the struggle becomes worth while to me. It matters little what the immediate consequences may be. Suppose she becomes dizzy with pride, suppose she should break with me, oh, well, she is free; but she shall yet be mine. That the engagement should bind her is foolishness; I will have her only in her freedom. Let her forsake me, the second war is just beginning, and in this second war I shall be the victor, just as certainly as it was an illusion that she was the victor in the first. The more abundant strength she has, the more interesting for me. The first war was a war of liberation, it was only a game; the second is a war of conquest, it is for life and death.

Do I love Cordelia? Yes. Sincerely? Yes. Faithfully? Yes — in an aesthetic sense, and this also indicates something important. What good would it do this girl to fall into the hands of some numbskull, even if he were a faithful husband? What would she then become? Nothing. Someone has said that it takes a little more than honesty to get through life. I should say that it takes something more than honesty to love such a girl. That more I have — it is duplicity. And yet I really love her faithfully. Rigidly and abstemiously I watch over myself, so that everything there is in her, the whole divinely rich nature, may come to its unfolding. I am one of the few who can do this, she is one of the few who is fitted for this; are we not then suited to one another?

Is it sinful of me that instead of looking at the preacher, I fix my eye on the beautiful embroidered handkerchief you hold in your hand? Is it sinful for you to hold it thus?... It has a name in the corner.... Your name is Charlotte Hahn? It is so fascinating to learn a lady's name in such an accidental manner. It is as if there were a helpful spirit who mysteriously

made me acquainted with you.... Or is it perhaps not accidental that the handkerchief was folded just right for me to see your name?... You are disturbed, you wipe a tear from your eye, the handkerchief again hangs carelessly down.... It is evident to you that I am looking at you, not at the preacher. You look at the handkerchief, you notice that it has betrayed your name.... It is really a very innocent matter. It is easy to get to know a girl's name.... Why do you take it out on the handkerchief, why do you crumple it up? Why are you angry at it? Why angry at me? Listen to what the preacher says: "No one should lead a man into temptation; even one who does so unwittingly, has a responsibility, he is even in debt to the other, a debt which he can discharge only by increased benevolence."... Now he says Amen. Outside the church door you'll probably dare to let the handkerchief flutter loosely in the wind... or have you become afraid of me? What have I done?... Have I done more than you can forgive, more than you dare remember — in order to forgive?

A two-fold movement becomes necessary in relation to Cordelia. If I constantly flee before her superior force, it makes it possible for the erotic in her to become too diffused and vague for the deeper womanliness to hypostatize itself. Then, when the second war began, she would not be able to offer resistance. She may be asleep to her victory, — that's as it should be; but, on the other side, she must constantly be awakened. Then, when for an instant it seems to her that her victory has been wrested from her, she must learn to hold it fast. In this conflict her womanhood is matured. I might either use conversation to inflame or letters to cool, or vice versa. The latter is by all means to be preferred. I then enjoy her most intense moments. When she has received a letter, when she has absorbed its sweet poison in her blood, then a word is enough to make her love break forth. The next moment irony and coldness awaken doubt, but yet not sufficiently to nullify her sense of victory, rather she feels it increased through the

reception of the next letter. Irony does not lend itself well to expression in a letter, for one runs the risk of her not understanding it. Glimpses only of one's ardent feelings may be allowed to enter into conversation. My personal presence prevents extravagance of mood. When I am only present in a letter, she can easily endure me, to a certain extent she confuses me with a universal being who lives in her love. In a letter, too, one can better let oneself go; in a letter I can throw myself at her feet beautifully, a thing that would certainly make me look like a fool if I were actually to do it, and would destroy all the illusion. The contradiction in these movements will evoke and develop, strengthen and consolidate her love, in one word, tempt it.

These letters must not assume a strongly erotic coloring too early. In the beginning it is best for them to have a general character, contain a single suggestion, remove a single doubt. Occasionally they may also suggest the advantage an engagement gives in keeping people away by some trickery. What imperfections an engagement otherwise has, she shall have plenty of opportunities to discover. In my uncle's house all the travesties necessary can always be found. The intimate erotic she cannot develop without my assistance. When I refuse this, and let its caricature worry her, then she will soon become tired of being engaged, still without realizing that I am the one who made her tired of it.

A little note today describing the condition of my soul will give her an insight into how it stands with herself. It is the correct method, and I always have method. I have you to thank for that, you dear girls, whom I formerly have loved. I owe it to you that my soul is so attuned that I can be whatever I wish to Cordelia. I remember you with gratitude, the honor belongs to you. I shall always acknowledge that a young girl is a born teacher, from whom one can always learn, if nothing else, how to deceive her — for one learns this best from the girls themselves; no matter how old I may become,

I shall never forget that everything is first really over for a man when he has got so old that he can learn nothing from a young girl.

My Cordelia!

You say that you had not imagined that I was like this, but neither had I imagined that I could become like this. Does not the change lie in yourself? For it is conceivable that I am not really changed, but that the eye with which you look at me is changed. Or does that change He in me? It lies in me, for I love you; it lies in you, for it is you I love. Proudly and inexorably I considered everything by the calm, cold light of reason, nothing terrified me, nothing surprised me; even if a spirit had knocked at my door, I should calmly have taken the candelabrum and opened the door. But lo, it was not wraiths I opened to, not pale, nerveless forms, it was to you, my Cordelia; it was life and youth and health and beauty who entered in. My arm trembled, I could hardly hold the light steady. I retreat before you, and cannot refrain from fixing my eyes upon you, cannot refrain from wishing I might hold the light steady. I am changed; but how, why, in what does this change consist? I do not know. I know no better definition, no richer predicate to use than this, when I very mysteriously say about myself: I am changed.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Love loves secrecy — an engagement is a revelation; it loves silence — an engagement is a public notice; it loves a whisper, an engagement is a proclamation from the housetops; and yet an engagement, with my Cordelia's help, may be an excellent trick for deceiving the enemies. On a dark night there is nothing more dangerous to other ships than hanging out a lantern, which is more deceptive than the darkness.

Thy Johannes.

She sits on the sofa by the tea table. I sit by her side; she holds my arm, her head weighed down by many thoughts rests on my shoulder; she is so

near me, and yet so far away. She resigns herself to me, and yet she does not belong to me. Even yet she resists me, but this is not subjectively reflective, it is the ordinary feminine resistance, for woman's nature is submission in the form of resistance. — She sits on the sofa by the tea table, I sit by her side. Her heart is beating, yet without passion; her bosom moves, yet not in disquiet; sometimes she changes color, yet in an easy transition. Is that love? By no means. She listens, she understands. She listens to the winged word, she understands it; she listens to another's speech, she understands it as her own; she hears the voice of another as it echoes through her; she understands this echo also, as if it were her own voice, which is manifest to her and to another.

What am I doing? Do I fool her? Not at all; that would be of no use to me. Am I stealing her heart? By no means; I really prefer that the girl I love should retain her heart. Then what am I doing? I am creating for myself a heart in the likeness of her own. An artist paints his beloved; that gives him pleasure; a sculptor fashions his. I do this, too, but in a spiritual sense. She does not know that I possess this picture, and therein lies my real deception. Mysteriously have I secured it, and in this sense I have stolen her heart, just as Rebecca stole Laban's heart when she craftily took away from him his household gods.

Environment and setting still have a great influence upon one; there is something about them which stamps itself firmly and deeply in memory, or rather upon the whole soul, and which is therefore never forgotten. However old I may become, it will always be impossible for me to think of Cordelia amid surroundings different from this little room. When I come to visit her, the maid admits me to the hall; Cordelia herself comes in from her room, and, just as I open the door to enter the living room, she opens her door, so that our eyes meet exactly in the doorway. The living room is

small, comfortable, little more than a cabinet. Although I have now seen it from many different viewpoints, the one dearest to me is the view from the sofa. She sits there by my side; in front of us stands a round tea table, over which is draped a rich tablecloth. On the table stands a lamp shaped like a flower, which shoots up vigorously to bear its crown, over which a delicately cut paper shade hangs down so lightly that it is never still. The form of the lamp reminds one of oriental lands, the movement of the shade of the mild oriental breezes. The floor is concealed by a carpet woven from a certain kind of osier, which immediately betrays its foreign origin. For the moment I let the lamp become the keynote of my landscape. I am sitting there with her outstretched on the ground, under the lamp's flowering. At other times I let the osier rug evoke ideas about a ship, about an officer's cabin — we sail out into the middle of the great ocean. When we sit at a distance from the window, we gaze directly into heaven's vast horizon. This adds to the illusion. When I sit by her side, then I describe these things as pictures which pass as lightly over reality as death walks over one's grave.

Environment is always of great importance, especially for the sake of memory. Every erotic relation should always be lived so that one can easily reproduce a picture of it, in all the beauty of the original scene. To make this successful one must be especially observant of the surroundings. If one does not find them as one wants them, then one must make them so. In the case of Cordelia and her love, the environment was entirely suitable. What a different picture appears to me when I think about my little Emily, and yet, again, how suitable was the environment. I cannot imagine her, or rather, I only remember her in the little garden room. The door stood open, a little garden in front of the house cut off the view, forcing the eye to stop there, to pause at the boldly inviting highway that vanished in the distance. Emily was charming, but more insignificant than Cordelia. Her environment, too, suited her. The eye was held to earth, it did not rush boldly and impatiently

forward, it rested in this little foreground. Even the highway which romantically lost itself in the distance only emphasized this, so that the eye traversing the stretches lying before it turned back again into this garden in order to traverse the same stretches again. The apartment was of the earth. Cordelia's environment must have no foreground, but only the infinite boldness of far horizons. She must not be of the earth, but ethereal, not walking but flying, not forward and back, but everlastingly forward.

When a man is himself engaged, he is straightway initiated with a vengeance into all the foolishness of the engaged. Some days ago Licentiate Hansen turned up with the attractive young girl he has become engaged to. He confided to me that she was charming, which I knew before, that she was very young, which I also knew; finally he confided to me that this was exactly the reason he had chosen her, so that he might shape her according to the ideal which was ever floating before his mind. Ye gods, what a silly licentiate, — and a healthy, blooming, joyous girl! Now I am a fairly old practitioner, yet I should never approach a young girl otherwise than as Nature's *Venerabile,* and learn first from her. In so far as I can have any formative influence upon her, it is by repeatedly teaching her what I have learned from her.

Her soul must be set in motion, agitated in every possible direction; not, however, piecemeal and by sudden gusts, but totally. She must discover the infinite, experience what it is that lies nearest to man. This must she discover, not by the way of thought, which for her is the wrong way, but in imagination, which is the real mode of communication between her and me; for what is but a part with man, is the whole with woman. Not by the toilsome labor of thought should she work toward the infinite, for woman is not born for intellectual work, but she should grasp it through imagination and the easy way of the heart. The infinite is just as naturally a part of a

young girl as is the conception she holds that all love must be happy. A young girl has above all, wherever she turns, the infinite about her, and the transition is a leap, but, it is well to note, a feminine not a masculine leap. Why are men generally so clumsy? When a man would leap, he first takes a run, makes lengthy preparations, measures the distance with his eye, takes several running starts, becomes afraid, and turns back again. At last he jumps and falls in. A young girl leaps in a different fashion. In mountainous regions one often sees twin peaks towering above the mountain range. A yawning chasm separates them, terrible to gaze down into. No man would dare this leap. A young girl, however, so the mountain folk say, did venture it, and for this reason it is called the Maiden's Leap. I can readily believe it, as I believe everything remarkable about a young girl, and it is intoxicating to me to hear the simple mountain folk talk about it. I believe everything, believe the miraculous, am amazed at it only in order to believe, as the only thing in the world which has astonished me is a young girl, the first and the last. And yet, such a leap is for a young girl only a hop, while a man's leap always becomes ridiculous, because however far he straddles, his exertion at once becomes nothing, compared with the distance between the peaks, and yet it acts as a sort of measuring stick.

But who could be so foolish as to imagine a young girl's taking a running start? One can indeed imagine her running, but then the running is itself a game, a pleasure, an unfolding of charm, whereas the conception of a preliminary run separates those things which belong together in a woman. A run, in fact, has its own dialectic, which is contrary to woman's nature. And now the leap; who here dares again to be so ungracious as to separate what there belongs together? Her leap is a floating through the air. And when she has reached the other side, she stands there, not exhausted by the exertion, but more beautiful than ever, instinct with feeling, she wafts a kiss over to us who stand on this side. Young, new-born like a flower which has

shot up from the root of the mountain, she swings out over the abyss, so that it almost turns us dizzy.... What she must learn is to go through all the movements of infinity, to sway, to lull herself in her moods, to confuse poetry and reality, truth and romance, to be tossed about in the infinite. When she becomes familiar with this confusion, then I set the erotic in motion, then she becomes what I wish and desire. Then is my duty ended, my labor; then I take in my sail, then I sit by her side, and under her sail we travel forward. And in truth, when this girl is first erotically intoxicated, I shall have enough to do in sitting by the rudder to moderate the speed, so that nothing comes too early, nor in an unlovely manner. Sometimes I may take in a little sail, but in the next moment we rush forward again.

Cordelia becomes more and more indignant whenever we go to my uncle's house. She has several times requested that we should not go there again; there is no help for her, I always know how to find an excuse. Last night when we left she pressed my hand with unusual passion. She had probably felt tortured at being there, and it was no wonder. If I did not always get some amusement out of watching the artificiality of these artistic performances, it would be impossible for me to stand it. This morning I received a letter from her in which she, with more wit than I had expected from her, ridiculed the engagements. I have kissed that letter; it is the dearest one I have received from her. Rightly so, my Cordelia, this is the way I wish it.

It happens quite curiously that on Eastern Street there are two confectioners whose places are exactly opposite one another. On the first floor to the left lives a little maiden or matron. She is usually hidden behind a curtain which screens the windowpane where she sits. The curtain is made of very thin material, and if anyone knows the girl, or has seen her often, he will, if he has good eyesight, easily be able to recognize every feature, while to one

who does not know her, or does not see well, she will appear only as a dark shadow. The latter is to a certain degree the case with me; the former the case with a young officer who appears in the offing every day precisely at noon, and looks up at this window. I really first noticed this beautiful telegraphic relation because of the curtain. There are no curtains for the rest of the windows, and such a single curtain covering only one pane is usually a sign that some very retiring person sits behind it. One forenoon I stood at the window of the confectionery across the street. It was exactly twelve o'clock. Without paying any attention to the passers-by, I stood looking fixedly at this curtain, when suddenly the dark shadow behind it began to move. A feminine head appeared in profile at the next pane, so that it curiously turned toward the curtain. Thereupon the fair owner of the head nodded in a very friendly way, and again hid herself behind the curtain.

First and foremost, I decided that the person she greeted was a man, for her greeting was too passionate to be occasioned by the sight of a girl friend; in the second place, I decided that he whom she greeted must be coming from the other direction. Thus she had placed herself exactly right to be able to see him a long distance away, aye, she could even greet him while concealed by the curtain.... Very well, at precisely twelve o'clock, the hero in this little love scene appears, our gallant lieutenant. I am sitting in the shop of the confectioner who lives on the ground floor of the building whose first floor is occupied by the young lady. The lieutenant already had his eyes fixed upon her. Take care now, my friend, it is not so easy a matter to bow gracefully to the first floor. On the whole, he is not so bad — well developed, erect, a handsome figure, hooked nose, dark hair, the tricorn is very becoming to him. Now for the difficulties! The knees gradually begin to knock together a little from standing too long in one position. It makes an impression on the eyes comparable to the feeling a man with a toothache has when the teeth are left in the mouth too long. If a man centers his whole

power in his eyes and directs it to the first floor, it soon takes too much strength from the legs. I beg your pardon, Lieutenant, for intercepting that heaven-directed glance. It was impertinent, I know that well enough. One cannot call this glance very significant, rather insignificant, and yet very promising. But these many promises evidently rise too strongly to the head; he totters, to use the poet's word about *Agnete,* he wavers, he falls. That is tough, and if anyone asked me, I should say it ought never to happen. He is too good for that. It is really fatal, for when a man would impress a lady as a cavalier, he must never fall. If he would be a cavalier, he must conduct himself as such. If on the other hand, he only appears as a great intellect, then all such things are matters of indifference; he may sink into himself, he may collapse; if then he actually falls, there is nothing at all remarkable about it.... What impression might this incident have made upon my little miss?

It is unfortunate that I cannot be on both sides of the Dardanelles at the same time. I could, of course, post an acquaintance on the other side of the street, but, partly, I always prefer to make my own observations, partly, I never know what there might be in it for me, and in such a case it is well never to have a confidant, since then one must waste a great deal of time finding out what he knows, and confusing him about the matter.... I am really getting tired of my good lieutenant. Day after day he shows up in full uniform. This is a terrible constancy. Is such a quality becoming to a soldier? Dear Sir, don't you carry side arms? Ought you not to take the house by storm? and the lady by violence? Of course, if you were a student, a licentiate, a curate who lives on hope, that would be a different matter. Still, I forgive you, for the girl pleases me the more I look at her. She is pretty, her brown eyes are full of mischief. When she is awaiting your arrival her appearance is enhanced by a higher beauty, indescribably

becoming to her. Therefore I infer that she must have a great deal of imagination, and imagination is the natural rouge of beautiful women.

My Cordelia!

What is longing? Language and the poets rhyme it with the word prison *[Længsel — Fængsel]*. How absurd! As if only a prisoner could know longing. As if one could not long when one is free. If I were set free, would I not long? And on the other side, I am free, yes, free as a bird, and yet do I not long? I long when I am going to you, I long when I leave you, even when I sit by your side, I am longing for you. Can one then long for what one has? Aye, when one considers that in the next moment one may not have it. My longing is an eternal impatience. Only when I had lived through all eternities and assured myself that at every moment you belonged to me, would I return to you, and with you live through all eternities, and not even have the patience to be separated from you for a single moment without longing, but with confidence enough to sit quiet by your side.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Outside the door stands a little carriage which to me is large enough for the whole world, since it is large enough for two; hitched to it are a pair of horses, wild and unmanageable as the forces of Nature, impatient as my passion, spirited as your thoughts. If you are willing, I shall carry you away, my Cordelia! Only command it. Your command is the word which loosens the reins and spurs on the lust of flight. I carry you away, not from one person to another, but out of the world. — The horses rear, the carriage rises, the steeds in their ascent are almost directly above our heads. We ride heavenward through the clouds; the wind whistles about us. Is it we who are sitting still while all the world is moving, or is it our daring flight? Does it make you dizzy, my Cordelia? Then hold fast to me; I do not become dizzy.

One never becomes giddy in a spiritual sense when one thinks only of a single thing, and I think only of you — in the physical sense one is never giddy if one fastens the eyes on a single object. I look only at you. Hold fast; if the world passes away, if our comfortable carriage vanishes beneath us, we still hold each other close, floating in the harmony of the spheres.

Thy Johannes.

It is almost too much. My servant has waited six hours, I myself have waited two, in the wind and rain, just to meet that dear child, Charlotte Hahn. She is in the habit of visiting an old aunt of hers regularly every Wednesday between two and five. Today she doesn't come, just when I was so eager to see her. And why? Because she puts me in a very definite mood. I bow to her, she curtsies to me in a manner at once indescribably worldly, and yet so divine; she almost stops, sinks nearly to the ground, looking all the time as if she might ascend to heaven. When I look at her, my mind is at once solemn and yet filled with desire.

As for the rest, the girl does not interest me in the least. All I want is this greeting, nothing more, even if she were willing to give it. Her greeting creates a mood in me, and it is this mood which I then squander on Cordelia.... I'll wager now that in some way she has slipped by us. It is not only in comedies but in real life as well that it is difficult to keep track of a young girl; one needs to have an eye on every finger. It was a nymph, Cardea, who devoted her life to fooling men. She lived in a wood, lured her lover to its thickest copse, and disappeared. She wished to fool Janus also, but he fooled her instead; for he had eyes in the back of his head.

My letters do not fail of their purpose. They develop her mentally, if not erotically. For that purpose I must not use letters but notes. The more the erotic is to come out, the shorter they should be, but the more positively

they should stress the erotic side. However, in order not to make her sentimental or soft, irony must again stiffen her emotions, while yet giving her an appetite for the nourishment dearest to her. The notes vaguely and remotely suggest the absolute. As soon as this suspicion begins to dawn in her soul, the relation is ruptured. By my resistance the suspicion takes form in her soul, as if it were her own thought, her own heart's impulse. This is just what I want.

My Cordelia!

Somewhere in this town there lives a little family consisting of a widow and her three daughters. Two of the latter go to the Royal Kitchen to learn to cook. It was about five o'clock on an afternoon in spring, the door of the living room opened softly, a spying glance stole about the room. There was no one; only a young girl sat at the piano. The door stood ajar, so one could listen unobserved. It was no artist who was playing; had it been, the door would have been shut tight. She was playing a Swedish melody, suffused with the impermanence of youth and beauty. The words mocked the girl's own youth and beauty; her youth and beauty mocked the words. Which was right: the girl or the words? The tones were so quiet, so melancholy, as if sadness were the arbitrator who should decide the question. — But it is wrong, this sadness. What connection is there between youth and these reflections? What fellowship between morning and evening! The tones quiver and tremble; the spirits of the sounding-board rise in confusion and do not understand one another — my Cordelia, why so violent! to what end this passion!

How far remote in time must an event be for us to remember it? How far must it be so that memory's longing can no longer seize upon it? Most people have a limit in this respect: the things which lie too near them in time, they cannot remember, nor can they remember the more remote. I

know no limit. What was experienced yesterday, I push back a thousand years in time, and remember it as if it had happened yesterday.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

I have a secret to confide to you, my confidante. To whom should I confide it? Echo? It would betray it. The stars? They are cold. People? They do not understand it. Only to you can I confide it; for you know how to keep a secret. There is a girl more beautiful than my soul's dream, purer than the light of the sun, deeper than the depth of the sea, prouder than the flight of eagles — there is a girl — O! incline your head to my ear and to my words, that my secret may slip into it — I love this girl more dearly than my life, for she is my life; more than all my desires, for she is my sole desire; more than all my thoughts, for she is my sole thought; more warmly than the sun loves the flowers; more fervently than sorrow loves the secrecy of the troubled heart; more wistfully than the burning sands of the desert love the rain — I cling to her more tenderly than the mother's eye fastens itself upon the child; more worshipfully than the pleading soul to God; more inseparably than the plant to its root. — Your head becomes heavy and thoughtful, it sinks down on your breast, your bosom rises to support it — my Cordelia! You have understood me, you have understood me exactly, to the letter, no jot has been ignored. Shall I attune my ears and let your voice assure me of this? Could I doubt? Will you keep this secret? Dare I depend on you? Someone tells about men who in terrible crimes dedicate themselves to mutual silence. I have confided to you a secret which is my life, and my life's content; have you nothing to confide in me, nothing which is so beautiful, so significant, so chaste, that supernatural forces would be set in motion if I betrayed it?

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

The heaven is overcast — dark rain clouds hang over it like dark brows above a passionate countenance; the trees of the forest move restlessly, tossed about by unquiet dreams. You are hidden from me in the forest. Behind every tree I perceive a feminine being who resembles you; if I come nearer, then it hides behind the next tree. Will you not reveal yourself to me? Unify yourself? Everything is in confusion before me; a solitary part of the woods loses its isolated outline, I see everything as a foggy sea, where everywhere feminine beings resembling you appear and disappear. I do not see you, you constantly move in the waves of intuition, and yet I am made happy by every single resemblance to you. Wherein does it he — is it in the rich unity of your being or in the poor manifold of my own? — Is not loving you to love the world?

Thy Johannes.

It would really be interesting, if it were possible, to record exactly the conversations between Cordelia and myself. However it is easy to see that this is an impossibility; for if I were fortunate enough to remember every single word exchanged between us, still it would always be impossible to express the contemporaneity which really forms the nerve center of the conversation, the surprised outbreak, the passionateness which is the life-principle of conversation. In general, I have naturally not prepared myself, since this would militate against the essential nature of conversation, especially erotic conversation. Only I always have the contents of my letters well in mind, the moods which these might possibly evoke in her, always before my eyes. Naturally it would never occur to me to ask her whether she had read my letter. I can easily prove for myself that she has read it. I never talk with her directly about it, but I make mysterious allusions to it in the course of my conversation, partly to fix one or another impression more

firmly in her soul, partly to wrest it from her and make her irresolute. Then she can reread the letter and get a new impression of it, and so on.

A change is taking place, and it is taking place in her. Should I try to characterize the condition of her soul at this moment, then I should say that it is pantheistically daring. Her glance betrays this immediately. It is daring, almost rash in expectancy, as if it demanded and at every moment was prepared to view the extraordinary. Like an eye that sees beyond itself, so her glance travels beyond that which appears immediately before it, and sees the marvelous. It is daring, almost rash in its expectancy, but not in self-confidence; it is therefore dreamy and prayerful, not proud and commanding. She seeks the marvelous outside herself, she prays for it to appear, as if it was not in her own power to evoke it. This must be prevented, otherwise I get predominance over her too early. She said yesterday that there was something regal in my nature. Perhaps she will submit; that will not do at all. Certainly, my dear Cordelia, there is something kingly in my nature, but you do not suspect what it is I rule over as a kingdom. It is over stormy moods. Like Aeolus I hold them shut up in the mountain of my personality, and let now one, now another, go forth. Flattery will give her self-esteem; the difference between me and thee will be made valid; everything throws the responsibility on her. Great caution is needed in using flattery. Sometimes one must value himself very highly, yet so that there remains something still higher; sometimes one must set one's self very low. The first is more correct when one is moving toward the spiritual, the second, when one moves toward the erotic. — Does she owe me anything? Nothing at all. Could I wish that she did? Not at all. I am too much a connoisseur — I have too much understanding of the erotic for any such foolishness. If this were actually the case I should endeavor with all my might to make her forget it, and hush my own thoughts about it I to sleep. Every young girl is, in relation to the labyrinth of her heart, an

Ariadne; she holds the thread by which one can find his way through it, but she has it, without herself knowing how to use it.

My Cordelia!

Speak — I obey. Your wish is a command. Your prayer is an all-powerful invocation, every fleeting wish of yours is a benefaction to me; for I obey you not like a servile spirit, as if I stood outside of you. When you command, then your will increases, and with it I myself; for I am a confusion of the soul which only awaits your word.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

You know that I am very fond of talking to myself. I have found that the most interesting person of my acquaintance is myself. Sometimes I have feared that I might finally lack subjects for these conversations; now I no longer fear, now I have you. I talk, then, now and to all eternity about you with myself, about the most interesting subject with the most interesting man. — Alas, I am only an interesting man, you the most interesting subject.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Because I have loved you so short a time you almost seem to fear that I may have loved someone before. There are manuscripts on which the trained eye immediately suspects an older writing, which in the course of time has been superseded by insignificant foolishness. By means of chemicals, this later writing may be erased, and then the original stands out plain and clear. So your eye has taught me to find myself in myself. I let forgetfulness consume everything which does not concern you, and then I

discover an exceedingly old, a divinely young, original writing, then I discover that my love for you is as old as myself.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

How can a kingdom stand which is at strife with itself? How shall I be able to survive, when I strive with myself? What about? About you, in order, if possible, to find rest in the thought that I am in love with you. But how shall I find this rest? One of the striving powers will constantly persuade the other that he is most deeply and heartily in love; the next moment the other will do the same. It would not trouble me greatly if my war were external, if there were someone who dared to be in love with you, or dared to refrain from loving you, the crime is equally great; but this struggle in my own being consumes me, this one passion in its ambiguity.

Thy Johannes.

Just make yourself scarce, my little fisher-maiden; just hide yourself among the trees; just take up your burden, it is becoming to you to bend over, aye, even as you are now doing, with a natural grace, under the load of fagots you have collected — that such a creature should bear such burdens! Like a dancer you reveal your beautiful form — slender waist, lovely bosom, not yet fully mature, that every registry clerk must admit. You perhaps believe that your beauty is not worth mentioning, you think that fashionable ladies are far more beautiful. Ah, my child! You do not know how much deception there is in the world. But start your journey with your burden on your shoulders, into the great forest, which probably stretches many, many miles into the country, up to the very foot of the blue mountains. You are perhaps not a real fisher-maiden, but an enchanted princess; you are the slave of a troll; he is cruel enough to make you fetch fagots from the forest. It is always this way in fairy stories; otherwise why should you go deeper into

the forest? If you are really a fisher-maiden, you should go down to your lodgings with your firewood, past me, as I stand on the other side of the road. — If you just follow the foot-path which winds invitingly through the trees, my eyes will find you; just look around at me, my eyes are following you; move me you cannot; no desire pulls me hence.

I sit calmly on the railing and smoke my cigar. — Some other time — perhaps. Yes, your glance is roguish enough, when you half turn your head back that way; your graceful walk is inviting — yes, I know it, I understand where this path leads, — to the solitude of the forest, to the murmur of the trees, to the manifold stillness. Look, even heaven encourages you, it hides itself in the clouds, it darkens the background of the forest, it is as if it pulled down the curtain for us. — Farewell, my pretty fisher-maiden, live well. Thanks for your favor, it was a beautiful moment, a mood, not strong enough to move me from my firm place on the railing, but still rich in inward emotion.

When Jacob had bargained with Laban about the pay for his services, they agreed that Jacob should watch the white sheep, and as a reward for his work, should have the ringstraked and piebald lambs which were born in his flock. Then he laid mottled sticks in the water, and let the sheep look at them. — So I place myself everywhere before Cordelia, she sees me constantly. It seems to her sheer attentiveness on my part; personally I know, however, that her soul is losing interest in everything else, that there is developing within her a spiritual concupiscence which sees me everywhere.

My Cordelia!

How could I forget you? Is my love then a work of memory? Even if time expunged everything else from its tablets, even expunged memory itself, my relation to you would continue to live, you would still not be forgotten. As if I could forget you! What should I then remember? I have

even forgotten myself to remember you; if I then forgot you, I would come to remember myself; but at the moment I remembered myself, I would have to remember you again. As if I could forget you! What would happen then? There is a picture dating from antiquity. It represents Ariadne. She is leaping up from her couch and gazing earnestly toward a ship which is departing under full sail. By her side stands Cupid with unstrung bow, and dries his eyes. Behind her stands a winged and helmeted female figure. It is usually assumed that this figure represents Nemesis. Imagine this picture. Imagine it a little changed. Cupid does not weep, and his bow is strung; or were you then become less beautiful, less victorious, because I had become mad? Cupid smiles and bends his bow. Nemesis does not stand inactive by your side, she also draws her bow. In that picture we see in the ship a manly figure who is busily occupied. We assume that it is Theseus. Not so in my picture. He stands on the stem, he looks longingly back, he stretches out his arms, he has repented, or, rather, his madness has left him, but the ship bears him away. Cupid and Nemesis both aim at him, and arrows fly from both bows; their aim is true; one sees, one understands, that they have both hit the same place in his heart, as a sign that his love was the Nemesis which avenged.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

People say that I am in love with myself; I don’t wonder; for how could they notice that I am in love, since I love only you; how could anyone suspect it, since I love only you? I am in love with myself, why? Because I am in love with you; for I love you truly, you alone, and everything which belongs to you, and so I love myself because this myself belongs to you, so if I cease to love you, I cease to love myself. What is, then, in the profane eyes of the world an expression of the greatest egotism is for your initiated eyes an expression of purest sympathy; what is for the profane eyes of the

world an expression of the most prosaic self-preservation is in your sacred sight an expression for the most enthusiastic self-annihilation.

Thy Johannes.

What I had most feared was that her whole process of development might take too long a time. I see, however, that Cordelia is making such great strides forward that it becomes necessary, in order to keep her attention properly, to set everything in movement. Not for all the world must she become faint too early, that is to say, before the time when time is past for her.

When people are in love, they do not follow the public highway. It is only marriage which plods along the middle of the king's highway; when lovers walk from Noddebo, they do not stroll along the path by Esrom Lake, even though that is really only a hunting road, for it is blazed, and love prefers to blaze its own way. They penetrate deeper into Grib's Forest. And when they thus wander arm in arm, each one understands the other, and that becomes clear which before was obscurely amusing and painful. The lovers do not suspect that anyone is present. — Consequently, this beautiful beech tree becomes a witness to your love; under its crown you first confessed your love. You remembered everything so clearly: the first time you saw each other, the first time you clasped each other's hand in the dance, the first time you separated from each other in the morning hour, when neither of you would admit anything to yourself, to say nothing of making an admission to the other. — It is sufficiently entertaining to listen to the repertory of love. — They fell on their knees under the tree, they pledged each other inviolable love, they sealed the pact with the first kiss. — These are fruitful moods which must be squandered on Cordelia.... Consequently this beech became a witness. O well, a tree is a proper witness, but still it is not enough. Well, you think, heaven was also a witness, but heaven without

something else is a very abstract idea. Behold, therefore, there was nevertheless a witness. — Ought I to stand up, let them know that I am here? No, perhaps they would know me, and that would spoil the game. Should I, when they leave, stand up and let them know someone was present? No, that is inexpedient. Silence shall rest over their secret — as long as I wish. They are in my power, I can separate them when I will. I am privy to their secret; only from him or from her, can I have learned it — from her, that would be impossible — consequently, from him — that is abominable! Bravo! And yet it is almost malicious. Well, we'll see. If I can get a definite impression of her, which I cannot otherwise get normally, as I would prefer, then there is nothing else for it.

My Cordelia!

I am poor — you are my riches; dark — you are my light; I own nothing, want nothing. And how could I own anything? It is a contradiction to say that he can own something who does not own himself. I am as happy as a child, who can and should own nothing. I own nothing; for I belong only to you; I am not, I have ceased to be, in order to be yours.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Mine, what does this word signify? Not what belongs to me, but what I belong to, what contains my whole being, which is mine in so far as I belong to it. My God is not the God who belongs to me, but the God to whom I belong, and so again, when I say my native land, my home, my calling, my longing, my hope. If hitherto there had been no immortality, then would this thought that I am thine break through Nature's accustomed course.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

What am I? The unassuming herald who attends upon your triumph; the dancer who supports you when you lightly and gracefully leap into the air; the greensward on which you rest for a moment when you are tired of flying; the bass voice which is heard under the soprano ecstasy, helping it to rise ever higher. — What am I? I am the force of gravity which holds you to the earth. What am I then? Body, mass, earth, dust and ashes — you, my Cordelia, you are soul and spirit.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Love is everything. For this reason, to one who loves, everything ceases to have significance in and of itself, and has it only in the interpretation that love puts upon it. If there was some fiancé who found that he cared about another girl, he would probably stand there like a criminal, and she would be highly incensed. You, on the contrary, would, I know, see in such a confession an act of homage, for you know it would be impossible for me to love another; it is my love for you that casts its splendor over the whole of life. When then I concern myself with someone else, it is not for the purpose of convincing myself that I don't love her but only you — that would be presumptuous; but since my whole soul is filled with you, life takes on another significance for me. It becomes a myth about you.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

My love consumes me. Only my voice is left, a voice which is in love with you everywhere whispers to you that I love you. O! does it tire you to listen to this voice? Everywhere it encompasses you; like a manifold, inconstant compassing, my thoroughly reflective soul enfolds your pure deep being.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

One reads in ancient tales that a river fell in love with a maiden. So my soul is like a river that loves you. Sometimes it is peaceful and reflects your image deeply and quietly; sometimes it imagines that it has captured your image; then its waves rise up to prevent your escaping; sometimes the surface ripples softly, playing with your image; sometimes it has lost it, then its floods are black with despair. — Such is my soul: like a river which has fallen in love with you.

Thy Johannes.

To tell the truth: without having an unusually vivid imagination, one could conceive of a more convenient, comfortable, and above all, a more suitable conveyance; to ride with a peat-cutter really creates a sensation. — In a pinch, however, one accepts it with thanks. One goes out for a walk on the highway; one seats one's self in the cart; one rides a mile and meets no one; two miles, all goes well; one feels quiet and secure; really one can take in the scenery better from this point of view than when one is walking; one has gone almost three miles — now who would have expected to meet anyone from Copenhagen so far out here on the highway? And it is someone from Copenhagen, you are sure, not a man from the countryside; he has quite a distinguished manner, so decisive, so observant, so appraising, and so little derisive. Yes, my dear girl, you are in an uncomfortable position, you look as if you were sitting on a tray, the wagon-box is so shallow there is no room for your feet. — But it is your own fault; my carriage is entirely at your service; I venture to offer you a much less inconvenient place, if it would not embarrass you to sit by my side. If it does, I will turn over the whole carriage to you, sit in the driver's seat myself, pleased at being permitted to convey you to your destination. — The straw hat does not adequately protect you against a side glance. It is useless for you to bend your head down, I can still admire your lovely profile. — Is it not annoying

that the peasant bows to me? But it is indeed quite proper for a peasant to bow to a distinguished man. — You do not get off with that; here is a tavern, yes, a station, and a peat-cutter is in his way too pious to neglect his devotions. Now I shall see to him. I have an unusual gift for pleasing peat-cutters. O! may I also be fortunate enough to please you. He cannot resist my offer, and when he has accepted it, then he cannot resist the effect of it. If I cannot, then my servant can. — He has gone into the taproom, leaving you alone on the wagon in the shelter. — Heaven only knows what the girl is. Could she be a little middle-class girl, perhaps the daughter of a parish clerk? If so, she is uncommonly pretty, and dressed in unusual taste. The clerk must have a good living. It has just occurred to me that she may be a little aristocrat who is tired of riding in her carriage, and perhaps went for a little hike in the country, and now has embarked on a little adventure. It is possible, such things are not unheard of. — The peasant does not know anything; he is an oaf who only knows how to drink. Aye, aye, let him drink, the numbskull, he is welcome to it.

But what do I see? It is neither more nor less than Miss Jespersen, the daughter of the wholesaler. Heaven preserve me, we two know each other. I met her once on Broad Street; she was riding backwards, she could not get the carriage window up; I put on my glasses, and then had the satisfaction of following her with my eyes. It was a very cramped position; there were so many in the carriage she could not move, and she probably did not dare to make an outcry. Her present situation is just as embarrassing. It is clear that we two are predestined for each other. She is a very romantic little girl, and definitely she is out on her own. — There comes my servant with the peat-cutter. He is dead drunk. It is disgusting. They are an abominably depraved lot, these peat-cutters. Alas, yes! And yet there are worse men than peat-cutters. — See, now you will just have to ride in the carriage. Now that it becomes necessary for you to drive the horses, it is quite romantic. — You refuse my invitation. You insist that you are a very good driver. You do not deceive me. I can see well enough how cunning you are. When you have gone a little way, then you will jump out, you can easily find a hiding place in the woods. — My horse must be saddled. I follow you on horseback. — There, see! Now I am ready, now you can feel safe against any attack. — Don't be so terribly afraid, or I'll turn back immediately. I only want to frighten you enough to furnish the occasion for enhancing your natural beauty. You don't know that I was responsible for your peasant getting drunk, and I have not allowed myself to make a single offensive remark. Even yet everything can be all right; I shall certainly give the affair such a comic turn that you will laugh at the whole story. I only desire a little settling of accounts with you. Never believe that I would take any young girl off her guard. I am a friend of freedom, and whatever does not come to me freely, I never trouble myself about. "You will certainly see yourself that you cannot continue your journey in this manner. I myself am going hunting, that is why I am on horseback. My carriage is ready at the tavern.

If you are willing, it shall instantly overtake you and take you where you want to go. Unfortunately, I cannot have the pleasure of attending upon you, for I am bound by a hunting promise, and that is sacred." — You accept, on the contrary, and instantly everything is all right. Now you see you do not need to be embarrassed at the thought of seeing me again, or, at least, not more so than is becoming to you. You can be amused at the whole affair, laugh a little, and think a little about me. More I do not ask. This may not seem very much, but it is enough for me. It is the beginning, and I am especially strong on beginnings.

Last evening the aunt had a little party. I knew Cordelia would have her knitting-bag with her, so I had hidden a little note in it. She dropped it, picked it up, read it, and showed both embarrassment and wistfulness. One should never fail to take advantage of such opportunities. It is incredible how much it can help. The note had nothing of importance in it, but it became infinitely significant to her when she read it under such circumstances. She had no chance to talk with me; I had arranged it so that I had to escort a lady home. Consequently Cordelia had to wait until today. It is always best to give an impression time to sink into her soul. It always looks as if I were very attentive. This gives me the advantage of everywhere being in her thoughts, of everywhere surprising her.

Love still has its own dialectic. I was once in love with a young girl. Last summer in the theater in Dresden, I saw an actress who strikingly resembled her. Because of that I desired the pleasure of her acquaintance; then I discovered that there was really not a very great resemblance. Today I met a lady on the street who reminded me of that actress. This story can go on as long as you like.

Everywhere my thoughts encompass Cordelia, I dispose them like guardian angels about her. Like Venus riding in her chariot drawn by doves, so Cordelia sits in her triumphal chariot, and I harness my thoughts like winged creatures. She sits there joyous, rich as a child, powerful as a goddess; I walk by her side. Truly a young girl is still and remains *Venerabile* of Nature and the whole of existence. No one knows this better than myself. The only pity is that this glory is so short-lived. She smiles at me, she greets me, she beckons to me as if she were my sister. A single glance reminds her that she is my beloved.

Love has many positions. Cordelia makes good progress. She is sitting on my knee, her arm, soft and warm, encircles my neck; she rests upon my breast, light, without bodily weight; her soft form hardly touches me; like a flower her graceful figure twines about me, freely as a ribbon. Her eyes are hidden behind her lashes, her bosom is of a dazzling whiteness like snow, so smooth that my eye cannot rest upon it, would glance off, if her bosom did not move. What does this agitation mean? Is it love? Perhaps. It may be its anticipation, its dream. It still lacks energy. She embraces me elaborately, as the cloud the transfigured one, casually as a breeze, softly as one caresses a flower; she kisses me as dispassionately as heaven kisses the sea, softly and quietly as the dew kisses a flower, solemnly as the sea kisses the image of the moon.

So far I should call her passion a naïve passion. When the change comes, and I begin to draw back in earnest, then she will really muster all her resources in order to captivate me. She has no way to accomplish this except by means of the erotic, but this will now appear on a very different scale. It then becomes the weapon in her hand which she swings against me. Then I have the reflected passion. She fights for her own sake because she knows that I possess the erotic; she fights for her own sake in order to overcome me. She develops in herself a higher form of the erotic. What I

taught her to suspect by inflaming her, my coldness now teaches her to understand, but in such a way that she believes she discovered it herself. Through this she will try to take me by surprise; she will believe that her boldness has outstripped me, and that she has thereby caught me. Then her passion becomes definite, energetic, conclusive, logical; her kiss total, her embrace firm. — In me she seeks her freedom, the more firmly I encompass her, the better she finds it. The engagement is broken. When this happens, then she needs a little rest, so that this wild tumult may not bring out something unseemly. Then her passion gathers itself again, and she is mine.

As formerly in the time of Edward of blessed memory I supervised her reading indirectly, so now I do it directly. That which I furnish her I regard as the best food for thought: myths and fairy stories. Still, she is free in this as in everything. I draw everything out of her. If it was not there to begin with, I manage to implant it.

When the servant girls go to the Deer Park in the summer time, it generally affords them but a meager pleasure. They go only once a year, and feel, accordingly, that they ought to celebrate. So they put on hat and shawl, and disfigure themselves in every way. Their gaiety is wild, unseemly and lascivious. No, then I prefer Frederiksberg Park. They go there on Sunday afternoon, and I, too. Everything here is seemly and decent, the jollity itself has a quieter and finer stamp. In general, the man who has no appreciation of servant girls loses more thereby than they do. Their multitudinous host is really the most beautiful civil guard we have in Denmark. If I were king I know what I would do — I would not review the troops of the line. If I were one of the city's aldermen, I should immediately move to have a committee appointed whose business it would be, in every possible way, by insight, by advice and admonition, and by suitable rewards, to encourage the girls of the servant class to make a beautiful and meticulous toilet. Why should beauty go to waste, why should it go through life unnoticed? Let it at least

once a week show itself in the most favorable light! But above all let us have taste, restriction. A servant girl ought not to be dressed like a lady, so far I agree with *Politievennen,* but the reasons assigned by this respectable sheet are altogether fallacious. Could we look forward to so desirable a flowering of the servant class, would not this in turn have a beneficial effect upon our own daughters? or am I too daring, when I descry a future for Denmark which may truly be called matchless? If I were only so fortunate as to be living when this golden age comes, I could employ the whole day in the highways and byways with a good conscience, just to rejoice in the pleasures of the eye. How enthusiastic my thought has become, so bold, so daring, so patriotic! But it must be remembered that I am here in Frederiksberg Park, where the servant girls come on Sunday afternoon, and I, too.

First come the country lassies, hand in hand with their sweethearts; or in another pattern, all the girls hand in hand in front, all the men behind; or in still another pattern, two girls and one man. This host constitutes the setting; they usually stand or sit under the trees in the great square in front of the pavilion. They are sound, full of health; only the color contrasts are a little too strong, both in their dress and in their complexions. Now come the girls from Jutland and Funen: tall, rank, a little too stalwart of build, their dress a little careless. Here there would be much for the committee to do. There is not wanting a representative for the Bornholm division: clever cooks, but not very approachable, either in the kitchen or in Frederiksberg; there is something proud and restrained about them. Their presence here has a certain contrast value, and I should regret missing them here, but I rarely have anything to do with them.

Now come the troops of the center, the girls from Nyboder. Of moderate height, plump, a rounded figure, a delicate complexion, gay, happy, nimble, gossipy, a little given to coquetry, and above all, bareheaded. Their dress

may readily approximate a lady’s, but two things are to be noted: they do not wear a shawl but a kerchief, and no hat — at most, a smart little cap; preferably they are bareheaded — Why, how do you do, Marie; to think that I should meet you here. It is a long time since I saw you last. I suppose you are still in service at the Counsellor’s?— “Yes” — It is a very good place, is it not?— “Yes” — But you are so alone out here, have you no one to keep you company... no sweetheart... perhaps he hasn’t the time today, or perhaps you are waiting for him? — What, you are not engaged? Impossible! The prettiest girl in Copenhagen, a girl who is in service at the Counsellor’s, a girl who is an ornament and an example to all servant girls, who knows how to dress so neatly and... so richly. What a dainty little handkerchief you have in your hand, of the finest cambric... and look, with embroidery around the edge; I’ll wager it cost ten marks... and you may be sure that there is many a fine lady who does not own its equal... French gloves... a silk parasol.... And such a girl not engaged.... Why, it is absurd. If I remember rightly, was it not Jens who thought quite a little of you, you know whom I mean, Jens, the wholesaler’s Jens, who lived on the second floor... I see I struck it right.... Why, then, didn’t you become engaged? Jens was a handsome fellow, he had a good situation, and in course of time the Counsellor’s influence would have made him a policeman or a fireman, it wouldn’t have been at all a bad match... I am afraid you must have been at fault, you have been too hard on him.... “No, but I found out that Jens had been engaged to a girl before, and that he had not treated her right at all.” —

Well, well, who could have believed that Jens was such a rascal... those guardsmen... ah, those guardsmen, they are not to be depended on.... You did just right, a girl like you is really too good to be thrown at everyone.... You will make a better match some day, I will guarantee that. How is Miss Juliana? I have not seen her for a long time. My pretty Marie might be so kind as to help me with a little information... because one has been unhappy

in love oneself, one need not be without sympathy for others.... There are so many people here.... I dare not talk with you about it; I am afraid that someone might spy on me.... Listen just for a moment, my pretty Marie.... Ah, here is the place, here in this shaded walk, where the trees entwine themselves so as to hide us from others, where we see nobody, hear no human voice, only a soft echo of the music... here I dare speak of my secret.... Is it not so, if Jens had not been a bad man, you would have walked here with him arm in arm, and listened to the happy music, and yourself have enjoyed a still higher happiness.... Why so moved? Just forget Jens.... Will you then be unjust to me.... Why do you suppose I came out here?... I came to meet you... it was to see you that I came to the Counsellor's... you must have noticed... every time I could, I always passed by the kitchen door.... You must be mine.... The banns shall be published from the pulpit.... Tomorrow evening I will explain everything to you... up the backstairs, the door to the left, right across from the kitchen.... Goodbye, my pretty Marie, let no one know that you have seen me out here, or spoken with me, you know my secret. She is really a beautiful girl; it is possible that something might be made of her. — If I once get a foothold in her chamber, I will take care of the banns myself. I have always sought to develop the beautiful Greek self-sufficiency, and especially to make a priest superfluous.

If it were possible for me to stand behind Cordelia when she receives a letter from me, it might be very interesting. Then I could easily find out how far she has, in the most essential sense, appropriated the erotic to herself. On the whole, a letter is always an invaluable means of making an impression upon a girl; the dead letter often has greater influence than the living word. A letter is a mysterious communication; you are master of the situation, you feel no pressure from anyone's presence, and I believe a young girl would really rather be alone with her ideal, that is, at a given

moment, and particularly at the moment when it exerts the strongest influence upon her mind. Even if her ideal has found a sufficiently complete expression in a definite beloved object, there are still moments when she feels that there is an immensity in the ideal which reality lacks. These great feasts of the atonement must be granted to her; only one must take care that they are used rightly, so that she does not turn away from them back to reality weakened, but strengthened. For that reason a letter is helpful, since through it, although invisible, one may be spiritually present in these sacred moments of consecration, while the idea that the real person is the author of the letter creates a natural and easy transition back to reality.

Could I become jealous of Cordelia? Damnation, yes! And yet, in another sense, no! For if I saw, for instance, that even though I won in my fight against the other, her nature would be disturbed and not what I desired — then I would give her up.

An ancient philosopher has said that, if a man were to record accurately all of his experiences, then he would be, without knowing a word of the subject, a philosopher. I have now for a long time lived in close association with the community of the betrothed. Such a relationship ought then to bear some fruit. I have considered gathering all the material into a book, entitled: *Contribution to the Theory of the Kiss,* dedicated to all tender lovers. It is quite remarkable that no such work on this subject exists. If, then, I succeed in completing it, I will also be supplying a long-felt want. Could this lack in literature be due to the fact that philosophers do not consider such matters, or that they do not understand them? — I am able to offer several suggestions immediately. The perfect kiss requires a man and a girl as the participants. A kiss between men is tasteless, or — what is worse is distasteful. — Next, I believe a kiss comes nearer the idea when a man kisses a girl than when a girl kisses a man. When in the course of years there has come about an indifference in this relation, then the kiss has lost

its significance. This is true about the domestic kiss of marriage with which married people, apparently in lieu of a napkin, dab each other's lips as the man mutters the ceremonial thanks, "That was swell, Mother." — If the difference in age is very great, then the kiss is without idea. I remember in a girl's school in one of the provinces, the senior class had a peculiar byword, "to kiss the judge," an expression connoting anything but an agreeable idea. It had originated in this way: The schoolmistress had a brother-in-law who lived in her house. He was an elderly man, had been a judge, and took advantage of his age to kiss the young girls. — The kiss ought to be the expression of a definite passion. When a brother and sister who are twins kiss each other, it is not a true kiss. This also holds true of kisses given during Christmas games, as well as of the stolen kiss. A kiss is a symbolic action which is unimportant when the feeling it should indicate is not present, and this feeling can only be present under certain conditions.

If one wishes to classify the kiss, then one must consider several principles of classification. One may classify kissing with respect to the sound. Here the language is not sufficiently elastic to record all my observations. I do not believe that all the languages in the world have an adequate supply of onomatopoeia to denote the different sounds I have learned to know at my uncle's house. Sometimes it was smacking, sometimes hissing, sometimes crackling, sometimes explosive, sometimes booming, sometimes sonorous, sometimes hollow, sometimes squeaky, and so on forever. One may also classify kissing with regard to contact, as in the close kiss, or the kiss *en passant,* and the clinging kiss. One may classify them with reference to the time element, as the brief and the prolonged. With reference to time, there is still another classification, and this is the only one I really care about. One makes a difference between the first kiss and all others. That which is the subject of this reflection is incommensurable with everything which is included in the other

classifications; it is indifferent to sound, touch, time in general. The first kiss is, however, qualitatively different from all others. There are only a few people who consider this; it would really be a pity if there was but one who had thought about it.

My Cordelia!

A good answer is like a sweet kiss, says Solomon. You know I am bad about asking questions, I am almost taken to task for it. That happens because people do not understand what I ask; for you and you alone understand what I ask, and you and you alone understand how to answer, and you and you alone understand how to give a good answer; for a good answer is like a sweet kiss, says Solomon.

Thy Johannes.

There is a difference between spiritual love and physical. Hitherto I have chiefly tried to develop the spiritual in Cordelia. My physical presence must now be something different, not only an accompanying mood, it must be a temptation. I have in these days been constantly preparing myself by reading the celebrated passages in *Phaedrus* concerning love. It electrifies my whole being, and is an excellent prelude. Plato really understood about love.

My Cordelia!

A Roman says of an attentive disciple that he hangs on his master's lips. To love, everything is symbol, and in turn symbol is reality. Am I not a diligent, an attentive disciple? But you, after all, aren't saying a word!

Thy Johannes.

If someone other than myself were guiding this development, he would probably be too clever to allow himself to be guided. If I were to consult an initiate among the engaged, he would probably declare with a haughty

gesture of erotic boldness: "I seek in vain in these positions of love for the sonorous figures in which the lovers talk about their love." I should answer: "I am glad that you do seek in vain; for figures of speech simply do not belong within the intrinsic limits of the erotic, not even if one includes the interesting. Love is far too substantial to be satisfied with chitchat; the erotic situations far too important to be filled up with chitchat. They are silent, still, in definite outlines, and yet eloquent as the music of Memnon's statue. Eros gestures, he does not speak; or, in so far as he does, it is a mysterious hint, a symbolic music. Erotic situations are always either plastic or picturesque; but for two people to talk together about their love is neither plastic nor picturesque. The substantial engagement, however, always begins with such small talk, which later becomes the connecting thread in their garrulous marriage. This small talk also furnishes assurance that their marriage will not lack the dowry Ovid speaks about: *dos est uxoria lites.*

If there is talking to be done, it is sufficient for one to do it. The man ought to do the talking, and therefore he ought to be in possession of some of the powers that lay in the girdle of Venus, with which she beguiled men: conversation and sweet insinuating flattery.

It by no means follows that Eros is silent, or that it would be erotically incorrect to converse, but the conversation itself should be erotic, not lost in edifying observations about the prospects for life, and so on, and it should be regarded essentially as a respite from the erotic act, a pastime, not as the highest. Such a conversation, such a *confabulatio,* is quite divine in its nature, and I never weary of talking with a young girl. That is to say, I can get tired of talking with a particular young girl, but never of talking with a young girl. That is just as impossible for me as to get tired of breathing. That which is the essential characteristic of such a conversation is its vegetative flowering. The conversation is held down to earth, it has no

essential objective, and the accidental is the law for its movement — but as charming and profuse as the daisy *(Bellis perennis),* a source of perpetual delight.

My Cordelia!

"My — Thy" these words enclose like a parenthesis the impoverished content of my letters. Have you noticed that the distance between its arms is growing shorter? Oh, my Cordelia! It is beautiful that the emptier the parenthesis becomes, the more significant it becomes.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Is an embrace an appeal to arms?

Thy Johannes.

Generally Cordelia keeps silent. This has always pleased me. She has too deep a feminine nature to worry one with hiatuses, a fashion of speech particularly characteristic of women, and one which is inevitable when the man who should provide the preceding or the following limiting consonant, is equally feminine. Sometimes, however, a single brief utterance betrays how much there is in her, and then I can help her. It is as if behind a man who with an unsteady hand roughly sketched an outline drawing, there was standing another who constantly brought something bold and well rounded out of this. Even she is surprised, and yet it seems to be her own. So I watch over her, over every casual remark, every loosely dropped word, and when I give it back to her, it always becomes something more significant, something she both knows and does not know.

Today we were at a party. We had not exchanged a word with each other. We were leaving the table; a servant came in and informed Cordelia that a messenger wished to speak with her. This messenger was from me, he brought a letter which alluded to a remark I had made at the table.

I had managed to introduce it into the general table conversation so that Cordelia, although she sat at a distance from me, must necessarily overhear it and misunderstand it. The letter was calculated with this in mind. Had I not been fortunate enough to give the conversation this turn, then I should have been ready at the right time to confiscate the letter. When she returned to the room, she had to tell a little fib. Such things consolidate the erotic mystery, without which she cannot progress on her appointed way.

My Cordelia!

Do you believe that he who lays his head on a fairy hillock sees the image of a fairy in his dreams? I do not know, but I do know this, that when I rest my head upon your breast, and then do not close my eyes, but peep up through my eyelids, then I see an angel's face. Do you believe that he whose head reclined on a fairy hillock cannot lie quiet? I do not believe it; but I know that when my head rests on your bosom, I am moved too strongly for sleep to close my eyes.

Thy Johannes.

Jacta est alea. Now the change begins. I was with her today, quite carried away by an idea that has always engaged my thought. I had neither eyes nor ears for her. The idea was interesting in itself, and it fascinated her. Besides, it would have been wrong to begin this new plan of action by treating her coldly. Now when I have left her and the idea no longer interests her, she will readily discover that I was different from what I used to be. That she should come to realize this change when she is by herself makes it more painful to her; it acts more slowly but more earnestly upon her. She cannot immediately flare up, and so when the opportunity does come, she has already imagined so much that she cannot find expression for it all at once, but will retain a residuum of doubt. Unrest increases, the letters cease, the erotic nourishment is diminished, love is ridiculed as laughable. Perhaps she

goes along with it for a short time, but in the long run, she cannot endure it. Then she wishes to captivate me by the same means I had used with her, by means of the erotic.

In the matter of breaking off an engagement, every little maiden is a born casuist; and although the schools offer no courses in it, every girl is ready with an excellent answer when the question is, under what circumstances an engagement ought to be broken. This really ought to be a routine question in the school examinations of the senior year; and, while I know that the themes one usually gets in girls' schools are very monotonous, yet I am certain that here one would not lack variety, since the problem itself offers a wide range for a girl's acumen. And why should not a girl be given an opportunity to sharpen her wits in the best manner possible? And does not this afford her an opportunity to show that she is mature enough — to be engaged? I once had an experience which interested me very much. In a family where I sometimes visited, the elders were away one day, and the two young daughters had invited a group of their girl friends for a forenoon coffee party. There were eight in all, ranging from sixteen to twenty years old. They had probably not expected any visitors; indeed, the maid had orders to say they were not at home. However, I went in, and realized clearly that they were a little surprised. Heaven only knows what eight young girls like that really talk about in such a solemn synodical meeting. Married women, too, sometimes assemble in similar meetings. They of course discuss pastoral theology; especially the important question as to whether it is proper to let the maid go alone to the market; whether it is better to have an account with the butcher, or to pay cash; whether it is probable that the cook has a sweetheart, and how best to discourage his coming so that he won't interfere with her duties.

I took my place in this beautiful circle. It was very early in spring. The sun sent a few scattered rays as harbingers of its coming. Inside everything

was still wintry, and this made the sunbeams so welcome. The coffee on the table gave forth its rich aroma — and the young girls themselves were happy, healthy, blooming, frolicsome; for their anxiety was soon allayed, and besides, what was there to be afraid of? After all, they had the strength of numbers. I succeeded in turning their attention and their talk to the question of the conditions under which an engagement ought to be broken. While my eye amused itself by flitting from one flower to another in this garland of girls, amused itself by resting now on one, now on another beauty, while my outer ear revelled in the enjoyment of their musical voices, my inner ear listened to their observations on the question. A single word often enabled me to get a deep insight into a girl's heart and its history. How seductive is the way of love, and how interesting to investigate how far along this way the individual has come. I constantly stimulated them; cleverness, wit, aesthetic objectivity combined to make the relationship freer, and yet everything was kept within the bounds of strictest decorum. While we thus jested in the easy give and take of conversation, there slumbered the possibility of causing these good children an unfortunate embarrassment. This possibility lay in my power. The girls themselves neither knew nor suspected it. Through the easy play of the conversation, this possibility was at every moment held in abeyance, just as Scheherezade held the death warrant away by her storytelling.

Sometimes I carried the conversation to the verge of sadness; sometimes I let wantonness run wild; sometimes I tried them in a dialectical game. And what other subject contains so many possibilities in itself, however one looks at it? I constantly suggested new themes. I told about a girl who was forced by the cruelty of her parents to break her engagement. The unhappy collision almost brought tears to their eyes. I told them about a man who had broken his engagement, and who had given two reasons for doing so, first, that the girl was too tall, and, second, that he had not gone on his

knees to her when he proposed. When I objected that these were insufficient reasons, he answered that they were sufficient to accomplish what he wanted; certainly no one can give a logical answer to that. I presented for the consideration of the assembly a very difficult case. A young girl broke her engagement because she felt convinced that she and her sweetheart were not suited to each other. The lover tried to bring her to reason by assuring her of how much he loved her; then she would answer him: “Either we are suited to each other, and there is a real sympathy between us, so that you will realize that we are not suited to each other; or we are not suited to each other, and then you will realize that we are not suited to each other.” It was quite gratifying to see how the girls racked their brains over this puzzling story, and I could clearly see that a couple of them really understood it; for on the question of whether to break an engagement or not, every girl is a born casuist. I really believe it would be easier for me to dispute with the devil himself than with a young girl, when the question is under what circumstances one ought to break an engagement.

Today I was with Cordelia. With the speed of thought, I adroitly directed the conversation to the same subject we had considered yesterday, in a renewed effort to arouse ecstasy within her. “There is something I really should have said yesterday; it occurred to me after I had gone.” That succeeded. As long as I am with her she enjoys listening to me; when I have gone, she realizes that she has been cheated, and that I am changed. In this way one extends his credit. This method is underhanded, but entirely expedient, like all indirect methods. She can very well argue to herself that the things I talk about can really engross me, that they even interest her for the moment, and yet I defraud her of the real erotic.

Oderint, dum metuant — as if only fear and hate belong together, while fear and love have nothing to do with one another! As if it were not fear that

makes love interesting! With what kind of love do we embrace nature? Is there not a secret fear and terror in it, because this beautiful harmony stems from lawlessness and wild confusion, its security from insecurity? But just this anxiety is most fascinating. So, too, with love, if it is to claim our interest. At the bottom of this, there ought to brood the deep fearful night from which the flower of love springs forth. So the chalice of *nymphæa alba,* the white water lily, rests on the surface of the water, while thought fears to plunge down into the profound blackness where it has its root. — I have noticed that she always calls me *mine* when she writes to me; but she lacks the courage to say it to me. Today I begged her to do it, with all the insinuating and erotic warmth possible. She started to do so; an ironic glance, indescribably swift and brief, was enough to make it impossible for her, although my lips urged her with all their might. This mood is entirely normal.

She is mine. I do not confide this to the stars, as use and custom prescribe. I do not really see how this information can interest those distant spheres. Neither do I confide it to any human being, not even to Cordelia. This secret I keep for myself alone, whisper it to myself, as it were, even in my most secret conversations with myself. The attempted resistance on her part was not particularly strong; on the other hand, the erotic energy she is developing is admirable. How interesting she is in this deep passionateness, how great she becomes, almost supernaturally so! How supple she is in evasion, how pliant in insinuating herself wherever she discovers a vulnerable point. Everything is in movement, but in these elemental storms I find myself precisely in my element. And yet she is by no means unbeautiful even in this commotion, not distracted in her moods, nor dissipated in the elements. She is always an Aphrodite, except that she does not rise up in naïve charm, nor in immaculate serenity, but is influenced by the strong heart throbs of love, while she retains unity and poise. Erotically

she is completely equipped for the struggle, she fights with the darts of her eyes, with the command of her brows, with the secretiveness of her forehead, with the eloquence of her bosom, with the dangerous allurement of the embrace, with the prayer on her lips, with the smile on her face, with all the sweet longing of her entire being. There is a power in her, an energy, as if she were a valkyrie; but this erotic force is in turn tempered by a certain languishing weakness which is breathed out over her. — She must not be held too long at this peak, where only anxiety and unrest can hold her steady, and prevent her from falling. With such emotions she will soon feel that the engagement is too narrow, too confining. She herself will become the tempter who seduces me to go beyond the usual limitation. She will do this consciously, and for me that is the principal consideration.

Now she lets drop numerous remarks which clearly indicate that for her part she is tired of our engagement. They do not pass my ear unheeded, they are the scouts of my operation in the domain of her soul, who give me enlightening hints; they are the ends of the thread by which I weave her into my plan.

My Cordelia!

You complain about the engagement. You think our love does not need an external bond which exists only to hinder. In that I immediately recognize my wonderful Cordelia! In truth, I admire you. Our external union is only a separation. There is still a wall between us that separates us like Pyramus and Thisbe. That people should share our secret is disturbing. Only in opposition is there liberty. Only when no outsider suspects the love does it become significant. When every stranger believes that the lovers hate each other, only then is love happy.

Thy Johannes.

Soon the engagement will be broken. She herself is the one who breaks it, in order, if possible, by releasing me to bind me more strongly, as flowing locks entangle more than those which are bound up. If I were the one to break the engagement, then I should miss this erotic *salto mortale* which is so seductive to look at, and so certain an indication of the daring of her spirit. This is the main thing to me. Add to this the fact that the whole incident might cause me a great many unpleasant consequences, because of its effect upon other people. I should be blamed, hated, detested, although unjustly so. For might it not be very advantageous to many? There are many little maidens, who, in default of an engagement, would be quite satisfied with having been mighty close to it. That is always something, even though, to tell the truth, it be painfully little; for when one has pushed oneself forward to get a place on the waiting list, then precisely one has nothing to await; the higher one rises on the list and the more one gets advanced, the less there is to expect. In the world of love, the principle of seniority with respect to advancement is not in force. So it happens that such a little maiden is tired of retaining undivided possession of the estate; she wants her life to be stirred by an event. But what is there comparable to an unhappy love affair, especially when one can take the matter so lightly? Consequently, she deludes herself and her neighbor into thinking that she has been deceived, and since she is not eligible for admission to a Magdalen hospital, she takes lodgings by the side of it, in the tear-jerking press. I get hated, as a matter of duty.

In addition, there is still another division of those who have been wholly, or half, or three-quarters deceived. In this class there are many degrees, ranging from those who have a ring to appeal to, to those who pin their hopes on the squeezing of the hand at a country-dance. Their wounds are torn open again by this new pain. I accept their hate as a bonus. But all these hates are naturally like so many secret loves to my poor heart. A king

without a country is a laughable figure; but a war of succession between a crowd of pretenders to a kingdom without a country — this outstrips itself as the most laughable of all. Consequently, I ought to be loved and taken care of by the fair sex as a pawnshop. A real fiancé can only take care of one, but such a diffuse possibility as I am can tolerably well provide for as many as may be. All this finite nonsense I become free from, and I also have the advantage of afterwards being able to appear in an entirely new role. The girls will pity me, sympathize with me, sigh for me; I strike in in exactly the same key; also in this way one may catch something.

Strangely enough, I notice now with dismay that I am getting the indicative sign which Horace wished on all faithless girls — a black tooth, and a front tooth at that! How superstitious we still can be. The tooth disturbs me extraordinarily. I can't really stand any allusion to it; that is a weak side I have. While in other respects I am fully armed, here even the veriest bungler can give me a shock, which goes deeper than he thinks, when he touches on the tooth. I do everything possible to make it white, but in vain. I say with Palnatoke:

> I rub it by day and night,
> But I cannot erase this dark shadow.

Life still holds an extraordinary amount of mystery. Such a little circumstance can disturb me more than the most dangerous attack, the most painful situation. I would let them extract it, but that would interfere with my speech and its effectiveness. Still, if I let them take it out, I will have a false one set in; it will be false to the world; the black one was false to me.

It is capital that Cordelia is so set against an engagement. Marriage will always be an honorable estate, even though it has the tedium of enjoying in the early years part of the honor which should belong to the later years. A

betrothal, on the other hand, is a purely human invention, and, as such, so remarkable and ridiculous that it is quite natural that on one side, a young girl in the whirl of passion should disregard it, and still, on the other side, feel its significance, feel her soul's energy, like a higher circulatory system, present everywhere in herself. What is necessary here is to direct her, so that in her bold flight she loses sight of marriage, and of the mainland of reality in general, so that her soul, just as much in her pride as in her fear of losing me, destroys an imperfect human form, in order to hasten to something which is higher than humanity in general. As regards this, however, I do not greatly fear, for Cordelia's way of life is already so ethereal and light that reality is to a large degree lost sight of. Besides I am always on board, and can always break out the sails.

Woman will always offer an inexhaustible fund of material for reflection, an eternal abundance for observation. The man who feels no impulse toward the study of woman may, as far as I am concerned, be what he will; one thing he certainly is not, he is no aesthetician. This is the glory and divinity of aesthetics, that it enters into relation only with the beautiful: it has to do essentially only with fiction and the fair sex. It makes me glad and causes my heart to rejoice when I represent to myself how the sun of feminine loveliness diffuses its rays into an infinite manifold, refracting itself in a confusion of tongues, where each individual woman has her little part of the whole wealth of femininity, yet so that her other characteristics harmoniously center about this point. In this sense feminine beauty is infinitely divisible. But the particular share of beauty which each one has must be present in a harmonious blending, for otherwise the effect will be disturbing, and it will seem as if Nature had intended something by this woman, but nothing ever came of it.

My eyes can never weary of surveying this peripheral manifold, these scattered emanations of feminine beauty. Each particular has its little share,

and yet is complete in itself, happy, glad, beautiful. Every woman has her share: the merry smile, the roguish glance, the wistful eye, the pensive head, the exuberant spirits, the quiet sadness, the deep foreboding, the brooding melancholy, the earthly homesickness, the unbaptized movements, the beckoning brows, the questioning lips, the mysterious forehead, the ensnaring curls, the concealing lashes, the heavenly pride, the earthly modesty, the angelic purity, the secret blush, the light step, the airy grace, the languishing posture, the dreamy yearning, the inexplicable sighs, the willowy form, the soft outlines, the luxuriant bosom, the swelling hips, the tiny foot, the dainty hand. — Each woman has her own traits, and the one does not merely repeat the other. And when I have gazed and gazed again, considered and again considered this multitudinous variety, when I have smiled, sighed, flattered, threatened, desired, tempted, laughed, wept, hoped, feared, won, lost — then I shut up my fan, and gather the fragments into a unity, the parts into a whole. Then my soul is glad, my heart beats, my passion is aflame. This one woman, the only woman in all the world, she must belong to me, she must be mine. Let God keep His heaven, if only I can keep her. I know full well what I choose; it is something so great that heaven itself must be the loser by such a division, for what would be left to heaven if I keep her? The faithful Mohammedans will be disappointed in their hopes when in their Paradise they embrace pale, weak shadows; for warm hearts they cannot find, since all the warmth of the heart is concentrated in her breast; they will yield themselves to a comfortless despair when they find pale lips, lustreless eyes, a lifeless bosom, a limp pressure of the hand; for all the redness of the lips and the fire of the eye and the heaving of the bosom and the promise of the hand and the foreboding of the sigh and the seal of the kiss and the trembling of the touch and the passion of the embrace — all, all are concentrated in her, who

lavishes on me a wealth sufficient for a whole world, both for time and eternity.

Thus I have often reflected upon this matter; but every time I conceive woman thus, I become warm, because I think of her as warm. And though in general, warmth is accounted a good sign, it does not follow that my mode of thinking will be granted the respectable predicate that it is solid. Hence I shall now for variety's sake attempt, myself being cold, to think coldly of woman. I shall attempt to think of woman in terms of her category. Under what category must she be conceived? Under the category of being for another. But this must not be understood in the bad sense, as if the woman who is for me is also for another. Here as always in abstract thinking, it is essential to refrain from every reference to experience; for otherwise, as in the present case, I should find, in the most curious manner, that experience is both for me and against me. Here as always, experience is a most curious thing, because its nature is always to be both for and against. Woman is therefore being for another. Here again, but from another side, it will be necessary not to let oneself be disturbed by experience, which teaches that it is a rare thing to find a woman who is in truth a being for another, since a great many are in general absolutely nothing, either for themselves or for others. Woman shares this category with Nature, and, in general, with everything feminine. Nature as a whole exists only for another; not in the teleological sense, so that one part of Nature exists for another part, but so that the whole of Nature is for an Other — for the Spirit. In the same way with the particulars. The life of the plant, for example, unfolds in all naïveté its hidden charms and exists only for another. In the same way a mystery, a charade, a secret, a vowel, and so on, has being only for another. And from this it can be explained why, when God created Eve, He caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; for woman is the dream of man. In still another way the story teaches that woman is a

being for another. It tells, namely, that Jehovah created Eve from a rib taken from the side of man. Had she been taken from man's brain, for example, woman would indeed still have been a being for another; but it was not the intention to make her a figment of the brain, but something quite different. She became flesh and blood, but this causes her to be included under the category of Nature, which is essentially being for another. She awakens first at the touch of love; before that time she is a dream. Yet in her dream life we can distinguish two stages: in the first, love dreams about her; in the second, she dreams about love.

As being for another, woman is characterized by pure virginity. Virginity is, namely, a form of being, which, in so far as it is a being for itself, is really an abstraction, and only reveals itself to another. The same characterization also lies in the concept of female innocence. It is therefore possible to say that woman in this condition is invisible. As is well known, there existed no image of Vesta, the goddess who most nearly represented feminine virginity. This form of existence is, namely, jealous for itself aesthetically, just as Jehovah is ethically, and does not desire that there should be any image or even any notion of one. This is the contradiction, that the being which is for another *is* not, and only becomes visible, as it were, by the interposition of another. Logically, this contradiction will be found to be quite in order, and he who knows how to think logically will not be disturbed by it, but will be glad in it. But whoever thinks illogically will imagine that whatever is a being for another *is,* in the finite sense in which one can say about a particular thing: that is something for me.

This being of woman (for the word *existence* is too rich in meaning, since woman does not persist in and through herself) is rightly described as charm, an expression which suggests plant life; she is a flower, as the poets like to say, and even the spiritual in her is present in a vegetative manner. She is wholly subject to Nature, and hence only aesthetically free. In a

deeper sense she first becomes free by her relation to man, and when man courts her properly, there can be no question of a choice. Woman chooses, it is true, but if this choice is thought of as the result of a long deliberation, then this choice is unfeminine. Hence it is, that it is a humiliation to receive a refusal, because the individual in question has rated himself too high, has desired to make another free without having the power. — In this situation there is deep irony. That which merely exists for another has the appearance of being predominant: man sues, woman chooses. The very concept of woman requires that she be the vanquished; the concept of man, that he be the victor; and yet the victor bows before the vanquished. And yet this is quite natural, and it is only boorishness, stupidity, and lack of erotic sensibility to take no notice of that which immediately yields in this fashion. It has also a deeper ground. Woman is, namely, substance, man is reflection. She does not therefore choose independently; man sues, she chooses. But man's courtship is a question, and her choice only an answer to a question. In a certain sense man is more than woman, in another sense he is infinitely less.

This being for another is the true virginity. If it makes an attempt to be a being for itself, in relation to another being which is being for it, then the opposition reveals itself in an absolute coyness; but this opposition shows at the same time that woman's essential being is being for another. The diametrical opposite to absolute devotion is absolute coyness, which in a converse sense is invisible as the abstraction against which everything breaks, without the abstraction itself coming to life. Femininity now takes on the character of an abstract cruelty, the caricature in its extreme form of the intrinsic feminine brittleness. A man can never be so cruel as a woman. Consult mythologies, fables, folk-tales, and you will find this view confirmed. If there is a description of a natural force whose mercilessness knows no limits, it will always be a feminine nature. Or one is horrified at

reading about a young woman who callously allows all her suitors to lose their lives, as so often happens in the folk-tales of all nations. A Bluebeard slays all the women he has loved on their bridal night, but he does not find his happiness in slaying them; on the contrary, his happiness has preceded, and in this lies the concreteness; it is not cruelty for the sake of cruelty. A Don Juan seduces them and runs away, but he finds no happiness at all in running away from them, but rather in seducing them; consequently, it is by no means this abstract cruelty.

Thus, the more I reflect on this matter, I see that my practice is in perfect harmony with my theory. My practice has always been impregnated with the theory that woman is essentially a being for another. Hence it is that the moment has here such infinite significance; for a being for another is always the matter of a moment. It may take a longer, it may take a shorter time before the moment comes, but as soon as it has come, then that which was originally a being for another assumes the character of relative being, and then all is over. I know very well that husbands say that the woman is also in another sense a being for another, that she is everything to her husband through life. One must make allowance for husbands. I really believe that it is something which they mutually delude one another into thinking. Every class in society generally has certain conventional customs, and especially certain conventional lies. Among these must be reckoned this sailor's yam. To be a good judge of the moment is not so easy a matter, and he who misjudges it is in for boredom for the rest of his life. The moment is everything, and in the moment, woman is everything; the consequences I do not understand. Among these consequences is the begetting of children. Now I fancy that I am a fairly consistent thinker, but if I were to think until I became crazy, I am not a man who could think this consequence; I simply do not understand it; to understand it requires a husband.

Yesterday Cordelia and I visited a family at their summer home. The party spent most of the day in the garden, where we passed the time in all sorts of physical exercises. Among other things, we played Ring. I took the opportunity, when another swain who had been playing with Cordelia had gone away, to take his place. What a wealth of charm she revealed, even more seductive than usual, as a result of the beautifying exercise! What graceful harmony in the self-contradiction of her movements. How light she was — like a dance over the meadows! How vigorous, yet without needing opposition, deceptive, until her poise explained everything. How dithyrambic her appearance, how challenging her glance. The game itself had naturally a special interest for me. Cordelia appeared not to notice it. A remark I made to one of the spectators about the beautiful custom of exchanging the rings struck like a bolt of lightning into her soul. From that moment a higher radiance rested over the entire situation, a deeper significance impregnated it, a higher energy pulsed through her being. I held both rings on my stick. I paused a moment, I exchanged a few words with the bystanders. She understood this pause. I again tossed the rings to her. Soon after she caught both of them on her stick. As if inadvertently she tossed them both straight up into the air at once, so high that it was impossible for me to catch them. This toss was accompanied by a glance full of boundless audacity. Someone tells the story of a French soldier who had taken part in the Russian campaign, whose leg was amputated because of gangrene. As soon as the painful operation was finished, he grabbed the leg by the foot, threw it in the air, and shouted: Vive l'empereur! With the same kind of look, she threw both rings into the air, even more gracefully than before, and said as if to herself: Long live love! I found it inadvisable to let her run away in this mood, or to leave her alone in it, for fear of the exhaustion that so often follows it. I therefore remained quite calm and,

abetted by the presence of the spectators, I obliged her to continue playing, as if I had noticed nothing. Such a procedure gives her more elasticity.

If, in our time, one could expect any support in such an investigation, then I should pose the prize question: aesthetically considered, which is the more modest, a young girl or a young matron, the ignorant or the informed; to which does one dare grant more freedom? But such things do not interest our serious age. In Greece such an inquiry would have aroused general attention; the whole state would have been set in ferment, especially the young maids and matrons. No one in our age would believe this, but neither will anyone now believe, if one were to tell them, about the well-known contest between two Greek girls, and the extremely thoroughgoing investigation it occasioned, for in Greece people did not treat such problems carelessly. And yet everyone knows that Venus bears a surname as a result of this contest, and everyone admires the statue of Venus which has immortalized her. A married woman has two periods in her life when she is interesting: first of all, her youth, and then again, long after, when she has become much older. But she has also — one must not deny her this — a moment when she is even more charming than a young girl, inspires even more respect; but it is a moment which is rarely met with in life, it is rather a picture for the imagination which need not be seen in life, and which perhaps never is seen. I think of her then, healthy, vigorous, well developed; she holds a child on her arm, on whom her whole attention is focused, in whose contemplation she is lost. It is a picture which one might call the most charming that human life has to offer, it is a myth of Nature which must therefore be seen artistically, not in actuality. There should never be additional figures in the picture, no setting, which is only disturbing. If one goes into our churches one often has an opportunity to see a mother approaching with a child in her arms. Disregarding now the disconcerting wail of the child and apart from the anxious thoughts in the expectation of

the parents for the future of the little one, occasioned by this childish cry, all the surroundings are already so confusing that, even if everything else were perfect, the effect is lost. One sees the father, which is a great fault, since it destroys the myth, the enchantment; one *sees — horrenda refero* — the sponsors' earnest chorus, and one sees — simply nothing. The conception, as a picture of fantasy, is the most charming of all. I do not lack boldness and briskness, nor rashness enough to venture an assault — but if I saw such a picture in reality, I would be defenseless.

How Cordelia engrosses me! And yet the time is soon over; always my soul requires rejuvenescence. I can already hear, as it were, the far distant crowing of the cock. Perhaps she hears it too, but she believes it heralds the morning. — Why is a young girl so pretty, and why does it last so short a time? I could become quite melancholy over this thought, and yet it is no concern of mine. Enjoy, do not talk. The people who make a business of such deliberations, do not generally enjoy. However, it can do no harm to think about it; for this sadness, not for one's self but for others, makes one a little more attractive in a masculine way. A sadness which darkens like a veil of mist deceptively over the manly strength is one of the things contributing to the masculine erotic. This corresponds to a certain melancholy in women. — When a girl has first given herself entirely, then everything is over. Always I approach a young girl with a certain anxiety, with a rapid pulse, because I feel the eternal power that lies in her nature. In the presence of a married woman I have never experienced it. The slight resistance she tries to offer with the help of art is nothing. It is as if one should say that a married woman's cap is more becoming than a young girl's uncovered head. For that reason Diana has always been my ideal. Her pure virginity, her absolute independence, has greatly engaged my attention. But while she has indeed occupied me, I have always kept a suspicious eye upon her. I imagine that she has not really deserved all the praise for her

virginity that she has received. She knew that her role in life depended on her preserving her virginity. It happens that in a philological corner of the world, I have heard mumblings that she had an idea of the terrible birth pains her mother had gone through, and this had frightened her. I cannot blame Diana. I only say with Euripides: I would rather go to war three times than to bear one child. I could not really fall in love with Diana, but I do not deny that I would give much for a conversation with her, for what I might call a heart to heart talk with her. She must be well versed in various kinds of tricks. Obviously my good Diana in one way or another possesses a knowledge which makes her far less naïve even than Venus. I am not interested in spying on her in her bath, not at all, but I would like to spy on her with my questions. If I were stealing off to a rendezvous where I feared for my victory, then I would prepare myself, arm myself, set all the spirits of love in motion, by conversing with her.

A frequent subject of reflection with me has been what situation, what moment should be regarded as the most seductive. The answer to this naturally depends upon what one desires, how one desires it, and how one is developed. I consider it the wedding day, and especially a definite moment on that day. When she then stands decked out as bride, and all the magnificence of her attire pales before her beauty, and she herself turns pale, when the blood almost stops, when her bosom rests, when the glance falters, when the foot gives way, when the maiden trembles, when the fruit ripens; when heaven exalts her, when earnestness strengthens her, when the promise sustains her, when prayers bless her, when the myrtle wreath crowns her; when the heart throbs, when the eyes are downcast, when she hides herself in herself, when she belongs not to the world, but wholly to one; when her bosom swells, when creation sighs, when the voice fails, when the tear trembles, before the riddle is explained, when the torch is lighted, when the bridegroom waits — then has the moment come. Soon it

will be too late. There is only one step left, but this is exactly enough for a false step. This moment makes even an insignificant girl significant, even a little Zerlina becomes a significant object. Everything must be unified, the greatest contrasts be united in the moment; if there is something lacking, especially one of the chief contrasts, the situation immediately loses a part of its seductiveness. There is a well-known engraving. It represents a penitent. She looks so young and innocent, that on account of her and her confessor, one is almost embarrassed at wondering what she can really have to confess. She raises her veil a little, she looks out into the world as if seeking something she might perhaps later have an opportunity to confess, and of course one understands that it is nothing more than duty, out of respect for — the father confessor. The situation is really seductive, and since she is the only figure in the piece, there is nothing to prevent one's thinking that the church wherein all this takes place is so spacious that a great many preachers could all preach here at the same time. The situation is highly seductive, and I have no objections to disposing myself in the background, especially if the girl does not object. However, it remains a highly subordinate position, for the girl seems in both senses to be only a child, and consequently there must be time before her moment comes.

Have I been constantly faithful to my pact in my relation to Cordelia? That is to say, my pact with the aesthetic. For it is this which makes me strong, that I always have the idea on my side. This is a secret, like Samson's hair, which no Delilah shall wrest from me. Simply and directly to betray a young girl, that I certainly could not endure; but that the idea is set in motion, that it is in its service that I act, to its service that I dedicate myself, that gives me self-discipline, abstemiousness from every forbidden enjoyment. Has the interesting always been preserved? Yes, I dare say it freely and openly in this secret conversation with myself. Even the engagement was interesting, precisely because it did not offer that which

one generally understands by the interesting. It preserved the interesting by the fact of the outward appearance being in contradiction to the inner life. Had I been secretly bound to her, then it would have been interesting only in the first degree. This, however, is interesting in the second degree, and therefore for the first time becomes interesting for her. The engagement is broken, but in such a way that she herself breaks it, in order to raise herself to a higher sphere. So it should be; this is, in fact, the form of the interesting which will occupy her most.

Sept. 16.

The bond burst; longing, strong, daring, divine, she flies like a bird which now for the first time gets the right to stretch its wings. Fly, bird, fly! In truth if this royal flight were a withdrawal from me, then my pain would be infinitely deep. As if Pygmalion's beloved were again turned to stone, so would this be for me. Light have I made her, light as a thought, and why should not this, my thought, belong to me! That would be a cause for despair. A moment earlier it would not have mattered, a moment later it will not trouble me, but now — now — this now, which is an eternity to me! But she does not fly away from me. Fly, then, bird, fly; soar proudly on your wings, glide through the soft realms of the air, soon I shall be with you, soon I shall hide myself with you in a profound solitude!

The aunt was somewhat taken aback by the news. However, she is too liberal to wish to coerce Cordelia, although I, partly to lull her to a sounder sleep, partly to fool Cordelia a little, have made some attempt to get her to interest herself in my behalf. As for the rest, she shows me much sympathy; she does not suspect how much reason I have for deprecating all sympathy.

She has received permission from her aunt to spend some time in the country; she will visit a family. It happens very fortunately that she cannot immediately give herself up to excessive moods. She will still, for some

time, be kept tense by all kinds of external criticism. I maintain a desultory communication with her by means of letters, so our relationship is sustained. She must now be strengthened in every way; especially, it is best to permit her to make a few eccentric flights to show her contempt for mankind in general. Then when the day for her departure arrives, a trustworthy man will appear as coachman. Outside the gate my confidential servant will join them. He will accompany her to her destination, and remain with her to render attention and assistance in case of need. Next to myself I know no one who is better fitted for this than John. I have myself arranged everything out there as tastefully as possible.

Nothing is lacking which can in any way serve to delude her soul, and to soothe it with a sense of well-being.

My Cordelia!

Not yet have the cries of "Fire!" rising from individual households merged into a city-wide hubbub, a capitoline cackle of alarm. Individual solos you have probably already had to endure. Consider the whole assembly of tea and coffee dowagers; consider the lady president who furnishes a worthy counterpart to that immortal President Lars in *Claudius,* and you have a picture of and a conception about and a measure for what you have lost and with whom: the esteem of good people.

With this letter I enclose the celebrated copper print which represents President Lars. I could not purchase it separately, and so I bought the whole of *Claudius,* tore it out, and threw the rest away; for how could I dare to trouble you with a gift which would have no significance for you at this time; how should I not do my utmost to procure something which might be acceptable to you, if only for a moment; how could I permit more to be mingled in a situation than belongs to it? Nature has such a prolixity, and so does the man who is enslaved by all the finite relationships of life; but you, my Cordelia, you, in your freedom, would hate it.

Thy Johannes.

Spring is the most beautiful time of the year to fall in love; autumn the most beautiful to reach the goal of one's desires. There is a sadness in the autumn which entirely corresponds to the emotion evoked by the thought of the fulfilment of one's desires. Today I was out at the country place where soon Cordelia will find surroundings that are attuned to her soul. For myself I do not desire to participate in her surprise and pleasure over this; such erotic conditions would only enervate her soul. If she is alone there, she will pass her time in reverie. Everywhere she will see allusions, hints, an enchanted world, but all this would lose its significance if I were with her; it would cause her to forget that for us the period of time when such things enjoyed in fellowship had significance is past. This environment must not like a narcotic ensnare her soul, but constantly incite it to rise up, because she sees it as a game, which has no significance in comparison with that which is to come. I myself intend in these days which still remain to visit this place more often in order to retain my mood.

My Cordelia!

Now I call you *mine* in truth. No external sign reminds me of my possession. — Soon I call you mine in truth. And when I hold you fast in my arms, when you entwine me in your embrace, then we need no ring to remind us that we belong to each other, for is not this embrace a ring which is more than a sign. And the more firmly this ring encloses us, the more inseparably it knits us together, the greater the freedom, for your freedom consists in being mine, as mine in being yours.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

While hunting, Alpheus fell in love with the nymph Arethusa. She would not grant his prayer, but always fled before him, until on the island of Ortygia she was changed into a spring. Alpheus sorrowed over this so bitterly that he was changed into a river in Elis in the Peloponnesus. However, he did not forget his love, but united himself under the sea with this spring. Is the time of changes past? Answer: Is the time of love over? With what can I compare your pure deep soul, which has no connection with the world, except with a spring? And have I not said to you that I am like a river which has fallen in love? And since we are separated, am I not plunging under the sea to be united with you? There under the sea we meet again, for first in this depth do we really belong together.

Thy Johannes.

My Cordelia!

Soon, soon, you are mine. When the sun closes its spying eye, when history is over and the myths begin, then I not only fling my cloak about me, but I fling the night about me like a cloak, and hasten to you, and hearken to find you, not by the sound of footfalls, but by the beating of your heart.

Thy Johannes.

In these days when I cannot be with her personally whenever I wish, I have been disturbed by the thought that it may occur to her to consider the future. So far it has not happened, for I have known how to drug her aesthetically. Nothing less erotic can be imagined than this talk about the future, which is usually the result of one's having nothing with which to fill the present. If only I am present, then I have no such fear, for I can make her forget both time and eternity. If a man does not understand how to put himself in rapport with a girl, he should never attempt to deceive, for then it will be impossible to escape the two rocks: questions about the future, and a

catechizing about faith. Hence it is quite proper that Gretchen should conduct such an examination of Faust, since he had been imprudent enough to display his chivalry; and against such an attack, a girl is always armed.

Now I believe everything is in order for her reception; she must not lack occasion to admire my memory, or, rather, she must get no time to admire it. Nothing is forgotten which could have any significance for her, and, on the other hand, nothing is included which might directly remind her of me, while still I am everywhere invisibly present. The effect will, however, largely depend on the circumstances under which she sees it for the first time. With regard to this my servant has received most particular instructions, and he is in his way a perfect virtuoso. He knows how to drop a remark accidentally and casually when so ordered; he knows how to be ignorant, in short, he is invaluable to me. — The arrangement is everything she might wish. If she sits in the center of the room, she can look out in both directions with nothing to obstruct the view; on both sides it stretches away to an infinite horizon, she is alone in a wide sea of air. If she comes nearer a broad bank of windows on the one side, there, far on the horizon is a forest curving like a wreath, limiting and enclosing. That is the way it should be. What does love love? — An enclosure; was not Paradise itself an enclosed place, a garden toward the east? But it closes itself too tightly about one, this ring — she comes nearer the window, a placid lake lies humbly concealed between its higher shores, a boat lies at the water's edge. A sigh from the fullness of the heart, a gust from the thought's unrest — it loosens itself from its moorings, it glides over the surface of the lake, softly moved by the gentle breezes of inexpressible longing; one disappears into the mysterious solitude of the forest, cradled on the surface of the lake which dreams of the deep shadow of the woods.

One turns to the other side, where the sea spreads out before the sight with nothing to limit it, filled with thoughts which nothing restrains. —

What does love love? Infinitude. What does love fear? Limitation. — Beyond this large room there is a smaller one, or rather a cabinet, for whatever that room in the Wahl house purported to be, this is it. The likeness is delusive. A carpet woven of osiers covers the floor; before the sofa stands a little tea table, a lamp upon it which matches the one at home. Everything is the same, only richer. This difference I allow myself in the room. In the salon stands a piano, a very simple one, but reminiscent of the one found at the Jansens. It is open; on the music-rest a little Swedish melody stands open. The door into the entry stands ajar. She comes in at the door at the back of the room, as John has been instructed. Her eye takes in at once the cabinet and the piano. Memory awakens in her; at that moment John opens the door. The illusion is perfect. She goes into the cabinet. She is pleased, I am sure of that. As she glances at the table, she sees a book. Just then John picks it up as if to lay it to one side, as he casually adds: "The master must have forgotten this, when he was out here this morning." Thus she learns for the first time that I had already been out there in the morning. Next she looks at the book. It is a German translation of the well-known work by Apuleius: *Amor and Psyche.* It is not poetry, nor should it be; for it is always an insult to a young girl to offer her a poetical work, as if in such a moment she were not poetical enough to absorb the poetry which lies immediately concealed in the situation, and which has not been predigested in another's thought. People generally do not consider this, but it is true. She will read the book, and thereby its purpose is attained. When she opens to the place where it was last read, there she will find a little sprig of myrtle; she will also find that this signifies a little more than being a mere bookmark.

My Cordelia!

What, frightened? When we keep together, then are we strong, stronger than the world, stronger even than the gods themselves. You know there

once lived a race of people on the earth who were indeed men, but who were each self-sufficient, not knowing the inner union of love. Yet they were mighty, so mighty that they could storm heaven. Jupiter feared them, and divided them so that from one came two, a man and a woman. Now, if it sometimes happens that what had once been united is united again in love, then is such a union stronger than Jupiter. They are not only as strong as the individuals were, but even stronger, for love's union is an even higher union.

Thy Johannes.

Sept. 24.

The night is still — the clock strikes a quarter before twelve. The watchman by the gate blows his benediction out over the countryside. It echoes back from Bleacher's Green — he goes inside the gate — he blows again, it echoes even farther. — Everything sleeps in peace, everything except love. So rise up, ye mysterious powers of love, gather yourselves together in this breast! The night is silent — only a lonely bird breaks this silence with its cry and the beat of its wings, as it skims over the dewy field down the glacial slope to its rendezvous — *accipio omen!* How portentous all Nature is! I read the omen in the flight of birds, in their cries, in the playful flap of the fish against the surface of the water, in their vanishing into its depth, in the distant baying of the hounds, in a wagon's faraway rumble, in footfalls which echo in the distance. I do not see specters in this night hour; I do not see that which has been, but that which will be, in the bosom of the sea, in the kiss of the dew, in the mist that spreads out over the earth, and hides its fertile embrace. Everything is symbol; I myself am a myth about myself, for is it not as a myth that I hasten to this meeting? Who I am has nothing to do with it. Everything finite and temporal is forgotten, only the eternal remains, the power of love, its longing, its happiness. Now my soul is attuned like a bent bow, now my thoughts lie ready like arrows in

my quiver, not poisoned, and yet able to blend themselves with the blood. How vigorous is my soul, sound, happy, omnipresent like a god. — Her beauty was a gift of Nature. I give thee thanks, O wonderful Nature! Like a mother hast thou watched over her. Accept my gratitude for thy care. Unsophisticated was she. I thank you, you human beings, to whom she was indebted for this. Her development was my handiwork — soon I shall enjoy my reward. — How much I have gathered into this one moment which now draws nigh. Damnation — if I should fail!

I do not yet see my carriage. — I hear the crack of the whip, it is my coachman. — Drive now for dear life, even if the horses drop dead, only not a single second before we reach the place.

Sept. 25.

Why cannot such a night be longer? If Alectryon could forget himself, why cannot the sun be equally sympathetic? Still, it is over now, and I hope never to see her again. When a girl has given away everything, then she is weak, then she has lost everything. For a man guilt is a negative moment; for a woman it is the value of her being. Now all resistance is impossible, and only as long as that is present is it beautiful to love; when it is ended there is only weakness and habit. I do not wish to be reminded of my relation to her; she has lost the fragrance, and the time is past when a girl suffering the pain of a faithless love can be changed into a sunflower. I will have no farewell scene with her; nothing is more disgusting to me than a woman’s tears and a woman’s prayers, which alter everything, and yet really mean nothing. I have loved her, but from now on she can no longer engross my soul. If I were a god, I would do for her what Neptune did for a nymph: I would change her into a man.

It would, however, really be worth while to know whether or not one might be able to poetize himself out of a girl, so that one could make her so proud that she would imagine that it was she who tired of the relationship. It

could become a very interesting epilogue, which, in its own right, might have psychological interest, and along with that enrich one with many erotic observations.

VOLUME II.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

ONLY BECAUSE IT is an opportunity, perhaps the last chance I shall have, to express my affectionate veneration for Professor David F. Swenson, have I undertaken to translate this volume. For I learned to my surprise after Dr. Swenson's death that he had translated something, and in some instances a good deal, from most of the eight parts of the first volume of Either/Or; and as Mrs. Swenson, wishing to salvage these precious fragments, undertook to complete the translation of that volume, I could do no less than translate the second — for obviously the "Either" could not be published without the "Or." In spite of the fact that S.K. published the second edition of *Either/Or* in one volume, it is too big a book for that, and now when the responsibility for the English translation is divided between two persons, it is convenient that it should be clearly divided by publishing the book, as originally it was published, in two volumes.

Although it is unusual, perhaps unique, to provide a preface for the second volume of a literary work, yet I had to say as much as I have said above. And having said that, I would say moreover that for me this task was not altogether an agreeable one. It is rather ironical that I, who had proposed to translate only S.K.'s latest and most definitely religious works, being interested profoundly only in them, should have found myself obliged, by the fact that no other proficient laborers volunteered, to proceed backward and translate several of the "aesthetic" works, ending here with the first literary work which S.K. produced. Although Either/Or (especially the part contained in the first volume) is undoubtedly a work of genius, and a work such as no man but S.K. could have produced, yet my experience as a translator who proceeds backward reveals a great discrepancy between this work and the works of S.K.'s maturity, with respect not only to the

felicity and exactness of his expression, but also to the sheer weight and value of his thought. Having been accustomed to weighing his golden thoughts by troy measure, I find that avoirdupois scales are good enough for use here. In translating the last works I never ventured to think that I could improve upon S.K.'s careful choice of expression; but here there are many passages, especially in Judge William's first letter, which could easily be improved by a mediocre translator. I go even so far as to say that the book would be improved by leaving out many passages, which not only are badly expressed but often are examples, and tedious examples, of argument for argument's sake, which is the essence of sophistry. Of course I have not omitted any of them, neither have I yielded to the temptation of bettering them. But I protest here that, if in some instances the translation appears stupid or even incomprehensible, the original is no better. Inasmuch as I have been regarded by supercilious critics as an undiscriminating eulogist of S.K., I am not sorry to have an opportunity of saying this here. But I would say at the same time that this big book was written in such an incredibly short time, and in part under such unfavorable conditions, that we have no cause to wonder at its defects. That it was written in eleven months was S.K.'s boast — a very questionable boast. When we reflect how much else he was doing and suffering at that time this feat seems the more difficult and incredible. "Would to God it had been impossible" — as Dr. Johnson said when he heard a soprano praised for reaching the most difficult notes.

This is all I need to say by way of a preface. But I confess to a special liking for prefaces — at least for writing them. The author, having finished his serious labor, can breathe freely, write the preface at his ease, and talk familiarly to the reader. As for the translator, it is the only opportunity he has of writing in his own person. I can speak from experience — for have I not written twenty-six prefaces? Collected, they would make a tidy little

volume. S.K.'s most amusing book was entitled Prefaces. It will never be translated, for it deals in a free and easy way with allusions to contemporary affairs which cannot be explained without pedantry. In the preface to the Prefaces the pseudonymous author, Nicholas Notabene, confides to the reader that he is not permitted to write a book because his wife is jealous of his preoccupation with such work, and hence he resorts to the expedient of writing a volume of prefaces. But there are other good reasons for writing a sequence of prefaces, although one never sees it done except when public demand has required one or more successive editions— "enlarged and improved," as the Germans say. Then the original preface is commonly preserved, and an indefinite number of prefaces follows it. Alas, I have never had this good fortune. But I have reflected that even without this popular demand for new editions there might be good reasons for accompanying a book with several prefaces.

Perhaps others besides me are accustomed to write a preface before a book is started in order to prescribe the aim — and then of course a very different one after the book is finished. If both were published, we should have an illuminating demonstration of the disparity between purpose and accomplishment. If only one preface is published, it ought to be for the convenience of the reviewers, seeing that they cannot always be expected to find time to read the book. To this end it ought of course to be laudatory. The blurb on the dust cover is usually made out of that, and it is astonishing how the reviewers lap it up. It is perhaps for this reason I have commonly had a *succès d'estime* — which unfortunately has led to no other success. But in addition to this there surely ought to be a preface meant for the readers, and perhaps a special preface addressed, as are all of the prefaces to S.K.'s *Edifying Discourses,* "to that single individual... my reader." One might well add a chatty autobiographical preface with a portrait of the author, containing just what the public demands, which generally it gets less

authentically, and perhaps less flatteringly, from the reviewer. Another preface might be devoted to the prospective critic, seeking to disarm him in advance. Indeed there is no end to the prefaces which might appropriately accompany every book. Since I am only a translator it would not be seemly for me to try out this experiment here. But precisely as the translator I must follow this with an introduction, which applies of course principally to this volume.

Walter Lowrie

May 11, 1942 Princeton

INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR

IN HIS JOURNAL (IV A 43) S.K. expresses his "judgment upon *Either/Or*" — and it is not a modest one: "There was a youth, richly gifted as an Alcibiades. He went astray in the world. In his distress he looked about for a Socrates, but among his contemporaries he found him not. Then he begged the gods to transform him into one. And, lo, he who had been so proud of being an Alcibiades became so shamefaced and humbled by the grace of the gods that when he had received just what might properly have made him proud he felt himself inferior to all."

Either/Or is undoubtedly a work of genius, but it is a very uneven work. It is by no means one of S.K.'s greatest books, although in some respects it is perhaps the most interesting, because of the great variety of its contents and its many purple patches. On the other hand, this very variety may be regarded as a defect, and the lack of variety in the second volume makes it tedious, the only spice it has being the interjections of the "young friend," which hark back to S.K.'s aesthetic stage. In the Preface I have already remarked upon the serious defects in Judge William's first letter exalting the aesthetic validity of marriage. A certain dullness in both letters is accounted for only in part by the consideration that the Judge (and perhaps the worthy P. V. Jacobsen who stood as the model for this character) may have been a prosy person, as moralists commonly are, and that S.K. took pains to draw this figure true to type. It was difficult for S.K. to impersonate with great enthusiasm the ethical stage as such, for he himself was well beyond this sphere, having leaped at once into the religious, and he never was of the opinion that the ethical could stand alone, or could stand securely with no other support than the vague religiousness which Judge William evinced.

S.K. says expressly that the last part of Either/Or (i.e.., the second volume) was written first. That implies that this volume was written in part at least before he fled to Berlin from the scandal of his broken engagement, therefore during the two months of agony when he was employed in trying to induce Regina to "break it off," pretending that he was a scoundrel. But at that time he was also preoccupied with the completion of his Master's dissertation on The Concept of Irony and with the public defense of it. He does not tell us which part of the volume was written at that time, but there can be no doubt that it was the first letter dealing with marriage. For us there is an additional pathos in this defense of the aesthetic character of marriage when we reflect that he was depicting in glowing terms the beauty of marriage just at the time when he felt compelled to renounce this happiness. And the defects of this letter are explained, if they are not excused, by the tragic preoccupations of that time. There was, it is true, an objective reason for beginning the "Or" with the consideration of marriage; for, as S.K. remarked in his Journal (IV A 234), "marriage is the deepest form of life's revelation," and "it is the duty of every man to be married." The aesthetic young man, S.K. says, was never revealed: in the first part only his casual moods were revealed; in the second only his external semblance whereby he would deceive people. S.K. also remarks (IV A 213) that the aesthetic life described in the first part came to grief upon time, and that for this reason the significance of time is stressed in the second part; also that the first part contains melancholy ("for imagination is always melancholy") and despair, and for this reason the second part teaches despair as a thing one must will, and teaches one to choose oneself — the way to overcome melancholy and despair. He explains too that "to choose oneself" is only another expression for the Socratic injunction "to know oneself."

We have to suppose then that the second letter was written dining the four months he spent in Berlin. It gives evidence of the metaphysical interests, particularly the refutation of Hegelianism, by which he was absorbed at that time. But a letter he wrote from Berlin to his friend Emil Boesen shows how multifarious and distracting were his occupations there: "This winter in Berlin will always have great significance for me. I have got a great deal accomplished. When you consider that I have heard from three to four lectures daily, have a language lesson daily, and that I have got so much written [of *Either/Or]* (and this in spite of the fact that at first I had to spend so much time writing out Schelling's lectures, which I did in a fair copy), and got a great deal read — so one cannot complain. And on top of that, all my pains and all my monologues [about Regina]. I have a feeling that I have not long to live, but I am living for a brief term and so much the more intensely."

In spite of all these distractions the Judge's second letter is a solid contribution to modern thought. It deals in a novel way with many important themes which were to find more adequate expression in his later writings, especially in the Postscript. The Judge uses the phrase "either/or" with solemn significance, whereas the young friend, who has these words more frequently in his mouth, frivolously takes them in vain. To the Judge they signify the vital importance of disjunction and choice. In this "passion for disjunction" he is in perfect agreement with S.K., who recognized that he was fitly called Either/Or, even if it was annoying to hear this name shouted after him by urchins in the street, and who at the end of his life wrote enthusiastically in one of the numbers of the Instant (xiv, p. 106), "Either/Or is the key of heaven." It is the exact opposite, he says, not only of "both — and," but of Hegelian mediation.

Evidently S.K. was himself sharply aware of the defects of the letter in which the Judge defended marriage, for he seized the opportunity presented

in the Stages to present this argument more fully, and he gave the Judge a chance to redeem himself. Yet when the Judge had said all he knew how to say, it is not to be supposed that he said just what S.K. would have said had he been writing under his own name. For S.K. had something more to say, and something different (cf. my Introduction to the Stages, p. 6). But for all that, the Judge says a great deal about marriage, and a great deal that is very valuable, much that no one else has ever thought of saying; and in our day when, owing to the dissolution of our *mores,* this subject is necessarily much discussed, both by serious and by frivolous people, one might profitably turn to Judge William for instruction. I, as a minister of the Gospel with the obligation of talking seriously to every couple that comes to me to be married, being myself well instructed by Judge William, am prepared to talk to them hours on end — and to talk interestingly.

Only after S.K. had returned to Copenhagen early in March 1842 was he completely free to devote himself to Either/Or, and presumably the whole of the first volume was written then, in about five months. The whole manuscript had to be copied by a scribe in order to preserve the secret of his authorship, and the time required for this was doubtless not included in the eleven months. The book was published on February 20, 1843. It was "accompanied" by Two Edifying Discourses, published under his own name on May 16 — the first of the series of religious discourses with which he accompanied all his pseudonymous works.

S.K. protested indignantly against the assumption that this book (especially the first volume) was made up of a lot of essays he had lying ready in his desk. We must take him at his word. And yet it is hard to resist the impression that, even if hardly anything except a few of the *Diapsalmata* had been written out beforehand, the various essays incorporated thoughts which had already occupied his lively imagination in his "aesthetic" days and needed only to be spun out.

Of the many and various reasons S.K. alleges for writing this book — a metaphysical interest, a religious purpose, as a "good deed" to Regina to "clarify her out of the engagement," as "a necessary evacuation" — only the last accounts adequately for most of the matter in the first volume. He needed to get these things off his chest, or, as he said, to "expectorate" them. The religious, moral and metaphysical interests were expressed here and there, but principally they were expressed by the title of the book, which in a way is more important than the book itself. S.K. affirmed that the title is so essential that the book "is not only called Either/ Or, but it is Either/Or," and that if no title had been printed on it, the reader could have supplied it (IV B 59, p. 217). This in a way the public understood, though they were unable to perceive how the book illustrated this in detail. And even we who are so much better informed about S.K.'s purpose do not find it any too easy to see how, as he affirmed, it "has one plan from the first word to the last, from the first Diapsalm to the conclusion of the Sermon" (IV A 214, 216). For his contemporaries it was the more difficult to detect a pervading plan and purpose, because (as he acknowledged in *The Point of View)* this book was "a deceit," even if it was meant, like the method of Socrates, to deceive people into the truth.

Although *Either/Or* produced a great sensation in Copenhagen, nobody was capable of understanding its subtle purpose, and so no one could adequately review it. The reviewers dwelt upon the immense size of the book, the amazing variety of its contents, and above all upon the mystery of its authorship. For this misunderstanding, or rather lack of understanding, S.K. was himself to blame, and yet he was furious. Furious especially at J. L. Heiberg, the *arbiter elegantiarum,* who wrote a long review in his *Intelligensblade.* Heiberg was scandalized by the size of the book and by the too great variety of its contents. Strangely enough, Heiberg, although he if any man was an aesthete, found the aesthetic part offensive and

disgusting. It did not occur to him that it drew such an unfavorable picture of the aesthetic life and its consequences of melancholy and despair in order to warn men against it — to warn *him* personally of the end to which he was tending — and to throw the aestheticists into the arms of the ethicist. But it appears to me still more strange that he was profoundly attracted by the ethical part. He imagines a hypothetical reader: "One thinks, 'Have I the time to read a book like that? One may just as well leap into it as creep.' With that one literally *leaps* into the book, reads a little here and there to get a taste of it. One stumbles upon many piquant reflections, some of them perhaps are even profound, one doesn't know for certain, for when one believes one has seen a point one is again disoriented.... One hastens on to 'The Diary of the Seducer,' for the title already gives a hint that this production must be more creative than critical. And in a way one does not find oneself disappointed in this expectation, but one is disgusted, offended and indignant, and one asks oneself, not whether it is possible that anyone can be like this seducer, but whether it is possible that the individuality of an author can be so constituted as to find pleasure in putting itself in the place of that character and elaborating it in its most secret thoughts. A glance at the book, and this possibility is substantiated. One closes the book and says, '*Basta!* I have enough of the *Either,* I want to have nothing of the *Or.*' However, one hears the *Or* enthusiastically discussed, and since on every page to which one chances to turn one sees lightning flashes of thought which suddenly illuminate whole spheres of existence, the readers have a presentiment that there must be an organizing power which makes of it all a veritable whole, they feel themselves incessantly under the influence of a rare and highly gifted mind which from a deep speculative spring draws up before their eyes the most beautiful ethical points of view, they are so captivated by this volume that they are unable to lay it down till they have finished it.... But the serious reader of whom I have been speaking

will, out of respect for an author who has written such an *Or,* take up again the *Either* and carefully read it through."

I confess that if a reviewer were to say something like this about a book of mine, I should not be "furious." Perhaps not many readers in our age will speak so enthusiastically about the second part of *Either/Or.* I confess that the first part is more interesting to me. I am sure that many will find the second part dull, as they did the *Stages,* which has far fewer defects. I was not surprised to hear people say that they found "Quidam's Diary" tedious, but I wondered that they expressed no enthusiasm for "The Banquet." Did not Brandes say that it could hold its own with Plato's *Symposium?* But, after all, I have to reflect that not many people in our day read the *Symposium,* and that those who do would perhaps pronounce it dull if they dared. After all, taste changes from age to age, and the tempo of our time is different.

Incidentally this volume has a singular interest for one who desires to know what sort of man S.K. was in his aesthetic stage, which corresponded precisely with his first seven years in the university. For he is graphically depicted in the descriptions Judge William gives of his "young friend" and in the lines which he ascribes to him. To that extent the second volume of *Either/Or* is autobiographical, almost in the same degree as the first. It is the self-portrait of a great artist; but it is the portrait which he painted of himself after he had ceased to be what he was. In a short while, because of his tragic experience as a lover, he had changed so much that he had to paint from memory, not by looking in a mirror; and, having resolutely chosen the "or," he is now addressing his earlier self through the mouth of Judge William, without by any means identifying himself with this amiable moralist.

In conclusion, I must speak of the Sermon with which the book ends. It is described as an *Ultimatum.* That means not merely a conclusion but a

challenging conclusion. Evidently S.K. felt that for the sake of completeness he must make mention of the third stage, the religious. But lugged in as it was by the sermon it was barely mentioned as an addendum. Hence he could say later that "*Either/Or* goes no further than the ethical" — though we can see that the Judge was evidently a "Christian," in the vague sort of way that most people are. One of the reasons for writing the *Stages* was to give due prominence to the religious stage — although in that book the ethical stage has almost dropped out, and the religious stage is not depicted but suggested when we are shown the young man undergoing the metamorphosis which will evidently result in attaining the wings of faith. S.K. says of this sermon, as he might say of any good sermon, that "the aim of the sermon is not to lull, not to win a metaphysical view, but to clear for action"; and he said of himself, "This is what I am able to do at all times."

AESTHETIC VALIDITY OF MARRIAGE

MY FRIEND,

The lines upon which your eye first falls were written last. The aim of them is to make still one more attempt to force into the form of a letter the copious inquiry which is remitted to you herewith. Thus these lines correspond with the concluding lines and along with them constitute an envelope, apprising you in an external way, as will many proofs of an internal character, that what you read is a letter. The thought that I was writing you a letter I was not willing to relinquish, partly because the time at my disposal does not permit the more careful composition which a dissertation demands, and partly because I was reluctant to let slip the opportunity of addressing you in the tone of earnest admonition which the form of a letter allows. You are so expert in the art of talking in perfectly general terms about everything without letting yourself be moved by it, that I am not tempted to set in motion your dialectical powers. You know well how the Prophet Nathan behaved with King David when the king was willing enough to understand the parable the prophet set forth but was not willing to understand that it applied to him. So to make the application plain Nathan said, "Thou, O King, art the man." Thus I too have constantly sought to remind you that what is said is about you, that to you it is addressed. Therefore, I have no doubt that in reading this you will constantly get the impression that it is a letter you are reading, even though you might be distracted from this thought by the fact that the form of the paper is not appropriate to a letter. As a public functionary I am accustomed to write upon a large sheet of paper. Perhaps this may be advantageous if in your eyes it should contribute to give my epistle a certain official character. The letter which you receive herewith is a rather big one. If it were to be

estimated by the scales of the post office, it would be a precious letter; by the troy weight of a subtile criticism it would perhaps turn out to be insignificant. I would therefore beg you not to employ either of these scales: not that of the post office, for you do not receive it in order to forward it; not that of criticism, for I should be loath to see you render yourself guilty of a misunderstanding so gross and unsympathetic.

In case any man but you were to get sight of this investigation, it would certainly strike him as exceedingly strange and superfluous; perhaps if he were a married man he would exclaim with the joviality of a paterfamilias, “Yes, marriage is the aesthetic side of life”; if he were a young man he would perhaps chime in rather confusedly and unreflectively, “Yes, love, thou art the aesthetic side of life”; but both of them would be unable to conceive how it could occur to me to wish to save the aesthetic repute of marriage. Indeed, instead of making myself meritorious in the eyes of actual or prospective husbands, I should presumably incur their suspicion, for a defense is an indictment. And I should have you to thank for this, for I on my part have never doubted — and you, in spite of all your bizarre qualities, I love as a son, as a brother, as a friend; I love with an aesthetic love because some day you will perhaps succeed in finding a center for your eccentric movements; I love you for the sake of your impetuosity, for the sake of your passions, for the sake of your foibles; I love you with the fear and trembling of a religious love because I see the devious paths you are treading, and because to me you are something quite other than a phenomenon. Yea, when I see you make a side spring, when I see you rear like a wild horse, throwing yourself on your haunches and then again plunging forward, I then — well, I refrain from all useless pedagogical intervention, but I think of an unbroken horse, and see also the hand that holds the reins, see the whip of fate raised menacingly over your head. And yet when this investigation finally comes to hand you will perhaps say,

“Yes, this is undeniably an immense task he has undertaken, but let us see then how he has resolved it.”

Perhaps I speak to you too mildly, perhaps I put up with too much from you, I ought perhaps to have availed myself more of the authority which in spite of your pride I actually exercise over you, or perhaps I ought not to have taken up this subject with you, for in many ways you are after all a terrible person, and the more one has to do with you the worse it is. You are not really an enemy of marriage, but you abuse your gifts for irony and sarcasm by making mock of it. I am ready to concede that in this respect you are not sparring with the air, that you strike a sure blow, and that you have much observation at your disposal, but at the same time I would say that this perhaps is your defect. Your life is wholly given over to preliminary runs. Presumably you will reply that at any rate this is always better than traveling on the railway of triviality and losing oneself atomistically in life’s social throng. As I have remarked, one cannot say that you hate marriage, for doubtless your thought has never yet got to that subject, at least not without being scandalized by it, and so you must forgive me for assuming that you have never thought the matter through. What you have a predilection for is the first sensation of falling in love. You know how to submerge yourself in a dreamy and glowing clairvoyance of love. About your entire person you spin as it were a cobweb and then lie in wait. But you are not a child, a consciousness just awakening, and therefore your glance has a very different significance, but you are content with that. You love the accidental. A smile from a pretty girl in a situation which is interesting, a glance which you entrap, that is what you are on the lookout for, that is a theme for your idle imagination. You who always plume yourself upon being an observer must put up with it if you yourself become an object of observation. I will remind you of an instance which I observed. A pretty young girl who accidentally was seated beside you at table was too

prim to bestow a glance upon you. It needs to be emphasized that the situation was accidental: you did not know her position, her name, her age, etc. For an instant you were puzzled as to whether this was merely prudery, or whether there was not mixed with it a little embarrassment which under the proper illumination might make an interesting situation. She sat opposite a mirror in which you could see her; she cast a shy glance at it without guessing that your eye had already taken up its abode there; she blushed when your eye met hers. Such sights you preserve as accurately and register as quickly as a daguerreotype, which as you know needs only half a minute even in the worst weather.

Ah! you are indeed a strange being, at one moment a child, at another an old man, at one moment you are thinking with prodigious seriousness about the loftiest scientific problems, proposing to sacrifice your life to them, the next moment you are an amorous fool. From marriage, however, you are a long way off, and I hope that your good genius will keep you from getting into bad ways, for sometimes I sense in you a trace of wanting to play at being a little Zeus. With your love you feel yourself so superior that doubtless you imagine every girl might count herself fortunate to be your sweetheart for a week. Your amorous studies you then for the time being carry on in conjunction with studies aesthetical, ethical, metaphysical, cosmopolitical, etc. One cannot really become angry with you. Evil has in you, as it had in the medieval conception, a certain seasoning of good nature and childishness. With regard to marriage you have always behaved merely as an observer. There is something treacherous in wishing to be merely an observer. How often — yes, I am willing to admit it — how often you have diverted me, but how often you have tormented me too with your tales of how you have wormed yourself into the confidence now of this and now of another husband in order to see how deeply he was stuck in the marriage bog. To worm your way into the confidence of people — for that

you really have great gifts, that I will not deny, nor will I deny that it is quite entertaining to hear you relate the results of it and to witness your exuberant joy every time you are in a position to announce a really fresh observation. But, honestly speaking, your psychological interest lacks seriousness and is rather a hypochondriac curiosity.

Now for the matter in hand. There are two things I must especially regard as my task: to show the aesthetic significance of marriage; and to show how the aesthetic element in it may be held fast in spite of the manifold obstacles of actual life. In order, however, that you may abandon yourself with the more security to the edification which this little treatise may possibly procure you, I will let a little polemical prelude precede my discussions, and in it take due account of your sarcastic observations. But with that I hope also that I shall have paid due tribute to the piratical states and can then calmly pursue my calling; for after all I am within my calling when I who am a married man fight in behalf of marriage — pro *aris et fotisfi* I assure you I take this matter so much to heart that I, who ordinarily do not feel tempted to write books, might actually be tempted to do so, if only I might hope to save a single marriage from the hell into which perhaps it has precipitated itself, or to render a few people more capable of realizing the most beautiful task proposed to men.

As a precautionary measure I will occasionally allude to my wife and my relation to her — not as though I presumed to represent our marriage as the normative example, but partly because the poetical descriptions which are purely fanciful have no very special convincing power, and partly because I count it of importance to show that even in commonplace situations it is possible to preserve the aesthetical. You have known me for many years, you have known my wife for five, you find her quite pretty, or rather attractive, and so do I; and yet I know very well that she is not so pretty by day as in the evening, that a certain sad, almost ailing trait vanishes only in

the course of the day, and that it is forgotten when in the evening she can really lay claim to be charming. I know very well that her nose is not the perfection of beauty, that it is too small; but it turns itself saucily to the world, and I know that this little nose has given occasion to so much pleasant banter that, if it were within my jurisdiction, I would never wish for her a more beautiful one. This is a much deeper appreciation of the significance of the accidental in life than that about which you are so enthusiastic. I thank God for all this good and forget the weak points.

This, however, is of minor importance. But there is one thing for which I thank God with my whole soul, namely, that she is the only one I have ever loved, the first one; and there is one thing for which I pray God with my whole heart, that He will give me strength never to want to love any other. This is a family prayer in which she too takes part; for every feeling, every mood, acquires for me a higher significance for the fact that I make her a partaker of it. All feeling, even the highest religious emotions, are able to assume an easy air when people always agree in them. In her presence I am at once priest and congregation. And if sometimes I might be unkind enough not to be mindful of this good and ungrateful enough not to give thanks for it, she will then remind me of it. Look you, my young friend, this is not the coquetry of the first days of love-making; it is not an essay in experimental eroticism, as when in the period of his engagement pretty much every man has proposed to himself and to his fiancée the question whether she has been in love before, or whether he himself has loved anyone before; but this is the downright seriousness of life, and yet it is not cold, uncomely, unerotic, unpoetic. And truly I take it very much to heart that she really loves me and that I really love her — not as though in the course of years our marriage might not attain as much solidity as most others, but the point with me is to renew constantly the first love, and this again in such a way that for me it has just as much religious as aesthetic

significance; for to me God has not become so supermundane that He might not concern Himself about the covenant He himself has established betwixt man and woman, and I have not become too spiritual to feel also the significance of the worldly side of life. And all the beauty inherent in the pagan erotic has validity also in Christianity, in so far as it can be combined with marriage. This renewal of our first love is not merely a sad reflection or a poetic recollection of something that has been experienced whereby one at length deludes oneself — that sort of thing produces fatigue, but this is action. Generally, the moment comes soon enough when one has to be content with recollection. One ought as long as possible to keep life's fresh spring open.

You, on the contrary, are actually living by robbery. You sneak up to people unobserved, steal their happiest moment from them, thrust this shadowgraph into your pocket, like the tall man in the story of Peter Schlemihl, and take it out when you wish to. You say maybe that the persons concerned lose nothing by this, that they perhaps often do not themselves know which is their most beautiful moment. You think, on the contrary, that they ought to be obliged to you because by your study of illumination and by your incantations you have let them appear transfigured at the decisive moment into a supernatural size. Perhaps they do in fact lose nothing by this, and yet the question remains whether it is not conceivable that they retained a recollection of it which always remained painful. But you lose: you lose your time — your peace of mind — your patience with life. For you know very well how impatient you are. You once wrote to me that patience to bear life's burdens must be an extraordinary virtue, that for your part you did not even have patience to want to live. Your life resolves itself completely into interesting particulars of this sort. And in case one might venture to believe that the energy with which at such moments you are inflamed might acquire consistency and be spread evenly over your

whole life, something great would surely come of you, for at such moments you are transfigured. There is an unrest within you, above which, nevertheless, consciousness soars clearly and lucidly; your whole soul is concentrated upon this sole point, your understanding devises a hundred plans for the attack; it fails in one direction; instantly your almost diabolical dialectic is capable of explaining the previous failure in such a way that it must be serviceable for the new plan of operations. You are constantly hovering over yourself, and however decisive every step may be, you retain a possibility of interpretation which with one word is able to alter everything. And then with that the exaltation of your mood: your eyes sparkle, or rather they shoot out, as it were, a hundred spying eyes; an evanescent blush flits across your face; you rely confidently upon your calculations, and yet you wait with a terrible impatience — I verily believe, my dear friend, that in the end you delude yourself, that with all this talk about catching a man in his happiest moment it is only your overwrought mood you grasp. You are so potentiated that you are creative. It was for this reason I expressed the opinion that this was not so very harmful to others — to you, however, it is absolutely harmful.

And after all, at the bottom of this is there not something prodigiously faithless? Indeed, you say that men do not concern you, that on the other hand it is they that must thank you for the fact that by your contact with them you do not, like Circe, transform them into swine but from swine to heroes. You say that it would be an entirely different matter if there were a man who really confided in you; but such a man you have never yet encountered. Your heart is touched, you melt with inward emotion at the thought of sacrificing everything for such a man. I would not deny that you have a good-natured readiness to help, that the way you succor the needy, for example, is really beautiful, that the gentleness you sometimes display has something noble about it; but in spite of this I believe that here again

there is concealed a certain haughtiness. I will not recall to you certain eccentric expressions of this; it would be a shame to throw into the shade by this all the good that may be in you. However, I would remind you of a little incident in your life which it will do you no harm to remember. You once recounted to me that on one of your promenades you were walking behind two old women. My description of the incident has not perhaps at this moment the liveliness it had when you came rushing up to me with your mind full of this thought. They were two women from the poorhouse. Perhaps they had seen better days; but all that was forgotten, and the poorhouse is not exactly the place for nourishing a hope. While one woman was taking a pinch of snuff and offering it to the other she said, “If a body had five dollars.” Perhaps she herself was surprised at this daring wish, which echoed across the glaciers like a prayer unanswered. You approached her, after having concealed a five dollar bill in your sketch book before you took the decisive step, in order that the situation might retain a befitting elasticity and that she might not too soon suspect something. You approached her with an almost subservient politeness, as beseemed a ministering spirit; you gave her the five dollars and vanished. You enjoyed then thinking of the impression this would make upon her, wondering whether she would see in it a divine dispensation, or whether her mind, which by reason of many sufferings had perhaps developed a certain defiance, would not rather turn almost with contempt against the divine providence which in this case assumed the character of fortuitousness.

You told me that this prompted you to reflect whether the entirely fortuitous fulfillment of a wish fortuitously expressed might not bring a person actually to desperation, because thereby the reality of life was negated in its deepest root. So what you wanted was to play the part of fate; what you really enjoyed were the multifarious reflections which could be spun from this. I am ready to admit that you are well fitted to play the part

of fate, inasmuch as with this word one associates the notion of the most unstable and capricious of all things. For my part, I am disposed to content myself with a less eminent position in life. Moreover, in this instance you have an example wherein you can see to what degree it is true that your experiments have no harmful effect upon people. It looks as if you had the advantage on your side: you have given five dollars to a poor woman, you have fulfilled her highest wish; and yet you yourself admit that this might just as well have the effect upon her that she, as Job's wife counselled him to do, might curse God. You will say, maybe, that these consequences are not under your control, that if one were thus to reckon the consequences, one could not act at all. But I would reply, "Yes, indeed, one can act. In case I had had five dollars, I too perhaps would have given them to her, but at the same time I should have been conscious that I was not behaving experimentally; I should be conscious that divine providence, whose lowly instrument I felt myself to be at that moment, would surely dispose everything for the best, and that I had nothing for which I need reproach myself." How insecure and hovering your life is you can also convince yourself by the consideration that you are anything but sure that some day it may not weigh heavily upon your mind that your hypochondriacal acumen and subtility are capable of bewitching you into a circle of consequences from which you will seek in vain to extricate yourself, that you will be setting heaven and earth in commotion to find again the poor woman for the sake of observing what impression this has made upon her and "in what way she can best be influenced"; for you always stay the same, never grow wiser. With your passionate nature it might well be possible for you to forget your great plans, your studies, in short that everything might become indifferent to you in comparison with the thought of finding that poor woman, who perhaps was dead and gone long ago. In that way you seek to make amends for what you have done amiss, and thus your life task

becomes in itself so conflicting that you want to be at once fate and our Lord God — a task which even God Himself is unable to realize, for He is but one of these two.

The zeal you display may be quite praiseworthy, but do you not see how it becomes clearer and clearer that what you lack, and lack entirely, is faith? Instead of saving your soul by entrusting everything to the hand of God, instead of striking into this short cut, you prefer the endless detour which perhaps will never bring you to the goal. You presumably will now say, "Well, in that way there is no need of doing anything." I would reply, "Certainly there is, when you know that you have a place in the world which is yours, upon which you ought to concentrate all your activity; but to act as you do borders upon insanity." You will say that even if you were to fold your hands idly and let God take care of her; the woman perhaps would not be helped thereby. I would reply, "Quite possibly; but you would be helped — and the woman would too if she likewise were to put her trust in God. And do you not see that if you really were to put on your traveling boots and journey out into the world and waste your time and your strength, you would be neglecting all your other endeavors and subsequently perhaps would be tormented in turn by this thought?" But, as I have said, is not this capricious existence faithlessness? It may seem as if by wandering all around the world to find the poor woman you showed an extraordinary, an unexampled degree of faithfulness; for there was not the least egoistical motive, it was not like a lover who journeys afar to find the loved one; no, it was pure sympathy. I would reply, "You are right enough in denying that it is egoism, but it is your usual impudent spirit of revolt." Everything that is established by divine and human law you despise, and to liberate yourself from it you grasp at the accidental, as in this case at the poor woman who is unknown to you. And as for your sympathy, it was perhaps pure sympathy... for your experiment. You are always forgetting that your existence in the

world cannot, after all, be intended merely for the accidental, and the moment you make this the chief thing, you forget entirely what you owe to those next door to you. I know very well that you do not lack sophistical shrewdness for palliating your conduct nor ironical suppleness for underbidding the adversary. You therefore will answer, “I am not so grand as to imagine that I am the one who is able to work for the whole, I leave that to preeminent persons; if only I can work for some particular end, I am satisfied.” But this is a monstrous lie; for you are not willing to work at all, you want to experiment, and you contemplate everything from this point of view, often with much insolence; and activity is always an object of your derision — as once you expressed yourself about a man who had come to his end in a ludicrous way, which gave you amusement for many a day, saying that “though in other respects nothing was known of this man’s significance for the whole and in a great sense, yet now one can affirm that he verily has not lived in vain.”

As I have said, what you want is... to be fate. Now pause an instant. I do not mean to preach to you; but there is an earnestness for which I know you have an uncommonly deep respect, and everyone who has the power of evoking it in you, or confidence enough in you to let it appear, will see in you, I know, an entirely different man. Imagine for a moment — to take the very highest instance — imagine that the Almighty Origin of all things, that God in heaven, were thus to propose himself merely as a riddle for men, were to let the whole human race hover in this horrible uncertainty — would there not be something in your inmost being which would revolt against this, would you be able for a single instant to endure the torment, or would you for an instant be able to make your thought hold this horror fast? And yet He most of all, if I dare say so, might use this proud expression, “What matter men to me?” But therefore this is not true; and when I declare that God is incomprehensible I raise my soul to the highest pitch; it is

precisely in the most blissful moment I make this declaration; He is incomprehensible because His love is incomprehensible, incomprehensible because His love surpasses all understanding. When this is said of God it denotes the highest excellence; when one is compelled to say it of a man it denotes a fault, sometimes a sin. And Christ did not count it robbery to be equal with God but humbled Himself — and you would account the spiritual gifts bestowed upon you as robbery. But do reflect; your life is passing away, some day for you too the time will come when your life is drawing to a close, when no longer is there any expedient that can prolong it, when memories alone are left, but not in the sense in which you love them, this mingling of poetry and truth, but the serious and faithful memory of conscience; beware lest it unroll before you a list, not properly of crimes, to be sure, but of possibilities wasted, phantoms which it will be impossible for you to drive away. You are still young, the intellectual suppleness you possess clads youth becomingly and delights the eye for a season. One is struck by seeing a clown whose joints are so limber that all necessity for maintaining the human gait and posture is done away. Such are you in an intellectual sense, you can just as well stand on your head as on your feet, everything is possible for you, and by this possibility you can astonish others and yourself; but it is unwholesome, and for the sake of your own tranquility I beg you to see to it that what is your advantage does not end by being a curse. A man who has a conviction cannot at his pleasure turn topsy-turvy upon himself and all things. I warn you, therefore, not against the world but against yourself, and I warn the world against you.

This much is certain, that in case I had a daughter of an age when there could be any question of her being influenced by you, I would warn her most solemnly, and especially if she were also intellectually gifted. And would there not be good ground for giving warning against you when I who imagine, nevertheless, that I am a match for you, if not in suppleness, at

least in firmness and balance, if not in variableness and brilliancy, at least in steadiness — when even I sometimes feel with a certain indignation that you infect me, that I am letting myself be carried away by your exuberant mirth, by the apparently good-humored wit with which you make mock of everything, am letting myself be carried away into the same aesthetic-intellectual intoxication in which you live? With you, therefore, I have a certain feeling of insecurity, being now too severe, and now too indulgent. This, after all, is not so strange, for you are an epitome of every possibility, and so at one time I can see in you the possibility of perdition, at another of salvation. Every mood, every thought, good or bad, cheerful or sad, you pursue to its utmost limit, yet in such a way that this comes to pass rather *in abstracto* than *in concreter,* in such a way that this pursuit itself is little more than a mood from which nothing results but a knowledge of it, not even so much that the next time it becomes harder or easier for you to indulge in the same mood, for you constantly retain a possibility of it. Hence, one can reproach you almost for everything and for nothing, because it is and is not chargeable to you. According to circumstances you acknowledge or you do not acknowledge that you have had such a mood; but you are inaccessible to any calculation; what you care about is to have had the mood, completely and pathetically true.

But it was with the aesthetic validity of marriage I proposed to deal. This might seem a superfluous investigation, something which everyone is willing to concede, since it has been pointed out often enough. For through many centuries have not knights and adventurers undergone incredible pains and trouble in order to come to harbor in the quiet peace of a happy marriage? Have not novelists and novel readers worked their way through one volume after another in order to stop with a happy marriage? And has not one generation after another endured the troubles and complications of four acts if only there was some likelihood of a happy marriage in the fifth?

However, by these prodigious efforts very little has been accomplished for the glorification of marriage, and I doubt very much if by the reading of such works any man has been made capable of performing the task he set himself or has felt oriented in life. For this precisely is the pernicious, the unwholesome feature of such works, that they end where they ought to begin. After the many fates they have overcome the lovers finally sink into one another's arms. The curtain falls, the book ends, but the reader is none the wiser. For truly (assuming that the first flame of love is present) it requires no great art to have courage and shrewdness enough to fight with all one's might for possession of the good which one regards as the only good; but on the other hand it surely requires discretion, wisdom and patience to overcome the lassitude which often is wont to follow upon a wish fulfilled. It is natural that to love in its first outflaming it seems as if it could not suffer enough hardships in acquiring possession of the beloved object, yea, that in case there are no dangers present it is disposed to provide them in order to overcome them. Upon this the whole attention is directed in plays of this sort, and as soon as the dangers are overcome the scenery shifter knows well what he has to do. Hence, it is rather rare to see a wedding on the stage or to read of one, except in case the opera or the ballet holds in reserve this factor, which may well furnish an occasion for some sort of dramatic galimatias, for a gorgeous procession, for the significant gesticulations and the heavenly glance of a ballet dancer, for the exchange of rings, etc. The truth in this whole exposition, the real aesthetic element, consists in the fact that love is represented as a striving, that this feeling is seen fighting its way through opposition. The fault is that this struggle, this dialectic, is entirely external, and that love comes out of this fight quite as abstract as when it entered into it. When once there awakens an apprehension of love's proper dialectic, an apprehension of its pathological struggle, of its relation to the ethical, to the religious, verily

one will not have need of hard-hearted fathers or ladies' bowers or enchanted princesses or ogres and monsters in order to give love plenty to do. In our age one rarely encounters such cruel fathers or such frightful monsters, and in so far as modern literature has fashioned itself in conformity with the antique, money has become essentially the opposition medium through which love moves, and again we sit patiently through the four acts if there is a reasonable prospect of a rich uncle dying in the fifth.

However, it is rather seldom one sees such productions, and generally speaking, modern literature is fully occupied with making fun of the abstract conception of immediate love which was the subject of the romantic novelists. For example, when we review Scribe's activity as a playwright we see that one of his principal themes is the representation of love as an illusion. Of this, however, I only need to remind you, for with Scribe and his polemic you have only too much sympathy; I believe firmly that you would maintain his position against the whole world, even though you would reserve chivalric love for yourself. For so far are you from being destitute of sensibility that with regard to this matter you are the most jealous man I know. I remember that you once sent me a little appreciation of Scribe's play, *The First Love,* which was written with an almost desperate enthusiasm. In this you maintained that it was the best thing Scribe had ever written, and that this play, if rightly understood, was sufficient to make him immortal. I would mention another play which in my judgment shows again the inadequacy of the thing which Scribe substitutes for romantic love. The title is, *Forever*. Here he is ironical about what is called a "first love." By the aid of a shrewd mother who at the same time is a fashionable woman of the world there has been fixed up a new love which the mother believes durable; but to the spectator who is not disposed to be satisfied with the poet's perfectly arbitrary way of ending the thing here with a period, it is very evident that a third love might come along just as

well. Taking it all in all, it is remarkable how voracious modern poetry is, and for a long time it has been living on nothing else but love. Our age reminds one vividly of the dissolution of the Greek city-state: everything goes on as usual, and yet there is no longer anyone who believes in it. The invisible spiritual bond which gives it validity no longer exists, and so the whole age is at once comic and tragic — tragic because it is perishing, comic because it goes on. For it is always the imperishable which sustains the perishable, the spiritual which sustains the corporal; and if it might be conceived that an exanimate body could for a little while continue to perform its customary functions, it would in the same way be comic and tragic. But only let our age go on consuming — and the more it manages to consume of the substantial value contained in romantic love, with all the more consternation will it some day, when this annihilation no longer gives pleasure, awaken to the consciousness of what it has lost, and despairingly feel its misfortune.

We will now see whether the age which demolished romantic love has succeeded in putting anything better in its place. First, however, I will indicate the marks by which romantic love may be known. One might say in one word that it is immediate: to see her was to love her; or, though she saw him only once through a slit in the shuttered window of her chamber, nevertheless, from this instant she loved him, him alone in the whole world. Here I ought properly, according to agreement, to leave place for a few polemical outbursts in order to promote in you the secretion of bile which is an indispensable condition for the wholesome and profitable appropriation of what I have to say. But for all that, I cannot make up my mind to do so, and for two reasons: partly because this is a rather hackneyed theme in our time (and honestly it is incomprehensible that in this instance you want to go with the current, whereas ordinarily you go against it); and partly because I really have conserved a certain faith in the reality of romantic

love, a sort of reverence for it, accompanied by some feeling of sadness. I therefore do no more than refer to the theme of your polemic in this field, the heading of a little article you wrote: “Sentimental and Incomprehensible Sympathies, or the *harmonia praestabilita* of two hearts.” Here we have what Goethe with so much art, in his book entitled *Natural Affinity,* first enabled us to divine in the symbolical language of nature in order to show how it was exemplified in the world of spirit, only that Goethe endeavored to render this power of attraction intelligible by protracting it through a succession of moments (perhaps for the sake of showing the difference between the life of spirit and the life of nature) and did not emphasize the speed, the infatuated impatience and assurance with which an affinity seeks its mate. And after all, is it not beautiful to imagine that two beings are meant for one another? How often one has felt the need of reaching out beyond the historical consciousness, a longing, a nostalgia, for the primeval forest which lies behind us. And does not this longing acquire a double significance when with it there is associated the conception of another being which also has its home in these regions. Hence, every marriage, even one which was entered upon after reflective deliberation, feels the need, at least in certain moments, of such a foreground. And how beautiful it is that the God who is spirit loves also the love which is earthly. The fact that among married people there is a great deal of lying in this respect I am very ready to concede to you, and also that your observations in this field have often amused me; but one ought never to forget the truth that is in it. Perhaps one or another man may think that it is better to have complete authority in the choice of “his life’s companion,” but such an opinion discloses a high degree of narrow-mindedness and silly self-importance, with no inkling of the fact that the inborn quality of romantic love is freedom and that its greatness consists precisely in this quality.

Romantic love shows that it is immediate by the fact that it follows a natural necessity. It is based upon beauty; in part upon sensuous beauty, in part upon the beauty which can be conceived through and with and in the sensuous, yet not as if it came to evidence through a deliberation, but in such a way that it is constantly on the point of expressing itself, peeking out through the sensuous form. In spite of the feet that this love is essentially based upon the sensuous, it is noble, nevertheless, by reason of the consciousness of eternity which it embodies; for what distinguishes all love from lust is the fact that it bears an impress of eternity. The lovers are sincerely convinced that their relationship is in itself a complete whole which never can be altered. But since this assurance is founded only upon a natural determinant, the eternal is thus based upon the temporal and thereby cancels itself. Since this assurance has undergone no test, has found no higher attestation, it shows itself to be an illusion, and for this reason it is so easy to make it ridiculous. People should not, however, be so ready to do this, and it is truly disgusting to see in modern comedy these experienced, intriguing, dissolute women who know that love is an illusion. I know no creature so abominable as such a woman. No debauchery is so loathsome to me, and nothing is so revolting as to see a lovable young girl in the hands of such a woman. Truly this is more terrible than to imagine her in the hands of a club of seducers. It is sad to see a man who has learned to discount every substantial value in life, but to see a woman on this false path is horrible. Romantic love, however, as I have said, presents an analogy to morality by reason of the presumptive eternity which ennobles it and saves it from being mere sensuality. For the sensual is the momentary. The sensual seeks instant satisfaction, and the more refined it is, the better it knows how to make the instant of enjoyment a little eternity. The true eternity in love, as in true morality, delivers it, therefore, first out of the

sensual. But in order to produce this true eternity a determination of the will is called for. But of this I shall say more later.

Our age has perceived very clearly the weak points of romantic love, and its ironical polemic against it has sometimes been thoroughly amusing — whether it has remedied its defects, and what it has put in its place, we shall now see. One may say that it has taken two paths, one of which is seen at the first glance to be a false one, that is, an immoral path; the other is more respectable, but to my mind it misses the deeper values of love, for if love is in fact founded upon the sensuous, everyone can easily see that this immediate, chivalrous faithfulness of theirs is foolishness. What wonder then that women want emancipation — one of the many ugly phenomena of our age for which men are responsible. The eternal element in love becomes an object of derision, the temporal element alone is left, but this temporal again is refined into the sensuous eternity, into the eternal instant of the embrace. What I say here applies not only to a seducer here and there who sneaks about in the world like a beast of prey; no, it is appropriate to a numerous chorus of highly gifted men, and it is not only Byron who declares that love is heaven, marriage is hell.

It is very evident that there is in this a reflection, something which romantic love does not have. For romantic love is quite willing to accept marriage too, willing to accept the blessing of the Church as a pretty adjunct to the festivity, without attaching to it any real significance on its own account. By reason of its disposition to reflection the love here in question has with a terrible firmness and induration of mind made up a new definition of what unhappy love is, namely, to be loved when one no longer loves — the opposite of loving without requital. And verily, if this tendency were aware what profundity is implied in these few words, it would itself shrink from it. For apart from all the experience, shrewdness and cunning this definition reveals, it contains also a presentiment that conscience exists.

So then the moment remains the principal thing, and how often one has heard these shameless words addressed by such a lover to a poor girl who could love only once: “I do not demand so much, I am content with less; far be it from me to require that you shall continue to love me to all eternity, if only you love me at the instant when I wish it.” Such lovers know very well that the sensuous is transient, they know also what is the most beautiful instant, and therewith they are content.

Such a tendency is, of course, absolutely immoral; yet on the path of thought it brings us in a way nearer our goal, for as much as it lodges a formal protest against marriage. In so far as the same tendency seeks to assume a more decent appearance it does not confine itself merely to the single instant but extends this to a longer period, yet in such a way that instead of receiving the eternal into its consciousness it receives the temporal, or it entangles itself in this opposition between the temporal and the eternal by supposing a possible alteration in the course of time. It thinks that for a time one can well enough endure living together, but it would keep open a way of escape, so as to be able to choose if a happier choice might offer itself. This reduces marriage to a civil arrangement; one need only report to the proper magistrate that this marriage is ended and another contracted, just as one reports a change of domicile. Whether this is an advantage to the State I leave undecided — for the individual in question it must truly be a strange relationship. Hence, one does not always see it realized, but the age is continually threatening us with it. And verily it would require a high degree of impudence to carry it out — I do not think this word is too strong to apply to it — just as on the part of the female participant in this association it would betray a frivolity bordering on depravity. There is, however, an entirely different disposition of mind which might easily get a similar notion into its head, and that is a disposition which I would deal with here more especially, since it is very characteristic

of our age. For in fact such a plan may originate either in an *egoistic* or in a *sympathetic melancholy.* People have now been talking long enough about the frivolity of this age; I believe it is now high time to talk a little about its melancholy, and I hope that by this everything will be better clarified. Or is not melancholy the defect of our age? Is it not this which resounds even in its frivolous laughter? Is it not melancholy which has deprived us of courage to command, of courage to obey, of power to act, of the confidence necessary to hope? And now when the good philosophers are doing everything to give intensity to the actual, shall we not become so crammed full of it that we are suffocated? Everything is cut out except the present — what wonder then that for the constant dread of forfeiting this, one forfeits it. Well, it is true enough that we ought not to vanish in an evanescent hope, and that this is not the way to become transfigured in the clouds; but in order truly to enjoy one must have air, and not only in moments of sorrow is it important to have the heavens opened, but also in the time of joy to have a free vista and the folding doors thrown open wide. It is true that enjoyment apparently loses by this a certain degree of the intensity it has by the help of such an alarming limitation; but it is not likely that thereby much will be lost, for this intensity has a good deal in common with the intense enjoyment of the Strasbourg geese which costs them their lives. It might perhaps prove rather difficult to make you perceive this; but on the other hand I surely do not need to explain to you the significance of the intensity one attains in a different way. For in this respect you have great virtuosity — you *cui di dederunt formam, divitias, artemque fruendi.*

In case enjoyment were the chief thing in life, I would sit at your feet as a pupil, for in this you are a master. At one moment you are able to make yourself an old man in order to imbibe in slow draughts through recollection what you have experienced; at another moment you are in the first blush of youth, inflamed with hope; now you enjoy in a manly way,

now in a womanly; now you enjoy immediately, now you enjoy reflection upon your enjoyment, now reflection upon the enjoyment of others; now you enjoy abstinence from enjoyment; now you devote yourself to enjoyment, your soul is open like a city which has capitulated, reflection is mute, and every step of the foreigner echoes in the empty streets, and yet there always remains a little observant outpost; now your mind is closed, you entrench yourself brusquely and unapproachably. Such is the situation, and at the same time you will see how egoistic your enjoyment is, and that you never give yourself out, never let others enjoy you. You may be right enough in scorning men who by every pleasure are consumed and wasted, for example, the lovelorn men with tattered hearts, since you on the contrary understand capitally the art of being in love in such a way that it throws your own personality into relief. Now you know very well that the most intensive pleasure consists in holding fast to the enjoyment with the consciousness that the next instant it perhaps will vanish. Hence, the last scene in Don *Juan* pleases you so greatly. Pursued by the police, by the whole world, by the living and the dead, alone in a remote chamber, he once again collects all the power of his soul, flourishes the goblet once again, and once again delights his soul with the sound of music.

But I return to my foregoing proposition, that a melancholy which is partly egoistic, partly sympathetic, may give rise to that point of view. The egoistic sort fears, of course, for its own sake, and like all melancholy it is self-indulgent. It has a certain extravagant deference for the thought of an alliance for the whole life, and a secret horror of it. “What can one rely on? Everything is transitory. Perhaps this being whom I now adore may change; perhaps fate may subsequently bring me into association with another being who for the first time would be truly the ideal I had dreamt of.” Like all melancholy it is defiant and knows that it is, thinking, “perhaps precisely the fact that I tie myself to one person by an irrevocable bond may make

this being whom otherwise I should love with my whole soul intolerable to me; perhaps, perhaps, etc." The sympathetic melancholy is more painful and at the same time rather nobler; it is fearful of itself for the sake of the other. "Who knows so surely that one may not change? Perhaps what I now regard as good in me may vanish; perhaps that by which I now captivate the loved one, and which only for her sake I wish to retain, may be taken from me, and there she stands then, deluded, deceived; perhaps a brilliant prospect opens for her, she is tempted, she does not withstand the temptation. Great God! I should have that upon my conscience! I have nothing to reproach her for, it is I that have changed, I forgive her everything, if only she can forgive me for being so imprudent as to let her take a step so decisive. I know indeed in my heart that so far from talking her into it I rather warned her against me; I know that it was her free resolution, but perhaps it was precisely this warning which tempted her, which let her see in me a better being than I am, etc., etc." It is easy to see that such a way of thinking is no better served by an alliance for five years than by one for ten, or even by an alliance such as Saladin formed with the Christians, for ten years, ten months, ten weeks, ten days, and ten minutes; indeed, is no better served by such an alliance than by one for the whole life. One sees very well that such a way of thinking feels only too deeply the significance of the saying, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." It is an attempt to live every day as though that day were the decisive one, an attempt to live as though every day were a day of examination. Hence, when one finds in our times a strong disposition to abolish marriage, this is not as in the Middle Ages because the unmarried life is regarded as more perfect, but the reason of it is cowardice and self-indulgence. It is also evident that such marriages as are contracted for a definite time are of no avail, since they involve the same difficulties as those which are contracted for a whole life, and at the same time are so far from bestowing the required

strength for living that on the contrary they enervate the inner power of married life, relax the energy of the will, and diminish the blessing of confidence which marriage possesses. It is also clear at this point, and will subsequently become more so, that such associations are not marriages, inasmuch as, though contracted in the sphere of reflection, they have not yet attained the consciousness of the eternal which morality has and without which such an association is not marriage. There is also something upon which you will agree with me entirely, for how often and how surely have your mockery and your irony hit the mark when you were denouncing what you call "fortuitous love affairs" and the "bad infinity" of love — when one is looking with his sweetheart out of the window, and that instant a young girl turns the corner into another street, and it occurs to him, "It is with her I am really in love," but when he would trace her he is again unsettled, etc.

The other expedient, the respectable way, would be the marriage of convenience. The mere mention of it shows that reason intervenes, and that we have entered the sphere of reflection. One person and another, and you among them, have always made a dubious face at the union here implied between immediate love and the calculating understanding; for really, if one were to show respect for linguistic usage, it ought to be called a marriage of common sense. Especially are you accustomed, with an ambiguous use of words, to recommend "respect" as a solid foundation for the marriage relation. It shows how thoroughly reflective this age is, that it must help itself out with such a compromise as a marriage of convenience. In so far as such an association waives all claim to real love, it is at least consistent, but at the same time it thereby shows that it is not a solution of the problem. A marriage of convenience is therefore to be regarded as a sort of capitulation, necessitated by the complications of life. But how pitiful it is that this should be the only comfort that is left to the poetry of our age, the comfort of despairing; for it is evidently despair which makes such an alliance

acceptable. It is contracted, therefore, more likely by persons who no longer are chickens, and who also have learnt that love is an illusion and its realization at the most a pium desiderium. What it therefore has to do with is life's prose, subsistence and social standing. In so far as it has neutralized the sensuous factor in marriage it appears to be moral, but it nevertheless remains a question whether this neutralization is not just as immoral as it is unaesthetic. Or even though the erotic is not entirely neutralized, it is nevertheless disheartened by a cool common-sense consideration that one must be prudent, not be too quick in sorting and rejecting, that life after all never presents the ideal, that it is quite a respectable match, etc. The eternal, which (as has been shown above) is properly a part of every marriage, is not really present here; for a common-sense calculation is always temporal. Such an alliance is therefore at once immoral and fragile. Such a marriage of convenience may assume a prettier form when the motive is somewhat higher. In such a case it is a motive foreign to the marriage which decides the matter — as, e.g., when a young girl, out of love for her family, marries a man who is in a position to rescue it. But precisely this outward teleology shows clearly that we cannot seek here a solution of the problem. At this point I might perhaps aptly deal with the manifold motives to marriage about which there is a great deal of talk. Such deliberation and debate are perfectly at home in the sphere of reason. However, I prefer to reserve this subject for another place, where also, if possible, I may be able to make this talk hold its tongue.

We have now seen how romantic love was built upon an illusion, and that the eternity it claims was built upon the temporal, and that although the knight was sincerely convinced of its absolute durability, there nevertheless was no certainty of this, inasmuch as its trials and temptations have hitherto been in a medium which was entirely external. Such being the case, it was able with a pretty piety to accept marriage along with love, although, after

all, this acquired no very deep significance. We have seen how this immediate and beautiful but also very naïve love, being embodied in the consciousness of a reflective age, must become the object of its mockery and of its irony; and we have seen too what such an age was capable of substituting for it. Such an age embodied marriage in its consciousness and in part declared itself on the side of love in such a way as to exclude marriage, in part on the side of marriage in such a way as to exclude love. Hence, in a recent play a sensible little seamstress, speaking of the love of fine gentlemen, makes the shrewd observation, "They love us but they don't marry us; the fine ladies they don't love, but they marry them."

Herewith this little treatise (as I am compelled to call what I am here writing, although at first I thought only of a big letter) has reached the point from which marriage can be viewed in the right light. That marriage belongs essentially to Christianity, that the pagan nations have not brought it to perfection, in spite of the sensuousness of the Orient and all the beauty of Greece, that not even Judaism has been capable of this, in spite of the truly idyllic elements to be found in it — all this you will be ready to concede without compelling me to argue the matter, and this all the more because it is sufficient to remember that the contrast between the sexes has nowhere been made a subject for such deep reflection that the other sex has received complete justice. But within Christianity also love has had to encounter many fates before we learned to see the deep, the beautiful and the true implications of marriage. Since, however, the immediately preceding age was an age of reflection, as is ours also to a certain degree, it is not so easy a matter to prove this, and since in you I have found so great a virtuoso in bringing the weaker sides into prominence, the task of convincing you of the side which I have undertaken to defend is doubly difficult. I owe you, however, the admission that I am much indebted to you for your polemic. When I think of the multifarious expressions of it which I

possess in their dispersion, and imagine them gathered into a unity, your polemic is so talented and inventive that it is a good guide for one who would defend the other side. For your attacks are not so superficial that (if only you or another would think them through) they might not contain the truth, even though neither you nor your adversary observe this in the moment of conflict.

Inasmuch as it appeared to be a defect on the part of romantic love that it was not reflective, it might seem reasonable to let true conjugal love begin with a kind of doubt. This might seem all the more necessary in view of the fact that we approach this subject with the prepossessions of a reflective age. I am by no means prepared to deny that a marriage might be artificially accomplished after such a doubt; but the question remains nevertheless whether the nature of marriage is not substantially altered by this, since it presupposes a divorce between love and marriage. The question is whether it is essential to marriage to annihilate the first love because of doubt as to the possibility of realizing it, in order to make conjugal love possible and actual through this annihilation, so that the marriage of Adam and Eve was really the only one in which immediate love was preserved inviolate, and that again chiefly for the reason which Musaeus wittily suggests, that there was no possibility of loving anybody else. The question remains whether immediate love, the first love, would be secured against this scepticism by being assumed in a higher concentric immediacy, so that conjugal love would be in no need of plowing under the beautiful hopes of first love, but conjugal love itself would be first love, seasoned with an admixture of determinants which would not detract from it but would ennoble it. This is a difficult problem to prove, and yet it is of prodigious importance, lest in the ethical sphere we might have such a cleavage as exists in the intellectual sphere between faith and knowledge. And how beautiful it would be, my dear friend — you will not deny it, for after all your heart is susceptible to

love, and your head is only too well acquainted with doubt — how beautiful it would be if the Christian might venture to call his God the God of love, in such a way as to think therewith of that unspeakably blissful feeling, the eternal force in the world — earthly love.

In the foregoing discussion I dealt with romantic and reflective love as discursive points of view, but now we are to see to what extent the higher unity is a return to immediate love, and accordingly to what extent (apart from the *more* which it contains) it contains also what was comprised in the first. It is now clear enough that reflective love constantly consumes itself, and that it stops arbitrarily now at this point, now at another; it is clear that it points beyond itself to the higher position, but the question is whether this higher experience cannot come at once into touch with the first love. Now this higher experience is the religious, in which the reflective understanding comes to an end; and just as for God nothing is impossible, so too for the religious individual nothing is impossible. In the religious sphere love finds again the infinity which it vainly sought in the sphere of reflection. But in case the religious, higher though it certainly is than everything earthly, does not stand in an eccentric relation to immediate love but in a concentric relation, unity might be brought about without any necessity for the pain which religion indeed can heal but which, nevertheless, always remains a profound pain. One very rarely sees this matter made the subject of serious deliberation, because those who have feeling for romantic love do not bother much about marriage, and because on the other hand so many marriages unfortunately are contracted without the deeper erotic which is assuredly the most beautiful thing in a purely human existence. Christianity holds firmly to marriage. So in case conjugal love is unable to contain all of the first erotic, Christianity does not represent the highest development of the human race, and without doubt it is a secret dread of such an

incongruity which is largely responsible for the despair which permeates modern lyric both in verse and in prose.

So you see what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that romantic love can be united with and can persist in marriage, yea, that marriage is the true transfiguration of romantic love. This is not by any means to cast disparagement upon the marriages which have been rescued from reflection and its shipwreck, nor would I be so unsympathetic as to grudge them my admiration; it is not to be denied that much can be done in this way, nor ought it to be forgotten that the whole tendency of the age often makes such marriages a dolorous necessity. As for this "necessity," however, it must be remembered that every generation, and each individual in the generation, begins life anew to a certain extent, and that for each one severally there is a possibility of escaping this maelstrom, and it must be remembered, too, that one generation should learn from the other, and that hence there is a likelihood that after reflection has made such a sorry spectacle of one generation the successive generation will be more fortunate. And however many painful confusions life may still have in store, I fight for two things: for the prodigious task of showing that marriage is the transfiguration of first love, not its annihilation, that it is its friend, not its enemy; and for the task (which to others is very trivial but to me is all the more important) of showing that my humble marriage has had such a meaning for me, so that from it I derive strength and coinage to fulfill constantly this task.

And now when I approach this investigation I cannot but rejoice that it is to you I am writing. Yea, certain as it is that to no other man would I express myself unreservedly about my marriage, just so certain it is that before you I open my mind with confidence and joy. Sometimes when the noise of the conflicting and laboring thoughts, the tremendous machinery you carry about with you, is hushed, there come then quiet moments which

indeed by their stillness may be almost alarming but which prove to be truly refreshing. I hope that this essay will encounter you in such a moment; and just as one may unconcernedly confide to you anything one will when the machinery is in motion, for then you hear nothing, so also without jeopardy one can relate to you everything when your soul is still and solemn. I will talk also about her of whom I commonly speak only to deaf nature, wishing only to hear myself, about her to whom I owe so much, including the fact that I dare frank-heartedly defend the cause of first love and marriage. For what would all my love and all my effort avail if she did not come to my aid, and what would I avail if she did not arouse in me the enthusiasm to will? And yet I know very well that if I were to say this to her she would not believe it; yea, I should perhaps be doing wrong to say it to her, it would perhaps disturb and agitate her deep and pure soul.

The first thing then I have to do is to orient myself, and more especially to orient you, in the definitions of what a marriage is. What properly constitutes it, gives it its substantial content, is obviously love. If this is lacking, the life in common is either satisfaction of a carnal lust, or it is an association, a partnership, for the attainment of one aim or another. But love has in it precisely the characteristic of eternity, whether it be the superstitious, romantic, chivalrous love, or the deeper moral and religious love which is filled with a mighty and lively assurance.

Every estate has its traitors, and so also has the estate of matrimony. I, of course, do not mean the seducers, for they have not entered into this holy estate — I hope that this investigation will encounter you in a mood which does not incline you to smile at this expression. I do not mean those who by divorce have left the ranks, for at least they have had courage to be open rebels. No, I mean those who are only rebels in thought, who do not even venture to let the thought express itself in action, those miserable married men who sit and sigh over the fact that love has long ago evaporated out of

their marriage; those married men who, as you once said of them, sit like madmen each one in his matrimonial cell and shake the iron bars and rave about the sweetness of engagement and about the bitterness of marriage; those married men who, according to your own correct observation, are the ones who with a certain malicious joy congratulate everyone who becomes engaged. I cannot describe to you how despicable they seem to me, and how much it delights me when such a husband takes you as his confidant, when before you he pours out his sufferings, repeats by rote all his lies about the happy first love, and you with a cunning look say, "Yes, I shall take good care not to get on smooth ice," and it embitters him even more that he cannot manage to drag you with him into a *commune naufragium* [common shipwreck]. It is to these married men you so often allude when you talk about a tender paterfamilias with four blessed children... whom he would like to see in Jericho.

If there were actually something in what they say, then there must be a discrepancy between love and marriage of such a sort that love would be relegated to one particular moment in time and marriage to another, but love and marriage would remain incompatible. So one would seek at once to discover what period it was to which love belonged — would find that it was the period of the engagement, "the beautiful period of the engagement." With an agitation and emotion which savors of the burlesque these people know how to prate continually about the joys of the days of their engagement. I must now admit that I have never had much liking for the spoony sweetmeats of the engagement period, and the more one makes of this period, the more it appears to me to resemble the time many men take before jumping into the water, first walking back and forth on the float, sticking now one hand, now one foot into the water, finding it now too cold, now too warm. If it actually was a fact that the engagement is the most beautiful time, truly I fail to see why they get married — or, supposing they

are right, why anybody gets married. Nevertheless, they do get married with all possible bourgeois exactness when aunts and cousins and neighbors and friends find the marriage suitable, betraying in this the same drowsiness and apathy as they do in regarding the engagement as the most beautiful period. If worse comes to worst, I am for those rash men who alone take pleasure in springing out into the water, even though the emotion in this case is never so great, the shudder of consciousness never so refreshing, the reaction of the will never so energetic, as when a strong manly arm encompasses the loved one tightly but tenderly, powerfully and yet in such a way that precisely in this embrace she feels free before the face of God to plunge into the sea of existence.

In case such a separation between love and marriage had any validity except in the empty heads of foolish humans or rather unhumans who know as little about love as they do about marriage — it would be a poor outlook, then, for marriage and for my attempt to show that marriage is an aesthetic musical accord. But what grounds might be alleged for such a separation? It might be because, generally speaking, love cannot be maintained. Here we have the same distrust and cowardice which is so often expressed in our age and is characterized by the fact that it regards development as a step backward and as destruction. At this point I willingly concede that such an unmanly and unwomanly love (which you with your usual effrontery would call a four-penny love) would not be capable of resisting a single puff of life's storm; but from this no argument can be drawn with regard to love and marriage if both were in a wholesome and natural state. Or else it might be because the ethical and the religious which are associated with marriage proved to be so heterogeneous with love that for this cause love and marriage cannot be united; whereas love, if it were allowed to repose in itself and rely upon itself, would be perfectly capable of fighting the battle of life through triumphantly. This view, then, would bring the thing back

either to the untried pathos of immediate love, or to the whim and caprice of the particular individual who believed that by his own power he was capable of finishing the race. The notion that it might be the ethical and the religious elements in marriage which have a disturbing effect is a view which at the first glance gives evidence of a certain manliness which may easily deceive a cursory observation, and although it is mistaken it has a great deal more sublimity than the other pitiful view of the perishableness of love. I shall return to it later, with all the more reason because my inquisitorial glance greatly deceives me if I do not see in you a heretic infected to a certain degree by this error.

The substantial factor in marriage is love. But which comes first? Is love the first, or is marriage, of which love then is the sequel? This latter view has enjoyed no little esteem on the part of shallow, common-sense people; it has been preached not infrequently by shrewd fathers and by mothers still shrewder who, thinking that they have had experience, would indemnify themselves by insisting that their children shall have it too. This is the wisdom which dove fanciers also have when they shut up in a little cage two doves which have no sympathy for one another and think that they will soon learn to agree. This view is so stupid that I have alluded to it only for the sake of a sort of completeness, and at the same time to remind you of what you have pilloried. So then love comes first. But according to the view alluded to above, love is of a nature so delicate, in spite of nature it is so unnatural and so coddled, that it cannot endure coming into touch with reality. Here again I am at the point touched upon above. Here the engagement seems to acquire a peculiar significance. It is a love which has no reality, which lives only upon the sweet confectionary of possibility. The relationship has not the actuality of the real, its movements are without content, it never gets beyond the same "fatuous, spoony gesticulations." The more unreal the engaged couple themselves are, and the more these

merely feigned gesticulations cost them effort and exhaust their strength, all the more need they will feel to shun the serious figure of matrimony. The engagement, having apparently no reality which results necessarily from it, would be a capital compromise for those who have not the courage to get married. They perhaps feel, and in all probability feel extravagantly, a need of seeking the help of a higher power when they want to take the decisive step. Then they fix the matter up with themselves and with the higher power: with themselves by getting engaged on their own responsibility; with the higher power by not evading the blessing of the Church, which with a good deal of superstition they value too highly. Here again we have a schism between love and marriage, in the most cowardly, the most pinchbeck, the most unmanly form. However, such a monstrosity cannot lead one astray; its love is no love, it lacks the sensuous factor which finds its moral expression in marriage, it neutralizes the erotic to such a degree that an engagement of this sort might just as well take place between men. On the other hand, so soon as the sensuous factor gets its due, this falls under the categories already described. Such an engagement then is unbecoming, from whatever side one looks at it; for in a religious respect also it is unbecoming, being an attempt to deceive God, by sneaking into a relationship for which it thinks it does not need His help, and by having recourse to Him only when it feels that the thing can't turn out well otherwise.

So then it is not marriage which is to evoke love; on the contrary, love presupposes that, and it presupposes it not as a past state but as a present. But marriage contains an ethical and religious factor, as love does not; for this reason marriage is based upon resignation, as love is not. Now if one is not ready to assume that every man in the course of his life passes through two movements, first the pagan movement, if I may so call it, in which love has its home, and after that the Christian movement which is expressed in

marriage; in short, if one will not say that love must be excluded by Christianity, then it must be shown that love can be united with marriage. It occurs to me, by the way, that if any outsider were to get sight of this paper, he would likely fall into the deepest amazement that such a matter could give me so much bother. Well, the fact is, I write it only for you, and your development has been of such a nature that you fully understand the... difficulties.

So first, an investigation of love. I will attach my argument to a term which in spite of your mockery and that of the whole world has always had a significant meaning for me: the first love. (Believe me, I will not yield, and presumably you will not either, and so this situation remains as a strange incongruity in our correspondence.) When I speak of first love I am thinking of the most beautiful thing in life; when you use this word it is the signal for the vedette posts of your observation to open fire all along the line. But for me this word has nothing ludicrous about it, and as I, to speak candidly, put up with your attack only because I ignore it, I may say, also, that for me it has not the sad connotations it may well have for one man or another. This sadness need not be morbid, for the morbid is always the untrue and the mendacious. It is a fine and healthy sign when a man has had ill-luck with his first love, when he has learned to know the pain of it but has yet remained faithful to his first love, has yet preserved faith in "first love"; it is fine if, then, in the course of years he sometimes recalls it vividly; and though his soul has been sound enough to take leave as it were of this kind of life in order to consecrate itself to something higher, it is fine if he remembers sadly that which, although it was not perfection, was nevertheless so beautiful. And this sadness is far more wholesome and beautiful and noble than the prosaic common sense which has finished long ago with such childish pranks, or than the devilish shrewdness of Basil, the singing master in the play, which plumes itself upon being healthy but is

really the most consuming sickness. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? For me this phrase, “the first love,” contains no sadness at all, or at all events only a little seasoning of sad sweetness; for me it is a battle cry, and although I have been for several years a married man, I still have the honor of fighting under the victorious banner of first love.

For you, on the other hand, the conception of “the first,” the question of its true significance, its under and overvaluation, is an enigmatic oscillation. At one moment you are solely possessed by an enthusiasm for “the first.” You are so impregnated by the energetic concentration implied in this thought that it is the only thing you wish for. You are so glowing, so inflamed, so lovingly ardent, so dreamy and fertile, sunken as low as a cloud surcharged with rain — in short, you have a lively conception of what it means that Jupiter in a cloud or in a gentle rain descended upon the loved one. The past is forgotten, every limitation is abolished. You expand more and more, you are sensible of a softness and elasticity, every joint becomes limber, every bone a pliable sinew — as a gladiator extends and stretches his body in order to have it entirely in his power, and everyone must think that thereby he divests himself of his might, and yet this voluptuous torture is precisely the condition for thoroughly employing his strength. Now then you are in the condition in which you enjoy the sheer luxury of complete receptivity. The gentlest touch is enough to thrill this invisible, widely extended spiritual body through and through. There is an animal upon which my thought has dwelt profoundly. It is the jellyfish. Have you ever observed how this gelatinous mass is able to extend itself like a disk and then can slowly sink or rise, lies so still and seems so firm that one might think one could step upon it? Now it observes that its prey approaches, then it hollows itself and becomes a pouch and with prodigious impetus sinks deeper and deeper, until by this impetus it draws the prey into — not into its

pouch, for it has no pouch, but into itself, for it is itself a pouch and nothing else. It is able to contract itself to such a degree that one cannot comprehend how it was possible for it to expand. Such is pretty much the case with you, and you will simply have to forgive me for not having a more beautiful animal to compare you with, and also for the fact that you cannot perhaps quite forbear smiling at yourself when you think of being a mere pouch.

At such moments it is "the first" you are pursuing, that alone is what you want — without suspecting that it is a self-contradiction to want the first to be constantly recurring again, and that, consequently, you either have never yet reached the first, or else you really have had it, and what you see now, what you are enjoying, is merely a reflection of the first. And it also remains to be observed that you are in error when you believe that the first might be completely present in any other but "the first," if only one seeks rightly. And it needs to be said that in so far as you appeal to your professional practice this also is a misunderstanding, since you have never practiced in the right direction. At other times, on the contrary, you are as cold, as sharp and biting as a March wind, as sarcastic as hoar frost, as clear-minded as the air commonly is in springtime, as dry and infertile, as egoistically astringent as it is possible to be. If when you are in such a state of mind it happens that a man to his discomfiture comes to you to talk about "the first," about the beauty implied in this, perhaps even about his first love, then you become positively angry. "The first" now becomes the most ludicrous, the most foolish of all things, one of the lies in which one generation confirms another. You rage like a Herod from one child-murder to another. You are able, then, to talk without end about how cowardly and unmanly it is to cling to the first, asserting that the truth lies in what is acquired, not in what is given. I recall that in this mood you once came to my room. You filled your pipe as usual, stretched yourself in the softest armchair, put your legs on another, rummaged among my papers (I

remember also that I took them from you), and then you burst forth with an ironical eulogy upon first love and everything that is "first," including even "the first licking I got in school," declaring in an explanatory note that you could say this the more emphatically because the teacher who administered the licking was the only one you had ever known who could strike with emphasis. Thereupon you concluded by whistling this ditty, kicking to the other side of the room the chair upon which you had placed your feet, and off you went.

In vain one seeks to learn from you what lies behind this mysterious word, "the first," a word which has had and to all time will have a prodigious significance in the world. The significance which this word has for the particular individual is definitive for his spiritual situation as a whole, while the fact that it has no significance for someone shows that he is not attuned in such a way that he can be touched by lofty impulses and be set in vibration by their touch. However, two ways lie open before the man to whom "the first" is significant. Either "the first" contains promise for the future, is the forward thrust, the endless impulse. Such are the fortunate individuals for whom "the first" is simply the present, but the present is for them the constantly unfolding and rejuvenating "first." Or "the first" does not impel the individual; the power which is in "the first" does not become the impelling power in the individual but the repelling power, it becomes that which thrusts away. Such are the unfortunate individualities who constantly withdraw more and more from "the first." The latter situation, of course, cannot come about totally without any fault on the part of the individual.

With this word, "the first," all who are touched by ideas associate a notion of solemnity, and only when used of things belonging to a lower sphere does "the first" mean the worst. You are prolific with examples of this use of it: the first printer's proof; the first time a man puts on a new

dress coat, etc. The more probability there is that a thing may be repeated, the less significance does “the first” acquire; the less the probability of repetition, the greater is its significance. On the other hand, the more significant that thing is which for the first time announces itself, the less is the probability of its being repeated. If there is something so important as to be even eternal, all probability that it may be repeated vanishes. Hence, when one has talked with a certain sad seriousness of the first love as of something which could never be repeated, this is no disparagement of love but a lofty eulogy of it as the eternal power. Thus — for the sake of making a little philosophical flourish, not with the pen but with thought — God only once became flesh, and it would be vain to expect this to be repeated. In paganism it could happen oftener, but this was precisely for the reason that it was not a true incarnation. Thus man is born only once, and there is no probability of a repetition. The notion of transmigration of souls fails to appreciate the significance of birth. I will illustrate further what I mean by a few examples. The first green, the first swallow, we hail with a certain solemnity. The ground of this, however, is the idea we associate with it, so that here what is announced by “the first” is something different from the first itself, the one first swallow, for example. There is an engraving which represents Cain murdering Abel. Adam and Eve are seen in the background. Whether it has value as a work of art I am not competent to decide, but the title inscribed beneath it has always interested me: *prima caedes, primi parentes, primus luctus* [the first murder, the first parents, the first sorrow]. Here again “the first” has profound significance, and in this instance what we reflect upon is “the first” itself, but more with relation to time than to content, since one does not see the continuity with which the whole is posited by the first. (The “whole” might, of course, be understood as the sin transmitted to the race. The first sin — if by that we think of the sin of Adam and Eve — would, it is true, lead one to think of continuity, but as it

is the nature of evil not to have continuity, you will easily perceive why I do not use this example.) One more illustration. It is well known that several rigorous sects in Christendom wanted to prove the limitation of God's grace from the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews about the impossibility of renewing again to repentance those who once were enlightened and had fallen away. Here, then, "the first" had all of its deep significance. In this first, the deep Christian life as a whole came to evidence, and he then who apprehended it amiss was lost. But in this case the eternal is dragged down too much into temporal determinants. Still, this example may serve to explain how "the first" is the whole, the whole content. But now when what is implied in "the first" rests upon a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, everything I have set forth above evidently retains its validity. In "the first" the whole is present implicitly, hiddenly. Now again I am not ashamed to mention the word "first love." To the fortunate individuals the first love is at the same time the second, the third, the last; the first love has here the determinants of the eternal. To the unfortunate individuals the first love is a moment, it has the determinants of the temporal. For the fortunate individuals the first love, in the very fact that it is, is the present; for the others, in the very fact that it is, it is the past. Inasmuch as there is reflection also in the fortunate individuals, this when directed toward the eternal in love will be a source of strength for love, whereas reflection upon the temporal will be the demolition of love. Thus, for him who reflects in a temporal way the first kiss, for example, will be a past fact (as Byron has made it in a little poem); for him who reflects in an eternal way it will be an eternal possibility.

All this has to do with the predicate we attach to love when we call it the "first." I now go on to consider more expressly *the first love. As* a preliminary I will beg you to recall the little contradiction we encountered: the first love comprises the whole content, and if such be the case the

shrewdest thing would be, it seems, to pluck it and go on to a second first love. But when one takes the first in vain it vanishes and one doesn't get the second. But after all, is not the first love merely the first? Yes, but when we reflect upon the content it is the first only in so far as we remain in it. If one remains in it, does it then become a second love? No, precisely because one remains in it, it remains the first, if one reflects upon eternity.

The Philistines who think that now they have about reached the period of life when it would be suitable for them to look around and listen around for a helpmeet (perhaps by an advertisement in the newspaper) have already excluded themselves once for all from first love, and such a philistine state of mind cannot be regarded as the condition which precedes first love. It is, of course, conceivable that Eros might be compassionate enough to play upon such a man the prank of making him fall in love. I say "compassionate," for after all it is an extraordinary act of compassion to bestow upon a man the highest earthly good, and that first love always is, even though it be unhappy. But this chance always remains an exception, and the man's previous condition affords no explanation of it. If one would believe the priests of music (who in this respect are most like believers), and if in their company one would give heed to Mozart, surely then the condition which precedes first love must be described by recalling the saying that love makes blind. The individual becomes as if blind; one can almost see this by looking at him; he sinks into himself, contemplates in himself his own contemplation, and yet there is a constant effort to look out upon the world. The world has blinded him and yet he stares out at the world. It is this dreamy yet searching state of mind which Mozart has depicted in the person of the Page in *Figaro,* representing it as a condition which is just as sensuous as it is mental. In contrast to this, first love is an absolute alertness, an absolute beholding; and not to do it an injustice, this must be insisted upon. It is directed towards a single, definite and actual

object, which alone has existence for it, everything else being nonexistent. This one object does not exist in vague outline but as a definite living being. This first love contains a factor of sensuousness and beauty, yet it is not merely sensuous. The sensuous factor as such comes to evidence only through reflection, but first love lacks reflection and is therefore not simply sensuous. This gives the character of necessity to first love. Like everything eternal it has the double propensity of presupposing itself back into all eternity and forward into all eternity. This is the element of truth in what the poets have often sung so beautifully, to the effect that the lovers even at first sight feel as if they already had loved one another for a long while. This is the element of truth in the inviolable faithfulness of chivalry, which fears nothing, is not alarmed by the thought of any disuniting power. But since the essence of all love is characterized as a unity of freedom and necessity, so it is in this case. Precisely in the necessity the individual feels himself free, is sensible in this of his whole individual energy, precisely in this he senses the possession of all that he is. It is for this reason one can inerrantly observe in every man whether he truly has been in love. Love involves a transfiguration, a spiritualization, which lasts his whole life long. In him there is a union of all the factors which ordinarily are dispersed; he is at the same moment both younger and older than men commonly are; he is a man and yet a youth, yea, almost a child; he is strong and yet so weak; he is a harmony which, as was said, echoes through his whole life. We will extol this first love as one of the most beautiful things in the world, but we will not lack courage to put it to the test.

This, however, is not what immediately concerns us. Already at this point it is possible to think of a doubt of the same sort as that which will recur in view of the relation between first love and marriage. A religiously developed individual is accustomed to relate everything to God, to penetrate and leaven every finite relationship with the thought of God, and thereby to

sanctify and ennoble it. (This statement, of course, is to be understood obliquely.) In view of this it seems precarious to allow such feelings to arise in consciousness without taking counsel with God; but by taking counsel with God the relationship is, in fact, altered. In this instance the difficulty is more easily removed, for it is characteristic of first love to take by surprise, and being the fruit of surprise it is involuntary, so that it is not obvious how such a consultation with God might be possible. The only thing that could be thought of would be the question of remaining in this state — but this is the theme of a subsequent deliberation. But would it not be possible to anticipate the first love which, as such, recognizes no relation to God? I may touch in a few words upon the marriages in which the decision rests with another, a person other than the individual himself, cases in which the individual has not yet got to the point of freedom as a determinant. We encounter the pitiful forms of this, where by sorcery or similar arts, by recourse to nature-magic, the individual seeks to conjure up the object of his love. The nobler forms are those which one might call religious in the stricter sense. (Marriage in the true sense does not, of course, lack the religious factor, but at the same time it has the erotic factor.) Thus, when Isaac in all humility and trustfulness refers it to God's judgment whom he shall choose for a wife, and putting his confidence in God sends his servant, does not himself look about, because he feels his fate secure in God's hand, this is doubtless very pretty, but the erotic, nevertheless, does not get due recognition. Now in this case one must remember that however abstract the God of Judaism was in general, He was deeply interested in everything pertaining to the vital interests of the Jewish nation, and particularly to its elect figures, and that although He was spirit He was not too spiritual to be concerned about earthly things. To a certain degree Isaac therefore might venture to expect confidently that God would choose for him a wife who was young and beautiful and highly regarded by the people and lovable in

every way; but for all that, we feel the lack of the erotic element, even if it proved to be the case that he loved this woman of God's election with genuine youthful passion. Freedom was lacking.

In Christianity one sees from time to time an obscure mixture of the erotic and the religious which is attractive by reason of its obscurity and ambiguity, and which has in it just as much roguishness as childish piety. This, naturally, is to be found particularly in Catholicism, and with us among the common people. I ask you to imagine (and I know that you can do it with pleasure, for this surely is a situation) — imagine a little peasant girl, hiding behind her lashes a pair of eyes which are audacious and yet humble, a girl healthy and blooming, with something in her complexion which is not the flush of sickness but the sign of a superior health; imagine her on Christmas Eve; she is alone in her room, midnight is already passed, and yet sleep which usually visits her so faithfully now evades her; she is sensible of an agreeable, sweet disquietude, she opens the window halfway, she looks out into the infinite space, alone with the silent stars, a little sigh makes her feel so light, she shuts the window, and with a seriousness which yet has constantly the possibility of lapsing into roguishness she prays:

> Ye Three Kings of Orient wise,
> Disclose a vision to my eyes.
> Who is the man whose board I'll spread,
> Him for whom I shall make the bed?
> What his name is, be it said.
> Show me the man whom I shall wed.

With that she springs joyfully into bed. Honestly, the Three Kings ought to be ashamed of themselves if they did not look out for her; and it's no use saying one doesn't know what man she wishes: one knows that very well, at least if all the signs of Yuletide do not fail, she knows it pretty nearly.

We return now to first love. It is the unity of freedom and necessity. The individual feels drawn to the other individual by an irresistible power, but precisely in this is sensible of his freedom. It is a unity of the universal and the particular; it has the universal as it has the particular up to the limit of the fortuitous. But all this it has, not by virtue of reflection but immediately. The more definitely first love has this character, the more wholesome it is, and the greater is the probability that it is a first love. With an irresistible power it draws the two together, and yet in this they enjoy complete freedom. Now I have no hardhearted fathers at hand, no sphinxes which must first be overcome, and as I have wealth enough to provide them with a dowry — and not having assumed the task, like novel writers and playwrights, of stretching out the time to the torment of the whole world, the lovers, the readers and the spectators — then in God's name let them come together. I am playing the part of the noble father, you see; and truly it is in itself a very pretty role, if only we had not frequently made it so ridiculous. You noticed, perhaps, that I interjected as appropriate to the father the little phrase, "in God's name." That you can well condone in the old man, who perhaps has never known what first love is or has long ago forgotten it. But when a younger man who is still enthusiastic about first love takes the liberty of laying emphasis upon this religious phrase you are perhaps surprised.

So first love possesses all the immediate, temperamental assurance; it fears no danger, it defies the whole world, and my only wish for it is that it may always have as easy a time as in the present case, for I place no obstacles in its way. Perhaps by this I do it no service; indeed, when I come to think of it I may even fall into disgrace. In first love the individual is in possession of a prodigious power, and hence it is just as unpleasant for him not to encounter opposition as it would be for a bold knight who had acquired a sword wherewith he could cut stones to find himself in a sandy

region where there was not even a blade of grass he could try it on. So first love is confident enough, it needs no prop; "if it should need a prop," the knight would say, "it is no longer first love." This, then, seems clear enough, but it is also evident that I am moving in a circle. In the foregoing discussion we saw that it was the defect of romantic love that it came to a halt with love as an abstract *an-sich,* and that all the dangers it saw or wished to see were outward dangers which were irrelevant to love itself. We also recalled the fact that if dangers came from another quarter, from within, the thing became much more difficult. But to this the knight of course would reply, "Yes... if. But how might that be possible? And if it were possible, this would no longer be first love." You see, this matter of first love is not so easy. I might now remind you that it is a misunderstanding to assume that reflection is able only to destroy, for it is just as capable of saving. However, since what I proposed to show was that first love can coexist with marriage, I will emphasize more particularly what I hinted at in the foregoing, that first love can be assumed into a higher concentricity, and that doubt is not necessary for this. Subsequently I shall show that it is essential for first love to be historical, and that the condition for this is precisely marriage; and with this I shall show that romantic first love is unhistorical — even though one might be capable of filling folios with the knight's exploits.

So, then, first love is immediately secure in itself, but at the same time the individuals are religiously developed. I have a right to assume this, indeed I am bound to do so, for I am about to show that first love and marriage can coexist. It is another matter, of course, when an unhappy first love teaches the individuals to flee to God and to seek security in marriage. With this the first love is changed, even if it remains possible to re-establish it. So, then, they are accustomed to refer everything to God. But of course the referring of everything to God can be done in a multiplicity of different

ways. Now it is not in time of sorrow they seek God, neither is it fear or dread which impels them to pray; their heart, their whole being, is replete with joy — what more natural than for them to thank God for it? They fear nothing, for outward dangers will have no power over them, and as for inward dangers, first love does not know them at all. But by this expression of thanksgiving first love is not changed, no disturbing reflection has molested it, it is assumed into a higher concentricity. But like all prayer such a thanksgiving is united with a readiness to act, not in an outward but an inward sense, in the present case with the will to hold this love fast. The nature of first love is not changed by this, no reflection molests it, its firm composition has not been dissolved, it still has its blessed self-assurance, it is merely assumed into a higher concentricity. Perhaps in this higher concentricity it does not know at all what it has to fear, it perhaps thinks of no danger, and yet by this good resolution, which also is a kind of first love, it is elevated into the ethical sphere. But here you will object that by using constantly the word concentricity I am guilty of a *petitio principii,* since I ought to start out with the proof that these regions we are dealing with are eccentric. To this I may reply that if I were to start out from eccentricity I should never reach concentricity; but I also beg you to remember that when I start out from the latter I prove at the same time that the other regions are eccentric. So then we have put first love in relation to the ethical and the religious, and it appeared that its nature need not be changed thereby; and it was precisely the ethical and the religious which seemingly made the union of first love and marriage difficult. So everything seems to be all right.

However, I know you too well to venture to hope to "put you off," as you would say, "with that sort of thing." You are acquainted with absolutely all the difficulties in the world. With your swift and piercing mind you have thought with great speed of a multiplicity of scientific tasks, of personal relationships, etc., but everywhere you have halted at the difficulties, and I

hardly believe that it will be possible for you in any single instance to get over them. In a certain sense you resemble a pilot, and yet you are the exact opposite. A pilot knows the dangers and conducts the ship safely into the harbor: you know the shoals, and you always run the ship aground. Of course, you do the best you can, and do it, one must concede, with great alacrity and efficiency. You have such a practiced eye for men and for the seaways that you know at once how far out you must go with people in order to run them aground. Neither are you light-minded about it, you do not forget again that the man is stranded out there; you can remember that with a childish maliciousness the next time you see him, and are then careful to ask how he feels and how he got off the shoal. Presumably you would not be embarrassed to find difficulties in this instance. You would likely remind me that I had left it undetermined and vague which God I was referring to, whether it was not a pagan Eros who would so gladly be privy to love's secrets, and whose presence in the last resort would be a reflection of the lovers' own mood — or whether it was the God of the Christians, the God who is Spirit and is jealous of everything which is not spirit. You would remind me that in Christianity beauty and sensuousness are negated; you would incidentally remark that it was therefore indifferent to the Christians whether Christ was ugly or beautiful; you would beg me to hold myself aloof with my orthodoxy from the secret trysts of lovers, and to refrain especially from any attempts at mediation, which to you are even more distasteful than the crassest orthodoxy. "Yes," you would say, "it must be cheering to the young girl, it must be entirely in accord with her mood, to *step* up before the altar. And the congregation ought surely to look upon her as an imperfect being who was unable to resist the seductions of lust; she ought to stand there as a pupil stands to be reprimanded or to make public confession; and then the priest should read to her the text, and perhaps thereupon lean over the altar rail and secretly confide to her as a

little comfort that matrimony after all is an honorable estate well pleasing to God. The only thing of any value in this whole affair is the situation of the priest, and if it was a pretty young girl, I should be glad to be the priest in order to whisper this secret in her ear." But, my dear young friend! Yes, truly, matrimony is an estate well pleasing to God; on the other hand, I do not know where anything is said in the Scriptures about a special blessing upon bachelors — and that, after all, is the end of your multifarious love affairs. But in dealing with you one has assumed pretty nearly the most difficult task, for you are capable of proving everything whatever, and under your hands every phenomenon becomes anything whatever. Yes, certainly, the God of the Christians is Spirit, and Christianity is spirit, and discord is posited between flesh and spirit; but "the flesh" is not sensuousness, it is selfishness, and in this sense even the intellectual which you call "spiritual" may be sensual; for example, if a man takes in vain his intellectual gifts he is carnal. And I know well that for the Christians it was not necessary that Christ should be an earthly beauty, and for a different reason than that which you adduce this would be very sad; for how ardently, then, the believer must long to see Him — in case beauty were in this instance something essential. But from all this it by no means follows that the sensuous is abolished by Christianity. First love has in it the factor of beauty, and the joy and fullness which is found in the sensuous when it is innocent can well be admitted into Christianity. But let us beware of one thing, namely, of a false path which is more dangerous than that which you would avoid — let us not be too spiritual. One cannot, of course, leave it to your whim how you will conceive of Christianity. If your conception were correct, the best thing for us would be to begin as soon as possible with all the self-inflicted torments and annihilation of the body which we learn about in the excesses of mysticism. Even health would be a suspicious circumstance. I doubt very much, however, if any pious Christian would

deny that he may well pray to God to preserve his health, to the God who went about healing the sick. The lepers in that case ought to have declined to be healed, for they were then closest to perfection. The more simple and childlike a person is, the more he can pray for; but since among other things it is a characteristic of first love to be childlike, I cannot see why it too might not venture to pray, or rather (keeping to the foregoing line of thought) why it might not venture to thank God, without its nature being changed thereby.

But perhaps you still have something more on your conscience. You may as well come out with it, the sooner the better. If in view of one expression or another in what follows you should be prompted to say, “But I never expressed myself in that way!” I would reply, “That is perfectly true, but you, my good Mr. Observer, must *forgive* a poor married man if he has presumed to make you the object of *his* observation.” You conceal something within you which you never frankly utter. Hence it is that in every expression of yours there is so much energy, so much elasticity, because it suggests something more which you leave to be guessed, some outburst still more terrible.

So then you have found that after which your soul aspired, which it thought it was about to find in many mistaken trials; you have found a girl in whom your whole being finds repose; and although you might seem to be a little too experienced, this nevertheless is your first love, of that you are convinced. “She is beautiful” (why of course!), “charming” (I have no doubt of it), “and yet her beauty does not find its expression in the normal but in the unity of the manifold, in the accidental, in the self-contradictory. She is soulful” (You don’t say sol), “she shows her devotion in a way which makes one’s head swim; she is light, she can swing like a bird on a twig, she has *esprit* — enough to illuminate her beauty, but no more.” The day has come when you are to assure yourself of the possession of all that you own

in the world — a possession, however, of which you are thoroughly sure. You have begged for the privilege of imparting to her an extreme unction. You already have waited a long time in the family dining room; a brisk chambermaid, four or five inquisitive cousins, a venerable aunt, and the hairdresser, have hurried past you several times. You already are half provoked by it. Then the door of the parlor opens softly, you cast thither a fleeting glance and are delighted to see that not a soul is there, that she has had the tact to remove all irrelevant persons from the parlor. She is pretty, prettier than ever, about her there is an inspiration, a harmony, to the vibrations of which she tingles through and through. You are astonished; she even surpasses your dreams; you are transformed, yet your subtile reflection instantly conceals your emotion. Your calmness has upon her a still more seductive effect and prompts in her soul a longing which makes her beauty interesting. You approach her, feeling that her finery imparts to the situation an unusual character. You have not yet uttered a word; you see, and yet it is as though you saw not, you would not annoy her with spoony behavior, but even her reflection in the mirror is a delight to you. You fasten upon her bosom a trinket which you had presented to her the very first day, the day you kissed her with a passion which now at this moment seeks its confirmation; she has kept it hidden, no one has seen it. You take a little bouquet composed of flowers all of one sort, a flower which in itself is entirely insignificant. Always when you sent her flowers there was a little sprig of it, but unobservable, so that none but she suspected it, she alone. Today this flower is to come to honor and dignity; it alone is to adorn her, for she loved it. You hand it to her, a tear trembles in her eye, she gives it back to you, you kiss it and fasten it upon her bosom. A trace of sadness spreads over her. You, too, are moved. She steps back a pace, she looks at her finery half wrathfully, it is burdensome to her, she throws her arms about your neck. She is unable to tear herself away, she embraces you as

vehemently as if there were a hostile power which would tear her away from you. Her delicate finery is crushed, her hair has fallen down, instantly she vanishes.

You are left again to your solitude, which is broken only by a brisk chambermaid, four or five inquisitive cousins, a venerable aunt, and a hairdresser. Then the door of the parlor opens, she enters, and quiet earnestness is legible in her every expression. You press her hand, you leave her, to meet again... before God's altar. That you had forgotten. You who have thought upon so many things, upon tins contingency among others, in your infatuation you had forgotten it. You had made the best of situations which were conventionally expected, but upon this you had not reflected — and yet you are far too much developed not to see that a wedding is a little more than a ceremony. A dread seizes you. "This girl whose soul is as pure as the light of day, sublime as the vault of heaven, innocent as the sea, this girl before whom I could kneel in adoration, whose love I feel must be able to pluck me out of all aberration and to give me a new birth, her I am to lead to God's altar, she is to stand there like a sinner, it will be said of her and to her that it was Eve who seduced Adam. To her before whom my proud soul submits, the only one to whom it has submitted, to her it will be said that I am to be her master, and that she shall be obedient to the husband. The moment has come, the Church already stretches out its arms for her, and before it gives her back to me it will first impress a nuptial kiss upon her lips — not the nuptial kiss for which I would give all the world. It already stretches out its arms to embrace her, but this embrace will cause all her beauty to fade, and then it will pass her over to me saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply.' What sort of a power is this which dares to intrude between me and my bride, the bride I myself have chosen and who has chosen me? And this power would command her to be faithful to me. Does she then need to be commanded? And would she be true to me only because a third

party, which then she would love more than me, commanded it? And it bids me be faithful to her. Do I need any such bidding? I who belong to her with my whole soul! And this power defines our relationship to one another, it says that I am to command and she to obey. But suppose I have no desire to command, that I feel too lowly for that! No, her I will obey, her hint is my commandment, but to a foreign power I will not submit. No, I will flee with her far away while yet there is time, and I will pray the night to cover us and the silent clouds to recount to us fairy tales in bold symbols appropriate to a nuptial night, and under the immense vault of heaven I will intoxicate myself with her charms, alone with her, alone in the whole world, and I will cast myself into the abyss of her love; and my lips are silent for the clouds are my thoughts and my thoughts are clouds; and I will cry out and conjure all powers in heaven and on earth that nothing may disturb my good fortune, and I will put them to the oath and have them swear to this. Yes, far, far away, that my soul may regain its health, that my breast may again be able to draw breath, that I may not be stifled in this stuffy air. Away!" Yes, that I would say too: procul, o procul *este profani* [Avaunt, avaunt, ye uninitiated]. But have you also reflected whether she will follow you on this expedition? "Woman is weak" — no, she is humble, she is much closer to God than man is. Hence it is that love is everything to her, and she will certainly not disdain the blessing and confirmation which God is ready to bestow upon her. It has never occurred to a woman to object to marriage, and it would not occur to her in all eternity if men themselves do not corrupt her. To be sure, to an emancipated woman this notion might occur. The offense always comes from man's side, for man is proud, he would be everything, would have nothing above him.

That the description I have given fits your case pretty exactly you will certainly not deny, and at any rate you will not deny that it applies to the spokesmen of this tendency. I have intentionally altered a little bit the usual

forms in which a lover expresses himself in order to characterize expressly your "first love"; for honestly the love here described, however passionate it is, with however much pathos it expresses itself, is far too reflective, far too intimate with love's coquetry, to be called a first love. A first love is humble and therefore rejoices that there is a power higher than it — if only for the reason that it has some one to thank. (It is for this cause one finds a pure first love more rarely in men than in women.) In you, too, analogies to this were to be found; for you said, indeed, that you would conjure all the powers in heaven and on earth, and this expresses your need of seeking a higher source for your love, only that with you this is a fetishism, a most arbitrary fetishism.

The first thing then that scandalized you was that you should be solemnly instated as her lord and master — as if you were not that (and perhaps all too much so), as if your words did not clearly enough bear the stamp of it. But you will not give up this idolatry, this coquetry, of pretending to want to be her slave, although you thoroughly feel yourself her master.

The second thing was that your soul revolted against the thought that your loved one should be declared a sinner. You are an aesthete, and I could be tempted to propose to the deliberation of your idle head whether this factor would not be apt to make a woman even more beautiful: it implies a mystery which casts an interesting light upon her. The character of childish roguishness which sin may have so long as we dare to account it innocence only enhances beauty. You can well conceive that I am not serious in holding this view, since I feel vividly what it implies and shall subsequently explain it; but I mean to say that if it had occurred to you, you perhaps would have become absolutely enthusiastic about this aesthetic observation. You would have made an immense number of aesthetic investigations as to whether it would be best (i.e., most interesting) to prod with it, so to speak,

by an infinitely remote suggestion, or to let the innocent young girl fight alone with this obscure power, or with a sort of solemn seriousness to tip her over into the hands of irony, etc. In short, there would be plenty for your hands to do in this line. You would have thought of the tremulous light which in the Gospel itself is shed upon the woman that was a sinner, whose many sins were forgiven her because she loved much. What I would say, however, is, that again it is your arbitrary interpretation that she is to stand there as a sinner. For it is one thing to know sin *in abstracto,* and another to know it *in concreto.* But woman is humble, and it certainly has never occurred to a woman to be truly scandalized by the fact that the earnest word of the Church was addressed to her. Woman is humble and trustful — who like a woman can cast the eyes down, but who like her can lift them up? If, then, any change were to be wrought in her by the solemn declaration of the Church that sin has entered into the world, it must be that she only the more strongly would hold fast *to her love.* But from this it does not follow that first love is changed; it is only drawn up into a higher concentricity. It would be very difficult to convince a woman that earthly love in general might be sin, since by this affirmation her whole existence is destroyed in its deepest root. The fact is, moreover, that she has not come to Gods altar to deliberate whether or no she shall love the man who stands beside her; she loves him, her very life is in it, and woe unto him who awakens doubt in her and would teach her to revolt against her nature and not to be willing to kneel before God but to stand erect. I ought not, perhaps, to have set myself in opposition to you on this point, for since you have now got it fixed in your head that for first love to exist sin must not have come into the world, you must yourself feel that you are beating the air. (By the fact that you want to ignore sin you prove that you are in the stage of reflection.) But since the individuals between whom we imagined a first love were religiously developed, I have no need to go into this

question. For sinfulness is not to be attributed to first love as such but to the selfishness in it, but selfishness only makes its appearance the moment it reflects, and with that first love is destroyed.

Finally, it offends you that a third power wants to impose upon you the obligation of being faithful to her and she to you. For the sake of fairness I beg you to remember *that* this (bird power does not obtrude itself, but since the individuals we have in mind are religiously developed they themselves have recourse to it, and the question here at issue is whether there is anything in this which constitutes an obstacle to their first love. You will hardly deny that it is natural for first love to seek corroboration in one way or another by making love an obligation which the lovers impose upon themselves before the face of a higher power. The lovers swear fidelity to one another by the moon, by the stars, by their fathers' ashes, by their honor, etc. If to this you reply, "O well, such oaths don't mean anything; they are simply the reflection of the lovers' own mood — for how otherwise could it occur to them to swear by the moon?" — then I would reply, "With this you yourself have altered the nature of first love; for the beautiful thing about it is precisely this, that for it everything acquires reality in virtue of love. Only in the moment of reflection does it appear void of meaning to swear by the moon; in the moment of the oath this has validity." Might then this situation be changed by the fact that they swear by a power which really has validity? Hardly, I think, for it is of the utmost importance to love that the oath have true significance. So when you think that you would like to swear by the clouds and the stars, but it puts you out that you have to swear by God, it is evident that you are caught in reflection. For the fact is your love must have no witnesses — except such as cannot see. Yes, it is true enough that love is mysterious, but your love puts on such airs that not even God in heaven may know anything about it — in spite of the fact that God (to use a rather frivolous expression) is not

an embarrassing witness. But the fact that God must not know anything about it is the selfish and reflective element. For God is in one's consciousness, and yet at the same time He must not be there. First love knows nothing about such things.

This need, then, of letting your love become transfigured in a higher sphere you do not feel, or rather (since first love too feels no need of this but does it spontaneously) you feel the need but will not satisfy it. If I were inclined for a moment to return to your feigned first love, I would say that you might perhaps succeed in conjuring all powers — and yet not far from you there grew a mistletoe. It shot up, it fanned you with its coolness, yet it hid within it a deeper warmth, and you both rejoiced in it — but this mistletoe symbolizes the feverish restlessness which is the life principle in your love; it cools and heats, it changes continually, indeed, at the same moment you could wish that you both might have an eternity before you and that this instant were the last; and therefore the death of your love is certain.

We have seen, then, how first love could come into relation with the ethical and the religious without the intervention of a reflection which would alter its nature, since it was merely drawn up into a higher concentricity, always in the sphere of immediacy. In a certain sense a change has been brought about, and it is this which I will now consider as the metamorphosis (so it might be called) of the lovers into bride and bridegroom. When first love is referred to God, this comes to pass for the fact that the lovers thank God for it. With this an ennobling transformation is effected. The weakness to which the male is most prone is to imagine that he has made a conquest of the girl he loves. In this he is sensible of his superiority — but there is nothing aesthetic in that. In thanking God, however, he humbles himself under his love; and truly it is far more beautiful to receive the beloved from God's hand than to have subdued the

whole world in order to make a conquest of her. Moreover, the man who truly loves will not find repose for his soul before he has thus humbled himself before God, and in truth the maiden he loves means too much to him for him to dare to take her as a prey even in the fairest and noblest sense. And if he might find joy in conquering and acquiring her, he will know that the daily acquisition throughout a whole life is more comely than the preternatural force of a brief period of love-making. But this does not come to pass by reason of a preliminary doubt; it comes to pass by immediacy. The real life principle in first love remains intact, but the fusel oil (if I may use this expression), the undesirable ingredient, is taken away. For the other sex it is rather natural to feel the predominance of man and to submit to it; and yet, even though the woman feels joyful and happy in being nothing, she is in the way of becoming more or less disingenuous. Then, when she thanks God for the beloved her soul is secured against suffering; by the fact that she thanks God she removes the man she loves just so far from her that she is able to draw breath; and this does not come to pass in consequence of an alarming doubt (for such she does not know) but by immediacy.

Already I have indicated above that even the illusory eternity in first love makes it moral. Now when the lovers refer their love to God this act of thanksgiving imparts to it an absolute stamp of eternity, as does also resolute purpose and the sense of obligation; and this eternity will not be founded upon obscure forces but upon the eternal itself. Purpose has at the same time another significance. That is, it implies the possibility of a movement in love, and hence, also, the possibility of liberation from the difficulty attendant upon first love as such, that it is incapable of budging from the spot. The aesthetical aspect of it consists in its infinity, but the unaesthetical in the fact that this infinity cannot become finitized. I will elucidate by a more figurative expression the fact that the addition of

religion cannot disturb first love. Indeed, the religious is properly the expression for the conviction that man by God's help is lighter than the whole world, the very same faith which accounts for the fact that a man is able to swim. If, then, there were a swimming belt which could hold one up, one might suppose that a man who had been in mortal danger would always carry it; but one might also suppose that a man who had never been in mortal danger would likewise carry it. The latter supposition corresponds to the relation between first love and the religious. First love girds itself with the religious, even though no painful experience or alarming reflection has gone before. Only I must beg you not to press this analogy too far, as if religion stood in a merely external relation to first love. I have shown in the foregoing that such is not the case.

Let us then cast up the account once for all. You talk so much about the erotic embrace — what is that in comparison with the matrimonial embrace! What richness of modulation in the matrimonial "Mine!" in comparison with the erotic! It re-echoes not only in the seductive eternity of the instant, not only in the illusory eternity of fantasy and imagination, but in the eternity of clear consciousness, in the eternity of eternity. What power there is in the matrimonial "Mine!" — for will, resolution and purpose have a deeper tone. What energy and pliability! — for what is so hard as will, and what so soft? What power of movement! — not merely the confusing enthusiasm of obscure impulses; for marriage is made in heaven, and duty permeates the whole body of the universe to its utmost limits and prepares the way and gives assurance that to all eternity no obstacle shall be able to unsettle love! So let Don Juan keep the leafy bower, and the knight the starry dome of heaven, if he can see nothing above it; marriage has its heaven still higher up. Such is marriage; and if it is not thus, it is not the fault of God, nor of Christianity, nor of the wedding ceremony; it is not due to cursing nor to blessing, but it is man's own fault. And is it not a sin and a

shame that men write books in such a way as to make people perplexed about life, make them tired of it before they begin, instead of teaching them how to live! And this would be a painful truth, even if they were in the right, but in fact, it is a lie. They teach us to sin, and those who have not the courage for that they make equally unhappy in other ways. Unfortunately, I myself am too much influenced by the aesthetic not to know that the word "husband" grates upon your ears. But I don't care. If the word husband has fallen into discredit and almost become laughable, it is high time for one to seek to restore it to honor. And if you say, "Such a sight as this one never sees, although one often enough sees marriages," this does not disquiet me; for the fact that one sees marriages every day entails the consequence that one more rarely sees the greatness in marriage, especially in view of the fact that people do everything to belittle it. For have not you and your sort carried the thing so far that the maiden who gives her hand before the altar is regarded as a more imperfect being than these heroines in your romances with their "first love"?

Now that I have listened patiently to you and your outburst, you perhaps will forgive me for coming forward with my little observations. (Your outbursts, by the way, were perhaps wilder than you were aware; but even though you have not thoroughly understood these emotions within you, yet when marriage comes to meet you as a reality, you will see that within you there will be a raging storm, though presumably you will not again confide in anyone.) A man loves only once in his life — the heart clings to its first love-marriage! Harken and be amazed at the harmonious accord of these different spheres. It is the same thing, except that it is expressed aesthetically, religiously, and ethically. One loves but once. To effect a realization of this, marriage joins in — and in case people who do not love each other take it into their heads to get married, the Church is not responsible. A man loves only once — this refrain is heard from the most

various quarters: from the fortunate to whom every new day gives a glad reassurance; and from the unfortunate. Of the latter there are properly only two classes: those who are always aspiring after the ideal; and those who will not stick to it. The last are the real seducers. One meets them rather seldom, because an uncommon aptitude is always requisite for this. I have known one, but he too admitted that a man loves only once; his wild lusts, however, love was unable to tame. “Yes,” say these people, “one loves only once, one marries two or three times.” Here the two spheres are again united; for aesthetics says, “No,” and the Church with ecclesiastical ethics looks with suspicion upon the second marriage. To me this is of the utmost importance; for if it were true that one loves several times, marriage would be a questionable institution; it might seem that the erotic suffered harm from the arbitrary exaction of the religious, which requires as a rule that one should love only once, and disposes of the business of the erotic as cavalierly as though it were to say, “You can marry once, and that’s the end of it.”

We have now seen how first love came into relation with marriage without being changed by it. The same aesthetic quality which was found in first love must, therefore, be found also in marriage, since the former is contained in the latter; but the aesthetic quality consists in the infinity, the apriority of first love — as we have already seen. In the next place, it consists in the unity of the contradictions exemplified by love: it is sensuous and yet spiritual; it is freedom and yet necessity; it is in the moment, is definitely in the present tense, and yet it has in it an eternity. All this marriage has too: it is sensuous and yet spiritual, but it is more than that, for the word “spiritual” when it is used of first love means rather that it is soulish, that it is sensuousness permeated by spirit; it is freedom and necessity, but it is also more, for “freedom” as it is applied to first love is no more than the soulish freedom of an individual not yet clarified from the

dregs of natural necessity. But the more freedom, the more complete the abandonment of devotion, and only he can be lavish of himself who possesses himself. In the religious the individuals become free — he from false pride, she from false humility — and between the lovers who hold one another in such a close embrace the religious presses in, not to separate them, but in order that she might surrender herself with a richer devotion than she had before dreamt of, and that he might not only receive her but surrender himself, and she receive the devotion. Marriage has within it inward infinity, even more than first love, for the inward infinity of marriage is an eternal life. It is a unity of contradictions, even more than first love, for it has one contradiction the more, the spiritual, and thereby it has the sensuous in a still more profound opposition — but the further one is removed from the sensuous the more aesthetic significance it acquires, for otherwise the instinct of the beast would be the most aesthetic. But the spiritual factor in marriage is higher than in first love, and the higher heaven is above the marriage bed, the more beautiful this is, the more aesthetic; and it is not the earthly heaven which arches over marriage, but the heaven of the spirit. Marriage is in the moment, it is sound and vigorous, but in a deeper sense than first love, for the defect of first love precisely is that it has an abstract character, but in the purpose which marriage expresses is implied the law of movement, the possibility of an inward history. Purpose is resignation in its richest form, where it does not have in view what is to be lost, but what is to be gained by holding fast. In the purpose another person is posited, and love is posited in relation to that person, yet not in an outward sense. But the purpose is not the fruit acquired by doubt, but is the superabundance of promise. So beautiful is marriage, and the sensuous is by no means renounced but is ennobled.

I confess — it is wrong of me perhaps — that often when I think of my own marriage, the mental picture of it arouses in me an inexplicable

sadness, for the fact that it will come to an end, that certain as I am that with her to whom I was united in marriage I shall live in another life, yet there she will be given to me in another way, that the contradiction which was a component in our love will be abolished. Yet it consoles me to know that I shall remember that with her I lived in the most heartfelt, the most beautiful relationship which human life affords. If I have any understanding of the matter, the defect of earthly love is the same thing as its advantageous quality, i.e., its partiality. Spiritual love has no partiality and moves in the opposite direction, constantly abhorring all relativities. Earthly love in its true form takes the opposite path, and at its highest it is love only for one single person in the whole world. This is the element of truth in the saying that a man loves only one and loves only once. Earthly love begins by loving several — these are the preliminary anticipations — and it ends by loving one. Spiritual love is constantly opening itself more and more, ever extending its circle of love to include more and more persons until it reaches its true expression in loving all. So then marriage is sensuous but at the same time spiritual, free and at the same time necessary, absolute in itself and at the same time inwardly pointing beyond itself.

Having this inner harmony, marriage has, of course, its teleology in itself; it exists because it constantly presupposes itself, and hence, every question about its "why" is a misunderstanding, which comes very natural to prosaic common sense; and though generally the definition of what marriage is, is not so bold as that of Basil the singing master, who asserts that "of all ludicrous things marriage is the most ludicrous," yet it may easily tempt not you only but me too to say that if marriage is nothing else but this, it is of all ludicrous things the most ludicrous.

Meanwhile, let us as a diversion look a little more closely at one and another of these answers. Even though between your laughter and mine there is a vast difference, we can very well laugh a little in company. The

difference in our laughter will correspond pretty nearly to the diversity of intonation with which we respond to the question what marriage is for by exclaiming, “God only knows!” Moreover, when I say that we will laugh a little in fellowship it must not be forgotten how much I owe in this respect to you for your observations, for which as a married man I thank you cordially. For when people are not willing to perform effectually the most beautiful task, when they want to dance everywhere else but on the Rhodes which is assigned to them as the dancing place, let them become a sacrifice for you and other cunning persons who behind the mask of a confidant know how to make fools of them. But there is one point I would spare, one point at which I never have and never shall permit myself to laugh. You have often said that it might be “a capital thing” to go around and ask every man severally why he had married, and one would find that in most cases it was a very insignificant circumstance which was the determining cause; and so you seek the ludicrous element in the fact that such an immense effect as a marriage with all its consequences can issue from such a small cause. I shall not linger to point out the incorrectness of your argument when you regard the little circumstance quite abstractly, nor to observe that if the little circumstance comes to something it is because it is superadded to a multiplicity of determinants. What I would dwell upon is the beauty in marriages which have as little “why” as possible. The less “why,” the more love — that is, when it is genuine. For the frivolous it will of course be evident in the result that it was a little “why”; for the serious man it will to his joy be evident that it was an immense “why.” The less “why” the better. Among the lower classes marriage is generally entered into without any very great “why”; but, therefore, these marriages echo far less frequently with so many “hows” — how they are to get along, how they are to provide for their children, etc. Marriage needs nothing more than its own “why,” but that is infinite, and therefore in the sense in which I have been using the

word it is not a "why." Of this you too will easily be convinced, for if to the "wherefore" alleged by such a philistine husband one were to reply with the true "therefore," he presumably would say like Basil the singing teacher in Heiberg's play, "So let us invent a new lie." You will also perceive why I am neither able nor willing to see the comical side of this lack of a "why," because I fear that with this the true "why" will be lost. The true "why" is only one, but at the same time it has in it an infinity of energy and power which is able to smother all "hows." The finite "why" is an agglomeration, a swarm, from which each takes his own, the one more, the other less, each more foolish than the other; for even if a man could unite all the finite "whys" at the inception of his marriage, he would be precisely the poorest of husbands.

One of the most reputable answers, apparently, to the "Why?" of marriage is that marriage is a school for character; one marries in order to ennoble and improve one's character. I will attach myself to a definite fact which I owe to you. There was a government employe you "had got hold of" — that is your own expression, and it is just like you, for when there is a subject for your observation there is nothing you shrink from, you consider that you are justified by your vocation. Moreover, he was a rather clever fellow and had in particular a good knowledge of languages. The family was gathered around the tea table. He was smoking his pipe. His wife was no beauty, looked rather simple, was old in comparison with him, and in view of all this one might promptly come to the conclusion that there must be a queer "why." At the table sat a newly married woman, young and rather pale, who seemed to know another "why." The wife herself poured tea, a young girl of sixteen, not pretty but plump and lively, passed it around — she appeared not yet to have attained a "why." In that honorable company your unworthiness had also found a place. You, who were present *ex officio,* and already had made your appearance several times in vain,

found naturally that this situation was too favorable to be neglected. Just in those days there was talk about a broken engagement. The family had not yet heard this important local news. The case was pleaded from all sides — that is to say, all were prosecuting attorneys. Then the case was adjudicated and the sinner excommunicated. Feeling ran high. You ventured to put in a little word in favor of the condemned man — which, of course, was not calculated to benefit the person in question but to serve as a cue. That did not succeed, so you went on to say, "Perhaps the engagement was too precipitate, perhaps he had not taken into consideration the momentous why,' one might almost say the "but,' which ought to precede such a decisive step — *enfin* why do people marry, why, why do they?" Each of these "whys" was uttered with a different but equally dubitative intonation. That was too much. One "why" would have been quite sufficient, but such a formal challenge, an attack in force upon the enemy's camp, was decisive. The moment had come. With an air of good humor which bore also the stamp of the predominance of common sense the host said, "Well, my good man, I will tell you. A man marries because marriage is a school for character." Now everything was in train. Partly by opposition, partly by approbation, you got him to outdo himself in grotesqueness — not at all to the edification of his wife, to the scandal of the young married woman and to the astonishment of the young girl, I reproved you for your conduct at that time — not out of consideration for the host, but for the sake of the women towards whom you were malicious enough to make the scene as trying and tiresome as possible. The two younger women do not need my defense, and in fact, it was only your usual coquetry which beguiled you to keep your eye on them. But perhaps the man really loved his wife, and it must have been terrible for her to listen to this. Besides, there was something indecorous in the whole situation. For common-sense reflection is so far from making marriage moral that it rather makes it immoral.

Sensuous love has only one transfiguration in which it is equally aesthetic, religious and moral — and that is love. Common-sense calculation makes it just as anaesthetic as it is irreligious, because the sensuous element does not receive its due in immediacy. So the man who marries for this and that and the other reason takes a step as unaesthetic as it is irreligious. The goodness of his purpose makes the case no better, for the trouble is precisely that he has a purpose. In case a woman were to marry in order — indeed, the madness I have in mind is not unheard of in the world, a madness which seems to give her marriage a prodigious "why" — let us say, in order to bear a saviour to the world; in this case the marriage would be just as unaesthetic as it is immoral and irreligious. This is something people cannot make clear enough to themselves. There is a certain class of common-sense men who look down with immense contempt upon the aesthetic as trumpery and childishness, imagining that they are raised high above it by their pitiable teleology; but it is exactly the contrary, such men with their common sense are just as immoral as they are unaesthetic. One always does best, therefore, to look at the other sex, which is both the more religious and the more aesthetic. The host's exposition was at all events very trivial, and I do not need to report it. On the other hand, I will conclude this comment by wishing to every such husband a Xanthippe for a wife, and then children as wicked as possible, so that he may hope to be in possession of the conditions requisite for attaining his purpose.

The fact that marriage actually is a school for character, or (in order not to use so philistine an expression) that it is a genesis of character, I am quite ready to admit, though of course I must constantly maintain that everyone who marries for this reason might be assigned to any other school than that of love. Moreover, a man like that will never derive any profit from this schooling. First of all, he deprives himself of the consolidation, the penetrating shudder through all thoughts and joints which marriage is, for

after all, it is truly a deed of daring. But that is what it should be; and so far is it from being the right thing to want to calculate it, that such a calculation is precisely an attempt to enervate it. In the second place, he has lost, of course, the immense working capital of love and the humbling effect which the religious element in marriage has. He is, of course, far too super-shrewd not to bring with him a readymade conception of how he wants to be developed, and this, then, becomes regulative for his marriage and for the unfortunate being he has shamelessly selected to try the thing out on. But let us forget this and remember with gratitude how true it is that marriage educates — in case, that is to say, a man does not want to stand above it but is willing to subordinate himself as one always does when it is a question of education. It ripens the whole soul by the fact that it gives it a feeling of significance and at the same time imposes the weight of a responsibility one cannot sophisticate away, because one loves. It ennobles the whole man by the blush of bashfulness which belongs to woman but is the corrector of man; for woman is the conscience of man. It brings melody into man's eccentric movements, it gives strength and significance to woman's quiet life, but this only in so far as she seeks it in man, and so it does not become an unwomanly manliness. His proud wrath is quelled by the fact that he turns back constantly to her. Her weakness is made strong by the fact that she leans upon him.

It is marriage, therefore, which first gives a man his positive freedom, because this relationship is of a sort that extends over his whole life, over the least things as well as the greatest. It liberates him from a certain natural embarrassment in natural situations — a liberation which can indeed be acquired in many other ways, but often at the expense of the good. It liberates from stagnation in habit by maintaining a fresh current; liberates him from people precisely by the fact that it binds him to one person. I have often noticed that unmarried people toil exactly like slaves. First of all they

are slaves to their whims: they can indulge them freely without rendering and accounting to anybody; but then they become dependent, indeed, slaves to other people. What a role is often played by a servant, a housekeeper, etc. In them the master's whims and proclivities are impersonated and expressed in clock time. They know at what time the master gets up, or rather how early he's to be called, or rather how long in advance his study must be wanned before they call him. They know how to lay out for him dean shirts, how to turn his stockings inside out so that he can pull them on easily, how to have cold water ready when he has washed in tepid water, to close the windows when he goes out, to put out the boot-jack and slippers for him when he comes home, etc., etc. All this the servants, especially if they are a bit shrewd, know very well how to do. In spite, then, of the fact that all this is done punctiliously, such unmarried persons are often not satisfied. They are able, in fact, to purchase for themselves the satisfaction of every wish. Once in a while they are ill-tempered and peevish, then weak and good-natured. A few dollars make it all right. The servant promptly learns to take advantage of this: it is enough if at suitable intervals he does something a bit wrong, lets the master rage, then he is in despair, and thereupon receives a *douceur*. So the master is captivated by such a personality, he doesn't know whether he ought to wonder most at his punctuality or at the sincere repentance he shows when he has done something amiss. Thus such a personality becomes indispensable to the master and is a perfect despot.

And then all the pettiness marriage brings with it. O yes, here you will be ready enough to agree with me, but at the same time will pray God to deliver you from it. No, there is nothing that educates so much as the petty. There is a period in a man's life when he ought to keep it at a distance; but there is also a period when it is good, and it requires a great soul to save one's soul out of the petty — but one can do this if one will, for the fact of willing makes the great soul, and he who loves also wills. For man this may

be especially difficult, and, therefore, in this respect woman will have such great significance for him. She was created to deal with the small, and knows how to give it an importance, a dignity, a beauty, which enchants. Marriage liberates one from habits, from the tyranny of onesidedness, from the yoke of whims — and how could all such evil get time to assume shape in a matrimonial union which so often and in so many ways calls itself to an accounting? In it no such things can thrive, for “love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” Think of these beautiful words of the Lord’s Apostle, imagine them applied to a whole life, in such a way that one oftentimes did these things easily, oftentimes failed, oftentimes forgot them, yet returned to them again. Imagine that a married couple dare to repeat these words to one another in such a way that the principal impression is joyful — what blessedness is implied in this, what a transfiguration of character! In marriage one gets nowhere with great passions; one cannot pay in advance, by being loving for a month on a great scale one cannot make good the defect of another time; here every day has its trouble, but also its blessing. I know that I have subjected my pride and my hypochondriac restlessness to her love, I have subjected her impetuosity to our love; but I know also that it has cost many days, I know also that there may be many dangers ahead, but my hope is fixed upon victory.

Or one marries... to have children, to make one’s humble contribution to the propagation of the human race. Imagine he were to have no children — his contribution would then be humble indeed. To be sure, states have presumed to associate this purpose with marriage, putting a premium on marriage and rewarding the man who has the most male children. At certain

times Christianity has opposed this by putting a premium on not getting married. Even though this was a misunderstanding, it nevertheless shows a profound respect for personality that to this degree one would not treat the particular individual merely as a moment in a process but as the definitive reality. The more abstractly the State is conceived and the less individuality is able to assert itself, the more natural it is to issue this injunction and to offer this encouragement. In contrast to this, people in our age are sometimes almost inclined to extol a marriage without children. For in our age people find it hard enough to muster up the resignation required for entering into the marriage relation; if a man has exercised self-denial to that degree, he thinks it's enough, and he cannot put up with the annoyance of having a flock of children. Often enough in novels one finds a dislike for children alleged, perhaps quite casually, as the reason why a particular person does not marry; in real life one sees this expressed in the most refined countries by the fact that the children are removed as early as possible from the paternal home and sent to boarding-school, etc. How often you have been diverted by the tragi-comic fathers with four blessed children whom secretly they wished far away. How often you have been amused at the lofty superiority of such fathers when they were mortified by the pettiness which life brings with it, when the children have to be spanked, when they slobber at table, when they cry, when the great man — the father feels his boldness checked by the thought that his children bind him to the earth. How often with well-merited cruelty you have brought such a father to the highest degree of suppressed rage by occupying yourself exclusively with his children and letting drop a few words about how blessed a thing it is after all to have children.

To marry for the sake of contributing to the propagation of the race might seem a very objective reason and a very natural one. It might seem as though one were taking God's viewpoint and beholding from thence the

beauty of maintaining the race; indeed, one might lay special emphasis upon the words, "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth." And yet such a marriage is as unnatural as it is arbitrary, nor has it any support in Holy Scripture. For in the Bible we read that God established marriage because "it is not good for man to be alone," hence, in order to give him company. Although to some scoffers at religion there might seem to be something a bit questionable about the companionship which began by casting man into perdition, that proves nothing; I prefer to appeal to this event as a motto for all marriages; for only after woman had done this was the most hearty comradeship established between them. Then we read these words, that "God blessed them." These words people completely overlook. And when in one place the Apostle Paul admonishes woman with a good deal of severity to "learn in quietness with all subjection" and to "be in quietness," and thereupon, having stopped her mouth, he adds, to humiliate her still more, "she shall be saved through child-bearing," I truly never would have forgiven the Apostle for this base opinion, if he had not made it all right again by adding, "if they (i.e., the children) continue in faith and love and holiness with sobriety."

It occurs to me in this connection that it may seem strange that I, whose duties leave so little time for study and whose studies such as they are generally take a very different direction, should appear to be so well versed in the Holy Scriptures that I could apply for the final examination in theology. An old pagan, Seneca I think it was, affirmed that by the time a man had reached his thirtieth year he ought to be so well acquainted with his constitution that he could be his own physician; and so I, too, am of the opinion that when a man has reached a certain age he ought to be able to be his own priest. Not as though I were by any means inclined to disdain participation in public worship and the instruction which is there offered; but I think that one ought to be clear in one's own mind about the most

important relationships of life, about which, by the way, one rather rarely hears anything very definite said in a sermon. I have an idiosyncrasy against edifying books and printed sermons, so when I cannot resort to church I have recourse to the Scriptures. I commonly seek enlightenment from one learned theologian or another, or from some learned work in which are to be found the most important passages of Scripture dealing with the subject in question, and I read them through. Thus I was already married and had been married for half a year before it occurred to me to reflect seriously upon what the New Testament teaches about marriage. I had been present at several weddings before my own, so I was acquainted with the sacred texts which are recited on that occasion. Nevertheless, I desired to have a little more complete acquaintance, and therefore had recourse to my friend Pastor Olufsen, who was here in town just at that time. Following his instructions I found the principal passages and read them through in my wife's hearing. I well remember the impression made upon her by that passage from St. Paul. This was a singular situation: I did not know the passages of Scripture I was about to read to her, and I did not wish to examine them beforehand; I cannot bear to be prepared for the impression I shall make upon her — such a thing suggests an unbecoming distrust. This you might well take to heart. For it is true you are not married and so have no person to whom in the strictest sense you are obliged to be candid; but your preparations really reach the point of being ludicrous. You are well able to fool people, you can even seem to do everything as casually, as impromptu as possible, and yet I believe that you are not able to say good-bye without having deliberated how you will say it.

But to return to marriage and to the married people who are indefatigable in perpetuating the race. A marriage of this sort is wont sometimes to hide behind a more aesthetic screen. There is an ancient noble family of distinction which is about to die out; there are only two representatives left,

a grandfather and his grandson. It is the only wish of the venerable old man that his grandson might marry in order that the race might not be obliterated. Or it is the case of a man to whose life not so much importance attaches but who thinks back with a certain sadness, if not to a more remote time, at least to his parents, and he loves them so dearly that he could desire that this name might not die out but be kept in the grateful memory of living men. Perhaps he pictures to himself how beautiful it would be if he could talk to his children about their grandfather, dead long ago, to fortify their lives by such an ideal picture, to inspire them to everything noble and great by this presentation of him; he will think, perhaps, that he could pay off something of the debt he owes to his parents. Now all this is very well and very pretty, but essentially it is irrelevant to marriage, and a marriage contracted for such reasons alone is as unaesthetic as it is immoral. I may seem harsh in saying this, but it is true. Marriage can only be undertaken with one purpose, by which it becomes in the same degree ethical and aesthetical, but this purpose is immanent; every other purpose separates what belongs together, and thereby reduces both the spiritual and the sensuous factors to finite terms. It may well be that by such talk an individual may win a girl's heart, especially when the feelings above described truly exist in him; but the thing is wrong, and her nature is essentially perverted, and it always is an insult to a girl to want to marry her for any other reason than because one loves her.

Although the analogy of a stud-farm (if I may use your expression) is not properly applicable to any marriage, yet for the man who has not misunderstood the meaning of his marriage the progeny proves to be a blessing. It is a beautiful thing for a person to owe another as much as possible; but the highest thing one person can owe another is... life. And yet a child may owe still more to a father; for in fact it does not receive life pure and simple, but it receives it with a definite content, and when it has

long enough reposed upon its mother's breast it is laid upon the father's, and he too nourishes it with his own flesh and blood, with the experiences often dearly bought in the course of a stirring life. And what possibility there is in a child! I am very ready to concur with you in hating the idolatry which is practiced with children, the whole family cult in particular, and the circulation of children at the dinner table to exchange the family kiss, with family admiration and family expectations, while the parents self-complacently congratulate one another upon the difficulties already overcome and rejoice in the consummate product of their art. Yes, I admit it, I can wax almost as sarcastic as you against such a nuisance, but I do not allow myself to be disturbed by it further. Children belong to the inmost and most hidden life of the family, and to this dim region of mystery one ought also to direct every serious or Godfearing thought concerning this theme. But there, too, it will be manifest that every child has a halo about its head, and there, too, every father will feel that there is more in the child than it owes to him, yea, he will feel with humility that the child is a trust, and that he is in the most beautiful sense of the word only a stepfather. The father who has not felt this has taken in vain his paternal dignity. Let us be free from all unseasonable fuss, but let us also be free from your wantonness, when like Heiberg's Henrik you would pledge yourself to accomplish the impossible.

The child is the greatest and most important thing in the world; it is the most insignificant and the most unimportant-just as one wants to take it — and one has an opportunity to get a deep insight into a man when one learns how he thinks in this respect. A tiny babe may almost produce a comic effect when one thinks of its pretension to be a human being; it may also produce a tragic effect when one reflects that it comes into the world with a cry, that a long time elapses before it forgets to cry, and that no one has explained this baby cry. It may thus produce various effects, but the

religious way of regarding it remains the most beautiful and can well be united with the others. And now as for you — you indeed love possibility, and yet the thought of children will certainly not produce a joyous effect upon you, for I have no doubt that your inquisitive and vagabond mind has taken a peep into this world. This distaste is attributable, of course, to the fact that you want to have possibility under your control. You like to be in the same condition as children when they are waiting in the dark room for the revelation of the Christmas tree; but a child is evidently a possibility of a very different sort, and of so serious a sort that you would hardly have patience to put up with it. And nevertheless, children are a blessing. It is right and seemly that a man should think with profound seriousness upon the responsibility he bears for the child, but if he does not sometimes remember that it is not merely an obligation imposed upon him, but that it is also a blessing, and that God in heaven has not forgotten, as even men do not forget, to lay a gift in the cradle, then that man has not opened wide his heart either to aesthetic or to religious feelings. The better a man is able to hold fast to the conviction that children are a blessing, and the fewer conflicts he has to overcome and the less dubious he is in conserving this jewel which is the only thing the infant possesses, and lawfully possesses because God Himself has confirmed to it this right — all the more beautiful, the more aesthetic, the more religious it is. I, too, sometimes saunter about the streets, abandoning myself to my own thoughts and the impressions momentarily made upon me by the surroundings. I have seen a poor woman who carried on a small business, not in a shop, nor in a stall, but in an open place, standing there in rain and wind with a babe in her arms. She was herself clean and neat, and the babe was carefully wrapped. I saw her many times. A fashionable lady came by and almost rebuked her because she did not leave the child at home — all the more because it was only an obstacle to her. And a priest passed by that same way, and he approached her and

offered to put the child in an asylum. She thanked him kindly, but you should have seen the glance with which she bent down and looked at the child. If the child had been frozen, this look would have thawed it; if it had been dead and cold, this look would have recalled it to life; if it had been extenuated by hunger and cold, the benediction of this glance would have refreshed it. But the child slept, and not even its smile could reward the mother. Lo, this woman had perceived that the child was a blessing. If I were an artist, I would never paint anything else but this woman. Such a sight is a rarity; it is like a rare flower which is seen only by a happy chance.

But the world of spirit is not subjected to vanity; if one has discovered the tree, it blooms perpetually — this woman I have often seen. I showed her to my wife. I assumed no self-importance, I sent her no rich gifts, as though I had plenary divine authority to distribute rewards; I humbled myself under her; verily she stands in no need of gold, or of fashionable ladies, or of asylums and priests, or of a poor assessor in civil law and his wife. She needs absolutely nothing except that the child will one day love her with the same tenderness — not even of this does she feel the need, but it is the reward she has deserved, a blessing which heaven will not fail to give her. That this is pretty, that it moves even your hardened heart, you will not deny. Therefore, for the sake of impressing upon you the fact that a child is a blessing, I employ no terrifying pictures such as people often use when they would frighten the unmarried with the thought of how lonely they some day will be and how unhappy if they are not surrounded by a flock of children. For, in the first place, you presumably would not allow yourself to be terrified, not by me at least, yea, not by the whole world, though when you are alone with yourself in the dark chamber of melancholy thoughts you are sometimes doubtless in dread of yourself. And, in the second place, it always seems to me a suspicious circumstance

that in order to convince oneself of the possession of something precious one must alarm others by the thought that they have it not. Mock, then, if you will, utter the word which hovers upon your lips, scoff at the four-seated Holstein wagon; divert yourself, if you will, by the reflection that the excursion is no further than to Frederiksberg; drive past us, if you will, in your matchless Viennese carriage; but beware of indulging often in your mockery, which directed to this theme might perhaps quietly develop an ideal longing in your soul which would be a dear punishment for you to pay.

But in still another sense children are a blessing, because one has so very much to learn from them. I have seen proud men whom no adverse fate could humble, every one of whom was capable of snatching the girl he loved from the family circle to which she belonged, and doing it with an assurance which seemed to say, “Now thou hast me, so that ought to be enough. I am accustomed to defy tempests, and now how much more when the thought of thee will give me enthusiasm, now when I have much more to fight for.” I have seen the same men as fathers — a little mishap which befell their children was capable of humbling them, an illness forced their proud lips to pronounce a prayer. I have seen men who almost took pride in despising God in heaven, who were wont to pick out every believer as the target of their mockery — I have seen them as fathers concerned for the welfare of their children take into their service the most pious persons. I have seen girls whose proud glance made Olympus tremble, whose vain mind was fixed only upon pomp and finery — I have seen them as mothers endure every humiliation, begging almost like mendicants what was for the advantage of their children. I think of a particular case. It was that of a very proud lady. Her child fell ill. One of the physicians of the city was called. He refused to come on account of a previous experience with that family. And now she went to him and waited in his antechamber in order to move

him to come by her prayers. But what is the use of these striking descriptions which, even if they are true, are not so edifying as the simpler examples which are visible every day for those who have eyes to see! Moreover, one has much to learn from children in another way. In every child there is something original, and upon that all abstract principles and maxims come to grief. One must start from the beginning, often with much toil and trouble. There is profound significance in the Chinese proverb: "Bring up your child well — thus you will know how much you owe your parents." And then consider the responsibility which is laid upon the father. One consorts with other men, one attempts to convey to them a notion of that which one regards as the right; one perhaps makes several attempts; when this is of no avail one has nothing more to do with them, one washes one's hands. But when comes the moment when a father dares, or rather when a fatherly heart can resolve to give up every further attempt? A man lives over again his whole life in his children, and only now does he understand his own life. To you, however, it is no use talking about all this; there are things of which one can never form a concrete conception without having experienced them, and among these is that of being a father.

And now, finally, about the beautiful way in which a man by means of his children is connected with a past and with a future. Although one may not have quite fourteen noble ancestors and be concerned about producing the fifteenth in the line, yet one has, in reality, a far longer genealogy, and it is truly a cheering thing to see how in families the human race assumes, as it were, distinct types. The unmarried man, too, can, of course, make such reflections, but he will not, to the same degree, feel prompted to do so, nor entitled to, since, to a certain degree, he is encroaching intrusively.

Another case is that when one marries in order to acquire a home. One has become bored at home, one has traveled abroad and been bored, one has come home again and been bored. For company's sake one keeps a

remarkably fine water spaniel and a full-blooded mare, but one still feels the lack of something. At the restaurant where one meets with like-minded friends one looks in vain for an acquaintance who for a long time has not turned up. One learns that he has married, one becomes soft-hearted and sentimental about one's old age; one feels that everything is so empty around one, no one is waiting for one when one stays away. The old housekeeper is at bottom a very honest woman, but then she doesn't know in the *least* how to cheer one up and make things a bit agreeable. One marries. The neighbors clap their hands in approval, they find that he has acted shrewdly and sensibly — and thereupon they go on to talk about the most important factor in housekeeping, the supremest earthly good, an honest and reliable cook whom one can trust to go to the market alone, and a nimble chambermaid who is so smart that one can use her for everything. If only such a bald-headed old hypocrite would be content with marrying a night nurse — but generally that is not the case. The best is not good enough for him, and finally he succeeds in catching a pretty young girl who is manacled to such a galley-slave. Perhaps she has never loved — what a horrible misunderstanding!

You see, I let you have the floor. However, you must admit that among the simpler classes more especially one finds marriages which have been contracted for the purpose of getting a home, and which are quite pretty. It is the case of men fairly young who without being especially knocked about in life have earned a sufficient income and then think of marrying. This is pretty; I know too that it would never occur to you to direct your mockery against such marriages. A certain noble simplicity gives them at once an aesthetic and a religious aspect. For here there is no egoistic trait in the thought of wanting to have a home; on the contrary, it is associated with the conception of a duty, a calling, which is laid upon them, but at the same time is a duty dear to them.

One only too often hears married people console themselves and alarm the unmarried by saying, “Yes, at least we have a home, and when we grow older a place of refuge.” Sometimes they add with a rare Sunday flourish in the edifying style, “Our children and children’s children will one day close our eyes and mourn for us.” The opposite is the fate of the unmarried, they imply. They admit with a certain envy that these have the best of it for a while, when they are young; they secretly wish that they were not yet married, but their turn will come. They liken the unmarried to the rich man in the parable who has his good things in advance.

All such marriages suffer from the defect that they treat one single factor in marriage as the purpose of marriage; and hence they often feel deluded (the first class, of course, more especially) when they must admit that marriage after all means a little more than the acquisition of a comfortable, agreeable and convenient home. But let us ignore the wrong side in order to see the beautiful and the good. It is not granted to every man to extend his activity so very far, and many of those who imagine that they are working for something great find themselves sooner or later deluded. By this I by no means intend to refer to you, for you, of course, are too clever not to scent the illusion at once, and it has often enough been the target of your mockery. In this respect you have an extraordinary degree of resignation and have once for all made a total renunciation. You prefer to divert yourself. You are everywhere a welcome guest. Your wit, your lightness in conversation, a certain quality of goodnature, and a bit of maliciousness, have the effect that on seeing you one associates with this sight the impression of an agreeable evening. You have always been and always will be an acceptable guest in my house, partly because I do not fear you greatly, and partly because I have good prospects of not needing to begin to fear you for a long time to come: my eldest daughter is only three years old, and so early as that you surely would not begin your telegraphic signals. You

sometimes have half reproached me for retiring more and more from the world — I remember that once you hummed the melody, "Tell me, Jeanette." The reason for it, of course, is, as I then said to you in reply, that I have a home. It is just as difficult to get hold of you in this instance as it is in every other, for you always have other aims in view. If one would wrench people out of their illusions in order to lead them to something truer, there you are at hand as usual, "in every way at your service." You are absolutely indefatigable in ferreting out illusions in order to smash them. You talk so sensibly, so understandingly, that everyone who has no closer acquaintance with you must believe you are a sedate man. However, you have not reached the truth, you have come to a stop with the destruction of illusions, and inasmuch as you have wrought that destruction in all possible and imaginable directions, you have really worked yourself into a new illusion: the illusion that one can stop there. Yes, my friend, you are living in an illusion, and you accomplish nothing. Here I have pronounced the word which has always had such a strange effect upon you. "Accomplished!" you say, "Who has ever accomplished anything? That is precisely one of the most dangerous illusions. I do not busy myself in any way, I divert myself — especially at the expense of those who believe they are accomplishing something. And is it not indescribably comic that a person can believe this? I shall not plague the world by such great pretensions." Whenever you talk on this theme you make an exceedingly disagreeable impression upon me. It revolts me because there is in it an impudent untruth which when delivered with your virtuosity always assures you of victory, or at least always brings the laughter around to your side.

I remember one occasion when you had been listening for a long time to a man who had become indignant at your talk, answering him not a word, but merely goading him by your sarcastic smile, and then, to the universal delight of those present, you replied, "Well, yes, when you add this speech

to all the rest you have accomplished, one can at least not blame you for the belief that you truly are accomplishing something in gross and in detail." When you talk like this it pains me, because I feel for you a certain compassion. If you do not restrain yourself, a rich nature will go to ruin in you. It is because of this gift you are dangerous, because of this your outbursts as well as your coolness have a power which I have never known in any other among the many who dabble at the profession of being discontented. You do not belong to tins class either; it is the object of your satire, for you have gone much further. You are joyful, so you affirm, and delighted with life; you smile, you walk with a jaunty flourish of your hat, you do not strain yourself with life's sorrows, you have not even allowed your name to be inscribed in any society for triple lamentations. But precisely for this reason your utterances are so dangerous to younger men, for they must be impressed by the mastery you have attained over everything in life. Now I will not say to you that a man should accomplish something, but I will say, if there are particular passages in your life over which you throw an impenetrable veil, might they not be the sort of things you wished to accomplish although your melancholy moans with pain at accomplishing so little? And how entirely different the whole thing appears within you! Is it not there a profound sorrow over the fact that you are able to accomplish nothing? I know at least one situation: you once let fall a few words about it which did not pass unnoticed. Certainly you would give everything to be able to accomplish something. Whether it is your own fault that you cannot, whether it is your pride which must be broken before you can, I do not know, and I shall never press you further. But why will you take side with all the bad elements which rejoice in your power to insure a triumph? Too often, as I have said, one feels how little it is one is able to accomplish in the world. I do not say this despondently; I have no reason to reproach myself; I believe I perform the duties of my office conscientiously

and joyfully, and I shall never feel tempted to mix in things which do not concern me, with the hope of accomplishing more; but this activity of mine is a very limited one, and really it is only by faith one possesses assurance that one is actually accomplishing something.

But then, beside this I have my home. With regard to this I often think of the beautiful words of Jesus the son of Sirach, which I would beg you also to consider: "He that getteth a wife entereth upon a possession: a helpmeet for him and a pillar of repose. Where no hedge is the possession will be laid waste: and he that hath no wife will mourn as he wandereth up and down. For who will trust a nimble robber that skippeth from town to town? Even so, who shall trust a man that hath no nest and lodgeth wheresoever he findeth himself at nightfall." I did not marry in order to have a home, but I have a home, and it is a great blessing; I am not, and I believe you would not venture to call me, "a fool of a husband." I am not my wife's husband in the sense that the Queen of England has a husband; my wife is not a bondwoman in Abraham's house whom I am free to drive away with the child, but neither is she a goddess about whom I dance with spoony devotion. I have a home, and this home is not everything, but I know that I have been everything to my wife. I know it partly because in all humility she has believed it, partly because I know within myself that I have been and shall be, so far as one can be everything to another. Here I am able to illustrate for you the beauty of the fact that a person can be everything to another without being reminded of it by any finite or particular thing whatsoever. Upon this point I can talk with all the greater assurance because she certainly is not cast into the shade. She stood in no need of me; it was not a poor girl I married, doing her an act of charity (as the world says with all possible contempt for itself); it was not a silly fool whom I married for other reasons and out of whom by my wisdom I have brought forth something good. She was independent, and more than that, she was content

with so little that she did not need to sell herself. She was wholesome, more sound than I, although more impetuous. Of course her life could not be so active as mine, nor so reflective; with my experience I could perhaps save her from many errors, but her wholesomeness made that superfluous. In truth, she owes me nothing, and yet I am everything to her. She had no need of me, but for this cause I have not been indifferent; I have watched over her, and like Nehemiah I am armed even in my sleep — to repeat an expression which came to my tongue on a similar occasion, and to show you that I have not forgotten your sarcastic observation that this might be a great embarrassment to my wife. My young friend, I am not troubled by such an observation, as you can see from the fact that I repeat it, and repeat it, I assure you, without wrath. So I have been nothing and yet everything to her. You, on the other hand, have been everything to a multitude of people, and at bottom you have been nothing to them. And suppose also that in the temporary connections you form with men you were able to endow one man with such a treasure of the interesting and to awaken him to so much productivity that he had enough for his whole lifetime (which is to assume the impossible), suppose that he really gained something from you, yet you yourself... lost, for after all you had found no single individual to whom you could wish to be everything; and even if this were a mark of your greatness, this greatness is in truth so painful that I will pray God to exempt me.

The notion which one must first of all associate with the home is that of action, in order to get away from every false and contemptible thought of ease. In man's enjoyment even there ought to be an element of action, even if it is not expressed in any external and palpable deed. In this way a man may be active even though he does not seem to be, whereas woman's domestic activity is more apparent.

But in the next place there is associated with the home such a concretion of small details that it is very difficult to say anything about them in

general. In this respect every house has its characteristic features, and it might be interesting to compare a variety of such peculiarities. Naturally, every such characteristic ought to permeate the common spirit of the home, and nothing is more abhorrent to me than the separatists humbug in families which from the very first make a point of showing how special everything is in their house, which sometimes go so far as to speak a language of their own, or one so full of enigmatic allusions that a man does not know what to make of it. The proper thing is for the family to have such a characteristic distinction, but the art is to hide it.

Those who marry in order to have a home are always making loud complaint that there is no one expecting them, no one to welcome them, etc. This shows clearly enough that really they have a home only when they imagine themselves outside. Praise God, I do not have to go out, whether to remember or to forget that I have a home. The feeling has often gripped me most sensibly when I am sitting, nor do I need to go into the parlor or the dining room to ascertain that I have a home. This feeling often grips me when I sit quite alone in my work room. It grips me when the curtain before the glass door of my study is drawn and I see a blithe face at the pane, and the curtain falls back again and there is a gentle knock, and thereupon a head peeps through the door in such a way that one might think it had no body belonging to it, and that instant she stands by my side — and again vanishes. This feeling may grip me when I am sitting there entirely alone far into the night, as in the old days at college. I can then light my lamp and steal quietly into her room to see if she is really asleep. As a matter of course this feeling often grips me when I come home. And then when I ring the bell she knows the hour I am accustomed to come (we poor government employees are hampered also in this respect, that we cannot take our wives by surprise), she knows the way I am accustomed to ring, so when before the door is opened I hear the noise and rumpus made by the children and by

her, and she herself appears at the head of the troupe, and she so childlike that she seems to rival the children in jubilation — then I feel that I have a home. And then if I look serious (you talk so much of being a judge of men, but who is such a judge of men as is a woman?) how altered the frolicsome child is; she does not become disconsolate, does not feel dejected, but there is in her a power, not hard but flexible, like the sword which could cut stone and yet was wrapped around the waist. Or when she can see that I am cross (good Lord, that happens too) how indulgent she can be, and yet what superiority there is in this indulgence.

What more I have in mind to say to you with regard to this matter I prefer to say in connection with a phrase which might well be used of you and which you often use: "a stranger and a pilgrim in the world." Young people who have no notion how dearly experience is bought, nor any presentiment of the unspeakable wealth which it is, may easily let themselves be carried away by the same whirlwind; they may perhaps be affected by your talk as by a fresh breeze which lures them out upon the infinite ocean to which you point them; and you yourself may become almost uncontrollably intoxicated by the thought of that infinity which is your element, an element which like the ocean conceals everything which lies upon its changeless floor. Should not you, who are already an experienced navigator in these waters, know how to tell of disasters and distress at sea? Upon this sea, it is true, one does not know a great deal about the other man. One does not equip great ships which are laboriously launched upon the deep; no, they are very small boats, skiffs for only one person; one takes advantage of the instant, one spreads one's sail, one skims along with the infinite speed of restless thoughts, alone upon the infinite ocean, alone under the infinite sky. Dangerous this life is, but one is familiar with the thought of losing it; for precisely in this the enjoyment consists, that one disappears into the infinite in such a way that no more is left of one

but just enough to enjoy this disappearance. Seafaring men relate that on the great oceans one sees a kind of sailboat called the Flying Dutchman. It is able to spread a little sail and then with infinite speed to skim over the surface of the sea. Pretty nearly thus it is with your navigation upon the sea of life. Alone in one's kayak, one is sufficient unto oneself, has nothing to do with anybody except at the moment it pleases one. Alone in one's kayak — I cannot quite understand how one is able to fill this void; but as you are the only man I have known of whom it can be said with some truth that you fill the void, I know also that you have one passenger aboard who is able to help you to fill up the time. You ought therefore to say: alone in one's boat, alone with one's care, alone with one's despair, which one prefers cowardly to retain rather than to suffer the pain of being healed. Permit me now to bring to light the sickly aspect of your life — not as though I wanted to terrify you, for I am not posing as a bugaboo, and you are too knowing to be affected by that sort of thing. But I beg you to reflect how painful, how sad, how humiliating it is to be in this sense a stranger and a pilgrim in the world.

The effect I might possibly make upon you I shall not imperil by provoking you with the thought of family clannishness, the herd instinct, which you abhor; but consider family life in its beauty when it is founded upon a deep and heartfelt sense of community, in such a way that the tie which binds everything together is mysteriously concealed, so that one has only a presentiment of it; think of the hidden life of such a family when it is clothed in an outward form so beautiful that one is nowhere offended by the hardness of its joints; and then think of your relation to it. Such a family would be precisely to your taste, and perhaps you would often take delight in entering this circle. With your easy ways you would soon become, as it were, intimate with that family. I say, "as it were," because you do not really become intimate, and it is perfectly clear that one who is a stranger

and a pilgrim never can. They would regard you as a welcome guest, they would, perhaps, be kind enough to make everything as agreeable for you as possible, they would be complaisant towards you, yes; they would treat you as a child to whom one is attached. For your part, you would be inexhaustible in your attentions to the family, inventive to delight them in every way. To be sure, this is all very pretty, and in a moment of chagrin over the fact that no real intimacy exists you might be tempted to say that you don't care to see the family in dressing gowns, the daughter in slippers, and the mother in curl papers; and yet the correct behavior of this family in your presence implies, if you will look more closely, a prodigious humiliation for you. Thus every family would have to behave towards you, and you would be humiliated by it. Or do you not believe that the family keeps hidden an entirely different life which is its sanctuary? Do you not believe that every family has its household gods, although they are not put in the vestibule? And in that utterance of your chagrin is there not concealed a very refined weakness? For really I do not believe that, if ever you were married, you could bear to see your wife in negligee, unless this were a fine dress expressly calculated to please you. You think, of course, that you have done much for the family by entertaining them, by shedding upon them a certain aesthetic luster; but suppose that the family cared very little for this in comparison with the inner life it possesses. You will have the same experience in relation to every family, and proud as you are, this is a humiliation. No one shares sorrow with you, no one confides in you. You think indeed that they often do, you have enriched yourself in fact with manifold psychological observations; but this is often a delusion, for people are commonly willing to talk to you superficially, hinting indirectly at an anxiety, because that sets in motion the interesting in you, which in itself has already the agreeable quality which prompts them to desire this medicine when they do not need it. You know that people would rather take

communion from a mendicant monk than from their father confessor, and if precisely on account of your isolated position a man were to address himself to you, this could never acquire the true significance of reciprocal confidence, either for you or for him. Not for him, because he would feel how arbitrary it was to pick you out as a confidant; and not for you, because you could not close your eyes to the equivocal character of your competence.

Undeniably you are a good operator, you understand how to penetrate into the most secret recesses of sorrow and grief, yet so shrewdly that you never forget the way back. Well, I assume that you succeeded in healing your patient, but you got out of it no true and deep joy, for the whole thing bore the stamp of arbitrariness, and you had no responsibility. It is only responsibility that bestows a blessing and true joy, and that even though one may not do the thing half as well as you; it often bestows a blessing when one accomplishes nothing. But when one has a home, then one has responsibility, and in itself this responsibility gives assurance and joy. Precisely because you are not willing to have responsibility, you must find it quite natural, though you often complain of it, that people are ungrateful to you. It is rather rare, however, that you meddle with healing; commonly, as I have said, your principal business is that of destroying illusions, and occasionally working people into illusions. When one sees you with one or two young men, sees how with a few exercises you already have helped them thoroughly over their childish illusions, which are, nevertheless, salutary in so many ways, how they then become lighter than reality, how the wings sprout, while you yourself like an old experienced bird give them an exhibition of what it means with a beat of the wings to soar over the whole of existence; or when you undertake a similar course of training with young girls and study the difference in the mode of flight, noting that in the male flight one hears the beat of the wings, whereas the female flight is like

a dreamy stroke with the oars — when one sees this, one cannot be angry with you for the art which brings this to pass, but who ought not to be angry with you for the lightmindedness implied in it? You may surely say of your heart as is said in the old verse:

Mein Herz ist wie ein Taubenhaus:
Die eine fliegt herein, die Andre fliegt heraus

— only that in your case one does not so much see that the thoughts fly in as that new ones are constantly flying out. But beautiful as a dovecote is when used as a symbol of a quiet domestic home, it truly should not be used in this way. And is it not painful and sad to let life go past one thus without ever gaining a firm position? Is it not sad, my young friend, that for you life never acquires content? There is something sad in the feeling that one is growing old, but it is a far deeper sadness which grips one when one cannot grow old. I feel precisely at this moment how much justification I have in calling you "my young friend." The distance of seven years between us is not exactly an eternity; I will not boast of mental maturity in comparison with you, but I can boast of a maturer view of life. Yes, I feel that I really have grown older, but you constantly hold fast to youth's first surprise. And when sometimes, though it is rather seldom, I feel weary of the world, this is associated with a feeling of quiet exaltation, I think of the beautiful words, "Blessed are they that rest from their labors." I do not deceive myself by thinking that I have had a great work to do in life, I did not sort it out, it was assigned to me, and even if it was a lowly business, it has been my business to be glad of it in spite of its being lowly. You certainly do not rest from your labors, rest is a curse to you, you can live only in unrest. Rest is your polar opposite, rest makes you more restless. You are like a hungry man whom food makes only more hungry, a thirsty man whom drink makes only more thirsty.

But I return now to the previous theme, the finite aims with which people enter upon marriage. I have mentioned only three because these appear to have something in their favor for the fact that they take into consideration one or another of the real factors in marriage, although for their one-sidedness they are just as ridiculous as they are unaesthetic and irreligious. I will not dwell upon a multitude of finite aims which are so perfectly paltry that one cannot even laugh at them. As when one marries for money, or from jealousy, or for prospective advantage, because there are good prospects of her dying soon — or that she may live long and prove to be a blessed branch which bears much fruit, so that by her one may sweep into one's pocket the inheritance of a whole series of uncles and aunts. This sort of thing I prefer not to dwell upon.

As an outcome of this investigation I can emphasize here the fact that marriage in order to be aesthetic and religious must, as it was proved, have no finite "why." But this was precisely the aesthetical feature of first love; and so here again marriage is on a level with first love, and the aesthetic feature of marriage is that in itself it conceals a multiplicity of "whys" which life gradually brings to light in all their blessedness.

However, since what I proposed to prove in the first instance is the aesthetic validity of marriage, and since what distinguishes marriage from first love is the ethical and religious element, which in so far as it seeks to express itself in a particular form finds this in the wedding ceremony, I will dwell upon this topic, in order that I may not seem to treat the question too lightly or give the slightest appearance of wishing to conceal the schism between first love and marriage which you and others, for different reasons, seek to establish. You may be right in affirming that, if many people do not remark upon this schism, it is because they lack the energy and the culture requisite for thinking clearly over either of these things.

However, let us examine more closely the wedding ceremony and its formulas. Here again you may perhaps find me well armed; and I can assure you that I am well armed without incommoding my wife, for she is glad to see me hold off such freebooters as you and your kind. Moreover, I am of the opinion that, just as Christians ought to be always ready to render an account for the faith that is in them, so too a married man ought to be always ready to render an account for marriage, not exactly to everyone who is pleased to require it, but to everyone whom he counts worthy, or whom he may think it well to enlighten, even though, as in the present instance, he is unworthy. And since you, after having laid waste other territories, have begun to ravage the province of matrimony, I feel challenged to encounter you.

I can assume that you know the marriage service, indeed, that you have made a study of it. As a rule you are thoroughly well equipped and generally do not begin an attack before you are as well informed about the case as are its experienced defenders. It therefore happens at times, as you complain, that your attack is too strong, that those who should defend the case are not so well informed about it as are you who attack it. Now we will see.

However, before we enter into particulars let us see whether in the marriage service, regarded simply as a ceremony, there is not something disturbing. The wedding, in fact, is not a thing which the lovers themselves in an exuberant moment have happened to think of, a thing which they could give up as a matter of course if in the meantime they should have a different notion. Thus, it is a power which encounters us. But does love then need to recognize any other power but itself? You will, perhaps, admit that when doubt and anxiety have taught a man to pray he will thankfully submit to such a power, but you insist that first love has no need of it. At this point you must remember that we have conceived of the individuals in question

as religiously developed. I am not concerned, therefore, to ask how religion can develop in a man, but how it can subsist along with first love; and certain as it is that unhappy love may make a man religious, it is just as certain that religious individuals can love. Religion is not so foreign to human nature that a rupture is necessary in order to awaken it. But if the individuals in question are religious, then the power which encounters them in the wedding ceremony is not foreign to them; and as their love unites them in a higher unity, so does the religious lift them to a still higher plane.

What, then, does the wedding ceremony accomplish? It provides a survey of the genesis of the human race, and therewith it grafts the new marriage upon the great body of the race. Thereby it presents the universal, the essentially human, and evokes it in consciousness. Perhaps this offends you; you say, perhaps, "At the very instant when one is uniting oneself to a person so tenderly that everything else disappears from view, it is distasteful to be reminded that es ist eine alte Geschichte, something that has been and is and will be." You would rejoice in that which is peculiar in your love, you would suffer the whole passion of love to glow in you, and you do not wish to be disturbed by the thought that Tom, Dick and Harry have the same experience. "It is exceedingly prosaic," you say, "to be reminded of one's numerical significance: in the year 1750 on such a day at 10 o'clock, Mr. N.N. and the estimable Miss N.N.; the same day at 11 o'clock, Mr. N.N. and Miss N.N." This sounds to you perfectly dreadful, yet in your reasoning there is concealed a reflection which has been disturbing to first love. Love, as we have already observed, is a unity of the universal and the particular; but the wish to enjoy the particular in the sense you propose indicates a reflection which has placed the particular outside the universal. The more the universal and the particular interpenetrate, the more beautiful love is. Greatness, whether in the immediate sense or in a higher sense, does not signify being peculiar, but the possession of the universal in the peculiarity.

Therefore, to first love an introduction which recalls the universal cannot be disturbing. Moreover, the marriage service gives more than that, for in pointing to the universal it leads the lovers back to the first parents. It does not stop with the universal *in abstracto* but exhibits it as it was expressed by the first couple in the human race. This is an indication of what every marriage is. Every marriage, like every human life, is at the same time this particular thing and yet the whole, at once an individual and a symbol. Thus it furnishes the lovers with the most beautiful picture of a couple who were not disturbed by reflecting about other people: it says to the individuals, "Thus you also are a couple, it is the same experience which is here repeated in you, you also are now standing here alone in the infinite world, alone before the face of God." So you see that the wedding furnishes what you require, but that at the same time it gives more, that at one and the same time it gives the universal and the particular.

"But the marriage service proclaims that sin has entered into the world, and to be reminded so emphatically of sin is surely discordant at the moment when one feels most pure. In the next place it teaches that sin entered into the world along with marriage, and this hardly seems encouraging to the respective partners. The Church, of course, can wash its hands if anything unfortunate come out of it, for it has not flattered with a vain hope." That the Chinch does not flatter with a vain hope might of itself seem to be a good thing. Moreover, in saying that sin entered into the world along with marriage, the Church, nevertheless, permits marriage, and it might be a grave question whether it teaches that sin entered by means of marriage. In any case, it proclaims sin merely as man's universal lot, making no definite application to the individual, and least of all does it say, you are about to commit a sin. It is certainly a very difficult thing to expound in what way sin entered in along with marriage. It might seem as if sin and the sensuous were here identified. However, such cannot be the

case, inasmuch as the Church permits marriage. “Yes,” you would say, “it does so only when it has taken away all the beauty of earthly love.” By no means, I would reply. At least, not one word to this effect is to be found in the marriage service.

In the next place the Church proclaims the punishment of sin: that woman shall bear children with pain and be subject unto her husband. But, after all, the first of these consequences is surely of such a nature that, if the Church did not proclaim it, it would proclaim itself. “Yes,” you reply, “but the disturbing thing is that this is said to be the consequence of sin.” You find it aesthetically beautiful that a child is born with pain, it is a mark of respect for a human being, a symbolic indication of the significance of the fact that a man comes into the world, in contrast to the beasts which, the lower they are in the scale, the more easily they bring forth their young. I may here again lay emphasis upon the consideration that this is proclaimed as the universal lot of mankind; and the statement that a child is born in sin is the profoundest expression for its highest dignity. It is a glorification of human life that all that pertains to it is referred to the category of sin.

In the next place it is said that the wife shall be subject unto her husband. At this point you will perhaps say, “Yes, that is pretty, and it has always pleased me to see a woman who loves her husband as her lord.” But it offends you that this is regarded as the consequence of sin, and you feel called upon to be the champion of woman. Whether you thereby are doing her a service I leave undecided, but I believe that you have not comprehended the nature of woman in all its inwardness, for it belongs to her nature to be more perfect and more imperfect than man. If one would indicate the purest and most perfect quality, one says, “a woman”; if one would indicate the weakest, the most feeble thing, one says “a woman”; if one would give a notion of a spiritual quality raised above all sensuousness, one says “a woman”; if one would give a notion of the sensuous, one says

"a woman"; if one would indicate innocence in all its lofty greatness, one says "a woman"; if one would point to the depressing feeling of guilt, one says "a woman." In a certain sense, therefore, woman is more perfect than man, and this the Scripture expresses by saying that she has more guilt. If again you will remember that the Church only proclaims the universal lot of woman, I do not think that from this there can proceed anything disquieting to first love, but only to reflection, which does not understand how to cleave to her with this possibility in mind. Furthermore, the Church does not make woman a mere slave. It says, "And God said, I will make for Adam a helpmeet for him," an expression which has just as much aesthetic warmth as truth; and hence the Church teaches, "A man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife." We would expect it rather to say that woman shall leave her father and her mother and shall cleave unto her husband, for woman is in fact the weaker one. In the Scriptural expression there is a recognition of woman's importance, and no knight could be more gallant toward her.

Finally, as for the curse which fell to man's lot, the circumstance that with the sweat of his brow he shall eat bread does indeed seem with one word to drive him out of the honeymoon of first love. The fact that this curse, like all divine curses, as often has been remarked, conceals in itself a blessing proves nothing here, for as much as the experience of it must always be reserved for a subsequent time. But I would remind you that first love is not cowardly, that it does not fear danger, and that therefore in this curse it will see a difficulty which cannot terrify it.

What then does the wedding accomplish? "It checks the motion of love," you say. Not at all; but rather it causes that which already was in motion to appear outwardly. It insists upon the universal-human, and in this sense also upon sin; but all the dread and anguish which desires that sin might never have come into the world has its ground in a reflection with which first love

is unacquainted. To wish to have it that sin might never have come into the world is to carry mankind back to a more imperfect stage. Sin has entered in, but when the individuals have humbled themselves under it they stand higher than they stood before.

Thereupon the Church turns to the individual and puts to him several questions. Thereby it may seem that he is prompted to reflect: “Why such questions? Love has its assurance in itself.” But the Church puts the questions not to make one waver but make one firm and to let that which already is firm express itself. Here the difficulty emerges that in its questions the Church seems to take no account at all of the erotic. It asks, “Hast thou taken counsel with God and with thy conscience, and then with friends and acquaintances?” I shall not insist here upon the very obvious advantage of the fact that such questions are asked by the Church with profound seriousness. The Church, to use your own expression, is not a marriage agency. Can the parties concerned be disturbed by that? In fact, they have gratefully referred their love to God and have thus taken counsel with Him, for when I thank God it is a way, though an indirect way, of taking counsel with Him. If the Church does not ask if they love one another, this is by no means because it would nullify earthly love, but because it assumes it.

Thereupon the Church requires a vow. We saw above how splendidly love can be assumed into a kind of higher concentricity. Resolution makes the individual free, but, as has been explained, the more free the individual is, the more aesthetically beautiful is marriage.

It has thus been made clear, I think, that in so far as the aesthetic character of first love is discovered in its present tense as an immediate infinity, marriage may be regarded as a glorification of it and is more beautiful than it is. This, I think, is obvious from the foregoing discussion, and in the immediate context we have seen also that all the talk about the

disparagement of love by the Church is utterly unfounded and exists only for him who has taken offense at religion.

But if such is the case, the rest follows of itself. For what remains is the question whether this love can be realized. When you have conceded all that I have urged hitherto, you will perhaps say, "Well, it is just as difficult to realize marriage as to realize first love." To this I reply, No; for in marriage there is the law of motion. First love remains an unreal *an-sich* which never acquires inward content because it moves only in an external medium; in the ethical and religious purpose marital love possesses the possibility of an inner history and is distinguished from first love as the historical from the unhistorical. First love is strong, stronger than the whole world, but the instant doubt occurs to it, it is annihilated, it is like a sleep-walker who with infinite security can walk over the most perilous places, but when one calls his name he plunges down. Marital love is armed; for by the resolution the attention is not directed merely towards the environment, but the will is directed towards itself, towards the inward man. And now I invert everything and say: the aesthetic does not lie in the immediate but in the acquired — but marriage is precisely the immediacy which has mediacy in itself, the infinity which has finiteness in itself, the eternal which has the temporal in itself. Thus marriage proves to be the ideal in a double sense, both in the classical and in the romantic understanding of the word. When I say that the aesthetic lies in the acquired, this is not by any means to affirm that it lies in the effort as such; for this is negative, and the merely negative is never aesthetic.

On the other hand, when there is an effort which has content in itself, a struggle which has victory in itself, then in that duality I have the aesthetic. This I think I ought to call to mind in view of the enthusiasm of despair with which people in our age hear the acquired exalted in contrast to the immediate, as though the whole point were to lay everything waste in order

to build anew. It has really alarmed me to hear the jubilation with which younger men, like the men in the Reign of Terror which followed the French Revolution, cry out, *de omnibus dubitandum.* Perhaps this is narrow-mindedness on my part. Nevertheless, I believe that one should distinguish between a personal and a scientific doubt. Personal doubt is an entirely separate thing, and such an enthusiasm for destruction as one often hears talk of leads at the most to the consequence that a great many men venture out upon the deep without possessing the power to doubt and therefore perish, or they fall into a vacillation which likewise is certain destruction.

If, on the other hand, the conflict of doubt develops in a particular individual the power to overcome doubt, such a sight is uplifting, inasmuch as it shows what a man is capable of, but it is not properly beautiful, for to be beautiful it must have immediacy in itself. Such a development brought about by doubt of the extremest sort seeks what one might describe as the transformation of a person into an entirely different one. Beauty, however, consists in acquiring the immediate in and with doubt. This I must emphasize in opposition to the abstract way of conceiving doubt, the idolatry with which it is regarded, the foolhardiness with which people plunge into it, the blind confidence with which they hope for a glorious issue out of it. It may also be remarked that the more spiritual the aim is, the more one can exalt doubt. But love belongs to a province where it is not a question so much of a thing acquired as of a thing given, and of a given thing which is to be acquired.

I cannot conceive what kind of doubt might be appropriate in this case. Might it be the proper preparation for a married man that he had had a doleful experience, that he had learned to doubt, and might that be the truly beautiful marriage which came to pass when by virtue of this doubt he resolved with great moral seriousness to get married and as a husband was

faithful and constant? We are ready to praise him, but we will not extol his marriage except as an example of what a man is capable of. Or in order to be a thorough doubter should he also be doubtful of her love, of the possibility of retaining the beauty in the relationship — and yet have enough stoicism to will this marriage? I know very well that you false teachers are prompt to extol such a marriage, precisely for the sake of finding readier acceptance of your false doctrine; you praise it when it serves your purpose to do so, and you say, “Behold, that is the true marriage.” But you know very well that this praise conceals a censure, and that woman in particular is by no means served by it, and that in this way you are doing everything to tempt her. Hence you make a distinction, following the old rule: *divide et impera.* You extol first love. That, according to your view, remains a moment outside of time, a mysterious something about which one can utter any lie. Marriage cannot hide itself in this way; it takes a year and a day to unfold — how easy it is, then, to find opportunity to tear down or to build up with such treacherous considerations that desperate resignation is needed to put up with it.

This much we have proved: that conjugal love, regarded as a moment, is not only quite as beautiful as first love but far more so, because it contains in its immediacy a unity of more opposites. It is, therefore, not true that marriage is a highly respectable estate but a tiresome one, while love is poetry. No, marriage is properly the poetical thing. And if the world has so often observed with pain that first love could not be carried through, I am ready with my condolence, but at the same time I would remind you that the fault did not lie so much in the subsequent stage as in the fact that they did not begin aright. The fact is that first love lacks the second aesthetic ideal, the historical element. It does not possess in itself the law of motion. If I were to conceive of personal religious faith as pure immediacy, the kind which would correspond to first love is a faith which in virtue of the

promise believes it is capable of moving mountains, and then would go about and work miracles. Perhaps it would succeed, but this faith would have no history; for the patter about all its miracles is not its history, whereas the appropriation of faith in the personal life is the history of faith. Conjugal love possesses this movement, for in the resolution the movement is turned inward. In the religious experience it leaves it to God, as it were, to care for the whole world; in the resolve it is ready in union with God to fight for itself, to acquire itself in patience. There is comprised in the consciousness of sin a conception of human frailty, but in the resolution this is regarded as overcome. I cannot sufficiently stress these considerations with reference to conjugal love. I have certainly done full justice to first love, and I believe I am a better eulogist of it than you are; but its fault is to be found in its abstract character.

Conjugal love, therefore, contains something more, as you can see from the fact that it is capable of giving itself up. Suppose that first love cannot be realized; then, in case it was truly a conjugal love, the individuals will be capable of giving it up and yet remain in possession of its sweetness, though in a different way. This can never be done by first love. But it is by no means to be concluded from this that it was a doubt which gave conjugal love its resignation, as though it were a diminished form of first love. If such were the case, this would not be resignation. And yet no one perhaps knows better how sweet love is than he who renounces it while having power to realize it. But this power, again, is just as great when it is a question of holding on to love and realizing it in real life. The same power is exemplified in holding on to love and in giving it up, and the true retention of it is the power of giving it up expressing itself now in holding on, and in this consists the true freedom in holding on, the true and well-assured hovering.

Conjugal love shows itself to be historical by the fact that it represents a process of assimilation which deals with the experience and refers back the experience to itself. Thus, it is not a disinterested witness of what occurs but is essentially a sympathetic participant, in short, it experiences its own development. Romantic love, too, refers to itself what it experiences, as when the knight sends to his beloved the banners won in battle; but even if romantic love could conceive of ever so long a time involved in such conquests, it never could occur to it that love might have a history. The prosaic view goes to the opposite extreme; it can very well conceive that love acquires a history, but commonly it is a very short history, and this history is so homely and so pedestrian that love can soon acquire feet to walk with. Experimental love also acquires a sort of history; but for all that, as it lacks true apriority, so, too, it lacks continuity and depends merely upon the caprice of the experimenting individual, who is at once his own world and in it is his own fate. Experimental love is therefore very prone to inquire about its own state and condition and in this finds a double joy, not only when the result corresponds to the calculations, but also when it appears that something very different is coming out of it. In the latter case it is also well pleased at finding a task for its indefatigable combinations. Conjugal love, on the other hand, has apriority in itself, and, likewise, constancy in itself, and the power in this constancy is the same as the law of motion, i.e., it is the resolution. In the resolution is posited another thing, but at the same time this other is posited as overcome; in the resolution this other is posited as an inward other, inasmuch as even the outward is visible by means of the reflection in the inward experience. The historical factor here consists in the fact that this other comes forth and acquires its validity, but precisely in its validity is seen to be something which ought not to have validity, so that love, tested and purified, issues from this movement and assimilates the experience. How this other comes forth is not dependent

upon the power of the individual, who does not behave experimentally; but at the same time love has triumphed over all this without knowing it. Surely somewhere in the New Testament there is the saying: "Every gift is good if it is received with thanksgiving." Most people are ready to be thankful when they receive a good gift, but at the same time they require that it shall be left to diem to determine what gift is good. This is evidence of their narrow-mindedness. The broader thankfulness, on the other hand, is truly victorious and apriorical since it is characterized by an eternal health which is not disturbed even by evil gifts — not for the reason that it knows how to keep them at a distance, but because of the boldness, the lofty personal courage, which ventures to give thanks for them. So it is also with love. At this point it could not occur to me to comment upon all the jeremiads which you mischievously have always in readiness for the edification of distressed husbands. I hope that this time you will restrain yourself, since you have to do with a married man who hardly is likely to be disturbed for your amusement.

But while I am thus pursuing the development of love from its hidden cryptogamous stage to its phanerogamous life I stumble upon a difficulty to which you surely will attach no little significance. I assume for the sake of argument that I have succeeded in convincing you that the religious and ethical factors which distinguish conjugal love do by no means detract from it; I assume that in your inmost being you are profoundly convinced of this and would now by no means disdain a religious point of departure. You would therefore be ready, alone with her who is dear to you, to submit yourself and your love humbly to God. You are really deeply touched and affected — but now (attention!) I utter one word, "the congregation," and with that everything vanishes as in the ballad. You will never succeed, I believe, in getting beyond the determinant of inwardness. "The congregation," you say, "the dear congregation, which in spite of its

multiplicity is nevertheless a moral person! Would that, along with the tiresome traits which all moral persons have, it possessed this good trait, that it had one head upon a single neck... like Caligula I know what I would do." You surely know the story of the crazy man who had the fixed idea that the room in which he lived was full of flies, so that he was in danger of being suffocated by them. With desperate fear and with desperate fury he fought for his existence. So you seem to be fighting for your life against just such an imaginary swarm of flies, against what you call "the congregation." However, the situation is not really so dangerous. But in the first place I will enumerate the most important points of contact with the congregation, merely reminding you, by the way, that first love has no right to reckon it to its credit that it knows no such difficulties, for this is due to the fact that it is kept entirely abstract and comes into no contact with reality. You will know very well how to distinguish between abstract relationships to an environment if it is resolved by an abstraction. You can perfectly well put up with it if you have to pay the priest and the parish clerk and a functionary of the government, for money is a capital means for resolving every personal relationship. Therefore, you initiated me into your plan of never doing anything and never receiving anything, not even the most trifling, without giving or receiving money. Indeed, one might expect that, if ever you were to get married, you would be capable of paying a *douceur* to everybody who comes to witness your joy in taking this step. In that case you need not be surprised that the congregation increases in number or that what the crazy man feared from the flies should in reality happen to you. What you fear is the personal relationship which by polite inquiries, by congratulations, by compliments, yea, even by wedding presents, makes a claim to being a relationship which is incommensurable with money and seeks to display all possible sympathy, in spite of the fact that precisely on this occasion you on your behalf and that of the lady would prefer to

dispense with all sympathy. “By the aid of money,” you say, “one can liberate oneself from a multitude of ludicrous situations. With money one can stop the mouth of the church trumpeter who otherwise would loudly herald one’s nuptials. With money one can be dispensed from being proclaimed before the whole congregation as a husband, a proper husband, in spite of the fact that one would prefer to be such for one person alone.” This is not my invention, it is your description. Can you recall how you once raved on the occasion of a church wedding? You suggested that just as at an ordination the whole company of the clergy who are present come forward to lay their hands upon the ordinand, so should the whole tenderly sympathetic fraternity present at the wedding come forward and salute the bride and bridegroom with a congregational kiss. You declared, indeed, that it was impossible for you to utter the words bride and bridegroom without thinking of the significant moment when a dear father or an elderly friend rises with his glass to pronounce with deep emotion the beautiful toast, “Bride and bridegroom.” For just as you felt that the whole ecclesiastical ceremony was calculated to quench the erotic, so you thought that the subsequent worldly festivity was indecent in the same degree as the ecclesiastical. “For after all is it not indecent, ridiculous and in bad taste to place such a *quasi* husband and wife together at the dinner table and thereby suggest the false and indelicate reflection whether the decree of the Church had of itself been sufficient to constitute them a married couple?” So you seem to be in favor of a quiet wedding. To that I have no objection, but I take leave to inform you that in this case you would just as clearly be declared a proper husband. Perhaps you can endure this word better when no one else hears it. Moreover, I would remind you that the phrase in the marriage service is not “before the whole congregation,” but “before God and this congregation,” which neither discomforts one by its narrowness nor does it lack boldness.

As for the further complaints you make against the "congregation," though you make them with your usual exaggeration, I can forgive you more easily because what you attack here is only the social relationship. In that respect I admit that everybody may have his own opinion, and though I am far from approving your *Sprôdigkeü,* I shall for all that be as tolerant as possible. On this subject we presumably shall always remain in disagreement. The great thing, as I regard it, is to live in the congregation, to bring something finer out of it, if one is able; at all events to subordinate oneself to it and put up with it if one is unable to better it. I see no danger to love in the publication of the banns from the pulpit, nor do I believe that such publication will do the hearers any such injury as you with your extravagant rigorism once detected when you maintained that the publication of the banns ought to be abolished because so many people, especially women, went to church only to hear them, so that the impression of the sermon was nullified. There is something false at the bottom of your apprehension, as though such trifles might be able to disturb a strong and healthy love. It is by no means my intention to put up a defense for all the mischievous practices which are current. When I adhere to the congregation I do not identify it with a "highly esteemed public" which, to use an expression of Goethe's, "is shameless enough to believe that everything one undertakes to do is done only to supply matter for conversation." Another consideration by which I can explain to myself your great dread of all fuss and publicity is that you are afraid of missing the erotic instant. You understand how to keep your soul as still and apathetic as a bird of prey is still before it plunges down; you know that the instant is not in any man's power and that, nevertheless, the most beautiful experience is comprised in the instant; therefore, you understand how to be on the lookout and do not wish to anticipate anything with the restlessness with which you await the instant. But when such an event is fixed at a definite time which one knows

a long while before and of which by the preparations one is constantly reminded, then one runs the danger of “missing the point.” From this one sees that you have not comprehended the nature of conjugal love and that you cherish a heretical superstition about first love.

Let *us now consider* whether this thing of the congregation is in reality so perilous — if, that is to say, it does not assume so terrible a shape as it does at this instant in your sickly brain. Your life has surely brought you not only into touch but into intimate connection with several persons the remembrance of whom does not alarm you, does not disturb the ideal you cherish, whose names you utter aloud to yourself when you would prompt yourself to good deeds, whose presence expands your soul, whose personality is a revelation to you of the noble and the sublime. Might it then disturb you to have such persons as your confidants? That is almost as if in a religious reference a person were to say, "I wish with my inmost heart to maintain my fellowship with God and Christ, but I cannot bear that He should confess me before all the holy angels." On the other hand, your life and your external circumstances have surely brought you into connection with other people the monotony of whose daily lives *is* rarely broken by joys and noteworthy diversions. Does not every family reckon such persons among its acquaintances, perhaps in its very midst, and is it not a beautiful thing that these persons who are almost deserted in their loneliness find a support in the family? For them a marriage would therefore be an event of importance, a bit of the poetical woof in their humdrum life, something they long look forward to with joy and long afterwards remember. In a family where I visit I often see an old maid who is contemporary with the mistress of the house. She still remembers so vividly her friend's wedding, alas, more vividly perhaps than the wife herself, remembers exactly how the bride was adorned and every little subordinate circumstance. Would you deprive all such people of the opportunity of joy which you could give them? Let us deal lovingly with the weak. There is so many a marriage which was entered upon as secretly as possible in order to enjoy the pleasure of it thoroughly, and time perhaps brought something else, brought so little that one might be tempted to say, "Well, if at least it had had the

significance of giving joy to a multitude of people, it might after all have been worth while." As you know, I hate prying into family affairs as much as you do, but on the one hand I know how to keep this at a distance, and on the other hand I know how to rise superior to it; and you with your acrimonious wit, your polemical talent, your artillery, might you not know how to call it to order? You indeed do so, but none the less it disturbs you. I will not prescribe to you any limits. Cast aside whatever disturbs you, but do not forget my principle, do not forget, if it be possible, to realize the still more beautiful ideal, remember that the art is, if it be possible, to save such men, not to defend yourself. I might prescribe this as a prudential maxim, for you know very well that the more one isolates oneself, the more intrusive one makes these ineffectual gossipy people; you know it who so often have made sport of them by whetting their curiosity and then letting the whole thing dissolve into nothing. I might prescribe this as a prudential maxim, but I will not do so, for I have too much respect for the truth of what I say to be willing to degrade it.

Every process of becoming, in the proportion precisely that it is a healthy process, has an element of the polemical. So, too, has every conjugal union, and you know very well that I hate the slipshod behavior in family life, the insipid *communia bonorum* which makes marriage seem as if it were marriage with the whole family. If conjugal love is a genuine first love, it has something hidden about it, it does not wish to display itself, does not devote its life to the ostentation of family visits, does not derive its nutriment from polite congratulations and an exchange of compliments nor from an idolatrous adoration of the family. That you know very well. I have no objection if you let your wit play upon this sort of thing. In many ways I agree with you, and I believe that it would not do you and the good cause any harm if sometimes you would allow me, as the experienced forester, to

indicate the decayed trees which ought to be felled, but also to mark others with a cross as a sign that they are to be spared.

I feel no hesitation in affirming that mysteriousness is the absolute requisite for preserving the aesthetic quality in love — not, however, as though one were to make an affectation of it, pursue it as an end, take it in vain, enjoy merely the pleasure of the mysterious. It is one of the pet notions of first love that it would like to flee to an uninhabited island. This has been held up often enough to ridicule: I shall take no part in the iconoclastic savagery of our age. The fault is to be found in the fact that first love believes there is no way in which it can be realized except by flight. This is a misunderstanding due to its unhistoric character. The art is to remain in the multifarious environment and yet preserve mystery. Here again I might insist upon it as a prudential maxim that only by remaining among people does mystery acquire its true energy, only by encountering this opposition does its point bore in more and more deeply. I will not do so, for the same reason as before, and also because I always recognize a relationship to other people as something which has reality. But art is required for this, and conjugal love does not shim such difficulties, rather it preserves and acquires itself in them. Moreover, the conjugal life has so much else to think about that it doesn't get time to wear itself out with a polemic against a particular antagonist.

Inwardly this prime requisite may be expressed by its polar opposite: open-heartedness, candor, publicity on the largest conceivable scale; for this is the life-principle of love, and here in the intimate life secretiveness is its death. However, this is more easily said than done, and truly it requires courage to carry this principle out consistently, for you perceive that by this I am thinking of something more than the jabbering chattiness which prevails in the family-marriage. There can of course be no question of secretiveness where there is publicity, and the more secretiveness there is,

the more difficult is the other. It requires courage to be willing to show oneself as one truly is, it requires courage not to be willing to exempt oneself from a little humiliation when one can do so by a certain air of secrecy, not to be willing to acquire a little addition to one's stature when one can do so by being reticent. It requires courage to want to be wholesome and sound, honestly and candidly to will the true.

However, let us begin with something of minor importance. A newly wedded couple who found themselves, as they said, "constrained to limit their love to the narrow confines of three small rooms," furnished the occasion which prompted you to make a little excursion into the realm of imagination — which lies in fact so near to your every-day habitation that one may doubt if it can properly be called an excursion. You thereupon devoted yourself with the greatest possible care and good taste to the decoration of a future such as you might desire for yourself. You know that I sympathize ungrudgingly with a little experiment of this sort; and, praise God, when a princely carriage with four champing steeds passes me by, I still am child enough to be able to imagine that I am sitting in it, am still innocent enough, when I convince myself that such is not the case, to rejoice that another is sitting there, am still sufficiently unspoiled not to wish that the maximum might be to keep one horse, serving at once for riding and for the carriage, because my circumstances only allow me this. So you thought you were married, happily married, had rescued your love inviolate out of all adversities, and were now deliberating how you would arrange everything in your home so that you might retain as long as possible the fragrance of your love. To that end you had need of more than three rooms. On that point I agreed with you, seeing that as an unmarried man you make use of five. It would be distasteful to you if you were compelled to yield one of your rooms to your wife; in that situation you would prefer to give up four of them to her and yourself live in the fifth,

rather than share one room in common. After having pondered these difficulties you continued: “I take the abovementioned three small rooms as my point of departure — not in the philosophical sense of a postulate, for I have no intention of returning to them, but on the contrary, would get as far away from them as possible.” Indeed, you felt such an abhorrence for the three small rooms that, if you could not have more, you would prefer as a vagrant to live under the open heaven — which in fact would be so poetic that it would require a large suite of chambers to compensate for it. By reminding you that this was one of the customary unhistoric heresies of first love I sought to call you to order, and then I was very glad to walk with you through the big, cool, high-vaulted halls of your castle in the air, through the mysterious, half-obscure chambers, through the dining rooms illuminated to furthest corners by a multiplicity of lights, pendant lusters and mirrors, through the small room with folding doors opening upon the terrace, where the morning sun penetrated, and where the perfume of flowers which opened only for you and for your love was wafted in.

I will not pursue further your audacious venture as you sprang like a chamois hunter from crag to crag. Only the principle which lay at the basis of your arrangement shall I discuss a little more in detail. Your principle evidently was: mysteriousness, mystification, refined coquetry. Not only the walls of your chambers should be inset with mirrors, but even your world of consciousness must be diversified by similar refractions of light; not only everywhere in the chamber but also in consciousness you would everywhere encounter yourself and her, her and yourself. “But,” you say, “in order to accomplish this the wealth of all the world is not sufficient; in addition to that, spirit is requisite, and a wise moderation controlling the powers of the spirit. People must therefore be strangers to one another to such a degree that familiarity becomes interesting, and so familiar that the strangeness becomes a stimulating opposition. The conjugal life must not be

a dressing gown in which one makes oneself comfortable, but neither must it be a corset which hampers one's movements; it must not be a labor which requires fatiguing preparation, but neither must it be a dissolute ease; it must bear the stamp of the accidental, and yet one must remotely sense an art; a person is not exactly required to stare herself blind stitching a carpet capable of covering the floor of the great hall, but on the other hand, the most insignificant thing she makes for me may well have a little mysterious sign stitched on the border. One does not exactly need to have a monogram on the cake every time we eat together, and yet there may well be a little telegraphic allusion. The thing is to keep as far off as possible the point where one has a suspicion of movement in a circle, the point where repetition begins; and, since this cannot be kept off completely, the thing is to have so adjusted oneself that a variation is possible. One has only a certain number of texts — if the first Sunday the preacher preaches himself out, he not only has nothing for the year that follows, but even for the first Sunday of the next year he hasn't anything. People ought to remain enigmatic to one another as long as possible, and when in successive stages they reveal themselves this must come about as far as possible by making use of accidental circumstances, so that the revelation becomes relative and can be viewed from many angles. One must be on one's guard against every symptom of satiety and every suggestion of an after-taste."

You then would dwell on the ground floor of the lordly castle, which should be situated in a beautiful region but in the vicinity of the capital. Your wife, your consort, should dwell in the left wing of the first floor. There was one thing you had always envied in princely persons, that husband and wife dwelt apart. What detracts, however, from the aesthetic character of such a court life was, you thought, the ceremonial which claims to be more important than love. One is announced, one waits a moment, one is received. That in itself, you thought, was something not unbeautiful, but

it would first acquire its true beauty when it was a playful part in the divine game of love, when it could be allowed to have validity in such a sense that one could just as well deprive it of validity. Love itself might have many boundaries, but every boundary must at the same time be a luxurious temptation to overstep the boundary. So you dwelt on the ground floor, where you had your library, billiard room, audience chamber, and your bedroom. Your wife dwelt on the first floor. Here was also your *toral conjugale,* a large room with two alcoves, one on each side. Nothing must remind you or your wife that you were married, and yet everything must be arranged in such a way as no unmarried people could have it. You were unaware of what your wife was about, and she of what occupied you. But this by no means in order to be inactive or to forget one another, but in order that every contact might be significant, and in order to keep at a distance the deadly instant when you would look at one another... and, lo, you were bored! So you would not parade in conjugal procession with your wife upon your arm, you would desire with still youthful passion to follow her course from the window when she walked in the garden, you would sharpen your eye to see her better, and be absorbed in the contemplation of her image when it had vanished from your sight. You would steal after her, sometimes she would rest upon your arm, for after all there always is something pretty in what has come into prescriptive use among men as the expression of a definite feeling, you would even give her your arm, half acknowledging the beauty of this custom, half laughing over the fact that you were promenading like a regular married couple. But where could I end if I were to pursue the clever refinements of your ingenious brain in this Asiatic luxuriance which almost wearies me and makes me wish myself back in the three small rooms you passed by so proudly?

Now if there might be anything aesthetically beautiful in this view, it is to be found partly in the erotic bashfulness you let one suspect, partly in the

fact that at no instant are you willing to possess her as something definitely acquired but steadily continue to acquire her. The latter is in itself true and right, but the problem is not envisaged with erotic seriousness, and hence, it is not solved. You were constantly clinging to a given immediacy as such, to an impulse implanted by nature, and did not dare to allow it to transform itself into a consciousness common to both of you; for this is what I meant by the expression sincerity and candor. You fear that when the enigmatic is over love will cease; I, on the contrary, think that love begins only when that is over. You fear that one dare not know entirely what one loves, you count upon the incommensurable as the absolutely important ingredient; I maintain that only when one knows what one loves does one truly love. Moreover, all your good fortune has one lack, it lacks a blessing, for it lacks adversities. And since this is a fault, it is fortunate, in case you actually were to guide anyone by your theory, that it is not true to life. Let us turn then to the actual conditions of life. Now when I insist that adversities have their part in matrimony I do not by any means intend to permit you to identify marriage with a catena of adversities. It is indeed already implied in the resignation characteristic of the resolve that it sees adversities as a concomitant, though they have not yet assumed any definite shape and are not alarming because they are seen as already overcome in the act of resolution. Moreover, the adversity is not seen outwardly but inwardly, as it is reflected in the individual and thus belongs to the history which conjugal love has in common. Secretiveness, as was set forth above, becomes a contradiction when it has nothing to hide in its secret depository, and it becomes a childish prank when its deposit amounts to no more than amorous fudge. Only when a man's love has truly opened his heart, has made him eloquent in a far deeper sense than we are accustomed to associate with the word when we say that love makes one eloquent (for that eloquence the seducer too may have), only when he has deposited all in the

consciousness they share together, only then does mysteriousness acquire strength, life and significance. But for this a decisive step is required, and hence it requires courage, yet conjugal love sinks into nothing when this does not take place; for only by this does one show that one loves another and not oneself. And how might one show this but by showing that one only is for the other, and how is one only for the other but by the fact that one is not for oneself? But to be for oneself is the most generic expression for the mysteriousness the individual life possesses when it remains in itself. Love is devotion, but devotion is only possible when I go out of myself.

How, then, can this be combined with the lack of frankness which wishes precisely to remain in itself? "One loses," you say, "by thus revealing oneself." Yes, of course, that man always loses who profits by being secretive. But if you would be consistent, you must carry this much further, so that you must not only dissuade from marriage but from every closer approach to people — and I wonder how you could get on with telegraphic communication. The most interesting reading is that in which the reader is to a certain extent productive; the true erotic art would be to make an impression at a distance, which would be exceedingly dangerous to the person concerned, precisely because it would be out of nothing she herself created her object and then fell in love with her own creation. But this is not love, it is the coquetry of the seducer. On the other hand, he who loves has lost himself and forgotten himself in the other; but in losing himself and forgetting himself in the other he is revealed to the other, and in forgetting himself he is remembered in the other. He who loves will not wish to be mistaken for another, whether it be a better or a more lowly man, and he who has not this reverence for himself and for the loved one does not love. Therefore secretiveness generally has its ground in a feeling of inferiority, one would like to add a cubit unto one's stature. He who has not learned to disdain such a thing has never loved; for if he had, he would have felt that

even if he were to add ten cubits unto his stature he would still be too lowly. Generally, it is believed that this humility of love belongs only in comedies and romances or must be referred to the conventional lies of the period of courtship. This, however, is by no means the case: this humility is a true and profitable and constant corrector whenever anybody would measure love with anything but love. Though it were the lowliest and most insignificant person in the world who loved the most talented, the latter, if there was truth in him, would feel, nevertheless, that all his gifts were incommensurable with love, and that the only way he could satisfy the claim implied by the other's love was by loving in return.

Let us never forget that one cannot count with heterogeneous quantities. Only the man, therefore, who has truly felt this has loved; but certainly, he has never been afraid of depriving himself of something which as such has no value to him. Only the man who has become poor in the world has gained the true security of possession, and only the man who has lost all has gained all. Therefore, I cry with Fénelon: "Believe in love, it takes all, it gives all." And this truly is a beautiful, an uplifting, an indescribably blissful feeling, to let all the particular thus vanish beneath one, to let it pale and, like the shapes in the mist, flee away before the infinite power of love. This is a mathematical demonstration which at the instant in which it is concluded is just as beautiful as during the successive stages in which one takes delight in putting out one's hand and letting the factors disappear piece by piece; yea, this is the true enthusiasm of destruction characteristic of love, when it could wish for the whole world, not to glory in it, but to let it perish as a pleasantry for the entertainment of love. And verily, as soon as one opens the door for finite considerations it is just as stupid and just as ludicrous, whether one wants to be loved because one has the highest intelligence, the greatest talent, the loftiest artistic genius, or because he cherishes on his lip the most beautiful moustache. However, these

assertions and these sentiments, of course, apply just as well to first love, and it is only the wondrous, unsteady attitude you always assume which makes it necessary here to touch upon this point again.

First love can wish with supernatural pathos, but this wishing easily becomes an “in case” which lacks content, and we are not living in such a paradisiacal state that the good Lord is ready to give every married couple the whole world to deal with as they please. Conjugal love knows better, its movements are not outward but inward, and here it observes at once that it has a wide world for itself, but also that every little act of self-repression is very much more commensurable with the infinity of love; and even though it feels pain in recognizing that there may be so much to fight against, it is conscious also of courage for this fight; yea, it has boldness enough to outdo you in paradoxes when it is almost able to rejoice that sin has entered into the world. But in still another sense it has boldness enough to outdo you in paradoxes, for it has the courage to resolve them. For conjugal love, like first love, knows all these obstacles as vanquished in the infinite moment of love, but it knows also (and this precisely is the historical factor in it) that this victory wills to be acquired, and that this acquisition is not merely a game but also a conflict, yet at the same time not merely a conflict but also a game, just as the war in Valhalla was a deadly conflict and yet a game, because the contestants constantly arose again from the dead rejuvenated; and it knows also that this fencing is not an arbitrary duel but a conflict under divine auspices, and it feels no need of loving more than one, but senses the blissfulness of this restriction, and no need of loving more than once, for it senses an eternity in this once. And do you think, then, that this love which has no secrets might miss something beautiful? Or might it be unable to resist time and be blunted necessarily by daily association? Or might tedium overtake it more swiftly? — as though conjugal love did not possess an

eternal content of which one never grows tired, an eternal content which now with kiss and jest, now with fear and trembling, it acquires and continues to acquire. "But," you say, "it must renounce all these pretty little surprises." I see no necessity of that; my notion is not that conjugal love must always stand with its mouth open and chatter even in its sleep. On the contrary, all these little surprises acquire their significance precisely when the total open-heartedness has taken place. For this gives a sense of security and confidence in which these interludes show off to the best advantage. If anyone believes, on the other hand, that the essence of love and of true bliss consists in such a train of little surprises, and thinks that the petty effeminacy and uneasiness with which one must every instant be prepared for a little surprise and even think one up is to be considered beautiful, then I will take the liberty of saying that it is very unseemly, and that it is a very suspicious sign when a marriage has no better trophies to display than a desk full of bonbons, bottles of perfume, dried leaves, embroidered slippers, etc.

However, marriages in which the mystery-system is carried out are to be seen from time to time. For my part, I have never seen a happy marriage of this kind; but since my observation might be entirely accidental I shall state the reasons commonly given for such a judgment. This is a matter of considerable importance to me, for the aesthetically beautiful marriage is always a happy marriage, so if a happy marriage could be constructed on this basis, my theory must be amended. I shall not try to avoid the mention of any form in which this system appears, and I shall describe each as justly as I possibly can, dwelling more especially upon a type which in the house where I saw it put into effect was carried out with a virtuosity which really was fascinating.

You will readily concede that the mystery-system generally proceeds from men, and although it is always bad, it is, nevertheless, more tolerable

than the intolerable type in which it is the wife who exercises such a *dominium.* The ugliest form is, of course, a pure despotism in which the wife is a slave, a maid of all work in the domestic economy. Such a marriage is never happy, even if the years produce a hebetude which finds itself content with it. A prettier form is the very opposite of this, an ill-advised solicitude. “Woman is weak,” it is said, “she is unable to bear troubles and sorrows, one must treat the weak and fragile creature lovingly.” Falsehood! Falsehood! Woman is just as strong as man, perhaps stronger. And is she really treated lovingly when you thus humiliate her? Or who gave you leave to humiliate her? Or how can your soul be so blind that you consider yourself a more perfect being than she is? Only confide to her everything! If she is weak, if she is unable to bear it — well, then, she can lean upon you, you have strength and to spare! This, you see, you cannot bear to do; so it is you who lack strength and not she. Perhaps she has more strength than you, perhaps she was ashamed of you — and, lo, this you have not the strength to bear. Or have you not promised to share with her both good and evil? Is it not, then, to withhold from her her just share when you will not initiate her into the evil? Is not this to quench the better part in her? Perhaps she is weak, perhaps her sorrow will make everything harder — eh *bien,* then share with her the evil. But this, in its turn, will save her; and have you a right to deprive her of a way of salvation? Have you a right to conduct her stealthily through the world? And from whence do you derive your strength? Is she not as close to God as you? Will you deprive her of the opportunity of finding God in the deepest and most heartfelt way — through pain and suffering? And do you know so certainly that she has no presentiment of what your mysteriousness conceals? Do you know whether in secret she does not sorrow and sigh, whether she has not suffered damage to her soul? Perhaps her weakness is humility, perhaps she believes it her duty to bear all this. Hereby you have, in fact, been an

occasion of developing strength in her, but it was not in the way you had intended or promised. Or are you not treating her (to use the strongest word for it)... like a concubine? For the fact that you have not several wives is of no help to her. And is it not doubly humiliating to her when she perceives that you love her, that you treat her thus, not because you are a proud tyrant, but because she is a frail being?

For a long while I was accustomed to visit in a house where I had opportunity to observe the system of silence carried out in a more artistic and refined fashion. The husband was a fairly young man of unusual talent, with a fine intelligence and a poetic nature, too indolent to want to produce anything, but with an extraordinary flair and tact for making everyday life poetic. His wife was young, not without intelligence, but with a character very unusual. This tempted him. It was the most astonishing thing to see how he was able to arouse and nourish in her every youthful enthusiasm. Her whole existence, the whole life they shared together as a married couple, was entirely woven out of poetic enchantment. Everywhere his eye was present — when she looked about it was gone; his finger was in everything, but just as invisibly as God's finger is present in history. Her thought might turn whither it would — he was already there before her; he understood like Potemkin how to conjure up landscapes, and just of the sort that after a little surprise and a little resistance might be most pleasing to her. His home life was a little act of creation, and just as in the great creation man is that to which everything tends, so did she become the center of an enchanted circle, wherein she enjoyed nevertheless her full liberty. For the circle would bend in conformity with her movement and had no boundaries of which it might be said, "Hitherto and no further"; she might plunge as she would, in whatever direction she would, the circle yielded, but it remained there, nevertheless. She walked as in a toddling-basket, but this was not woven out of osiers, it was braided out of her hopes, dreams,

longings, wishes, fears; in short, it was fabricated out of the whole content of her soul. He himself moved with the utmost security in this dream-world; he relinquished nothing of his dignity, claimed and asserted his authority as husband and lord. It would have disquieted her if he had not done so, it would perhaps have awakened in her a fearful apprehension which would lead her to a solution of the mystery. He did not appear in the eyes of the world, nor even in her eyes, to be so extraordinarily attentive, and yet he knew within himself that she had received no impression of him but just that which he wanted to give her, and he knew that he had it in his power by one single word to dissolve the enchantment. Everything that might make a disagreeable impression upon her was kept at a distance. If any such thing were encountered, she received from him, either in response to her searching queries or with open-hearted anticipation of them, and in the form of candid information, an explanation which he himself had drafted, in stronger or weaker terms, according to the impression he wished to make upon her. He was proud, frightfully consistent, he loved her, but he could not relinquish the proud thought of daring to say to himself, either in the profoundest stillness of the night or in an instant which lay outside of time, “She owes everything to me.

You surely have followed with interest this description, however imperfectly I have succeeded in presenting it; for it summons up before your soul a picture with which you sympathize, which perhaps you would one day seek to emulate if you were to become a married man. Was then this marriage a happy marriage? Yes, if you will. Nevertheless, a dark fate hovered over this happiness. Suppose he were to fail in his effort, suppose she suddenly suspected something — I do not believe she could ever forgive him for it. For the fact that he had done it out of love for her — that her proud soul was too proud to let anyone tell her. There is an old-fashioned expression about the relation between married people which I

would recall to your attention. (I always take delight in lending support to the revolution, or rather the holy war, by which the plain and simple but true and rich expressions used for legitimate marriage strive to reconquer the realm from which the writers of romance have expelled them.) It is said of married people that they should live in good understanding with one another. One hears most frequently the negative expression, that a couple do not live in good understanding, meaning that they cannot abide one another, that they beat and bite, etc. Take now the positive expression. The married pair above described live in good understanding — yes, so the world would say; but you surely would not, for how can they live in good understanding when they do not understand one another? But is it not an essential part of understanding that the one knows how careful and loving the other is? Or even if he deprived her of nothing else, yet he deprived her of opportunity for that degree of gratitude wherein her soul would first find repose. Is it not a pretty and beautiful and simple expression: to live in good understanding? (These matrimonial terms, you see, know all about this subject and make no great fuss about that which now one must often insist upon precisely.) This expression assumes as a matter of course that people understand one another clearly and explicitly. It assumes this as a matter of course, as one may see from the fact that an adjective is adjoined with marked emphasis; for otherwise it would suffice to say that they should live in understanding. “Good understanding” — what else does that mean but that they should find their joy, peace, repose, their very life in this understanding?

So you see that the mystery-system does not by any means conduce to a happy or even to a beautiful marriage. No, my friend; candor, open-heartedness, revelation, understanding — these constitute the life principle of marriage, without which it fails to be beautiful or even moral; for that which love unites is then separated: the sensuous and the spiritual. Only when the being with whom in the earthly life I live in the most tender

association is in a spiritual respect equally close to me, only then is my marriage moral and, therefore, also aesthetically beautiful. And you proud men who perhaps rejoice secretly in this victorious triumph over woman forget in the first place that it is a sorry triumph when one triumphs over the weaker one, and that the husband honors himself in his wife, and he who does not do so despises himself.

So understanding is the life principle in marriage. One often hears people of experience discuss the question in what case one ought to dissuade a person from marrying. Let them discuss these circumstances and ruminate on them as thoroughly as they will; what they generally have to say does not signify much. For my part I will mention only one case, that is, when the individual life is so complicated that it cannot reveal itself. If the history of your inward development possesses an unutterable content, or if your life has made you privy to secrets; in short, if in one way or another you have gulped down a secret which you cannot draw up except at the cost of your life, then never marry. Either you will feel yourself bound to a being who has no presentiment of what is going on within you, and your marriage then becomes an unseemly misalliance; or you bind yourself to a being who observes this with anxious dread and every instant sees the shadow pictures on the wall. She will, perhaps, resolve never to question you closely, she will renounce the curiosity of dread which tempts her, but she will never be happy, nor you either. Whether there actually are such secrets, whether there is any truth in the close reserve which not even love is able to unlock, I will not decide, I am merely carrying out my principle, and so far as I myself am concerned, I have no secrets from my wife. One might believe that it surely never occurred to such a man to marry, seeing that apart from everything else he must undertake he had also the daily avocation of his painful secret. Nevertheless, this sometimes happens, and such a man is perhaps the most dangerous temptation to women.

But having spoken of mystery and understanding as two sides of the same thing, that thing being the chief thing in love, the condition absolutely requisite for preserving the aesthetic character of marriage, I have reason to fear that you will make the objection that I seem to forget the historical character of love, which, as you say, I commonly insist upon like a refrain of a ditty. You hope, however, to delude time by your mysteriousness and your shrewdly calculated relative information. "But," as you say, "when married people start in earnest to recount their shorter or longer story, the instant will soon arrive when as in childish play they say, 'the boy has the bun, the story is done.'" My young friend, you do not perceive that if you can make such an objection it is due to the fact that you are not in the correct position? By means of your mysteriousness you have a temporal purpose, and it really is important to delude time; on the other hand, love by self-revelation has an eternal purpose and so all competition is impossible. Also, it is an arbitrary misunderstanding to think of the revelation as obliging married people to spend a fortnight in recounting their careers, which would be followed by the silence of the grave, broken only once in a while by a repetition of the story already told. It lies in the historical character of marriage that this understanding is reached by a continuous process, not simply once for all. It is just as in the individual life: when one has attained clarity about oneself, when one has had courage to will to see oneself, it by no means follows that now the history is finished, for now it begins, now for the first time it acquires real significance for the fact that every individual moment experienced leads on to this total view. So also in marriage. In this revelation the immediacy of first love perishes, yet it is not lost but lifted up into the collective knowledge of conjugal life; with this the history begins, and to this collective knowledge the individual is referred, and in this consists its *blissfulness* — an expression in which, again, the historical character of marriage is conserved, and which corresponds to the

foie de vivre (or what the Germans call *Heiterkeit*) which is characteristic of first love.

So it is essential to conjugal love that it become historical, and the individual being then in the right attitude, the commandment which says, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,” is not a terrifying commandment, and the courage and strength of which conjugal love is conscious corresponds to the true romantic need of knightly love to perform adventurous exploits. As the knight is fearless, so, too, is conjugal love, in spite of the fact that the enemies with which it has to contend are often far more dangerous. Here a wide field for reflection is opened, upon which, however, I do not intend to enter. But if the knight has a right to say that the man who does not defy the whole world to save his lady does not know knightly love, the married man too has a right to say the same. Only I must constantly remind you that every victory of this sort which conjugal love wins is more aesthetically beautiful than that which the knight wins, because in winning this victory the married man at the same time wins again his love in a glorified form. Conjugal love fears nothing, not even little mistakes, little amorous affairs; on the contrary, these only serve to nourish the divine and healthy vigor of conjugal love. Even in Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* Ottilia, though eventually she goes to the dogs, is regarded as a slender possibility of serious conjugal love; and how much more might a marriage founded upon deep religious and ethical principles find strength for such a view. Indeed, Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* shows what secretiveness leads to. The love there described would not have acquired the power it did if it had not been allowed to grow up in silence. If the man had had courage to reveal himself to his wife, this situation would have been prevented, and the whole affair would have become an interlude in the drama of marriage. The fatality consisted in the fact that both Edward and his wife fell in love with other people at the same time — but this again

is the fault of silence. The married man who has the courage to confide to his wife that he loves another is saved by that, and the same holds true of the wife. But when he has not this courage he loses confidence in himself, and so what he seeks is forgetfulness in the love of another. Undoubtedly, it often is not so much true love for the other woman which causes a man to yield as it is a feeling of pain at not having resisted in time. He feels that he has lost himself, and when such is the case, strong opiates are needed to blunt this feeling.

About the difficulties with which conjugal love has to contend I will speak only in general terms and only in order to show that from them conjugal love has nothing to fear so far as concerns the preservation of its aesthetic character. The objections commonly originate in a misunderstanding of the aesthetic significance of the historical, or from the fact that, in general, people apply to a romantic experience only the classical ideal and have not the romantic ideal along with it. A great many other objections are attributable to the fact that, while people always like to think of first love as dancing upon roses, they take joy in letting conjugal love contend with the basest and most pitiful difficulties and fall prey to every chicanery. To this we may add that they privately believe these difficulties insurmountable, and thus they make short work of marriage. One must always be a bit cautious when one is dealing with you. I am not talking about any particular marriage, and so I can depict the situation as I will; but though I do not wish to be guilty of any arbitrary procedure, this does not insure that you Will forego this pleasure. When, for example, poverty is proposed as a difficulty with which marriage may have to contend, I would answer: “Work — then all obstacles give way.” Since now it is an imaginary or poetical world in which we are moving, you will perhaps take advantage of your poetic license and make answer: “They couldn’t get any work. The decline in business and in the shipping trade has

left a great many people without bread." Or you permit them to get a little work, but it is not sufficient. Then when I say that by wise economy they surely will be able to make both ends meet, you come out with the information that on account of the critical state of the market the price of wheat is so high that it is perfectly impossible to get along with what otherwise might have been sufficient. I know you only too well. You always take delight in maintaining with your poetic license the opposite point of view, and then, when this has amused you long enough, you seize the occasion of some chance remark to tangle your interlocutor, or some other person present, with a prolix patter which has nothing whatever to do with the matter originally in question. You take delight in suddenly transforming a willful poetic invention into a sort of reality, and then expatiating upon it. In case you had been talking to anyone but me in the manner I have described (for generally you are good enough to spare me), you presumably would have used the "high price of wheat" as a pretext for going on to say: "Such a dearth that bread would cost eight shillings a pound." If there happened, luckily, to be somebody present who replied that this was altogether too incredible, you would explain that "during the famine in Olaf's time bread, and bad bread at that, cost eight and a half shillings a pound, in old Danish currency; and when one considers that in those times money was scarce among the people, you can easily see," etc. If with that you had got this man on the go, you would be beside yourself with joy. The man who had begun the conversation would in vain try to bring you back to the point; everything would be reduced to confusion, and you would have made a married couple unhappy... in the world of poetry.

It is this that makes it so difficult to deal with you. If I were to venture out upon what might well be called glare-ice for me, and should try to describe in a novelistic manner a marriage which triumphantly held its own in the conflict with a multitude of such adversities, you would calmly reply,

"Well, that is merely fiction, and in the world of poetry one can easily make people happy, it's the very least one can do for them." If I were to take your arm and walk about with you in real life and show you a marriage which had fought the good fight, then you, if you were in the humor, would answer, "Yes, that's well enough. The outward aspects of temptation are susceptible of proof, the inward aspects are not. I assume that in this couple temptation has not possessed an inward power, for otherwise it would not have been possible to resist it." Just as though the true significance of temptation were that people should succumb to it! But enough of this. When once you take it into your head to abandon yourself to this demon of willfulness there is no end to it; and as everything you do is done deliberately, so is this willful prank, and you find delight in making every position insecure.

In a general way I can divide these difficulties into external and internal difficulties, constantly keeping in mind the relativity of such a division in the case of marriage, where, if anywhere, all experiences are internal. First, then, for the external difficulties. I have no hesitation or fear in mentioning all the most depressing, humiliating and vexatious finite afflictions, in short, all the items which go to make up a tearful drama. You and your kind are exceedingly arbitrary in this instance, as you are in every other. If a play of this sort compels you to undertake a journey through the caverns of misfortune, you say that it is unaesthetic, sniveling, tiresome. And in that you are right — but why? Because you are indignant that something sublime and noble perishes in the face of such difficulties. On the other hand, if you turn to the real world and encounter there a family which has undergone only half the adversities which this hangman of a playwright with the voluptuous enjoyment reserved for a tyrant has devised to torture others, you shudder, and you think, "Good night to all aesthetic beauty." You feel compassion, you are willing to help, in order to drive away gloomy

thoughts, if for no other reason; but as for the poor family, you already have given it up in despair. But if this thing is true in real life, the poet has a right to represent it and represents it rightly. When you are sitting in the theater, intoxicated with aesthetic enjoyment, you have the courage to require of the poet that he shall let the aesthetic triumph over all paltriness. It is the only comfort left, and, what is still more effeminate, it is you who take comfort in this, you to whom real life has furnished no occasion to make test of your strength. You are the poor and unfortunate one, like the hero and the heroine in the play, but you have also pathos, courage, an *os rotundum* from which eloquence gushes in a powerful stream; you conquer; you applaud the actor, and the actor is yourself, and the applause of the parterre is for you, for indeed, you yourself are the hero and the actor. In dreams, in the airy visions of aesthetics, you men are heroes. I bother myself relatively little about the theater, and for my part you may be as merry as you please — let the theatrical heroes perish or let them conquer, let them sink through the floor or vanish through the ceiling, I am not much moved by that. But if in real life it is true, as you teach and proclaim, that far fewer adversities are capable of reducing a man to the condition of a slave, so that he walks with his head bent and forgets that he, too, is created in God’s image, then please God may it be your just punishment that all playwrights should write nothing else but tearful dramas with every possible dread and terror, which would not permit your effeminacy to find repose in the theater nor you to distill your supernatural perfume, but would perhaps frighten you until you might learn to believe in the reality of that which you believe only in the form of poetry.

I admit gladly that in my marriage I have not met with many adversities of this sort, I cannot, therefore, speak from experience, yet I have the conviction that nothing is capable of crushing out the aesthetic element in man, a conviction so strong, so blissful, so heartfelt, that I render thanks to

God for it as for a gift of grace. And when we read in Holy Scripture about many gifts of grace, I really would reckon this among them: the frankness, the confidence, the trust in reality and in the eternal necessity of the triumph of the beautiful, and the bliss implied in the liberty of coming to the aid of God. This conviction is a constituent factor of my make-up, and I do not allow myself to be effeminately and voluptuously moved to shuddering by the artificial stimulus of the theater. The only thing I can do is to thank God for this firmness of my soul, but in doing so I hope that I have set my soul free from the danger of taking it in vain. You know that I hate all experimentation, but nevertheless, it is generally recognized that a man may have in thought experienced much which he never has occasion to experience in reality. There sometimes come despondent moments, and when a person does not evoke them arbitrarily for the sake of trying his hand at such things, that too is a strife, a very serious strife, and in this strife may be acquired an assurance, which, though it has not exactly the same stamp of reality as that which is acquired in real life, has, nevertheless, a good deal of significance. There are certain cases in life when it is a good sign in a man that he is as it were mad, that he has not separated the world of poetry from that of reality but sees the latter *sub specie poeseos.* Luther says somewhere in one of his sermons where he is talking of poverty and want: “One has never heard of a Christian man dying of hunger.” Therewith Luther has disposed of the matter and thinks, doubtless with good reason, that he has spoken about it with much unction and to the genuine edification of his hearers.

Inasmuch, then, as marriage has to deal with such external trials, the thing to do, of course, is to make them internal. I say “of course,” and I am speaking rather audaciously when I talk on this subject; but you see I am writing only to you, and it is likely that we both have just about the same amount of experience with adversities of this sort. The thing to do, then, is

to transform the external trial into an internal one, if one would preserve the aesthetic character of marriage. Or does it vex you that I still make use of the word aesthetic; do you think that it is almost a kind of childishness in me to persist in seeking this quality among the poor and the suffering? Or maybe you have degraded yourself by adopting the shocking division which assigns the aesthetic to the distinguished, the rich, the mighty, the highly educated, and at the most assigns religion to the poor? Well, it seems to me that the poor do not come out badly in this division. And do you not see that the poor in having the religious have also the aesthetic, and that the rich, in so far as they have not the religious, have not the aesthetic either? Moreover, I have spoken only of the extremes, and it is surely not a rare case that people who cannot be reckoned among the poor have to contend with care and anxiety about their daily bread. Besides, there are other cares which are common to all classes: illness, for example. I am convinced, however, of this, that he who has the courage to transform an external trial into an internal one has already as good as overcome it. By faith he undergoes a transubstantiation even in the moment of suffering. The married man who well enough remembers his love, and in the moment of want has courage to say, "The important thing is not first of all where I can get money and at what rate, but first of all it is about my love, that I have kept a pure and faithful covenant of love with her to whom I am united." He who with not too many inward struggles shall compel himself to say this, and with the youthful wholesomeness of first love, or with the assurance acquired by experience, undertakes to perform this movement — he has conquered, has preserved the aesthetic in marriage, even if he had not three small rooms to live in. Now it is not to be denied (as your cunning mind will soon scent out) that changing the external trial into an internal one may make it still harder. But the gods sell nothing great for naught, and just in this experience consists the educative, the idealizing effect of marriage. It is

often said that when one stands alone in the world one can bear all such things more easily. True enough, to a certain degree; but in this talk there is often concealed a great untruth. For why is it one can bear the thing more easily? It is because one can the more easily cast oneself away, suffer damage to his soul, without causing concern to anybody else, can forget God, can let the tempest of despair drown out the cry of pain, can become blunted in feeling, can almost take pleasure in living among men as a specter. Everyone ought indeed to take heed to himself, even though he stands alone; but after all, only the man who loves has a right conception of what he is and what he is capable of, and only marriage gives example of the historic fidelity, which is quite as beautiful as the chivalric sort. For in fact, a married man can never behave in this way; and however the world goes against him, even though for an instant he forgets himself and already begins to feel so light because despair is in the way of buoying him up, feels so strong because he has sipped the stupefying drink which is mixed by defiance and self-disdain, by cowardice and pride, feels so free because the bond which binds him to truth and righteousness is, as it were, broken and he experiences the speed which is the transition from good to bad — yet he will soon return to the old guiding control and as a married man *[Ægtetnand]* prove himself a genuine man *[segte Mand]*.

This must suffice for the external trials. I express myself briefly, because I do not feel profoundly competent to take part in the discussion of this subject, and also because an adequate treatment would require exorbitant space. But this is the result I reach: if love can be preserved — and that it can, so help me God — then can the aesthetic also be preserved; for love itself is the aesthetic.

The other objections, which have internal trials in view, are due to a misunderstanding of the significance of time and of the aesthetic validity of the historical. They apply to every marriage, and hence, I can speak of them

in very general terms. That I shall now do, trying not to overlook in this generic treatment the gist of the attack or the gist of the defense.

The first objection you would mention is custom, “inevitable custom,” you would say, “this terrible monotony, the perpetual sameness in the appalling still-life of the domestic regime of married people. I love nature, but I hate second-nature.” One must allow that you know how to describe with seductive warmth and pathos the happy time when one still makes discoveries, and to depict with the colors of dread and horror the time when this is over. You know how to paint in ludicrous and disgusting terms a conjugal uniformity which does not find its match even in nature. “For here, after all, as Leibnitz has already showed, nothing is quite identical. Such a uniformity has been reserved for rational creatures, resulting either from their drowsiness or from their pedantry.” Now I by no means am disposed to deny that it is a beautiful time, an eternally memorable time (mark well in what sense I can say this), when in the world of love the individual is affected with astonishment and made blissful by that which indeed had long ago been discovered, of which he had often heard and read, but which now for the first time he appropriates to himself with the whole enthusiasm of surprise, with the whole depth of inwardness. It is a beautiful time, from the very first presentiment of love, the first sight of the beloved object, its first disappearance, the first chord of this voice, the first glance, the first handshake, the first kiss, unto the first complete assurance of its possession. It is a beautiful time, the first uneasiness, the first longing, the first pain because she failed to put in an appearance, the first joy because she came unexpectedly. A beautiful time — but this is by no means to say that the subsequent time is not just as comely. You who pretend to such a chivalrous way of thinking, test yourself. When you say that the first kiss is the most exquisite, the sweetest, you offend the loved one; for what gives the kiss absolute value is time and the qualification it bestows.

In order, however, that I may not hurt the cause I am defending, you must first render me a little accounting. For in case you would not proceed arbitrarily you must assail first love in the same way you assail marriage. For if the former is to survive in real life it must be espoused to the same fatalities, and is far from having the same resources to oppose to them that conjugal love has in the ethical and the religious. To be consistent you must therefore hate all love which desires to be an eternal love. So you stop with first love as a transitory moment. However, in order to have its true significance first love must have in it the naive eternity. If once you have had the experience that this was an illusion, you have lost everything — unless you would struggle to fall again into the same illusion, which is a self-contradiction. Or might your shrewd head have so conspired with your lust that you could entirely forget what you owe to others? Might you think that even though it never could be repeated exactly like the first time, there still was a tolerable expedient: one was rejuvenated by experiencing the illusion in others, one relished the infinity and enjoyment found in the individual whose virginal girdle of illusion was not yet loosened? Such an attitude evinces as much desperation as it does depravity, and since it evinces desperation it will be impossible to find here enlightenment about life.

The first thing I shall protest is your right to use the word “custom” for the phenomenon of recurrence characteristic of every life and so, also, of love. The word custom is properly used only of evil, as indicating either a persistence in something which is in itself evil, or a repetition of something which is in itself innocent, but a repetition so obstinate that it becomes evil. Custom, therefore, always indicates something unfree. But just as one cannot perform the good without freedom, so neither can one remain in it without freedom, and, therefore, with reference to the good one can never talk about custom.

In the next place I must also protest against your disparagement of conjugal uniformity when you state that such a thing is not to be found even in nature. That affirmation is, in fact, very true, but uniformity may be the expression of something beautiful, and that being the case, man can be proud of being the inventor of it. Thus, in music uniform tact may be very beautiful and produce a great effect.

Finally, I would say that in case such a monotony were unavoidable in conjugal life, you must yourself see, if you were honest, that the task would be to vanquish it, i.e., to preserve love in and through and under it, and not to despair; for despair can never be a serious task; it is a convenience, which, I am willing to admit, only those grasp who see the task.

But let us now consider how it stands with this notorious uniformity. It is not only your fault but your misfortune that everywhere, and so, also, with respect to love, you think too abstractly. You think a little summary of love's factors, you think (as you perhaps yourself would say) the categories of love. In this respect I willingly concede to you an uncommon categorical thoroughness. You think every concrete object in terms of one factor, and this is the poetical way of thinking. Then when alongside of this you think the protracted character of marriage, this seems to you an appalling incongruity. The trouble is that you do not think historically. If a systematic mind were to think the category of reciprocal action and develop it thoroughly and with sound logic, but should say also, "It will go on for an eternity before the world is through with its eternal reciprocal action," you surely will not deny that one would have a right to laugh at him. This is simply the significance of time, and it is the lot of mankind and of individual men to live in it. If, therefore, you have nothing else to say but that this is not to be endured, then you will have to look about for another auditorium. This would be a perfectly sufficient answer; but not to give you opportunity to say, "Substantially you are of the same opinion as I am but

consider it best to put up with what you cannot alter," I shall endeavor to show that it not only is best to put up with it, as surely it is also a duty, but that putting up with a thing is truly the best.

But let us begin at a point which may be regarded as a point of contact. The time which precedes the culmination you are not afraid of, on the contrary, you love it, and by a great multiplicity of reflections you often try to make the instants employed in reproducing it even longer than they originally were, and if anyone were to reduce your life to categories, you would be exceedingly exasperated. During that time preceding the culmination it is not only the great and decisive actions which have interest for you, but every little insignificance, and you know then how to talk prettily enough about the secret which was hid from the wise: that the smallest is the greatest. On the other hand, when the culminating point has been reached everything is changed, everything then shrinks to a poverty-stricken and uninviting abbreviation. This, to your way of thinking, is just simply grounded in your nature, which is bent upon conquest but is able to possess nothing. Now in case you are not willful and perverse enough to persist in maintaining that this is simply the way you are made, there will come a moment when you are compelled to conclude an armistice and open the ranks so that I may come and see if this claim is true, and, if it be, how much truth there is in it. If you will not do this, then, without troubling about you, I will picture to myself an individuality exactly like yours and then calmly proceed with my vivisection of it. I hope, nevertheless, that you will have courage enough to submit personally to the operation, courage enough to let yourself — in reality and not merely in effigy — be hanged.

When you insist that you are "simply made that way," you thereby concede that others *might* be different. I can affirm no more than this, for it might be possible that you axe the normal man, although the fact that you are so anxious to assert this hardly suggests that you are the normal man.

But how do you conceive of the others? When you see a married couple whose union, as it seems to you, drags on in the most dreadful boredom, "with the most insipid repetition," as you say, "of love's holy institutions and sacraments," then truly a conflagration rages within you, a flame which would consume them. And tins, indeed, is not an arbitrary passion on your part; you are in the right, you are justified in letting the lightning of irony smite them, in letting the thunder of wrath terrify them. You do not annihilate them for the reason that you take pleasure in it but because they have deserved it. You condemn them — but what else does "condemn" mean but to require something of them, and if you cannot require it, surely it is a contradiction to require the impossible, and so it is a contradiction to condemn them. Surely you have compromised yourself when you hint at a law which you yourself are not willing to recognize and which, nevertheless, you have applied to others. You are not lacking, however, in self-possession; you say: "I do not blame them, I do not reproach them, I do not condemn them — I pity them." But suppose, now, that the couple in question did not find it at all tedious. A self-satisfied smile flits across your face, a happy conceit has come to you as a surprise and surely will surprise the person whom you address: "I pity them, as I have said, for either they feel the whole weight of boredom, and for this I pity them, or they do not notice it, and then too I pity them for the fact that they are in a pitiable illusion." That is about the way you would answer me, and in case there were several persons present your attitude of assurance would not fail to produce an effect. Now, however, there is nobody listening to us, so I can proceed with the examination. You pity them, then, in both cases. Only a third case is possible, that of the man who knows that this is how it is with matrimony and lucidly has not entered into it. But this situation is obviously just as pitiable for the man who has felt love and now sees that it cannot be realized; and, finally, the state of the man who has got himself out of this

shipwreck by the egoistic expedients above described is also pitiable, for he has assumed the place of the robber and disturber of the peace. It seems, therefore, that although marriage has generally become the expression for a happy ending, yet its own end is not so very joyful. As the result of this whole investigation we have thus readied the point of pitying everybody universally. But such a result is an absurdity. It is as if one were to say that the result of life's development is that one goes backward. You generally are not afraid of chiming in, and in this case perhaps you would say: "Yes, that sometimes occurs too: when a man has the wind dead against him on a slippery path the result of going forward is often a going backward."

I return again, however, to the consideration of your whole spiritual make-up. You say that yours is a nature designed for conquest and not capable of possessing. In saying this you certainly do not think you have said anything to your own disparagement; on the contrary, you are inclined rather to think yourself greater than others. Let us consider this a little more closely. Which requires greater strength, to go uphill or to go downhill? Evidently more strength is required for the latter, if the grade is a steep one. The disposition to go uphill is inborn in almost every man, whereas most people have a certain dread of going down a steep grade. So, too, I believe that there are far more natures formed for conquest than for possession; and when you feel your superiority over a host of married people and "their stupid animal satisfaction," that may be true to a certain degree, but then you feel that you have nothing to learn from those who are beneath you. True art generally takes the opposite direction to the course which nature follows, though without annihilating the process of nature; and so true art will exhibit itself by possessing, not by conquering. The fact is that possession is conquest in an inverse direction. In this expression you can already see how art and nature strive against one another. The man who possesses has also something which results from conquest; indeed, if one

were to be strict in the use of terms, one might say that only the man who possesses really conquers. You likely have the notion that you too possess, for in fact you have the instant of possession. But this is no possession, for there is no deeper appropriation. Thus, when I think of a conqueror who has subdued kingdoms and lands, he was also in possession of these oppressed provinces, he had great possessions, and yet such a prince is called a conqueror, not a possessor. Only when by wisdom he governed them to their own best interest did he really possess them. Now this is very rare in a conquering nature; generally he will lack the humility, the religiousness, the true humanity, required for possession. It was for this reason, you see, that in my exposition of the relation of marriage to first love I emphasized especially the religious factor, because this will dethrone the conqueror and let the possessor come to evidence. Therefore, I commended marriage for the fact that it was precisely designed for the highest end, for lasting possession. Here I may remind you of a saying you often utter with a flourish: "The great thing is not the original but the acquired." Now the passion for conquest and the fact that one makes conquests is the original, the primitive factor, but the fact that one possesses and wills to possess is the acquired. Pride is required for conquest, humility for possession; violence is required for conquest, patience for possession; cupidity for conquest, contentment for possession; food and drink for conquest, fasting and prayer for possession. But all the predicates I have used here, and surely have used rightly, to characterize the conquering nature may be applied with absolute propriety to the natural man; but the natural man is not the highest. Possession is not a spiritually inert and invalid "appearance" even though it has legal force, but it is a steady acquisition. Here you see again that the possessive nature has in himself the conquering disposition; for he conquers like the farmer, who does not put himself at the head of his henchmen and drive his neighbor away, but conquers by digging

in the earth. True greatness, therefore, is not conquest but possession. Here perhaps you will say, “I will not decide which is the greater, but I am willing to admit that these are two great formations of men. Everyone may decide for himself to which formation he belongs, and must guard against being transformed by this or the other apostle of conversion.” By this last expression I see you have your eye fixed upon me triumphantly. Nevertheless, I will make answer: The one is not merely greater than the other, but it has some sense in it, and the other has not. It has both an antecedent and a consequent clause, the other has merely the antecedent, and instead of the consequent clause a suspicious dash, the significance of which I shall explain to you another time, if you do not know it already.

If now you continue to say that you simply are a conquering nature, that is entirely indifferent to me, for you must concede that it is greater to possess than to conquer. When a man conquers he constantly forgets himself, when he possesses he remembers himself, not as a vain diversion but with all possible seriousness. ‘When one is going uphill one has an eye merely upon the other person, when one is going downhill one must keep watch upon oneself, observing the just relation between the support and the center of gravity.

But I go further. You will perhaps concede that it is more difficult to possess than to conquer. You say, however, “If only I am allowed to conquer, I shall not be so stingy as that; on the contrary, I shall be very liberal in my compliments to those who have the patience to possess, especially if they should be found disposed to work hand in hand with me by being willing to possess my conquests. That is the greater, so let it be, but more beautiful it is not; more ethical it may be, but (with all due deference to ethics) it is at the same time less aesthetic.” Let us try to come to a better understanding of one another on this point. Among a great many people there doubtless prevails a misunderstanding which confounds what

is aesthetically beautiful with the representation of aesthetic beauty. This is readily explained by the fact that the aesthetic satisfaction of which the soul has need is by most people found in reading or in beholding works of art, etc., whereas there are comparatively very few who themselves see the aesthetic as it is in everyday life, who themselves see everyday life in an aesthetic light and do not merely enjoy the poetic representation. But for an aesthetic representation there always is required a concentration in the moment, and the richer this concentration is, the greater is the aesthetic effect. Now it is only by this concentration that the happy, the indescribable moment, the moment of infinite significance, in short, *the* Moment, acquires its true value. This moment is either, as it were, the predestined moment which vibrates through consciousness by awakening the conception of the divinity of existence; or it presupposes a history. In the first case it takes one by surprise; in the second case there is indeed a history, but the artistic representation cannot dwell upon it, at the most it can merely give a hint of it, and then hasten on to the moment. The more it can put into the moment, the more aesthetic it is. Nature, as a philosopher has said, takes the shortest way. One might say that it takes no way, for at one stroke it is present all at once; and when I would lose myself in contemplation of the vaulted heaven I do not have to wait until the innumerable heavenly bodies take shape, for they all are there at once.

The way of history, on the other hand, like that of the law, is very long and toilsome. Then art and poetry step in to shorten the way and delight us with the moment of accomplishment, as they concentrate the extensive in the intensive. But the more significant that thing is which is to come out, the slower is the way of history, but the more significant is, also, this slow course itself, and the more it will be seen that the way is also the goal. As it is related to the individual life, history is of two kinds: external and internal. They are currents of two sorts with opposite movements. The first kind,

again, has two sides. In the one case the individual has not that for which he strives, and history is the strife in which he acquires it. In the second case the individual has that for which he strives, yet cannot come into possession of it because there is constantly something external which hinders him from doing so, and history is, then, the strife in which he triumphs over these hindrances. The second kind of history begins with possession, and history is the development through which one acquires possession. Since in the first case history is external and that towards which it strives lies outside, it has not true reality, and the poetic and artistic representation does quite right in shortening history and hastening on to the intensive moment. To stick to the subject which we have more particularly in hand, let us think of romantic love. Imagine, then, a knight who has slain five wild boars, four dragons, and delivered three enchanted princes, brothers of the princess whom he worships. In the romantic chain of reasoning this has complete reality. To the artist and the poet, however, it is of no importance at all whether there are five or only four monsters slain. The artist is, on the whole, more restricted than the poet, but even the latter will not be interested in relating circumstantially how the hero accomplished the destruction of each individual wild boar. He hastens on to the moment. He perhaps reduces the number, concentrates the toils and dangers with poetic intensity, and hastens on to the moment, the moment of possession. To him the whole historical succession is of comparatively little importance.

Where, however, it is a question of internal history, every little moment is of the utmost importance. Internal history is the only true history; but true history contends with that which is the life principle of history, i.e., with time. But when one contends with time, then the temporal and every little moment of it acquires for this fact immense reality. Whenever the internal process of blossoming in the individual has not yet begun and the individual is shut, there can only be external history. On the other hand, as soon as this

blossoming, so to speak, springs out, internal history begins. Think now of the theme with which we started, the difference between the conquering and the possessive natures. The conquering nature is constantly outside himself, the possessive nature within himself; hence, the former has external history, the latter has internal history. But since external history is the one kind of history which can without detriment be concentrated, it is natural that art and poetry choose this especially for representation, and hence, choose likewise the unopened individual and everything that has to do with him. It is said, indeed, that love opens the individual, but this is not true when love is conceived as it is in romances. There the individual is merely brought to the point where he will open — with that it ends; or he is about to open but is interrupted. But since external history and the shut individuality will remain more especially the subjects for artistic and poetic representation, so, too, will everything which goes to compose the content of such an individuality be preferred. But substantially this is what belongs to the natural man. Here are a few examples. Pride can very well be represented, for the essential point in pride is not succession but intensity in the moment. Humility is represented with difficulty, because here if anywhere we are dealing with succession, and whereas the beholder needs only to see pride in its culmination, in the other instance he properly requires what poetry and art cannot give, i.e., to see humility in its constant process of being, for it is essential to humility that it constantly remains, and when it is shown in its ideal moment the beholder senses the lack of something, because he feels that its true ideality does not consist in the fact that it is ideal in the moment but that it is constant. Romantic love can very well be represented in the moment, but conjugal love cannot, because an ideal husband is not one who is such once in his life but one who every day is such. If I would represent a hero who conquers kingdoms and lands, it can very well be represented in the moment, but a crossbearer who every day takes up his

cross cannot be represented either in poetry or in art, because the point is that he does it every day. If I would imagine a hero who stakes his life, it can very well be concentrated in the moment, but not the business of dying daily, for here the principal point is that it occurs every day. Courage can very well be concentrated in the moment, but not patience, precisely for the reason that patience strives with time. You will say that after all art has represented Christ as the image of patience, bearing all the sin of the world, and that religious poetry has concentrated all the bitterness of life in one cup and let one individual drain it in one moment. That is true, but it is because this has been almost spatially concentrated. The man, however, who really knows a little about patience knows very well that it does not properly stand opposed to the intensity of suffering (for with that it rather approaches courage) but to time, and that the true patience is that which is seen to be contending with time, or is properly long-suffering. But long-suffering cannot be represented artistically, for the point of it is incommensurable with art; neither can it be poetized, for it requires the long, protracted tedium of time.

Now what I would further say to you here you may regard as the lowly offering which a poor married man makes at the altar of aesthetics, and though you and all the priests of aesthetics should disdain it, I shall, for all that, know how to console myself, and that all the more because the offering I bring is not showbread, which may be eaten only by priests, but homemade bread, which like all domestic cookery is simple and not highly spiced, but wholesome and nourishing.

When one follows, either dialectically or historically, the development of the aesthetically beautiful, one will find that the direction of this movement is away from spatial determinants to those of time, and that the perfection of art depends upon the successive possibility of detaching oneself from space and orienting oneself towards time. In this consists the transition and the

significance of the transition from sculpture to painting, as Schelling has recently pointed out. Music has time as its element, but it gains no permanent place in it; its significance lies in its constant vanishing in time; it emits sounds in time, but at once it vanishes and has no permanence. Finally, poetry is the highest of all arts and is therefore the art which knows best how to set off to advantage the significance of time. It does not need to confine itself to the moment the way painting does, neither does it vanish as music does, but nevertheless, it is compelled, as we have seen, to concentrate in the moment. Hence, it has limits, and (as was shown above) it cannot represent that which has its reality in temporal succession. And yet the fact that the significance of time is stressed does not decrease the aesthetic effect; on the contrary, the aesthetic ideal becomes richer and fuller in proportion as the importance of time is duly emphasized. How, then, can the aesthetic be represented, seeing that it is incommensurable even with poetry? Answer; by living it. It thereby acquires a resemblance to music, which *is* merely because it is constantly repeated, existing merely in the instant of execution. For this reason I called attention above to the pernicious confusion of the aesthetic with whatever can be presented in the form of poetic reproduction. For example, everything I am talking about here can of course be presented aesthetically, not, however, in the form of poetic reproduction, but in the fact that one lives it, puts it into effect in real life. It is in this way aesthetics is neutralized and reconciled with life; for though in one sense poetry and art are a reconciliation with life, yet in another sense they are at enmity with it because they reconcile only one side of the soul. Here I have reached the highest concept of the aesthetic. And truly he who has enough humility and courage to let himself be transfigured to this degree; who feels that he is, as it were, a character in the drama which the Deity composes, where the poet and the prompter are not different persons, where the individual, like a practiced actor who has lived

himself into his part and into his lines, is not disturbed by the prompter but feels that what is whispered to him is what he himself would say, so that it almost becomes doubtful whether he puts the words in the prompter's mouth or the prompter in his; he who in the deepest sense feels that he is poet and poetized, who at the moment he feels himself to be the poet possesses the primitive pathos of the lines, at the moment he feels himself poetized has the erotic ear which picks up every sound — that man, and that man alone, has realized the highest ideal of aesthetics. But this history which proves to be incommensurable even with poetry is internal history. It has the idea in itself, and precisely for this reason it is aesthetic. It begins, therefore, with possession, as I expressed it, and its progress is the acquisition of this possession. It is an eternity in which the temporal has not vanished like an ideal moment, but in which it is constantly present as a real moment. When patience thus acquires itself in patience we have inward or interior history.

Let us now glance at the relation between romantic and conjugal love — for the relation between the natures made for conquest and for possession offers no difficulty at all. Romantic love remains constantly abstract in itself, and, if it is able to acquire no external history, death already is lying in wait for it, because its eternity is illusory. Conjugal love begins with possession and acquires inward history. It is faithful. So is romantic love — but now note the difference. The faithful romantic lover waits, let us say, for fifteen years — then comes the instant which rewards him. Here poetry sees very rightly that the fifteen years can very well be concentrated. It hastens on, then, to the moment. A married man is faithful for fifteen years, yet during those fifteen years he has had possession, so in that long succession of time he has continuously acquired the faithfulness he possessed, since after all conjugal love contains within itself first love and by the same token the fidelity thereof. But such an ideal marriage cannot be represented, for

the point is time in its extension. At the end of the fifteen years he has apparently got no further than he was at the beginning, yet he has lived in a high degree aesthetically. His possession has not been like dead property, but he has constantly been acquiring his possession. He has not fought with lions and ogres, but with the most dangerous enemy; with time. But for him eternity does not come afterwards as in the case of the knight, but he has had eternity in time, has preserved eternity in time. He alone, therefore, has triumphed over time; for one can say of the knight that he has killed time, as indeed a man constantly wishes to kill time when it has no reality for him. But this is never the perfect victory. The married man, being a true conqueror, has not killed time but has saved it and preserved it in eternity. The married man who does this, truly lives poetically. He solves the great riddle of living in eternity and yet hearing the hall clock strike, and hearing it in such a way that the stroke of the hour does not shorten but prolongs his eternity — a contradiction as profound but far more glorious than the situation described in a well-known tale of the Middle Ages which tells of an unhappy man that he awoke in hell and cried out, "What time is it?" and the devil answered, "Eternity." And now even if this is something which cannot be represented in art, let it be your comfort as it is mine that the highest and most beautiful things in life are not to be heard about, nor read about, nor seen, but, if one will, may be lived. When, then, I willingly admit that romantic love lends itself more aptly to artistic representation than does conjugal love, this is not by any means to say that the latter is less aesthetic than the former; on the contrary, it is more aesthetic. In one of the tales of the Romantic School which evinces the greatest genius, there is one character who has no desire to write poetry like the others among whom he lives, because it is a waste of time and deprives him of the true enjoyment — he prefers to live. Now if he had had the right conception of what it is to live, he would have been the man for me.

Conjugal love has its foe in time, its triumph in time, its eternity in time, and so it would have its problems, even if I were to imagine it free from all the so-called external and internal trials. Generally, it has these too; but if one were to interpret them rightly, one must observe two things: that these trials are constantly inward determinants; and that they constantly have in them the determinant of time. It is easy to see that for this reason, too, conjugal love cannot be represented. It constantly drags itself back inwardly, and (to use the expression in a good sense) it constantly drags along in time; but what is to be represented by reproduction must let itself be lured out, and its time must be capable of abbreviation. You may convince yourself of this more thoroughly by considering the predicates commonly applied to conjugal love. It is faithful, constant, humble, patient, long-suffering, indulgent, sincere, contented, vigilant, willing, joyful. All these virtues have the characteristic that they are inward qualifications of the individual. The individual is not fighting with external foes but fights with himself, fights out love from within him. And they have reference to time, for their truth does not consist in being once for all but in being constantly what they are. And by these virtues nothing else is acquired, only they themselves are acquired. Conjugal love, therefore, is not only what you, mockingly, have often called it: an everyday occurrence; but is also, at the same time, the divine (in the Greek sense); and it is the divine by reason of its being an occurrence every day. Conjugal love does not come with any outward sign, like “the rich bird” with whizzing and bluster, but it is the imperishable nature of a quiet spirit.

Of this fact you and all natures born for conquest have no conception. You are never in yourselves, but constantly outside yourselves. Yea, so long as every nerve in you is aquiver, whether when you are stealing softly about, or when you step out boldly and Janizary music within you drowns out your consciousness — then you feel that you are living. But when the

battle is won, when the last echo of the last shot has died away, when the swift thoughts, like a staff officer hurrying back to headquarters, report that the victory is yours — then, in fact, you know nothing more, you know not how to begin; for then, for the first time you are at the true beginning.

What you, therefore, under the name of custom abhor as unavoidable in marriage is merely the historical factor in it, which in your perverted eye acquires such a terrifying aspect.

But what is this thing you are accustomed to think of as not merely annihilated but profaned by the "custom" which is inseparable from conjugal love? Generally you think of what you call "the visible sacred symbol of the erotic," which, as you say, "like all signs or tokens, has in itself no importance but depends for its significance upon the energy, the artistic bravura and virtuosity, themselves proofs of inborn genius, with which it is executed."

"How disgusting it is," you say, "to see the languor with which such things are performed in married life, how perfunctorily, how sluggishly it is done, almost at the stroke of the clock — pretty much as among the tribe the Jesuits discovered in Paraguay, which was so sluggish that the Jesuits found it necessary to ring a bell at midnight as a welcome notice to all husbands, to remind them thereby of their marital duties. So everything is done on time, as they are trained to do it." Let us at this point agree that in our meditation we shall not let ourselves be disturbed by the fact that there is a great deal to be seen in existence which is ludicrous and preposterous; let us simply see whether it is necessary, and, if so, learn from you the way of salvation. In this respect I dare not expect much from you; for like the Spanish knight of the doleful countenance you are fighting, though in a different sense, for a vanished time. For as you are fighting for the moment against time, you actually are fighting for what has vanished. Let us take an idea, an expression, from your poetic world, or from the real world of first

love: “the lovers *look* at one another.” You know very well how to underscore this word “look” and to put into it an infinite reality, an eternity. In this sense a married couple who have lived together for ten years and seen one another daily cannot “look” at one another. But might they not therefore be able to look lovingly at one another? Now here we have again your old heresy. You have got to the point of limiting love to a certain age, and limiting love for one person to a very short period of time. Thereupon, like all conquering natures, you seek recruits in order to carry out your experiment — but this, indeed, is the very deepest profanation of the eternal power of love. This, indeed, is despair. However you turn and twist, you must admit that the gist of the matter is to preserve love in time. If this is impossible, then love is an impossibility. Your misfortune is that you recognize love simply and solely by these visible signs. If they are to be repeated again and again, and must be accompanied, you are to note, by a morbid reflection as to whether they continually possess the reality they once had by reason of the accidental circumstance that it was the first time, it is no wonder you are alarmed and that you associate these signs and “gesticulations” with things of which one dare not say *decies repetita placebunt;* for if that which gives them value was the characteristic qualification “the first time,” a repetition is indeed impossible. But healthy love has an entirely different worth; it is in time it accomplishes its work, and therefore, it will be capable of rejuvenating itself by means of these outward signs, and (what to me is the principal thing) it has an entirely different conception of time and of the significance of repetition.

I have shown in the foregoing discussion that conjugal love has its conflict in time, its victory in time, its blessing in time. I then regarded time merely as simple progression; now I shall show that it is not merely a simple progression in which the original datum is preserved, but a growing progression in which the original datum increases. You with your great

powers of observation will certainly grant that I am right in making the general observation that men are divided into two great classes: those who predominantly live in hope; and those who predominantly live in recollection. Both have a wrong relation to time. The healthy individual lives at once both in hope and in recollection, and only thereby does his life acquire true and substantial continuity. So, then, he has hope and does not will, like those who live off of recollection, to return backward in time. What, then, does recollection do for him? For, after all, some influence it surely must have. It sets a cross over the note of the instant — the further back recollection goes, and the more frequent the repetition, the more crosses there are. Thus, if in the present year the individual experiences an erotic moment, this is enhanced by the fact that he recollects one the year before, etc. In a beautiful way this has also found expression in married life. I do not know in what age the world now finds itself, but you know as well as I that people are accustomed to say that first comes the golden age, then the silver age, then the copper age, then the iron age. In marriage this is inverted: first comes the silver wedding, then the golden wedding. Is not recollection really the point of such a wedding? And yet the marriage terminology declares that this is still more beautiful than the first wedding. Now you must not misunderstand this — as you would do, for instance, if you might be pleased to say, "Then it would be best to get married in the cradle in order to begin promptly with one's silver wedding and have hope of being the first inventor of a brand-new term in the vocabulary of married life." You yourself presumably perceive the fallacy of your witticism, and I shall not dwell upon it any further. What I would remind you of, however, is that the individuals are in fact not merely living in hope; they constantly have in the present both the one and the other, both hope and recollection. At the first wedding hope has the same effect that recollection has at the last. Hope hovers over them as the hope of eternity which fills the moment

to the brim. You also will perceive the correctness of this when you reflect that if one were to marry merely in the hope of a silver wedding, and then hoped and hoped again for twenty-five years, one would be in no state to celebrate the silver wedding when the twenty-fifth year came around, for indeed, one would have nothing to recollect, since with all this hoping everything would have fallen apart. Moreover, it has often occurred to me to wonder why, according to the universal usage and way of thinking, the state of single blessedness has no such brilliant prospects, that on the contrary, people rather turn it to ridicule when a bachelor celebrates a jubilee. The reason, doubtless, is that in general it is assumed that the single state never can rightly grasp the true present, which is a unity of hope and recollection, and that therefore, bachelors are for the most part addicted either to hope or to recollection. But this again suggests the correct relation to time which common estimation also attributes to conjugal love.

There is also something else, however, in married life which you characterize by the word custom: “its monotony,” you say, “the total lack of events, its everlasting vacuity, which is death and worse than death.” You know that there are neurasthenics who may be disturbed by the slightest noise, who are unable to think when someone is walking softly across the floor. Have you observed that there is also another sort of neurasthenia? There are people so weak that they need loud noise and a distracting environment in order to be able to work. Why is this, unless for the fact that they have no command over themselves, except in an inverse sense? When they are alone their thoughts disappear in the indefinite; on the other hand, when there is noise and hubbub around them, this compels them to pit their will against it. It is for this reason you are afraid of peace and quietness and repose. You are within yourself only when there is opposition, but therefore you are never within yourself. That is to say, the moment you assimilate opposition there is quiet again. Therefore, you do not dare to do so. But

then you and the opposition remain standing face to face, and so you are not within yourself.

The same thing, of course, applies here which we noted earlier in the case of time. You are outside yourself and therefore cannot dispense with the other as an opposition; you believe that only a restless spirit is alive, and all men of experience think that only a quiet spirit is truly alive; for you, an agitated sea is the image of life, for me it is still deep waters. Often I have sat by a bit of purling water. It is always the same, the same soft melody, the same green plants on its floor, swaying beneath its quiet waves, the same little creatures running about at the bottom, a little fish which glides under the protection of the overhanging flowers, spreading out its fins against the current, hiding under a stone. How monotonous, and yet how rich in change! Such is the home life of marriage: quiet, modest, purling — it has not many *changements,* and yet like that water it purls, yet like that water it has melody, dear to the man who knows it, dear to him above all other sounds because he knows it. It makes no pompous display, and yet sometimes there is shed over it a luster which does not interrupt its customary course, like as when the moonbeams fall upon that water and reveal the instrument upon which it plays its melody. Such is the home life of marriage. But in order to be seen thus and to be lived thus it presupposes the one quality which I shall mention to you. I find it mentioned in a poem by Oehlenschlâger upon which, at least in time gone by, I know you set great store. For the sake of completeness I shall transcribe the whole of it:

How much must come together in the world That love's enchantment may be brought to pass!

First the two hearts which know each other well, Then charm which doth accompany them both, The moon then casting its bewitching beams Through the beech forests in the early spring, Then that these two can meet there all alone —

Then the first kiss — and then... their innocence.

You, too, are given to eulogizing love. I will not deprive you of that which is not indeed your property, for it is the property of the poet, but which, nevertheless, you have appropriated; but since I too have appropriated it, let us share it — you get the whole poem, I the last words: “their innocence.”

Finally, there is still another side to married life which has often given you occasion for attack. You say, “Conjugal love conceals in itself something quite different. It seems so mild and heartfelt and tender, but as soon as the door is closed behind the married pair, then before you can say Jack Robinson out comes the rod called duty. You may deck out this scepter as much as you will, you can make it into a Shrovetide rod, it still remains a rod.” I deal with this objection here because it also is due essentially to a misunderstanding of the historical factor in conjugal love. You would have it that either obscure powers or caprice are the constituent factors of love. As soon as consciousness comes forward to join them this enchantment vanishes. But this consciousness is conjugal love. To express it quite crudely — in place of the baton with which the director of the orchestra indicates the tempo for the graceful attitudes assumed in the dance of first love, you show us the unpleasant stick of the policeman. First of all you must concede to me that so long as there is no alteration in first love (and this, we have agreed, is contained in conjugal love) there can be no question of the strict necessity of duty. So the fact is you do not believe in the eternity of first love. Here we are back again at your old heresy: it is you who so often set yourself up as the knight of first love, and yet you do not believe in it, yea, you profane it. So because you do not believe in it you dare not enter into an alliance which, when you no longer are *volens* may compel you *nolens* to remain in it. For you, therefore, love is obviously not the highest thing, for otherwise you would be glad there was a power

capable of compelling you to remain in it. You will, perhaps, make answer that this remedy is no remedy; but to that I will remark that it depends upon how one looks at the matter.

This is one of the points to which we constantly return — you, as it seems, against your will and without being quite clear what it involves, I with full consciousness of its significance: the point, namely, that the illusory or naïve eternity of first or romantic love cancels itself out, in one way or another. Just because you try to retain love in this immediate form, try to make yourself believe that true freedom consists in being outside oneself, intoxicated by dreams, therefore you fear the metamorphosis, not regarding it as such but as something altogether heterogeneous which implies the death of first love, and hence your abhorrence of duty. For, of course, if duty has not already subsisted as a germ in first love, it is absolutely disturbing when it makes its appearance. But such is not the case with conjugal love. Already in the ethical and religious factors it has duty in it, and when this appears before it, it is not as a stranger, a shameless intruder, who nevertheless has such authority that one dare not by virtue of the mysteriousness of love show him the door. No, duty comes as an old friend, an intimate, a confidant, whom the lovers mutually recognize in the deepest secret of their love. And when he speaks, it is nothing new he has to say; and when he has spoken, the individuals humble themselves under it, but at the same time are uplifted just because they are assured that what he enjoins is what they themselves wish, and that his commanding it is merely a more majestic, a more exalted, a divine way of expressing the fact that their wish can be realized. It would not have been enough if he had encouraged them by saying, “It can be done, love can be preserved,” but when he says, “It shall be preserved,” there is in that an authority which answers to the heartfelt desire of love. Love drives out fear; but yet when love is for a moment fearful for itself, fearful of its own salvation, duty is

the divine nutriment love stands in need of; for it says, “Fear not, you shall conquer,” speaking not futuristically, for that only suggests hope, but imperatively, and in this lies an assurance which nothing can shake.

So then you regard duty as the enemy of love; I regard it as its friend. You will, perhaps, be content at hearing this declaration, and with your customary mockery will congratulate me on such an interesting and uncommon friend. I, on the other hand, will by no means be satisfied with this reply but will take the liberty of carrying the war into your own territory. If duty, once it has appeared in consciousness, is an enemy of love, then love must do its best to conquer it; for you, after all, would not think of love as a being so impotent that it cannot vanquish every opposition. On the other hand, you think that when duty makes its appearance it is all over with love, and you think also that duty, early or late, must make its appearance, not merely in conjugal love but also in romantic love; and the truth is that you are afraid of conjugal love because it has in it duty to such a degree that when it makes its appearance you cannot run away from it. In romantic love, on the other hand, you think this is all right, for as soon as the instant arrives when duty is mentioned, love is over, and the arrival of duty is the signal for you, with a very courtly bow, to say farewell. Here you see again what your eulogies of love amount to. If duty is the enemy of love, and if love cannot vanquish this enemy, then love is not the true conqueror. The consequence is that you must leave love in the lurch. When once you have got the desperate idea that duty is the enemy of love, your defeat is certain, and you have done just *as much to* disparage love and deprive it of *its* majesty as you have done to show despite of duty, and yet it was only the latter you meant to do. You see, this again is despair, whether you feel the pain of it or seek in despair to forget it. If you cannot reach the point of seeing the aesthetical, the ethical and the religious as three great allies, if you do not know how to conserve the unity of the diverse appearances

which everything assumes in these diverse spheres, then life is devoid of meaning, then one must grant that you are justified in maintaining your pet theory that one can say of everything, “Do it or don’t do it — you will regret both.”

Now I am not, like you, under the tragic necessity of having to begin a campaign against duty which cannot but have an unfortunate ending. For me, duty is not one climate and love another, but for me duty makes love the true temperate climate, and for me love makes duty the true temperate climate, and perfection consists in this unity. However, to make the falsity of your doctrine thoroughly evident, I will pursue this theme a little longer, begging you to reflect upon the various ways in which one might feel that duty is the enemy of love.

Imagine a man who had become a husband without ever having taken seriously into account the ethical factor in marriage. He loved with the whole passion of youth, and then suddenly was moved by an outward occasion to doubt whether it was not possible that she whom he loved, but to whom also he was tied by a bond of duty, might not think that he loved her after all only because it was his duty. You see that he was in a position like that of the man previously mentioned, to him, too, duty seemed to be in opposition to love; but he was in love, and for him love was truly the highest thing, and hence, his effort would be to overcome this enemy. So he would love her, not because duty prescribed it, not in the scant measure of a quantum satis which is all that duty can enjoin, but he would love her with all his soul and with all his strength and with all his might, he would love her even at the moment when (if such a thing were possible) duty bade him desist. You can easily see the confusion in his train of thought. What did he do? He loved her with his whole soul — but this, indeed, is just what duty enjoins. For let us not be confused by the talk of those who have the notion that duty is only a congeries of ceremonial prescriptions. Duty is only one:

to love truly with the inward movement of the heart; and duty is as protean in its forms as is love itself, and it pronounces everything good when it is of love, and denounces everything, however beautiful and specious it may be, if it is not of love. You see that this man, too, has assumed an incorrect attitude; but just because there was truth in him he does — although not willing to do only that — just what duty enjoins, neither more nor less. In a way he does more, for the fact that he does it; for the "more" which I find it possible for me to do is just this, that I am able actually to do what duty enjoins. Duty commands — more than that it cannot do. The "more" which I am capable of doing is to do what it commands, and the instant I do this I can in a certain sense say that I am doing "more." Translate duty from the external to the internal, and with that I am well beyond duty. You see from this what infinite harmony and wisdom and consistency there is in the world of spirit. When a man starts from a definite point and calmly pursues his path with truth and energy, it must always be an illusion when everything else seems to be in contradiction to it; and when someone believes he has thoroughly demonstrated discord, he has demonstrated harmony. Therefore, the husband we spoke about got off easily, and the only punishment he had to suffer was that duty made a bit of fun of him for his "little faith." Duty constantly chimes in with love. If you separate them, as that man did, and make one part the whole, you are constantly in self-contradiction. It is as if in the word "be" a man were to separate "b" and "e" and so would have no "e" but would maintain that "b" was the whole. The moment he pronounces it he utters the "e" along with it. So it is with true love: it is not a dumb and unutterable letter, but neither is it a soft and inapprehensible indefiniteness. It is an articulate sound, a letter. Is duty hard? *Eh bien,* then love pronounces it, it realizes it, and thereby does more than its duty. Is love by way of becoming so soft that it cannot be held fast? Well then, duty imposes upon it boundaries.

Now if you were in the same case as that man we have been talking about, if your notion that duty is the enemy of love were only an innocent misunderstanding, things would turn out with you as fortunately as they did with him. But your interpretation, though no doubt it is a misunderstanding, is a guilty misunderstanding. Hence it is that you disparage not only duty but also love, hence it is that duty appears to be an insuperable enemy. For duty loves only true love and has a mortal hatred of false love and slays it. The individuals, if they are in the truth, will see in duty merely the eternal expression of the fact that the path into eternity is prepared for them, that the path in which they would gladly walk they not only are permitted to take but are commanded to take, and that over this path there watches a divine providence which constantly points out to them the prospect and sets up warning signs at all perilous places. The man who loves, why should he be unwilling to accept a divine authorization just because it is expressed divinely and does not say merely, "You may" but "Thou shalt"? By duty the way is cleared for the lovers, and I believe it is for this reason that duty is expressed by the future tense, to suggest its historical implication.

Now I am through with this little exposition. Presumably it has made an impression upon you, you have a feeling that everything is inverted, and you cannot harden yourself against the logical consistency with which I have spoken. If I had said all this to you, however, in a conversation, you would likely have found difficulty in refraining from the sarcastic remark that I am preachifying. But you cannot properly accuse my presentation of suffering from this fault or of being what it perhaps ought to be when one is speaking to such a hardened sinner as you. And as for your effusions, your wisdom, they not too infrequently recall to mind the Book of the Preacher, Ecclesiastes, and really, one might suppose that occasionally you choose your texts from it.

But I will let you provide me with an occasion for illuminating this matter. For the fact is, you do not generally make light of ethics, and one has first to drive you to a certain point before you throw it overboard. As long as you possibly can you keep it on your side. “I by no means despise duty” — in this way your milder effusions commonly begin, the more refined assassination of duty. “Far from it. But above all, let us have pure bread in the bag, as they say: duty is duty, love is love. Period! Above all, no mixing things up. Or is not marriage the only abortion of this kind, with this hermaphroditic ambiguity? All else is either duty or love. I recognize that it is a man’s duty to seek a definite profession in life, I regard it as his duty to be faithful to his calling, and, on the other hand, when he violates his duty he suffers well-deserved punishment. Here is duty. I undertake something definite, I can state precisely what it is, I promise to perform it dutifully — if I do not, I am confronted by a power which is able to compel me. On the other hand, if I attach myself closely in friendship to another person, love is everything in this case, I recognize no duty; if love is at an end, then friendship is over. It is reserved for marriage alone to base itself upon such an absurdity. What after all does it mean to pledge oneself to love? Where are the limits? When have I fulfilled my duty? How is my duty exactly defined? To what judicial board shall I appeal in case of doubt? And if I do not fulfil my duty, where is the power which will compel me? The State and the Church, it is true, have established certain limits; but even though I do not overstep them, may I not be a bad husband? Who will punish me? Who will defend her who suffers under it?” The answer is: you yourself.

However, before I go on to resolve the confusion in which you have ensnared yourself and me, I must make one observation. There is often in your statements a certain degree of ambiguity, which to you is essential and characteristic. What you say might be said as well by the most light-minded

and the most heavy-minded of men. You know this very well, for it is one of the expedients you employ to swindle people. You say the same thing at various times, putting the emphasis at different places, and, lo, the whole thing turns out to be different! If someone objects that you are saying something different from what you said once before, you calmly reply, “Isn’t it word for word the same?” But enough of this! Let us see how it stands with your classification. There is a proverbial expression preserved through the centuries, characterizing the shrewd policy of the Romans: *divide et imper a.* With a far profounder significance one can apply this to the operation of the human understanding, for its cunning policy is to divide and by thus dividing to assure itself of the mastery, seeing that the powers which would be invincible as allies cancel one another when they are separated and hostile. So your notion is that all the rest of life can be construed under the category of duty, or under its opposite, and that it never has occurred to anybody to apply a different criterion, marriage alone being guilty of this contradiction. You adduce professional duty as an example and think that it is an apt example of a relationship in which duty alone is involved. This, however, is by no means the case. For if a man were to conceive of his profession as merely the sum total of appointments he had to keep at definite times and places, he would debase himself and his calling and his duty. Or do you think that such a view would make a man a good civil functionary? What place would be left for the enthusiasm with which one sanctifies one’s calling, what room for the devotion with which one loves it? Or what judicial forum could keep check on him? Or is not this love and enthusiasm required of him precisely as a duty? And would not every man who assumed an office without these qualities be regarded by the State as a hireling, whose toil and moil it might indeed use and reward, though in another sense he was an unworthy official? If the State does not say this expressly, it is because what it demands is something external,

something tangible, and when that is performed, the other is assumed. On the other hand, the main point in marriage is inwardness, which can neither be seen nor pointed out — but of this the precise expression is love. Hence I see no contradiction in requiring love as a duty; for the fact that no one can check up on it has nothing to do with the case, seeing that the man can keep check on himself. If you continue, then, to demand this external control, it is either because you want to shirk duty, or because you are so fearful for yourself that you would have yourself declared legally incompetent — but that is just as wrong and unacceptable as the other.

If you hold fast what I have set forth in the foregoing treatise, just as I have expounded it, you will easily perceive that in holding fast to the inwardness of duty in love I have not done so with the wild alarm which sometimes is displayed by men in whom prosaic common sense has first annihilated the feelings of immediacy and who, then, in their old age have betaken themselves to duty, men who in their blindness cannot express strongly enough their scorn of the purely natural, nor stupidly enough sing the praise of duty — as though with this it was different from what you call it. Of such a breach between love and duty I, thank God, know nothing; I have not fled with my love into wild regions and deserts where in my loneliness I return to savagery, neither have I asked all my neighbors what I should do. Such isolation and such participation are equally mad.

I have constantly had *impressa vestigia* before me, even in the universally valid sphere which is duty. I have also felt that there are instants when the only salvation is to let duty speak, that it is wholesome to let it punish me. I have felt this not with the melancholy effeminacy of a *heautontimoroumenos,* but with all seriousness and emphasis. But I have not been afraid of duty; it has not appeared before me as an enemy which would disturb the bit of happiness and joy I had hoped to preserve through life, rather it has appeared before me as a friend, the first and only confidant

of our love. But this power of having constantly a free outlook is the blessing bestowed by duty, whereas romantic love goes astray or comes to an impasse because of its unhistorical character.

Dixi et animam meam liberavni — not as though my soul had been entangled hitherto, and now in this prolix expectoration had found vent. No, this is merely a wholesome respiration in which I have enjoyed my freedom. Respiration is a word which indicates the flowing back of that which first had flowed out. In respiration the organism enjoys its freedom, and so have I in this letter enjoyed my freedom, the freedom I have every day.

So may you accept with a well-prepared mind the well-tested gift I offer you. If you should find it far too small a thing to satisfy you, then see if it might not be possible to prepare yourself better, see whether you have not forgotten some precautionary measure. The Serbs have a popular legend about a prodigious giant who had an appetite just as prodigious. He came to a poor cottager and wanted to share his midday meal. The cottager placed on the table the little his humble house afforded. The giant's greedy eye had already devoured it all, and had likely made the observation that he would not have been any better fed if he had actually eaten it up. They seated themselves. It never occurred to the cottager that there might not be enough for both. The giant reached for the dish. The cottager stopped him by saying, "It is the custom in my house to say a prayer first." The giant submitted to it — and, lo, there was enough for both.

Dixi et animant meam liberavi — for I have liberated her, also, whom I love with the youthful enthusiasm of first love. Not as though she had previously been bound, but she has rejoiced with me in our freedom.

When you receive my affectionate greetings receive also, as you commonly do, a greeting from her, as kindly and cordial as ever.

It is a long time since I have seen you chez nous. I can say this both in a literal and in a figurative sense. For during the fortnight I have employed my evenings instar omnium in writing this letter I have constantly seen you beside me; yet even in a figurative sense I cannot properly say that I have seen you chez nous, i.e., in my house, in my room, but rather outside my door where with my reproaches I have driven you. On my part this has not been a disagreeable task nor unkindly meant, and I am sure you will not take it amiss. However, it will be still more agreeable to me to see you frequently *chez nous,* both in a literal and a figurative sense. I say this with all the pride of a husband who feels himself entitled to use the formula *chez nous;* I say it with all the humane respect which every person may always be sure of encountering *chez nous.* Accept, therefore, an invitation for next Sunday — not a family invitation which reads "forever" and means a whole day — come when you will, sure of being always welcome; stay as long as you will, being always an acceptable guest; leave when you will, always with God's speed.

EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN THE AESTHETICAL AND THE ETHICAL IN THE COMPOSITION OF PERSONALITY

MY FRIEND, WHAT I have so often said to you I say now once again, or rather I shout it: Either/or, aut/aut. For a single aut adjoined as a rectification does not make the situation clear, since the question here at issue is so important that one cannot rest satisfied with a part of it, and in itself it is too coherent to be possessed partially. There are situations in life where it would be ridiculous or a species of madness to apply an either/or; but also, there are men whose souls are too dissolute (in the etymological sense of the word) to grasp what is implied in such a dilemma, whose personalities lack the energy to say with pathos, Either/or. Upon me these words have always made a deep impression, and they still do, especially when I pronounce them absolutely and without specific reference to any objects, for this use of them suggests the possibility of starting the most dreadful contrasts into action. They affect me like a magic formula of incantation, and my soul becomes exceeding serious, sometimes almost harrowed. I think of my early youth, when without clearly comprehending what it is to make a choice I listened with childish trust to the talk of my elders and the instant of choice was solemn and venerable, although in choosing I was only following the instructions of another person. I think of the occasions in my later life when I stood at the crossways, when my soul was matured in the hour of decision. I think of the many occasions in life less important but by no means indifferent to me, when it was a question of making a choice. For although there is only one situation in which either/or has absolute significance, namely, when truth, righteousness and holiness are lined up on one side, and lust and base propensities and obscure passions and perdition on the other; yet, it is always important to choose

rightly, even as between things which one may innocently choose; it is important to test oneself, lest some day one might have to beat a painful retreat to the point from which one started, and might have reason to thank God if one had to reproach oneself for nothing worse than a waste of time. In common parlance I use these words as others use them, and it would indeed be a foolish pedantry to give up using them. But sometimes it occurs, nevertheless, that I become aware of using them with regard to things entirely indifferent. Then they lay aside their humble dress, I forget the insignificant thoughts they discriminated, they advance to meet me with all their dignity, in their official robes. As a magistrate in common life may appear in plain clothes and mingle without distinction in the crowd, so do these words mingle in common speech — when, however, the magistrate steps forward with authority he distinguishes himself from all. Like such a magistrate whom I am accustomed to see only on solemn occasions, these words appear before me, and my soul always becomes serious. And although my life now has to a certain degree its either/or behind it, yet I know well that it may still encounter many a situation where the either/or will have its full significance. I hope, however, that these words may find me in a worthy state of mind when they check me on my path, and I hope that I may be successful in choosing the right course; at all events, I shall endeavor to make the choice with real earnestness, and with that I venture, at least, to hope that I shall the sooner get out of the wrong path.

And now as for you — this phrase is only too often on your lips, it has almost become a byword with you. What significance has it for you? None at all. You, according to your own expression, regard it as a wink of the eye, a snap of the fingers, a coup de main, an abracadabra. At every opportunity you know how to introduce it, nor is it without effect; for it affects you as strong drink affects a neurasthenic, you become completely intoxicated by what you call the higher madness. “It is the compendium,” you say, “of all

practical wisdom, but no one has ever inculcated it so pithily (like a god in the form of a puppet talking to suffering humanity) as that great thinker and true practical philosopher who said to a man who had insulted him by pulling off his hat and throwing it on the floor, 'If you pick it up, you'll get a thrashing; if you don't pick it up, you'll also get a thrashing; now you can choose.'" You take great delight in "comforting" people when they have recourse to you in critical situations. You listen to their exposition of the case and then say, "Yes, I perceive perfectly that there are two possibilities, one can either do this or that. My sincere opinion and my friendly counsel is as follows: Do it/or don't do it — you will regret both." But he who mocks others mocks himself, and your rejoinder is not a mere nothing but a profound mockery of yourself, a sorry proof how limp your soul is, that your whole philosophy of life is concentrated in one single proposition, "I say merely either/or." In case this really were your serious meaning, there would be nothing one could do with you, one must simply put up with you as you are and deplore the fact that melancholy [literally, heavy-mindedness] or light-mindedness had enfeebled your spirit. Now on the contrary, since one knows very well that such is not the case, one is not tempted to pity you but rather to wish that some day the circumstances of your life may tighten upon you the screws in its rack and compel you to come out with what really dwells in you, may begin the sharper inquisition of the rack which cannot be beguiled by nonsense and witticisms. Life is a masquerade, you explain, and for you this is inexhaustible material for amusement; and so far, no one has succeeded in knowing you; for every revelation you make is always an illusion, it is only in this way you are able to breathe and prevent people from pressing importunately upon you and obstructing your respiration. Your occupation consists in preserving your hiding-place, and that you succeed in doing, for your mask is the most enigmatical of all. In fact you are nothing; you are merely a relation to

others, and what you are you are by virtue of this relation. To a fond shepherdess you hold out a languishing hand, and instantly you are masked in all possible bucolic sentimentality. A reverend spiritual father you deceive with a brotherly kiss, etc. You yourself are nothing, an enigmatic figure on whose brow is inscribed Either/or— "For this," you say, "is my motto, and these words are not, as the grammarians believe, disjunctive conjunctions; no, they belong inseparably together and therefore ought to be written as one word, inasmuch as in their union they constitute an interjection which I shout at mankind, just as boys shout 'Hep' after a Jew."

Now although nothing you say in that style has the slightest effect upon me, or, if it has any effect, it is at the utmost the effect of arousing a righteous indignation, nevertheless, for your own sake I will reply to you. Do you not know that there comes a midnight hour when everyone has to throw off his mask? Do you believe that life will always let itself be mocked? Do you think you can slip away a little before midnight in order to avoid this? Or are you not terrified by it? I have seen men in real life who so long deceived others that at last their true nature could not reveal itself; I have seen men who played hide and seek so long that at last madness through them obtruded disgustingly upon others their secret thoughts which hitherto they had proudly concealed. Or can you think of anything more frightful than that it might end with your nature being resolved into a multiplicity, that you really might become many, become, like those unhappy demoniacs, a legion, and you thus would have lost the inmost and holiest thing of all in a man, the unifying power of personality? Truly, you should not jest with that which is not only serious but dreadful. In every man there is something which to a certain degree prevents him from becoming perfectly transparent to himself; and this may be the case in so high a degree, he may be so inexplicably woven into relationships of life which extend far beyond himself that he almost cannot reveal himself. But

he who cannot reveal himself cannot love, and he who cannot love is the most unhappy man of all. Your own tactic is to train yourself in the art of being enigmatic to everybody. My young friend, suppose there was no one who troubled himself to guess your riddle — what joy, then, would you have in it? But above all, for your own sake, for the sake of your salvation — for I am acquainted with no condition of soul which can better be described as perdition — stop this wild flight, this passion of annihilation which rages in you; for this is what you desire, you would annihilate everything, you would satiate the hunger of doubt at the expense of existence. To this end you cultivate yourself, to this end you harden your temper; for you are willing to admit that you are good for nothing, the only thing that gives you pleasure is to march seven times around existence and blow the trumpet and thereupon let the whole thing collapse, that your soul may be tranquilized, yea, attuned to sadness, that you may summon Echo forth — for Echo is heard only in emptiness.

However, I am not likely to get further with you along this path; moreover, my head is too weak, if you would put it that way, to be able to hold out, or, as I prefer to say, too strong to take pleasure in seeing everything grow dizzy before my eyes. I will therefore take up the matter from another side. Imagine a young man at the age when life really begins to have significance for him; he is wholesome, pure, joyful, intellectually gifted, himself rich in hope, the hope of everyone who knows him; imagine (yea, it is hard that I have to say this) that he was mistaken in you, that he believed you were a serious, tried and experienced man from whom one could confidently expect enlightenment upon life's riddles; imagine that he turned to you with the charming confidence which is the adornment of youth, with the claim not to be gainsaid which is youth's privilege — what would you answer him? Would you answer, "I say merely either/or"? That you would hardly do. Would you (as you are wont to express it when you

would indicate your aversion to having other people vex you with their affairs of the heart), would you stick your head out of the window and say, "Try the next house"? Or would you treat him as you do others who ask your advice or seek information from you, whom you dismiss as you do the collector of tithes by saying that you are only a lodger in life, not a householder and paterfamilias? No, you would not do this either. A young man with intellectual gifts is the sort of thing you prize only too highly. But in the case I suppose, your relation to the youth is not just what you would have wished, it was not an accidental encounter which brought you in contact with him, your irony was not tempted. Although he was the younger, you the older man, it was he, nevertheless, who by the noble quality of his youth made the instant serious. It is true, is it not, that you yourself would like to be young, would feel that there was something beautiful in being young but also something very serious, that it is by no means a matter of indifference how one employs one's youth, but that before one there lies a choice, a real either/or. You would feel that, after all, the important thing is not to cultivate one's mind but to mature one's personality. Your good nature, your sympathy, would be set in motion, in that spirit you would talk to him; you would fortify his soul, confirm him in the confidence he has in the world, you would assure him that there is a power in a man which is able to defy the whole world, you would insist that he take to heart the importance of employing time well. All this you can do, and when you will, you can do it handsomely.

But now mark well what I would say to you, young man — for though you are not young, one is always compelled to address you as such. Now what did you do in this case? You acknowledged, as ordinarily you are not willing to do, the importance of an either/or. And why? Because your soul was moved by love for the young man. And yet in a way you deceived him, for he will, perhaps, encounter you at another time when it by no means

suits your convenience to acknowledge this importance. Here you see one of the sorry consequences of the fact that a man's nature cannot harmoniously reveal itself. You thought you were doing the best for him, and yet perhaps you have harmed him; perhaps he would have been better able to maintain himself over against your distrust of life than to find repose in the subjective, deceitful trust you conveyed to him. Imagine that after the lapse of several years you again encountered him; he was lively, witty, intellectual, daring in his thought, bold in his expression, but your ear easily detected doubt in his soul, you conceived a suspicion that he had acquired the questionable wisdom: I say merely either/or. It is true, is it not, that you would be sorry for him, would feel that he had lost something, and something very essential. But for yourself you will not sorrow, you are content with your ambiguous wisdom, yea, proud of it, so proud that you will not suffer another to share it, since you wish to be alone with it. And yet you find it deplorable in another connection, and it is your sincere opinion that it was deplorable for the young man to have reached the same wisdom. What a monstrous contradiction! Your whole nature contradicts itself. But you can only get out of this contradiction by an either/or, and I, who love you more sincerely than you loved this young man, I, who in my life have experienced the significance of choice, I congratulate you upon the fact that you are still so young, that even though you always will be sensible of some loss, yet, if you have, or rather if you will to have the requisite energy, you can win what is the chief thing in life, win yourself, acquire your own self.

Now in case a man were able to maintain himself upon the pinnacle of the instant of choice, in case he could cease to be a man, in case he were in his inmost nature only an airy thought, in case personality meant nothing more than to be a kobold, which takes part, indeed, in the movements but nevertheless remains unchanged; in case such were the situation, it would

be foolish to say that it might ever be too late for a man to choose, for in a deeper sense there could be no question of a choice. The choice itself is decisive for the content of the personality, through the choice the personality immerses itself in the thing chosen, and when it does not choose it withers away in consumption. For an instant it is so, for an instant it may seem as if the things between which a choice is to be made lie outside of the chooser, that he stands in no relationship to it, that he can preserve a state of indifference over against it. This is the instant of deliberation, but this, like the Platonic instant, has no existence, least of all in the abstract sense in which you would hold it fast, and the longer one stares at it the less it exists. That which has to be chosen stands in the deepest relationship to the chooser, and when it is a question of a choice involving a life problem the individual must naturally be living in the meantime, and hence, it comes about that the longer he postpones the choice the easier it is for him to alter its character, notwithstanding that he is constantly deliberating and deliberating and believes that thereby he is holding the alternatives distinctly apart. When life's either/or is regarded in this way one is not easily tempted to jest with it. One sees, then, that the inner drift of the personality leaves no time for thought experiments, that it constantly hastens onward and in one way or another posits this alternative or that, making the choice more difficult the next instant because what has thus been posited must be revoked. Think of the captain on his ship at the instant when it has to come about. He will perhaps be able to say, "I can either do this or that"; but in case he is not a pretty poor navigator, he will be aware at the same time that the ship is all the while making its usual headway, and that therefore it is only an instant when it is indifferent whether he does this or that. So it is with a man. If he forgets to take account of the headway, there comes at last an instant when there no longer is any question of an either/or, not because he has chosen but because he has neglected to choose,

which is equivalent to saying, because others have chosen for him, because he has lost his self.

You will perceive also in what I have just been saying how essentially my view of choice differs from yours (if you can properly be said to have any view), for yours differs precisely in the fact that it prevents you from choosing. For me the instant of choice is very serious, not so much on account of the rigorous cogitation involved in weighing the alternatives, not on account of the multiplicity of thoughts which attach themselves to every link in the chain, but rather because there is danger afoot, danger that the next instant it may not be equally in my power to choose, that something already has been lived which must be lived over again. For to think that for an instant one can keep one's personality a blank, or that strictly speaking one can break off and bring to a halt the course of the personal life, is a delusion. The personality is already interested in the choice before one chooses, and when the choice is postponed the personality chooses unconsciously, or the choice is made by obscure powers within it. So when at last the choice is made one discovers (unless, as I remarked before, the personality has been completely volatilized) that there is something which must be done over again, something which must be revoked, and this is often very difficult. We read in fairy tales about human beings whom mermaids and mermen enticed into their power by means of demoniac music. In order to break the enchantment it was necessary in the fairy tale for the person who was under the spell to play the same piece of music backwards without making a single mistake. This is very profound, but very difficult to perform, and yet so it is: the errors one has taken into oneself one must eradicate in this way, and every time one makes a mistake one must begin all over. Therefore, it is important to choose and to choose in time. You, on the contrary, have another method — for I know very well that the polemical side you turn towards the world is not your true nature.

Yea, if to deliberate were the proper task for a human life, you would be pretty close to perfection. I will adduce an example. To fit your case the contrasts must be bold: either a parson/or an actor. Here is the dilemma. Now all your passionate energy is awakened, reflection with its hundred arms lays hold of the thought of being a parson. You find no repose, day and night you think about it, you read all the books you can lay your hands on, you go to church three times every Sunday, pick up acquaintance with parsons, write sermons yourself, deliver them to yourself; for half a year you are dead to the whole world. You can now talk of the clerical calling with more insight and apparently with more experience than many who have been parsons for twenty years. When you encounter such men it arouses your indignation that they do not know how to get the thing off their chests with more eloquence. "Is this enthusiasm?" you say. "Why I who am not a parson, who have not consecrated myself to this calling, speak with the voice of angels as compared with them." That, perhaps, is true enough, but nevertheless, you have not become a parson. Then you act in the same way with respect to the other task, and your enthusiasm for art almost surpasses your clerical eloquence. Then you are ready to choose. However, one may be sure that in the prodigious thought-production you were engaged in there must have been lots of waste products, many incidental reflections and observations. Hence, the instant you have to choose, life and animation enter into this waste mass, a new either/or presents itself — jurist, perhaps advocate, this has something in common with both the other alternatives. Now you are lost.

For that same moment you are at once advocate enough to be able to prove the reasonableness of taking the third possibility into account. So your life drifts on.

After you have wasted a year and a half on such deliberations, after you have with admirable energy exerted to the utmost the powers of your soul,

you have not got one step further. You break the thread of thought, you become impatient, passionate, scolding and storming, and then you continue: “Either hairdresser/or bank teller; I say merely either/or.” What wonder, then, that this saying has become for you an offense and foolishness, that it seems, as you say, as if it were like the arms attached to the iron maiden whose embrace was the death penalty. You treat people superciliously, you make sport of them, and what you have become is what you most abhor: a critic, a universal critic in all faculties. Sometimes I cannot help smiling at you, and yet it is pitiful to see how your really excellent intellectual gifts are thus dissipated. But here again there is the same contradiction in your nature; for you see the ludicrous very clearly, and God help him who falls into your hands if his case is similar to yours. And yet the whole difference is that he perhaps becomes downcast and broken, while you on the contrary become light and erect and merrier than ever, making yourself and others blissful with the gospel: *vanitas vanitatum vanitas,* hurrah! But this is no choice, it is what we call in Danish letting it go, or it is mediation like letting five count as an even number. Now you feel yourself free, you say to the world, farewell.

> So *zieh' ich hin in alle Ferne,*
> *Ueber meiner Mutze nur die Sterne.*

Therewith you have chosen... not to be sure, as you yourself will admit, the better part. But in reality you have not chosen at all, or it is in an improper sense of the word you have chosen. Your choice is an aesthetic choice, but an aesthetic choice is no choice. The act of choosing is essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical. Whenever in a stricter sense there is question of an either/or, one can always be sure that the ethical is involved. The only absolute either/or is the choice between good and evil, but that is also absolutely ethical. The aesthetic choice is

either entirely immediate and to that extent no choice, or it loses itself in the multifarious. Thus, when a young girl follows the choice of her heart, this choice, however beautiful it may be, is in the strictest sense no choice, since it is entirely immediate. When a man deliberates aesthetically upon a multitude of life's problems, as you did in the foregoing, he does not easily get one either/or, but a whole multiplicity, because the self-determining factor in the choice is not ethically accentuated, and because when one does not choose absolutely one chooses only for the moment, and therefore can choose something different the next moment. The ethical choice is therefore in a certain sense much easier, much simpler, but in another sense it is infinitely harder. He who would define his life task ethically has ordinarily not so considerable a selection to choose from; on the other hand, the act of choice has far more importance for him. If you will understand me aright, I should like to say that in making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses. Thereby the personality announces its inner infinity, and thereby, in turn, the personality is consolidated. Therefore, even if a man were to choose the wrong, he will nevertheless discover, precisely by reason of the energy with which he chose, that he had chosen the wrong. For the choice being made with the whole inwardness of his personality, his nature is purified and he himself brought into immediate relation to the eternal Power whose omnipresence interpenetrates the whole of existence. This transfiguration, this higher consecration, is never attained by that man who chooses merely aesthetically. The rhythm in that man's soul, in spite of all its passion, is only a *spiritus lenis.*

So, like a Cato I shout at you my either/or, and yet not like a Cato, for my soul has not yet acquired the resigned coldness which he possessed. But I know that only this incantation, if I have the strength for it, will be capable of rousing you, not to an activity of thought, for of that you have no lack,

but to earnestness of spirit. Perhaps you will succeed without that in accomplishing much, perhaps even in astonishing the world (for I am not niggardly), and yet you will miss the highest thing, the only thing which truly gives meaning to life; perhaps you will gain the whole world and lose your own self.

What is it, then, that I distinguish in my either/or? Is it good and evil? No, I would only bring you up to the point where the choice between the evil and the good acquires significance for you. Everything hinges upon this. As soon as one can get a man to stand at the crossways in such a position that there is no recourse but to choose, he will choose the right. Hence, if it should chance that, while you are in the course of reading this somewhat lengthy dissertation, which again I send you in the form of a letter, you were to feel that the instant for choice had come, then throw the rest of this away, never concern yourself about it, you have lost nothing — but choose, and you shall see what validity there is in this act, yea, no young girl can be so happy with the choice of her heart as is a man who knows how to choose. So then, one either has to live aesthetically or one has to live ethically. In this alternative, as I have said, there is not yet in the strictest sense any question of a choice; for he who lives aesthetically does not choose, and he who after the ethical has manifested itself to him chooses the aesthetical is not living aesthetically, for he is sinning and is subject to ethical determinants even though his life may be described as unethical. Lo, this is, as it were, a *character indelebilis* impressed upon the ethical, that though it modestly places itself on a level with the aesthetical, it is nevertheless that which makes the choice a choice. And this is the pitiful thing to one who contemplates human life, that so many live on in a quiet state of perdition; they outlive themselves, not in the sense that the content of life is successively unfolding and now is possessed in this expanded state, but they live their lives, as it were, outside of themselves,

they vanish like shadows, their immortal soul is blown away, and they are not alarmed by the problem of its immortality, for they are already in a state of dissolution before they die. They do not live aesthetically, but neither has the ethical manifested itself in its entirety, so they have not exactly rejected it either, they therefore are not sinning, except in so far as it is sin not to be either one thing or the other; neither are they ever in doubt about their immortality, for he who deeply and sincerely is in doubt of it on his own behalf will surely find the right. *On his own behalf,* I say, and surely it is high time to utter a warning against the great-hearted, heroic objectivity with which many thinkers think on behalf of others and not on their own behalf. If one would call this which I here require selfishness, I would reply that this comes from the fact that people have no conception of what this "self" is, and that it would be of very little use to a man if he were to gain the whole world and lose himself, and that it must necessarily be a poor proof which does not first of all convince the man who presents it.

My either/or does not in the first instance denote the choice between good and evil; it denotes the choice whereby one chooses good *and* evil/or excludes them. Here the question is under what determinants one would contemplate the whole of existence and would himself live. That the man who chooses good and evil chooses the good is indeed true, but this becomes evident only afterwards; for the aesthetical is not the evil but neutrality, and that is the reason why I affirmed that it is the ethical which constitutes the choice. It is, therefore, not so much a question of choosing between willing the good *or* the evil, as of choosing to will, but by this in turn the good and the evil are posited. He who chooses the ethical chooses the good, but here the good is entirely abstract, only its being is posited, and hence it does not follow by any means that the chooser cannot in turn choose the evil, in spite of the fact that he chose the good. Here you see again how important it is that a choice be made, and that the crucial thing is

not deliberation but the baptism of the will which lifts up the choice into the ethical. The longer the time that elapses, the more difficult it is to choose, for the soul is constantly attached to one side of the dilemma, and it becomes more and more difficult, therefore, to tear oneself loose. And yet this is necessary if one is to choose and is therefore of the utmost importance if a choice signifies something, and that it does I shall show later.

You know that I have never pretended to be a philosopher, and least of all when I am conversing with you. Partly to tease you a bit, partly because it really is my dearest and most precious and also in a certain sense my most important position in life, I am accustomed to appear in the role of a married man. I have not sacrificed my life for art and learning, what I have sacrificed myself for is insignificant in comparison with these things; I sacrifice myself for my profession, my wife, my children, or, more properly expressed, I do not sacrifice myself for them, but I find in them my satisfaction and joy. These are insignificant things in comparison with what you live for; and yet, my young friend, take heed lest the greater things for which you really are sacrificing yourself might deceive you. Now although I am not a philosopher, yet I am compelled at this point to venture upon a little philosophic inquiry which I would beg you not so much to criticize as to take to heart. For the polemical result which resounds in all your songs of triumph over life has a strange resemblance to the pet theory of the newer philosophy, that the principle of contradiction is annulled. I know very well that the standpoint you occupy is to philosophy an abomination, and yet it seems to me that philosophy is guilty of the same error, and that the reason why this has not been noticed immediately is that philosophy is not even in as correct a position as you are. Your place is the domain of action, that of philosophy is contemplation. As soon as one would transport philosophy into the practical domain it must reach the same result you reach, even

though it does not express itself in the same way. You mediate contradictions in a higher madness, philosophy mediates them in a higher unity. You turn towards the future, for action is always futuristic. You say, “I can either do this or do that, but whichever of the two I do is equally mad, *ergo* I do nothing at all.”

Philosophy turns towards the past, towards the whole enacted history of the world, it shows how the discrete factors are fused in a higher unity, it mediates and mediates. On the other hand, it seems to me to give no answer at all to the question I put to it, for I ask about the future. You, after all, do in a way give an answer, even though it is nonsense. Now I assume that philosophy is in the right, that the principle of contradiction really is annulled, or that the philosophers transcend it every instant in the higher unity which exists for thought. This, however, surely cannot hold with respect to the future, for the oppositions must first be in existence before I can mediate them. But if the oppositions are there, then there must be an either/or. The philosopher says, “That’s the way it’s been hitherto.” I ask, “What am I to do if I do not want to be a philosopher?” For if I want to be that, I see clearly enough that I, like the other philosophers, shall soon get to the point of mediating the past. In the first place, there is no answer to my question what I ought to do; for if I were the most gifted philosophic mind that ever has lived in the world, there must be one thing more I have to do besides sitting and contemplating the past. In the second place, I am a married man and by no means a philosophic mind, but I turn with all due respect to the devotees of this science to learn what I ought to do. However, I get no reply, for philosophy mediates the past and has its existence in it, the philosopher hastens back into the past to such a degree that, as a poet says of an antiquarian, “only his coat tails are left behind in the present.”

At this point you are united with the philosophers. What unites you is that life comes to a stop. To the philosopher world history is concluded, and

he mediates. Hence, in our age as the order of the day we have the disgusting sight of young men who are able to mediate Christianity and paganism, are able to play with the titanic forces of history, and are unable to tell a plain man what he has to do in life, and who do not know any better what they themselves have to do. You are very versatile in expressions for your pet result. I will call attention to one of them because in it you show a striking resemblance to the philosopher, even though his real or assumed seriousness would forbid him to take part in the obligato variation in which you take delight. If you are asked whether you will sign your name to an address to the King, or whether you desire a constitution or the right to impose taxes, or whether you will join this or that benevolent movement, you reply, "My revered contemporary, you misunderstand me, I am not in the game at all, I am outside like a tiny Spanish V." So it is, also, with the philosopher, he is outside, he is not in the game, he sits and grows old listening to the songs of long ago, harkening to the harmonies of mediation. I honor science, I respect its devotees, but life, too, has its demands, and although on seeing a single particularly talented pate losing himself onesidedly in the past I should be perplexed how to judge him, doubtful what opinion I should form of him irrespective of the deference I would entertain for his intellectual ability, yet in our age I am not perplexed, since I see a host of young men who could not possibly be all of them philosophic minds losing themselves in the pet *[undling]* philosophy of our age, or, as I am tempted to call it, the juvenal *[yngling]* philosophy. I have a valid claim upon philosophy, as has everyone whom it does not dare show to the door on the ground of a total lack of parts. I am husband of a wife, I have children; what if in their name I were to ask philosophy what a man has to do in life? You will perhaps smile, in any case the philosophic youth will smile at a paterfamilias, and yet I think that it is a tremendous argument against philosophy if it has no answer. Has the course of life been brought

to a stop? If the generation that now is can live off of contemplation, what will the following generation live off of? Contemplating the same thing? The foregoing generation has on this hypothesis accomplished nothing, has left nothing behind it to be mediated. Here again I can lump you with the philosophers, and I say to both of you that you miss the highest thing. My position as a married man here comes to my aid and enables me to illustrate the better what I mean. If a married man were to say that the perfect marriage is one where there are no children, he would be guilty of the same misunderstanding as the philosophers. He makes himself the absolute, and yet every married man will feel that this is untrue and unbecoming, and that the fact that he himself becomes a relativity, as he does by means of the child, is far more true.

Perhaps, however, I have already gone too far, have embarked upon investigations which perhaps I ought not to have attempted, partly because I am not a philosopher, partly because it is not at all my purpose to entertain myself with you by discussing one or another phenomenon of this age, but rather to accuse you, to make you feel in every way that you are the accused party. However, since I have in fact gone so far, I will reflect a little more precisely upon the problem of the philosophic mediation of opposites. If what I have to say lacks stringency, it perhaps makes up for that by more earnestness, and it is only on this ground I set it forth. For I have no intention of competing for any philosophic distinction, but once having taken my pen in hand I have a mind to defend with that the cause which ordinarily I defend in other and better ways.

As truly as there is a future, just so truly is there an either/or. The time in which the philosopher lives is not absolute time, it is itself a relative moment, and it always is a suspicious circumstance when philosophy is unfruitful; indeed, this must be regarded as a dishonor, just as in the East unfruitfulness in a woman is regarded as a disgrace. So time itself is a

relative moment, and the philosopher is a relative moment in time. Our age therefore will in turn appear to a subsequent age as a discrete factor, and a philosopher of a subsequent age will in turn mediate our age, and so forth. To that extent philosophy is within its rights, and we should only have to regard it as an accidental mistake on the part of the philosophy of our time that it confounded our time with absolute time. However, it is easy to see that the category of mediation has hereby suffered a considerable shock, and that the absolute mediation becomes possible only when history is finished, in other words, that the System is in a constant process of becoming. What philosophy maintains, however, is that there is an absolute mediation. Naturally, this is of the utmost importance to it, for if one gives up mediation, one gives up speculation. On the other hand, it is a precarious thing to concede this, for if we concede mediation, then there is no absolute choice, and if there is nothing of that sort, then there is no absolute either/or. This is the difficulty, yet I believe that it is due partly to the fact that two spheres are confounded with one another, that of thought and that of freedom. The opposition does not subsist for thought, which goes over to the other side and thereupon combines both in a higher unity. For freedom the opposition does subsist, for freedom excludes the other side. I am by no means confounding *liberum arbitrium* with the genuine positive freedom, for this, too, has to all eternity evil outside itself, even if the evil be only an impotent possibility, and it does not become more perfect by more and more absorbing the evil but by more and more excluding it. But exclusion is precisely the opposite of mediation. That with this I am not espousing the notion of a radical evil I shall show later.

The spheres with which philosophy properly deals, which properly are the spheres for thought, are logic, nature, and history. Here necessity rules, and mediation is valid. That such is the case with logic and nature nobody will deny. On the other hand, there is some difficulty about history, for here,

it is said, freedom rules. I believe, however, that history is wrongly conceived, and that the difficulty is due to this. For history is more than the product of the free actions of free individuals. The individual indeed acts, but his action passes into the order of things which sustains the whole of existence. What will be the issue of it the agent does not really know. But this higher order of things which digests, so to speak, the free actions and weaves them into its eternal law is necessity, and this necessity is the dynamic of world history, and hence it is quite right for philosophy to employ mediation, I mean the relative mediation. If I contemplate a world-historical individual, I can distinguish the works of which the Scripture says that "they follow him" from the works by which he belongs to history. With what one might call the inward work philosophy has nothing whatever to do, but the inward work is the genuine life of freedom. Philosophy regards the outward work, and this it does not see in isolation but as it is absorbed into and transformed by the world-historical process. This process is properly the subject matter of philosophy, and this it regards under the category of necessity. It therefore holds at a distance the reflection which would suggest that everything might have been different, it regards world history in such a way that there can be no question of an either/or. That in this way of regarding history much foolish and inept talk is mingled is at least my opinion; that especially the young wizards who wish to conjure up the spirits of history seem to me ridiculous, I do not deny, but I also incline with profound reverence before the grand achievements which our age has to show. As I have said, philosophy views history under the category of necessity, not under that of freedom; for even if one speaks of the historic process as free, that is meant only in the same sense as when one talks of the organizing process in nature. With regard to the historical process there is no question of an either/or, although it has probably never occurred to any philosopher to deny that an either/or presents itself in the case of an

individual who must act. Hence, the unconcemedness, the indulgence, with which philosophy contemplates history and its heroes; for it views them under the category of necessity. Hence again its inability to make a man act, its disposition to bring everything to a standstill; for properly it demands that one should act necessarily, which is a contradiction.

Thus, even the humblest individual has a dual existence. He also has a history, and this is not merely a product of his own free actions. The inward work, on the contrary, belongs to him and must belong to him unto all eternity; neither history nor world history can take that from him, it "follows him" either for joy or for sorrow. There rules in this inward world an absolute either/or, but with this world, philosophy has nothing to do. If I picture to myself an elderly man who looks back upon an eventful life, I admit that he can get a mediation out of it, for his history was intertwined with that of time; but in the most inward sense he gets no mediation. An either/or still separates enduringly that which was separated when he chose. If there is to be any talk of mediation, one might say that repentance is such; but repentance is no mediation, it does not look with pleasure upon that which is to be mediated, it consumes it with its wrath — but this resembles exclusion, the opposite of mediation. Here it is evident that I do not assume a radical evil, since I posit the validity of repentance. Repentance, it is true, is an expression for reconciliation, but it is also an absolutely irreconcilable expression.

But all this, perhaps, you concede — you who, nevertheless, in many ways make common cause with the philosophers... except in so far as you undertake on your own private account to make game of them. You think perhaps that I as a married man may well be content with this concession and can make use of it in my household economy. Honestly speaking, I ask nothing more, but I should like to know which life is the highest, that of the philosopher, or that of the free man. In case the philosopher is merely a

philosopher, completely lost in his profession, without knowing the blessed life of freedom, then he lacks a very important thing, he gains the whole world and loses himself. This never can happen to a man who lives for freedom, even though he were to lose ever so much.

For freedom, therefore, I am fighting (partly in this letter, partly and principally within myself), I am fighting for the future, for either/or. That is the treasure I desire to bequeath to those whom I love in the world; yea, if my little son were at this instant of an age when he could thoroughly understand me, and my last hour had come, I would say to him, "I leave to thee no fortune, no title and dignities, but I know where there lies buried a treasure which suffices to make thee richer than the whole world, and this treasure belongs to thee, and thou shalt not even express thanks to me for it lest thou take hurt to thine own soul by owing everything to another. This treasure is deposited in thine own inner self: there is an either/or which makes a man greater than the angels."

Here I will break off this reflection. It perhaps does not satisfy you, your greedy eye devours it without being satisfied by it, but that is because the eye is the sense which is most insatiable, especially when like you one does not hunger but suffers from a lust of the eye which cannot be satisfied with seeing.

That which is prominent in my either/or is the ethical. It is therefore not yet a question of the choice of something in particular, it is not a question of the reality of the thing chosen, but of the reality of the act of choice. This, however, is the decisive thing, and it is to an apprehension of this I would strive to arouse you. Up to this point one man can be of help to another, but having reached this point the importance one man can have for another becomes more subordinate. In the previous letter I remarked that the experience of having loved imparts to a man's nature a harmony which never is entirely lost; now I would say that the experience of choosing

imparts to a man's nature a solemnity, a quiet dignity, which never is entirely lost. There are many who set great store upon having seen one or another distinguished world-historical personality face to face. This impression they never forget, it has given to their souls an ideal picture which ennobles their nature; and yet such an instant, however significant, is nothing in comparison with the instant of choice. So when all has become still around one, as solemn as a starlit night, when the soul is alone in the whole world, then there appears before one, not a distinguished man, but the eternal Power itself. The heavens part, as it were, and the I chooses itself — or rather, receives itself. Then has the soul beheld the loftiest sight that mortal eye can see and which never can be forgotten, then the personality receives the accolade of knighthood which ennobles it for an eternity. He does not become another man than he was before, but he becomes himself, consciousness is unified, and he is himself. As an heir, even though he were heir to the treasure of all the world, nevertheless does not possess his property before he has come of age, so even the richest personality is nothing before he has chosen himself, and on the other hand even what one might call the poorest personality is everything when he has chosen himself; for the great thing is not to be this or that but to be oneself, and this everyone can be if he wills it.

That in a sense it is not a question of the choice of a something, you will see from the fact that what appears as the alternative is the aesthetical, the indifferent. And yet nevertheless there is here question of a choice, yea, of an absolute choice, for only by choosing absolutely can one choose the ethical. By the absolute choice the ethical is posited, but from this it does not follow by any means that the aesthetical is excluded. In the ethical the personality is concentrated in itself, so the aesthetical is absolutely excluded or is excluded as the absolute, but relatively it is still left. In choosing itself the personality chooses itself ethically and excludes absolutely the

aesthetical, but since he chooses himself and since he does not become another being by choosing himself but becomes himself, the whole of the aesthetical comes back again in its relativity.

So the either/or I propose is in a sense absolute, for it is a question of choosing or not choosing. But since the choice is an absolute choice, so is the either/or absolute; in another sense, however, it is only by this choice the either/ or comes to evidence, for with that [the choice between choosing and not choosing] the choice between good and evil makes its appearance. This choice between good and evil which is posited in and with the first choice need not concern me here; I would merely constrain you to go on to that point where the necessity of choice is manifest, and thereupon would contemplate existence under ethical categories. I am not an ethical rigorist, an enthusiast for a formal, abstract freedom. If only the choice is posited, all of the aesthetical returns again, and you will see that only then does existence become beautiful, that only in this way can a man succeed in saving his soul and gaining the whole world, can succeed in using the world without abusing it.

But what is it to live aesthetically, and what is it to live ethically? What is the aesthetical in a man, and what is the ethical? To this I would reply; the aesthetical in a man is that by which he is immediately what he is; the ethical is that whereby he becomes what he becomes. He who lives in and by and of and for the aesthetical in him lives aesthetically.

It is not my intention to go more particularly into the investigation of all that is implied in this definition of the aesthetical. It also seems to me superfluous to enlighten you about what it is to live aesthetically — you who are such an expert practitioner in this mode of life that I might rather need your help. Nevertheless, I will sketch several of the stages of the aesthetic life in order that we may work ourselves up to the point where you properly belong. This to my mind is important lest you escape me too soon

by one of your favorite side-leaps. Moreover, I have no doubt that in many ways I shall be able to enlighten you about what it is to live aesthetically. Although I would send to you as the most reliable guide any man who wished to live aesthetically, I would not send him to you if, in a higher sense, he wished to perceive what it is to live aesthetically, for about that you could not enlighten him, precisely because you are enmeshed; only he can do that who stands on a higher level and lives ethically. For an instant you might perhaps be tempted to make to me the sophistical rejoinder that then I am unable to give a reliable elucidation of what it is to live ethically, since I myself am enmeshed in it. This, however, would only furnish me with an occasion for a further elucidation. The reason why the man who lives aesthetically can in a higher sense explain nothing, is that he constantly lives in the moment, yet all the time is conscious only in terms of a certain relativity and within certain bounds. It is by no means my intention to deny that to live aesthetically when such a life is at its highest may call for a multiplicity of intellectual gifts, yea, even that these must be intensively developed to an uncommon degree; but nevertheless, they are enslaved, and transparency is lacking to them. Thus one often finds certain species of animals which possess far sharper and more intense senses than man, but they are bound to the instinct of the animal. I would fain take you as an example. I have never denied that you possess distinguished intellectual gifts, as you can see also from the fact that I have often reproached you for abusing them. You are witty, ironical, a close observer, a dialectician, experienced in pleasure, you know how to calculate the instant, you are sentimental or heartless according to circumstances; but beneath all this you are constantly only in the moment, and therefore your life dissolves, and it is impossible for you to explain it. If then a man would learn the art of enjoyment, he is quite right in going to you; but if he wishes to understand your life, he goes to the wrong person. By coming to me

perhaps he would sooner find what he seeks, in spite of the fact that I am by no means in possession of your intellectual gifts. You are enmeshed and have, as it were, no time to tear yourself loose; I am not enmeshed, either by my judgment of the aesthetical or by my judgment of the ethical; for in the ethical I am raised above the instant, I am in freedom — but it is a contradiction that one might be enmeshed by being in freedom.

Every man, however lowly his talents are, however subordinate his position in life, naturally feels the need of forming a life view, a conception of life's significance and of its purpose. The man who lives aesthetically does that too, and the universal expression which has been heard from age to age and in all stages is this: one must enjoy life. Naturally, there is great variety corresponding to the different conceptions of enjoyment, but in this expression, that one is to enjoy life, all are agreed. *But he who says that he wants to enjoy life always posits a condition which either lies outside the individual or is in the individual in such a way that it is not posited by the individual himself.* With respect to this last sentence I would beg you to hold fast the expressions I have used, for they are chosen deliberately.

Let us now run through these stages quite briefly in order to press on to the place where you belong. You are already, perhaps, a bit annoyed at the generic expression I formulated for living aesthetically, and yet you will hardly be able to deny that it is correct. Only too often you are heard to scoff at people for not knowing how to enjoy life, believing that you on the other hand have mastered this study. It is quite possible that they do not understand it, but in the expression of their aim they are in entire agreement with you. You perhaps have a presentiment that in this deliberation of mine you will be yoked with the sort of people whom you especially abhor. You think perhaps that I ought to be gallant enough to treat you as an artist and to pass over in silence the bunglers you have trouble enough with in life and with whom you would not have anything in common if you could help it. I

cannot help you, however, for you have something in common with them, nevertheless, and something very essential at that, namely, your view of life, and in my eyes the matter in which you differ from them is something unessential. I cannot help laughing at you. You see, my young friend, you are pursued by a curse: the many brothers in your art whom you are entirely unwilling to own. You incur the danger of falling into bad and common company — you who are so haughtily superior. I do not deny that it must be disagreeable to possess a view of life in common with drunken revelers and penny-sportsmen; nor is this exactly your case, for to a certain extent your position lies beyond the aesthetic domain, as I shall show later.

Great as the differences within the aesthetic domain may be, all the stages have this similarity, that spirit is not determined as spirit but is immediately determined. The differences may be extraordinary, all the way from complete stupidity (*Aandloshed)* to the highest degree of cleverness *(Aandrighed),* but even at the stage where cleverness is evident the spirit (*Aanden*) is not determined as spirit but as talent.

I will describe quite briefly each particular stage and will dwell only upon that which in one way or another fits you or which I could wish you would apply to yourself. Personality immediately determined is not spiritual but physical. Here we have a view of life which teaches that health is the most precious good, that on which everything hinges. The same view acquires a more poetic expression when it is said that beauty is the highest. Now beauty is a very fragile good, and therefore, one seldom sees this view carried through. One encounters often enough a young girl (or maybe a young man) who for a brief time prides herself upon her beauty, but soon it deceives her. I remember, however, to have once seen it carried through with rare success. In my student days I sometimes went during the vacation to the residence of a count in one of the provinces. In his younger days the Count had had a diplomatic post, he was now elderly and lived quietly at

his countryseat. The Countess had been extraordinarily beautiful as a young girl, as an elderly person she was still the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. The Count in his youth had great success with the fair sex because of his manly beauty. At the Court the handsome young gentleman-in-waiting was still remembered. Old age had not broken him, and a noble, genuinely superior dignity made him still more goodlooking. Those who had known them in their earlier days declared that this was the handsomest couple they had ever seen, and I who had the good fortune to learn to know them in their later years, found this perfectly natural, for they were still the handsomest couple one could see. Both the Count and the Countess were highly cultivated, and yet the life view of the Countess was concentrated in the thought that they were the handsomest couple in the whole land. I still remember vividly an occurrence which convinced me of this. It was a Sunday morning, there was a little festival in the church close to the countryseat. The Countess was not feeling quite well enough to venture to attend, but the Count went elegantly dressed in his uniform of gentleman-in-waiting, decorated with his orders. The windows of the great hall looked out on an allée which led up to the church. By one of them stood the Countess. She Was dressed in a tasteful morning gown and was really charming. I had enquired of her health and had entered into conversation about a yachting party which was to come off the following day. Then far down the allée the Count was seen. She relapsed into silence, became more beautiful than I had ever seen her, had an expression almost sad, the Count had come so near that he could see the Countess through the window, she threw him a kiss with the utmost grace, then turned to me and said, “Little William, my Detlev is surely the handsomest man in the whole kingdom, is he not? Yes, I can see well enough that he has sunk together a little bit on one side, but no one can see that when I am walking with him, and when we walk together we are surely the handsomest couple in the whole land.” No

little miss of sixteen years could be more blissfully happy over her fiancé, the handsome page at Court, than was her ladyship over the already aged lord-in-waiting.

Both views of life agree in the principle that one must enjoy life, and that the requisite condition lies in the individual himself, but in such a way that it is not posited by the individual himself.

We go further. We encounter views of life which teach that one must enjoy life but which place the condition for it outside the individual. This is the case with every view of life where wealth, glory, high station, etc., are accounted life's task and its content. In this connection I would also speak of a certain kind of love. If I picture to myself a young girl heart and soul in love, whose eye knew no pleasure but in seeing her lover, whose soul had no thought but him, whose heart had no desire but to belong to him, for whom nothing in heaven or on earth had any significance except him, then here we have again an aesthetic view of life where the condition is located outside the individual. You, of course, regard it as foolishness to be in love in this fashion, you think of it as something which occurs only in romances. Nevertheless, it is a thing that can be thought, and it is certain, at least, that in the eyes of many people such a love would be regarded as something admirable. I shall explain to you later why I cannot approve of it.

We go further. We meet views of life which teach that one must enjoy life, but the conditions for this lie in the individual himself, yet in such a way that they are not posited by him. In this case the personality is generally determined as talent, a mercantile talent, a practical talent, a mechanical talent, a mathematical talent, a poetical talent, an artistic talent, a philosophical talent. Satisfaction in life and enjoyment is sought in the development of this talent. One does not, perhaps, stop with the talent in its immediacy, one cultivates it in all ways, but the condition for satisfaction in life is the talent itself, a condition which is not posited by the individual.

The people in whom one finds this view of life often belong to the class which you are accustomed to make sport of for their tireless activity. You think that you yourself are living artistically and you are entirely unwilling to concede that they are. That you have a different view of what it is to enjoy life is undeniable, but this is not the essential thing; the essential thing is that one wants to enjoy life. Your life is far more *vornehm* than theirs, but theirs is far more innocent than yours.

Just as all these views of life have this in common that they are aesthetical, so also they resemble one another in the fact that they have a certain unity, a certain coherence, there is one definite thing upon which they all turn. That upon which they build their life is in itself something simple, and therefore, it is not split up as is the life view of those who build upon what is in itself a multiplicity. The latter is the case with a view of life upon which I shall now dwell at a little more length. Its teaching is, “enjoy life,” and it explains it thus: “live for your pleasure.” Pleasure, however, is in itself a multiplicity, and so one easily perceives that this life is split into a boundless multiplicity, except in so far as in a particular individual from childhood up pleasure is determined as a particular pleasure, e.g., a lust for fishing or hunting or for keeping horses, etc. Inasmuch as this view is split into a multiplicity one easily perceives that it lies in the sphere of reflection; this reflection, however, is only a finite reflection, and the personality remains in its immediacy. In lust itself the individual is immediate, and however delicate and refined, however crafty it may be, the individual remains immediate in this lust; in the enjoyment of pleasure he is in the moment, and however multifarious he is in this respect, he remains constantly immediate because he is in the moment. To live in order to satisfy one’s taste for pleasure implies a proudly superior station in life, and very seldom, God be praised, does one see this view carried through consistently, on account of the troubles of earthly life which give man

something else to think about. If such were not the case, I have no doubt we would often be witnesses of this dreadful spectacle, for it is certain, at least, that we often enough hear people complain that they feel themselves hampered by a prosaic life — which unfortunately means, very often, that they only long to enjoy themselves in all the wildness lust may whirl them into. For in order that this view may be carried out the individual must be in possession of a multiplicity of outward conditions, and this good fortune, or rather misfortune, is seldom allotted to a man — this misfortune, for it is certainly not from the gracious but from the angry gods this "fortune" comes.

It is seldom one sees this view of life carried out on any considerable scale, but it is not so rare to see people who bungle at it a little, and when the conditions requisite for it are lacking, are inclined to think that if only they had the conditions under their control they surely would have attained the happiness and joy they longed for in life. However, in history one meets now and then with an example, and as I believe that it may be useful to see where this view of life ends when everything favors it, I will portray such a figure, selecting for this purpose that omnipotent man the Emperor Nero, before whom the whole world made obeisance, who always found himself surrounded by a countless throng of obliging ministers of pleasure. With your habitual audacity you once maintained that one could not blame Nero for burning Rome in order to get a conception of the conflagration of Troy, but one might question whether he was enough of an artist to know how to enjoy it. It is one of your imperial pleasures never to shrink from any thought, never to be dismayed by it. To enjoy that pleasure one has no need of a praetorian guard, nor of silver and gold, nor of the treasures of all the world; one can be quite alone with it and come to a decision in perfect quiet; it is a wiser indulgence, therefore, but not less dismaying. Your intent was surely not to defend Nero, and yet a kind of defense is implied in fixing

attention not upon what he did but upon how he did it. I know very well that this audacity of thought is something one often finds in young men, who at such moments try it out, as it were, on the world, and then are easily tempted to make much of it themselves, especially when others are listening to it. I know very well that you as well as I, indeed every man, even Nero himself, would shrink from the thought of such savagery, and yet I never would counsel any man to credit himself in the strictest sense with strength enough not to become a Nero. For note that when I seek to characterize Nero's nature and apply to it a term which in my opinion essentially explains it, it will perhaps seem to you too mild a word, and yet as a judge I am certainly not mild, though in another sense I never judge any man. But believe me, the word is not too mild, it is the true expression, but at the same time it may serve to show how close to a man such an aberration may be; one may say that to every man who does not go through his whole life like a child there comes a moment when he has a presentiment, even if it is a distant one, of tins perdition. Nero's nature was *melancholy.* In our age it has become something great to be melancholy. For this reason I can understand that you find this word too mild. I attach myself to an earlier church doctrine which reckoned melancholy among the cardinal sins. If I am right, this is a very unpleasant piece of intelligence for you, for it turns upside down your whole view of life. But to avoid misunderstanding I will remark at once that a man may have sorrow and distress, yea, it may be so great that it pursues him perhaps throughout his whole life, and this may even be beautiful and true, but a man becomes melancholy only by his own fault.

So I picture to myself the imperial voluptuary. Not only when he ascends his throne or marches to the Senate is he surrounded by lictors, but especially when he sallies forth to satisfy his lust, in order that they might clear the way for his predatory raid. I imagine him somewhat older, his

youth is past, the light heart has escaped from him, he is already familiar with every conceivable pleasure, satiated with it. But this life, depraved as it may be, has nevertheless matured his soul, and yet in spite of all his understanding of the world, in spite of his experience, he is still a child or a youth. The immediacy of the spirit is unable to break through, and yet it demands a metamorphosis, it demands a higher form of existence. But if this is to come about, an instant will arrive when the splendor of the throne, his might and power, will pale, and for this he has not the courage. Then he grasps after pleasure; all the world's cleverness must devise for him new pleasures, for only in the instant of pleasure does he find repose, and when that is past he gasps with faintness. The spirit constantly desires to break through, but it cannot attain the metamorphosis, it is constantly disappointed, and he would offer it the satiety of pleasure. Then the spirit within him gathers like a dark cloud, its wrath broods over his soul, and it becomes an anguishing dread which ceases not even in the moment of pleasure. Lo, therefore is his eye so lowering that no one can bear to look upon it, his glance so flashing that it terrifies, for behind the eye lies the soul as a gross darkness. They call this glance an imperial glance, and the whole world trembles before it, and yet his inmost nature is anguished dread. A child who looks at him in an unaccustomed way or any casual glance may terrify him, it is as though this person owned him; for the spirit wills to break through, wills that he shall possess himself in his consciousness, but that he is unable to do, and the spirit is repressed and gathers new wrath. He does not possess himself; only when the world trembles before him is he tranquilized, for then there is no one who ventures to lay hold of him.

Hence this dread of men which Nero shares with every personality of this sort. He is as though possessed, in himself unfree, and hence it seems as if every glance would bind him. He, the Roman Emperor, may be afraid of

the glance of the most wretched slave. He meets such a glance, his eye consumes the man who thus ventures to look upon him. A ruffian stands by the Emperor's side, comprehends this wild glance of his, and that man is no more. Nero has no murder upon his conscience, but the spirit has a new dread. Only in the moment of pleasure does he find distraction. He burns up half of Rome, but his torment remains the same. Before long such things entertain him no more. There is a still higher pleasure available, he would terrify (*aengste)* men. To himself he is enigmatic, and dread *(Angst)* is his very nature, now he would be a riddle to all and find delight in their dread. Hence this imperial smile which no one can comprehend. People approach his throne, he greets them with a friendly smile, and yet a terrible dread grips them, perhaps the smile is their death sentence, perhaps the floor is opening and they are about to plunge into the abyss. A woman approaches his throne, he smiles graciously upon her, and yet she becomes almost impotent with dread; perhaps this smile already singles her out as a sacrifice to his lust. And this dread delights him. He does not wish to produce awe, he wishes to terrify. He does not step forth with imperial dignity — weak, impotent, he slinks here and there, for this powerlessness is still more disquieting. He looks like a dying man, his breathing is feeble, and yet he is the Emperor of Rome and holds in his hands the lives of men. His soul is faint, only witty sayings and clever conceits are capable for an instant of giving him breath. What a world he has drained! and yet he is unable to breathe if this source of pleasure is dried up. He is capable of having a child cut down before the mother's eyes to see if her despair would give passion a new expression which would entertain him. If he were not Emperor of Rome, he perhaps would end his life with suicide; for in truth it is only another expression for the selfsame thing when Caligula wishes that the heads of all men were set upon one neck so as to be able with one stroke to annihilate the whole world, and when a man puts himself to death.

Whether it was the case with Nero, I do not know, but in such characters one sometimes finds a certain good humor, and if Nero had it, I have no doubt that the people who surrounded him were prompt to call it graciousness. There is something very singular about this, but it furnishes also a new proof of the immediacy which constitutes by its repression genuine melancholy. So it comes about that at the very time when all the treasures of the world and its glory hardly avail to delight him, a single word, a curious little happening, the outward appearance of a man, or some other such insignificant thing, is enough to give him extraordinary joy. A Nero can rejoice over such a thing like a child. Like a child — that is precisely the right expression, for it is the whole immediacy of the child which appears in him unaltered and unexplained. A thoroughly developed character cannot rejoice in this way, for it is true that the man has retained childlike qualities, but he has ceased to be a child. Ordinarily Nero is an old man; occasionally he is a child.

Here I will bring to an end this description, which upon me at least has made a very serious impression. Nero is alarming even after his death, for, depraved as he is, he is, nevertheless, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and even in a monster there is something human after all. I have not set this forth in order to busy your imagination, I am not an author that sues for a reader’s favor, least of all for yours, and as you know, I am not an author at all, and I am writing only for your sake. Neither have I set this forth in order to give you and me occasion to thank God along with that Pharisee that we are very different. It awakens in me other thoughts, though I thank God that my life has been too uneventful to suggest more than a remote presentiment of such a horror, and now I am a happy married man. As for you, I rejoice that you are still young enough to learn something from this. Let each learn what he can, at least we both can learn that a man’s

unhappiness is never due to the fact that he has not the outward conditions in his power, this being the very thing which would make him unhappy.

What, then, is melancholy? It is hysteria of the spirit. There comes a moment in a man's life when his immediacy is, as it were, ripened and the spirit demands a higher form in which it will apprehend itself as spirit. Man, so long as he is immediate spirit, coheres with the whole earthly life, and now the spirit would collect itself, as it were, out of this dispersion and become in itself transformed, the personality would be conscious of itself in its eternal validity. If this does not come to pass, if the movement is checked, if it is forced back, melancholy ensues. One may do much by way of inducing forgetfulness, one may work, one may employ other expedients more innocent than those of Nero, but melancholy remains. There is something inexplicable in melancholy. The man who has sorrow and anxiety knows why he is sorrowful or anxious. If a melancholy man is asked what ground he has for it, what it is that weighs upon him, he will reply, "I know not, I cannot explain it." Herein lies the infinity of melancholy. This reply is perfectly correct, for as soon as a man knows the cause, the melancholy is done away with, whereas, on the contrary, in the case of the sorrowful the sorrow is not done away when a man knows why he sorrows. But melancholy is sin, really it is a sin *instar omnium*, for not to will deeply and sincerely is sin, and this is the mother of all sins. This sickness, or rather this sin, is very common in our age, and so it is under this all young Germany and France now sighs. I do not wish to provoke you, I would threaten you as leniently as possible. I am willing to admit that in a way melancholy is not a bad sign, for as a rule only the most gifted natures are subject to it. Neither shall I vex you by assuming that everyone who suffers from indigestion has for this cause a right to call himself melancholy — a thing often enough to be seen in our time when to be melancholy is the dignity to which everybody aspires. But he who would

claim to be more eminently gifted must put up with it when I charge him with the accountability of being also more guilty than other men. If he will see this situation rightly, he will not see in it a disparagement of his personality, though it will teach him to bow with genuine humility before the eternal Power. As soon as that movement comes about, melancholy is essentially done away with, although to the same individual it may well happen that his life has in store many sorrows and anxieties, and à propos of this you know that I am the last man to teach the wretched commonplace that sorrow is of no avail, that one must drive sorrow away. I should be ashamed of myself if with these words I were to approach a person in sorrow. But even the man in whose life this movement comes about quietly, peaceably and seasonably, will, nevertheless, always retain a little melancholy; but this is connected with something far deeper, with original sin, and it is due to the fact that no man can become perfectly transparent to himself. On the other hand, the men whose souls are acquainted with no melancholy are those whose souls have no presentiment of a metamorphosis. With them I have nothing to do here, for I am writing only to and about you, and to you I believe this explanation will be satisfactory, for you hardly assume like many physicians that melancholy is an ailment of the body — and for all that, strangely enough, the physicians cannot relieve it. Only spirit can relieve it, for it is a spiritual ailment. And when the spirit finds itself, all the small troubles vanish, all the causes which according to some people produced melancholy, for example, that one cannot find oneself in the world, that one comes to the world both too late and too early, that one cannot find one's place in life; for he who owns his own self eternally can come neither too early nor too late, and he who possesses himself in his eternal validity surely finds his significance in this life.

However, this was an episode, for which I hope you will forgive me since it came about essentially for your sake. I return to the view of life which represents that man should live for the satisfaction of pleasure. A shrewd common sense readily perceives that this cannot be carried through and that therefore it is not worth while making a start at it. A refined egoism perceives that it misses the very point in pleasure. So here we have a view of life which teaches one to enjoy life but expresses it thus: “Enjoy yourself, in enjoyment it is yourself you must enjoy.” This is a higher reflection, but for all that it does not penetrate to the personality itself, which remains in its accidental immediacy. In this case the condition requisite for enjoyment is after all an outward one which is not within the control of the individual, for although he says he enjoys himself, yet he enjoys himself only in the enjoyment, but the enjoyment is dependent upon an outward condition. So the difference is that he enjoys reflectively, not immediately. To that extent even this Epicureanism is dependent upon a condition over which it has no control. A certain callousness of the understanding then contrives an expedient and teaches: “Enjoy yourself while constantly casting away the conditions.” But it follows as a matter of course that he who enjoys himself by casting away the conditions is just as dependent upon them as is he who enjoys them. His reflection constantly turns back to himself, and as his enjoyment consists in providing as little content as possible for enjoyment, he is constantly scooping himself out, as it were, since such a finite reflection is, of course, incapable of opening the personality.

I believe that by these reflections I have now outlined, intelligibly enough at least for you, the territory of the aesthetical views of life. All of the stages have this in common, that what one lives for is that whereby one immediately is what one is; for reflection never grasps so high that it grasps beyond this. It is only a very cursory indication I have furnished, but I had no desire to give more; it was not the various stages which were important

to me, but only the movement which is imperatively necessary, as I shall now show, and it is upon that I would beg you to fix your attention.

So I assume that the man who lived for his health was, to use an expression of yours, just as hale when he died as ever he was; that the above-mentioned noble couple danced at their golden wedding, and that a whisper of admiration passed through the hall just as it did when they danced on the day of their nuptials; I assume that the rich man's gold mines were inexhaustible, that honors and dignities followed the happy man's pilgrimage through life; I assume that the young girl got the man she loved, that the man of mercantile talent harnessed with his trade connections all quarters of the globe and held the purses of all the world in his purse, that the mechanical talent succeeded in connecting heaven and earth — I assume that Nero never yawned, but that new pleasures surprised him every instant, that the cunning Epicurean could find delight in himself every instant, that the Cynic constantly had conditions to cast away in order to rejoice in his lightness — this I assume, and so all these people were happy. That, surely, you will not affirm, and the reason for it I shall explain later on; but this you will willingly concede, that many people would think them happy, and that one or another would imagine he said something very clever when he added that what they lacked was that they did not appreciate it. I will now make the opposite movement. Nothing of all this comes to pass. What then? Why, then, they despair. You will do no such thing, you will say perhaps that it is not worth while. Why it is that you will not admit despair I shall explain later on. Here I only require you to acknowledge that a great many men would find it natural to despair. Let us see now why they despair. Is it because they discovered that what they built their life upon was transient? But is that, then, a reason for despairing? Has any essential change occurred in that upon which they built their life? Is it an essential change in the transitory that it shows itself to be transitory? Or is it not

rather something accidental and unessential in the case of what is transitory that it does not show itself to be such? Nothing has happened which could occasion a change. So if they despair, it must be because they were in despair beforehand. The only difference is that they did not know it. But this is an entirely fortuitous difference. So it appears that every aesthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives aesthetically is in despair, whether he knows it or not. But when one knows it (and you indeed know it), a higher form of existence is an imperative requirement.

With only a few words I will explain myself further with respect to my judgment about the young girl and her love. You know that in my capacity as a married man it is my custom on every occasion to maintain against you, both orally and in writing, the reality of love, and therefore, to prevent any misunderstanding, I will also give expression to my thought here. Perhaps a man who is shrewd in a finite sense would become a little dubious about such a love, he would perhaps perceive its fragility and in opposing it would express his paltry wisdom by the proverb, “Love me little, love me long” — as if his worldly wisdom were not still more fragile or at least far more paltry than her love! You will easily perceive that I could not express my disapproval of it in that way. It is very repulsive to me to carry on a thought experiment in the domain of love. I have only loved once and am still indescribably happy in this love. It is repulsive to me to think of being loved by any other person than the one to whom I am joined and in any other way than that by which she makes me so happy. But I will make the venture. Suppose, then (however it may have come about), that I have become the object of such a love. It would not make me happy, and I would never accept it — not because I should disdain it, for God knows that I would rather have a murder on my conscience than to have disdained a maiden’s love — but for her own sake I would not permit it. So far as in me lieth, I desire to be loved by everybody, by my wife I desire to be loved as

dearly as one person can love another and it would pain me if I were not so loved, but I do not desire more, I will not permit anyone to take harm to her soul by loving me; I should love her too truly to permit her to abase herself. To a proud mind there is something seductive in being loved thus, and there are men who understand the art of infatuating a girl so that she forgets everything else but them — let them look to it how they justify this. Such a girl is for the most part punished severely enough, but the despicable thing is to let this occur. Observe that it is for this reason I said and still say that the young girl was equally in despair whether she got the loved one or not, for in fact it was an accidental circumstance if the man she loved was so upright that he would help her out of her heart's delusion; and even though the means he employed to this end were never so hard, I would affirm, nevertheless, that he acted towards her uprightly, sincerely, faithfully, chivalrously.

So the aesthetic view of life has proved itself to be despair. It might therefore seem to be in place to undertake the movement which brings to evidence the ethical. However, there still remains one stage, an aesthetic life view which is the most refined and superior of them all, into which I must inquire with the greatest care, for now it is your turn. You can follow with composure everything I have set forth hitherto, and in a way it is not to you I have been speaking, and it would be of little use to talk in this fashion to you or to explain to you that life is vanity. That you know very well and in your way have sought to adjust yourself. The reason why I have expounded this is that I desire to protect my rear and would prevent you from suddenly leaping back. This last life view is despair itself. It is an aesthetic life view, for the personality remains in its immediacy; it is the last aesthetic life view, for to a certain degree it is conscious of its own nullity. There is a difference, however, between despair and despair. If I imagine an artist, a painter, for example, who becomes blind, he then perhaps will despair if

there is nothing deeper in him. He despairs then over this particular thing, and if his sight were restored to him again, his despair would cease. Such is not the case with you, you are far too intellectually gifted for that, and your soul is in a certain sense too deep for this to befall you. Nor in outward respects has any such misfortune happened to you. You still have in your power all the factors requisite for an aesthetic life view, you have wealth and independence, your health is unimpaired, your mind still vigorous, nor have you yet become unhappy for the fact that a girl would not love you. And yet you are in despair. It is not despair about any actual thing but a despair in thought. Your thought has hurried on ahead, you have seen through the vanity of all things, but you have got no further. Occasionally you plunge into pleasure, and every instant you are devoting yourself to it you make the discovery in your consciousness that it is vanity. So you are constantly beyond yourself, that is, in despair. This is the reason why your life lies between two prodigious contradictions; sometimes you have enormous energy, sometimes an indolence just as great.

I have often observed that the more costly the fluid with which a man intoxicates himself, the more difficult it is to cure him, the intoxication being more beautiful and the consequences apparently not so dreadful. The man who gets drunk on gin is at once sensible of the dreadful consequences, and one may have hope of his salvation. He who uses champagne is cured with more difficulty. And you, you who have chosen the most refined means! For no intoxication is so beautiful as despair, so becoming, so attractive, especially in a maiden’s eyes (that you know full well), and especially if one possesses the skill to repress the wildest outbursts, to let despair be vaguely sensed like a distant conflagration while only a glimpse of it is visible outwardly. It imparts a light swing to the hat and to the whole body, it gives one a proud and defiant air. The lips smile arrogantly. It gives an indescribable lightness to life and a lordly survey of all things. And now

when such a figure approaches a young girl, when this proud head is bowed only before her, before her alone in the whole world, this flatters, and alas, there might be one who was innocent enough to believe in this false bow. Is it not shameful when a man thus... but no, I shall not deliver a thundering speech; that would only provoke you, I have other, more powerful expedients. I have that hopeful young man, he is perhaps in love, he comes to you, he is mistaken in you, he believes that you are a trustworthy, upright man, he would take counsel of you. In reality you can shut your door against every such unhappy young man, but your heart you cannot shut; though you do not wish him to be a witness of your humiliation, you shall not be spared it, for you are not so depraved as all that, and when you are alone with yourself you are more good-natured perhaps than anybody believes.

Here, then, I have your view of life, and believe me, much in your life will be explicable to you if with me you regard it as thought-despair. You are a hater of all activity in life. Very reasonably, for before there can be any meaning in activity there must be continuity, and that is what your life lacks. You occupy yourself with your studies, it is true; you are even industrious. But it is only for your own sake, and it is done with as little teleology as possible. For the rest you are idle, like the laborers in the Gospel you stand in the market place, you thrust your hands into your pockets and look on at life. Then you take repose in despair, nothing concerns you, you will not get out of the way of anything, you say, “If one were to throw a tile from the roof, I wouldn’t get out of the way.” You are like a dying man, you die daily, not in the serious significance usually attached to this word, but life has lost its reality, and, as you say, you always count your days by the number of times notice is served on you to quit your lodging. You let everything pass you by, it makes no impression, but now suddenly there comes something that grips you, an idea, a situation, a smile

from a young girl, and then you are “in it.” For as there are certain occasions when you are not “in it,” so there are others when you are and when you are very much “at your service.” Wherever there is something happening you are “in it.” You behave in life as you say you are accustomed to do in a crowd, working your way into the thickest group, contriving, if possible, to be pressed up above the others, and when you are up you make yourself as comfortable as possible, and so, also, you let yourself be carried through life.

But when the crowd has dispersed and the event is over you stand again at the street corner and look on at the world. A dying man, as you know, possesses supernatural energy, and so it is also with you. If it is an idea that has to be thought through, a book to be read through, a plan to be carried out, a little romance to be experienced — yes, even a hat that has to be bought, then you take hold of the thing with prodigious strength. According to circumstances, you work indefatigably for a day, for a month; you take joy in convincing yourself that you still possess the same vigor as before, you take no rest, “Satan himself could not keep up with me,” you say. If you work in common with others, you work them till they are ready to drop. But then when the month is up, or the half year, which you regard as the maximum, you break off, saying, “Here the story ends”; you retire and leave the other party to finish the work, or if you have worked at it alone, you say nothing about it to anybody. You then pretend to yourself and to others that you have lost the inclination and flatter yourself with the vain thought that you could have continued to work with the same intensity if you had been inclined to do so. But this is a prodigious deception. You would have succeeded as most others do in finishing the work if you had patiently willed to do so, but at the same time you also would have learned by experience that it requires an entirely different sort of perseverance from that which you have. So in this way you have deluded yourself and have

learnt nothing for your subsequent life. I can serve you here with a little piece of enlightenment. I am not unaware how deceitful one's own heart is, how easily one can deceive oneself — not to speak of a person like you who are in possession of a dialectical power to loose, which not only bestows dispensation for everything but dissolves and obliterates it.

So for my part, when something has confronted me in life, when I have resolved upon something which I feared in the course of time might acquire for me a different aspect, when I have done something which I feared in the course of time I might interpret differently, I have written down in a few clear words what it was I purposed to do or what I had done and why. Then when it seems to me I have need of it, some time when my resolution or my action did not stand out vividly before me, I take out my charter and pass judgment upon myself. It seems to you, perhaps, that this is pedantic, that it is too tedious and not worth making such a fuss about. I have no reply to make but this: if you feel no need of it, if your consciousness is always so unfailing and your memory so faithful, then let it be. But that I do not believe, for the talent your soul lacks is memory, I do not mean for this and that, not for ideas, witty sayings, or dialectical quirks — far be it from me to maintain that — but I mean memory of your own life, of what you have experienced in it. If you had such memory, the same phenomenon would not so often repeat itself in your life, and your life would not exhibit what I would call half-hour works, and would call them this even if you had spent half a year on them, seeing that you have not finished them. But you enjoy deluding yourself and others. If you were always as strong as you are in the instant of passion, I do not deny that you would be the strongest man I have ever known. But that you are not, as you yourself know right well. Hence, you retire, hiding yourself almost from yourself, and give yourself up to the repose of indolence. In my eyes, from whose watchfulness you cannot always withdraw, you become almost ludicrous by reason of your

momentary zeal and the justification you derive from this for your derision of others. Once upon a time there were two Englishmen who went to Arabia to buy horses. They brought with them several English race horses, wishing to try their qualities in comparison with the Arabian steeds. They proposed a race, and the Arabs were willing and left it to the Englishmen to select what horse they would from the Arabian steeds, what horse they would race against; but they were not willing to hold the race at once, they said that forty days was needed for training. They waited forty days, the amount of the prize was fixed, the horses saddled, and then the Arabs asked how long they should ride. "One hour," was the answer. This surprised the Arab, and he replied laconically, "I thought we should ride for three days."

Behold, thus it is with you. If one would run a race with you for an hour, Satan, as you say, couldn't keep up with you; a three days' race would be too much for you. I remember once telling you this story, and I remember your reply, that it was a ticklish thing to run a race of three days, there was risk of acquiring such headway that one could never come to a stop, and that therefore you refrained from all such violence, "once in a while I ride horseback, but I neither wish to be a cavalryman nor to pursue any other unflagging activity in life." And to a certain degree this is quite true, for you are always afraid of continuity, principally for the reason that it deprives you of the opportunity of deceiving yourself. The strength you possess is the strength of despair; it is more intense than ordinary human strength, but also it lasts a shorter time.

You are constantly hovering above yourself, but the ether, the fine sublimate into which you are volatilized, is the nullity of despair, and beneath you you behold a multiplicity of subjects for learning, information, study, observation, which for you, indeed, have no reality, but which you capriciously combine and employ to adorn as tastefully as possible the palace of the mind's luxurious delight where occasionally you sojourn.

What wonder, then, that for you existence is a fairy tale, that (to use your own words) you are often tempted to begin every speech by saying, "Once upon a time there was a king and a queen who unfortunately had no children," and that thereupon you forget everything else for the sake of the remark that strangely enough this is always the reason given by fairy tales for the sorrow of a king and a queen, whereas in ordinary life we hear rather of the sorrow of having children, as asylums and such like institutions go to prove. Now you have got the notion that "life is a fairy tale." You are capable of spending a whole month reading nothing but fairy tales, you make a profound study of them, you compare and analyze, and your study is not barren of result — but what do you use it for? To divert your mind; you let the whole thing go off in a brilliant display of fireworks.

You are hovering above yourself, and what you behold beneath you is a multiplicity of moods and situations which you employ to find interesting contacts with life. You can be sentimental, heartless, ironical, witty — in this respect one must grant that you are well schooled. Then as soon as anyone is capable of rousing you out of your indolence you throw yourself with your whole passion into your practice, and in your practice you have no lack of art, being only too thoroughly equipped with wit, agility, and all the seductive gifts of the mind. You are (as with self-complacent arrogance you express it) never so ungallant as to present yourself without bringing with you a little odorous, freshly-plucked bouquet of wit. The more one knows you, the more one is struck by the calculated shrewdness which pervades all that you do in the short time you are moved by passion. For passion never blinds you but makes you all the more clear-sighted. You then have forgotten your despair and all that commonly weighs upon your soul and thought, the accidental contact you have established with a person engages your attention absolutely. I will remind you of a little occurrence which took place in my own house. It is presumably to the two young

Swedish girls who were present I must express my thanks for the prize speech you delivered. The conversation had taken a rather serious turn and reached a point where it was not agreeable to you. I had expressed myself a bit in opposition to the exaggerated respect for intellectual gifts which is so characteristic of our age, I had insisted that what really matters is something quite different, an inwardness of the entire being for which language possesses no other expression but faith. By this you were, perhaps, placed in a less favorable light, and as you perceived clearly enough that along the path on which we had struck out you could get no further, you felt called upon to try your hand at what you yourself call "higher madness" in a sentimental key: "What! Am I supposed not to have faith? Why, I believe that in the inmost depths of the stillness of the forest, where the trees are reflected in the dark water, in its mysterious darkness, where even at midday there is twilight, there lives a being, a nymph, a maiden; I believe she is more beautiful than any one can conceive, I believe that in the morning she plaits garlands, that at midday she bathes in the cool water, that in the evening she sadly plucks the leaves from the garlands; I believe that I should be happy, the only man deserving to be so called, if I could catch her and possess her; I believe that in my soul there is a longing to search the whole world, I believe that I should be happy if that longing were satisfied; I believe that after all there is some meaning in the world if only I could find it — do not say, then, that I am not strong in faith and fervent in spirit." Perhaps you think that such a speech might entitle you to become a worthy member of a Greek symposium, for it is to this end among others you are cultivating your talents, and this you would regard as the most beautiful life, to gather together every night with Greek youths, to sit with a garland woven about your hair and deliver panegyrics upon love or upon whatever subject might occur to you; yea, you are willing to devote yourself wholly to delivering panegyrics. To me this speech seems claptrap, however artful

it is, and however impressive at the moment, especially when you yourself are permitted to declaim it with your feverish eloquence; and it seems to me, also, an expression of your disturbed mental condition, for it is quite natural that one who believes nothing that other people believe should believe in such imaginary beings, just as it often happens that one who is not afraid of anything in heaven or on earth is afraid of spiders. You smile, you think that I am falling into a trap, that I believed that you believed this which you were further from believing than any other man. That is quite so, for your speech always ends in absolute scepticism, but shrewd and calculating as you are, you cannot deny that for an instant you warm yourself with the morbid heat which lies in such an extravagance. Your intent, perhaps, is to deceive others, and yet there is a moment when without being aware of it you deceive yourself.

What applies to your studies applies to everything you do, you exist in the instant, and for an instant you attain a preternatural size, you sink your whole soul into the thing by an exertion of the will, for at the instant your whole nature is thoroughly under your command. He who sees you only at such an instant is very much deceived, whereas if he waits till the next instant, he may easily manage to exult over you. You remember, perhaps, the familiar fairy tale by Musaeus about the three young squires of Roland. One of them acquired from the old witch they visited in the forest a thimble which rendered him invisible. By means of that he penetrated into the chamber of the beautiful princess Urraca and declared his love to her, making a strong impression upon her since she saw nobody and surmised that it was a fairy prince who honored her with his love. Nevertheless, she required him to reveal himself. Here lay the difficulty: as soon as he showed himself the enchantment might vanish, and yet there was no joy to be had from his love if he could not reveal himself. I have at hand, as it happens, this fairy tale of Musaeus and will transcribe a little passage which I would

beg you to read through for the true good of your soul. “He consented unwillingly, as it seemed, and the imagination of the princess thrust before her the picture of the most beautiful man whom she thought with tense expectancy she was about to see. But what a contrast between the original and the ideal, since nothing appeared but a common visage, an ordinary person whose physiognomy betrayed neither genius nor sentiment!” What you wish to attain by these contacts with men, that you do attain, for you are considerably shrewder than that young squire, so you easily perceive that it doesn’t pay to become revealed. When you have imposed upon a man an ideal picture of yourself (and here one must concede that you can make yourself appear ideal in any direction whatsoever) you generally withdraw and then enjoy the pleasure of having duped a person. What you attain at the same time is that the coherence in your life view is broken and you have a new element which causes you to begin afresh.

Theoretically you are through with the world, finiteness cannot subsist before your thought; practically you are through with it to a certain degree, that is, in an aesthetic sense. Nevertheless, you have no world view, you have something which resembles a view, and this gives your life a certain composure, which must not, however, be confounded with a secure and refreshing confidence in life. You are composed only in contrast with one who is still pursuing the phantoms of pleasure, *per mare pauperiem fugiens, per saxa, per ignes.* In relation to pleasure you are superbly proud. That is quite natural, for indeed, you are through with finiteness altogether. And yet you are not able to give it up. You are content in comparison with those who are pursuing contentment, but it is in absolute discontent you find contentment. You are not concerned about seeing all the glories of the world, for in thought you are beyond them, and if they were offered to you, you would likely say as you commonly do, “Well, one might well devote to them a whole day.” You are not concerned because you have not become a

millionaire, and if this were offered to you, you would likely answer, "Well, it might be quite interesting to have been that, and one might well spend a month at it." And if one were able to offer you the love of the most beautiful maiden, you would answer, "Well, for half a year that would not be so bad." I will not here join in the cry of complaint often raised against you that you are insatiable, I would say rather that in a certain sense you are right, for nothing finite, not the whole world, can satisfy the soul of the man who feels need of the eternal. If one could offer you dignities and honor, the admiration of your contemporaries (for that is your weak point), you would answer, "Well, for a short time that would be pretty good." You do not really desire it, and you would not take one step to attain it. You would perceive that for this to have any significance you must actually be so eminently gifted in mind that this would be truth, and even in this case your thought sees even the highest degree of intellectual talent as something transitory. Your polemical temper gives you a more extreme expression for this when in your exasperation with life as a whole you could wish you were the most foolish of all men and yet were admired and adored by your contemporaries as the wisest of all, for this would be a far more profound mockery of existence than if the really clever man were honored as such. You therefore desire nothing, wish for nothing, the only thing you might wish for would be a divining twig which could give you everything, and that you would use to scrape your pipe.

So you are through with life, and, as you say, you have no need to make a will, for you have nothing to leave. But you are unable to hold yourself erect on this pinnacle, for it is true that your thought has taken everything from you, but it has given you nothing in place of it. The next instant a little insignificance captivates you. It is true that you regard it with all the superiority and pride which your arrogant thought bestows upon you, you disdain it as a paltry toy you are almost tired of before you take it in hand,

but it preoccupies you, nevertheless, and though it is not the thing itself which preoccupies you (that is never the case with you), yet you are preoccupied by the fact that you are willing to condescend to it. When you treat persons in this way your nature exhibits a high degree of faithlessness, for which, however, no one can reproach you ethically, for you are situated outside of ethical determinants. Fortunately, you are very little inclined to participate with others, and therefore this defect is not noticed. You often come to my house, and you know that you are always welcome, but you know, too, that it never occurs to me to invite you to participate in the least thing. I would not even take a drive with you in the forest, not because you cannot be very merry and entertaining, but because your participation is always a falsehood, for if you really take pleasure, it is not in something which gives pleasure to the rest of us, or in the drive, but in something you have *in mente;* and if you are not pleased, it is not because something unpleasant occurs which puts you out of sorts (for that might happen to the rest of us), but because already at the instant you are getting into the carriage you have discerned the nullity of this diversion. I am ready to forgive you for this, for your mind is always too active, and it is a true word you often apply to yourself, that you are like a woman in confinement, and when one is in such "interesting" situations it is no wonder that one is a little different from others.

However, the spirit will not let itself be mocked, it revenges itself upon you, it binds you with the chain of melancholy. My young friend, this is the way to become a Nero — if in your soul there were not a pristine seriousness, if in your thought there were not an innate depth, if you had not a spirit of magnanimity... and if you had become Emperor in Rome. However, you take another path. Now there appears before you a life view which seems to be the only one able to satisfy you, that is, to immerse your soul in sadness and sorrow. However, your thinking is so sound that this

view cannot meet the test; because to such an aesthetic sorrow existence is just as vain as it is to every other aesthetic life view. If a person cannot sorrow more profoundly, I can say with truth that sorrow wears off just as joy does, for all that is merely temporal perishes. And if many find it a comfort that sorrow wears off, it seems to me that this thought is just as comfortless as the observation that joy wears off. So your thought annihilates again this life view; and when one has annihilated sorrow one retains joy; instead of sorrow you choose a joy which is sorrow's changeling. This joy you have now chosen, this laughter of despair. You return again to life, under this illumination existence acquires a new interest for you. Just as you find great joy in talking to a child in such a way that what you say is understood by it very well and easily and naturally, while for you it means something entirely different, so you find joy in deceiving men by your laughter. When you can get people to laugh with you and shout for joy and delight themselves, then you triumph over the world, then you say to yourself, "If only ye knew what ye are laughing at!"

However, the spirit will not suffer itself to be mocked, and the gloom of melancholy grows denser around you, and the lightning flash of a mad wit reveals this to you more strikingly, more dreadfully. And there is nothing that diverts you, all the pleasure of the world possesses no significance for you, and though you envy the simple their foolish enjoyment of life, you do not pursue it. Pleasure does not tempt you; and pitiful as your condition is, it is a mercy it does not. It is not my intention to extol the pride within you which disdains pleasure, but rather to extol the grace which holds your thought fast. For if pleasure tempted you, you would be lost. But the fact that it does not tempt you shows what path you now must take, that you must go forward, not backward. There is another false path not less dreadful, and here again I rely not upon your pride but upon the grace which constantly sustains you. It is true enough that you are proud, and that

it is better for a man to be proud than to be vain, it is true that there is a dreadful passion in your thought and that you regard it as a claim you have no intention of relinquishing, that, to use your own words, you prefer to regard yourself as a creditor in the world who has not been paid rather than to annul the claim — and yet all human pride affords but a frail security.

Behold, my young friend, this life of yours is despair.

Hide this if you will from others, from yourself you cannot hide it, it is despair. And yet in another sense this life is not despair. You are too frivolous to despair, and you are too melancholy not to come in touch with despair. You are like a woman in childbirth, and yet you are constantly deferring the moment and remain constantly in pain. If a woman in her travail were to get the idea that she might give birth to a monster, or were to ponder within herself what it really was she would bring forth, her case would be similar to yours. Her effort to check the course of nature would be unavailing, but yours is indeed possible, for that to which a man gives birth in a spiritual sense is a *nisus formativus* of the will, and that is in a man's own power. What is it then you fear? You are not about to give birth to another human being, you are merely to give birth to yourself. And yet, as I know well, there is a seriousness in this which perturbs the whole soul: to become conscious of oneself in one's eternal validity is more significant than everything else in the world. It is as though you were caught and ensnared and could nevermore, either in time or eternity, make your escape, it is as though you lost your own self, as though you ceased to be, it is as though the next instant you would regret it and yet it could not be undone. It is a serious and significant moment when for an eternity one attaches oneself to an eternal power, when one receives oneself as a person whose memory no lapse of time shall efface, when in an eternal and unfailing sense one becomes aware of oneself as the person one is. And yet one can leave it alone!

So here there is an either/or. Let me talk to you as I never would do if anybody else were listening, partly because I can claim no right to speak to you thus, and partly because I am speaking only of future possibilities. If you will not harken to this, if you will continue to divert your soul with the trumpery of wit and the vanity of *esprit,* then do so, leave your home, travel abroad, go to Paris, devote yourself to journalism, sue for the smile of effete women, cool their hot blood with the coldness of your wit, let it be the proud theme of your life's labor to drive away the boredom of an idle woman or the gloomy thoughts of an enfeebled voluptuary, forget that you were a child, that there was piety in your soul and innocence in your thought, silence every higher voice in your breast, doze your life away in the glittering inanity of the *soirées,* forget that there is an immortal spirit within you; and when wit grows mute there is water still in the Seine and gunpowder in the store and traveling companionship at every hour of the day. But if you cannot do this, if you will not (and this you neither can nor will), then collect yourself, quell every rebellious thought which would presume to commit high treason against your better nature, despise all the pettiness which would envy your intellectual gifts and itself desires them in order to put thorn to a still worse use, despise the hypocritical virtue which unwillingly bears life's burdens and yet would be honored because it bears them; but do not for this cause despise life, respect every honest effort, every unassuming endeavor which modestly hides itself, and above all have a little more reverence for woman; believe me, it is from her comes salvation, as surely as depravity comes from man. I am a married man and to that extent I am partial, but it is my conviction that if it was a woman that ruined man, it was woman also that has fairly and honestly made reparation and still does so; out of a hundred men who go astray in the world ninety and nine are saved by women and one by immediate divine grace. And as I am also of the opinion that it is the nature of man to go astray in one way or

another, and that to a man it applies as truly as to a woman that he ought to abide in the pure and innocent peace of immediacy; you can easily see that in my opinion woman [when she restores a man to this state] makes due requital for the harm she has done.

What then must you do? Another perhaps would say, “Get married. Then you will have something else to think about.” Yes, that you will, but the question remains whether this will be any advantage to you, and whatever you may think of the other sex, you think at all events too chivalrously to wish to marry for that reason; and moreover, if you are unable to sustain yourself, you will hardly get another person who is capable of sustaining you. Or one might say, “Look for a job, throw yourself into the life of affairs, that is a distraction, and you will forget your melancholy. Get to work. That’s the best thing.” Perhaps you will succeed in getting to the point where your melancholy seems as if it were forgotten, but forgotten it is not; occasionally it will break out and will be more dreadful than ever, it will then perhaps be capable of doing what it could never do before, it may take you off your guard. Furthermore, however you may think of life and its affairs, you will nevertheless think too chivalrously of yourself to choose a profession for that reason, for that, after all, is a kind of falsehood, like marrying for the same reason. What then must you do? I have only one answer: despair.

I am a married man, my soul clings firmly and wisely to my wife, to my children, to this life which I shall always extol for its beauty. So when I counsel you to despair, it is not a fantastical youth who would whirl you away in the maelstrom of the passions, nor a mocking demon who shouts this comfort to the shipwrecked, but I shout it to you, not as a comfort, not as a condition in which you are to remain, but as a deed which requires all the power and seriousness and concentration of the soul, just as surely as it is my conviction, my victory over the world, that every man who has not

tasted the bitterness of despair has missed the significance of life, however beautiful and joyous his life might be. By despairing you do not defraud the world in which you live, you are not lost to it because you have overcome it, as surely as I can affirm of myself that I am a proper married man, in spite of the fact that I, too, have despaired.

When in this way I look upon your life, I declare you fortunate, for at the instant of despair it is truly of the utmost importance for a man not to be mistaken about life; this is just as dangerous for him as for a woman in travail to go amiss. He who despairs over one particular thing incurs the danger that his despair may not be genuine and profound, that it may be a delusion, a sorrow only for a particular loss. It is not thus you are to despair, for no particular thing has been taken from you, you still possess everything you had. If the despairing man makes a mistake, if he believes that the misfortune lies in his multifarious surroundings, then his despair is not genuine and it will lead him to hate the world and not to love it, for true as it is that the world is a burden to you because it is as if it would be to you something else than it can be, it is also just as true that when in despair you have found yourself you will love the world because it is what it is. If it is a fault or guilt or a troubled conscience which brings a man to despair, he will perhaps have difficulty in regaining his joyfulness. So, then, despair with all your soul and with all your mind; the longer you put it off, the harder the conditions become, and the demand remains the same. I shout this to you, like the woman who offered to sell to Tarquin a collection of books and when he would not give the sum she demanded burned one-third of them and demanded the same sum, and when again he would not give the sum she demanded burned another third of them and demanded the same sum, until finally he gave the original sum for the last third.

It is on beautiful terms despair is offered to you, and yet there are more beautiful terms. Imagine a young man as talented as you are. Let him love a

girl, love her as dearly as himself. Let him once ponder in a quiet hour upon what it is he has constructed his life and upon what she can construct hers. Love they have in common, and yet he will feel that there are differences. She possesses, perhaps, the gift of beauty, but this has no importance for him, and after all, it is so fragile; she has, perhaps, the joyful temper of youth, but that joy has no great significance for him, but he possesses the power of the mind and feels the might of it. He desires to love her in truth, and it never occurs to him to attribute this power to her, and her meek soul does not demand it, and yet there is a difference, and he will feel that this must be done away if he is to love her in truth. Then he will let his soul sink into despair. It is not for his own sake he despairs but for hers, and yet it is for his own sake too, for he loves her as dearly as himself. Then will despair devour everything till he finds *himself* in his eternal validity, but then he has also found her, and no knight can return more happily and gladly from the most perilous adventures than does he from this fight with flesh and blood and the vain differences of the finite, for he who despairs finds the eternal man, and in that we are all equal. The foolish thought of wishing to dull his mind or neglect its culture will not occur to him as a way of bringing about equality; he will preserve the gifts of the mind, but in his inmost heart he knows of himself that he who possesses these gifts is one who possesses them not. Or imagine a profoundly religious temperament, a man who from a true and sincere love for mankind cast himself into the ocean of despair till he found the absolute, the point where it is indifferent whether a forehead is squat or is arched as proudly as heaven, the point which is not indifference but absolute validity.

You have sundry good ideas, many whimsical notions, and a great quantity of follies — retain them all if you will, though I do not require you to. But one idea you have which I would beg you to hold fast, an idea which assures me that my mind is akin to yours. You have often said that you

would rather be anything but a poet, since as a rule a poet-existence is a human sacrifice. For my part, I would not deny that there have lived poets who had found themselves before they began to write poetry or who found themselves by poetizing, but on the other hand, it is also certain that a poet-existence as such lies in the obscurity which is due to the fact that a beginning of despair was not carried through, that the soul keeps on shivering with despair and the spirit cannot attain its true transformation. The poetic ideal is always a false ideal, for the true ideal is always the real. So when the spirit is not allowed to soar up into the eternal world of spirit it remains midway and rejoices in the pictures reflected in the clouds and weeps that they are so transitory. A poet-existence is therefore, as such, an unhappy existence, it is higher than finiteness and yet not infiniteness. The poet sees the ideals, but he must flee away from the world in order to rejoice in them, he cannot bear about in the midst of life's confusion these divine images within him, cannot tranquilly pursue his course unaffected by the caricatures of these ideals which appear on all sides, not to speak of having strength to clothe himself in them. The poet's life is, therefore, often an object of paltry compassion on the part of men who think themselves secure because they have remained in finiteness. You said once in a moment of despondency that doubtless there were some people who had privately cast up their accounts with you and were willing to be quits on the following terms: you were to be recognized as a clever pate, and in requital for that you were to sink out of sight and be no officious member of society. Yes, it is undeniable, there is such paltriness in the world which would triumph in this way over everything which projects even an inch above the ordinary level. However, do not let it disturb you, do not defy it, do not show your contempt for it — in this instance I would say as you are wont to say, "It's not worth the trouble." But if you do not wish to be a poet, there is no other way for you except that which I have indicated: despair!

So then choose despair, for despair itself is a choice; for one can doubt without choosing to, but one cannot despair without choosing. And when a man despairs he chooses again — and what is it he chooses? He chooses himself, not in his immediacy, not as this fortuitous individual, but he chooses himself in his eternal validity.

This point I shall endeavor to illuminate with application to you. In modern philosophy there has been more than enough talk about speculation beginning with doubt, but on the other hand, as far as I have been able to concern myself occasionally with such reflections, I have sought in vain for illumination upon the point of difference between doubt and despair. I will here attempt to throw light upon this distinction, in the hope that it will serve to orient you and put you in the correct position. I am far from presuming to claim any real competence as a philosopher, I have not your virtuosity in playing with the categories, but what in the deepest sense is the significance of life must be comprehensible also to a simpler man. Doubt is a despair of thought, despair is a doubt of the personality; hence it is I hold so stoutly to the category of choice, which is my solution, the nerve in my life view — and such a thing as a life view I have, even though I do not by any means presume to have a system. Doubt is the inward movement in thought itself, and in doubting I behave as impersonally as possible. Now I assume that thought, by carrying doubt through, finds the absolute and rests in it — rests in it, therefore, not as a consequence of choice but in consequence of the same necessity in consequence of which it doubted. For doubt itself is determined by necessity, and so, likewise, is rest. This is the lofty characteristic of doubt for which it has so often been extolled and praised by people who hardly know what they are saying. But the fact that it is determined by necessity shows that the whole personality is not engaged in the movement. Hence, there is a good deal of truth in it when a man says, "I would willingly believe, but I cannot, I must doubt." Hence, one often

sees that a doubter has in himself a positive content which lives apart from all communication with thought, that he may be an exceedingly conscientious person who has no doubt whatever about the validity of duty and the rule for his behavior, no doubt whatever about a multitude of sympathetic feelings and moods. On the other hand, in our age especially, one sees men who have despair in their hearts but yet have conquered doubt. This has struck me particularly in considering certain of the philosophers of Germany. Their thought is tranquilized, the objective logical thought is brought to rest in its corresponding objectivity, and yet they are in despair, even though they find distraction in objective thinking; for a man can find distraction in many ways, and there is hardly any anaesthetic so powerful as abstract thinking, because here it is a question of behaving as impersonally as possible.

Doubt and despair therefore belong in entirely different spheres, different sides of the soul are set in motion. Yet with this I am by no means satisfied, for doubt and despair would then be coordinate, and such is not the case. Despair is a far deeper and more complete expression, its movement much more comprehensive than that of doubt. Despair is precisely an expression for the whole personality, doubt only an expression for thought. The presumptive objectivity of doubt, whereof it is so proud, is precisely an expression for its incompleteness and imperfection. Doubt therefore is related to difference, despair to the absolute.

Talent is requisite for doubting, but no talent at all is requisite for despair; but talent as such is a difference, and that which has need of talent in order to assert itself can never be the absolute, for the absolute as absolute can only be for the absolute. The lowliest, the least talented man, can despair, a young girl who is anything but a thinker can despair, whereas everyone readily feels the foolishness of saying of them that they are doubting souls. The reason why a man's doubt may be tranquilized and he,

nevertheless, may be in despair and continue in it, is that in a deeper sense he does not will despair. One cannot despair at all without willing it, but to despair truly one must truly will it, but when one truly wills it one is truly beyond despair; when one has truly willed despair one has truly chosen that which despair chooses, i.e., oneself in one's eternal validity. The personality is tranquilized only in despair, not by necessity, for I never despair by necessity, but by freedom, and only thereby does one win the absolute. In this respect our age, in my opinion, will make progress — if I may venture to have an opinion about our age, seeing that I know it only from my reading of the newspapers and an occasional book or from my conversations with you. The time is not far off when people will learn, perhaps at a dear price, that the true point of departure for finding the absolute is not doubt but despair.

But I return to my category. I have only one, for I am not a logician, but I assure you that it is the choice both of my heart and of my thought, my soul's delight and my bliss — I return to the importance of choosing. So, then, in choosing absolutely I choose despair, and in despair I choose the absolute, for I myself am the absolute, I posit the absolute and I myself am the absolute; but in complete identity with this I can say that I choose the absolute which chooses me, that I posit the absolute which posits me; for if I do not remember that this second expression is equally absolute, my category of choice is false, for the category is precisely the identity of both propositions. That which I choose I do not posit, for in case this were not [already] posited, I could not choose it, and yet if I do not posit it by the fact that I chose it, then I did not choose it. It exists, for in case it were not in existence I could not choose it; it does not exist, for it only comes into being by the fact that I choose it, otherwise my choice would be an illusion.

But what is it I choose? Is it this thing or that? No, for I choose absolutely, and the absoluteness of my choice is expressed precisely by the

fact that I have not chosen to choose this or that. I choose the absolute. And what is the absolute? It is I myself in my eternal validity. Anything else but myself I never can choose as the absolute, for if I choose something else, I choose it as a finite thing and so do not choose it absolutely. Even the Jew who chose God did not choose absolutely, for he chose, indeed, the absolute, but did not choose it absolutely, and thereby it ceased to be the absolute and became a finite thing.

But what, then, is this self of mine? If I were required to define this, my first answer would be: It is the most abstract of all things, and yet at the same time it is the most concrete — it is freedom. Permit me at this point to make a little psychological observation. One often hears people give vent to their discontent with life, and often hears them express their wishes. Picture to yourself such a bungler — let us skip over the wishes which illuminate nothing because they have to do with the entirely accidental. He wishes: Would that I had that man's intelligence, or that man's talent, etc. — yea, to go to the extremest point, would that I had that man's firmness. Such wishes one hears frequently, but have you ever heard a man seriously express the wish that he might become another man? This is so far from being the case that it is precisely characteristic of the individuals we call unfortunate that for the most part they cling tightly to their own selves, that in spite of all their sufferings they would not for all the world be anybody else. And the reason for this is that such individuals are very close to the truth and feel the eternal validity of their personality, not in its blessings but in its bane, even though they have refrained from giving voice to this perfectly abstract expression for the gladness of being themselves rather than anybody else. But then, that man of the many wishes thinks constantly that he would remain himself although everything were to be changed. So there is something in him which is absolute in relation to everything else, something whereby he is the man he is, even though the alteration he would

accomplish by his wish were the greatest possible. That he is mistaken I shall show later, but here I would merely find the most abstract expression for this “self” which makes him the man he is. And this is nothing other than freedom. It would actually be possible in this way to produce a highly plausible proof for the eternal validity of the personality. Yea, even a suicide does not really desire to do away with his self, he too wishes, he wishes another form for his self, and therefore one may find a suicide who was in the highest degree convinced of the immortality of the soul but whose whole being was so entangled that by this step he expected to find the absolute form for his spirit.

The reason, however, why it seems to an individual as if he might constantly be changed and yet remain the same (as if his inmost nature were an algebraic sign which could signify anything whatever) is to be found in the fact that he is not correctly situated, has not chosen himself, has no conception of such a thing; and yet even in his lack of understanding there is implied a recognition of the eternal validity of the personality. He, on the other hand, who is correctly situated has a different experience. He chooses himself, not in a finite sense (for then this “self” would be something finite along with other things finite), but in an absolute sense; and yet, in fact, he chooses himself and not another. This self which he then chooses is infinitely concrete, for it is in fact himself, and yet it is absolutely distinct from his former self, for he has chosen it absolutely. This self did not exist previously, for it came into existence by means of the choice, and yet it did exist, for it was in fact “himself.”

In this case choice performs at one and the same time the two dialectical movements: that which is chosen does not exist and comes into existence with the choice; that which is chosen exists, otherwise there would not be a choice. For in case what I chose did not exist but absolutely came into existence with the choice, I would not be choosing, I would be creating; but

I do not create myself, I choose myself. Therefore, while nature is created out of nothing, while I myself as an immediate personality am created out of nothing, as a free spirit I am born of the principle of contradiction, or born by the fact that I choose myself.

The man we are speaking of discovers now that the self he chooses contains an endless multiplicity, inasmuch as it has a history, a history in which he acknowledges identity with himself. This history is of various sorts; for in this history he stands in relation to other individuals of the race and to the race as a whole, and this history contains something painful, and yet he is the man he is only in consequence of this history. Therefore, it requires courage for a man to choose himself; for at the very time when it seems that he isolates himself most thoroughly he is most thoroughly absorbed in the root by which he is connected with the whole. This alarms him, and yet so it must be, for when the passion of freedom is aroused in him (and it is aroused by the choice, as also it is presupposed in the choice) he chooses himself and fights for the possession of this object as he would for his eternal blessedness; and it is his eternal blessedness. He cannot relinquish anything in this whole, not the most painful, not the hardest to bear, and yet the expression for this fight, for this acquisition is... repentance. He repents himself back into himself, back into the family, back into the race, until he finds himself in God. Only on these terms can he choose himself, and he wants no others, for only thus can he absolutely choose himself. What is a man without love? But there are many sorts of love: I love a father and a mother differently, likewise my wife, and every distinct sort of love has its distinct expression; but there is also a love by which I love God, and there is only one word in the language which expresses it... it is repentance. When I do not love Him thus, I do not love Him absolutely, do not love Him with my inmost being, and every other sort of love for the absolute is a misunderstanding, for (to take for example

what is usually extolled most highly and which I myself hold in honor) when thought clings to the absolute with all its love, it is not the absolute I love, I do not love absolutely, for I love necessarily; as soon as I love freely and love God I repent. And if there might be any other reason why the expression for my love of God is repentance, it would be because He has loved me first. And yet this is an imperfect account of the reason, for only when I choose myself as guilty do I choose myself absolutely, if my absolute choice of myself is to be made in such a way that it is not identical with creating myself; and though it were the iniquity of the father which passed by inheritance to the son, he repents of this as well, for only thus can he choose himself, choose himself absolutely; and though tears were almost to blot out everything, he holds on to repentance, for only thus can he choose himself. His self is, as it were, outside of him, and it has to be acquired, and repentance is his love for this self, because he chooses it absolutely out of the hand of the eternal God.

What I have stated here is not professorial wisdom, it is something every man can state who wills to do so, and which every man can will to do if he will. I have not learned it in lecture rooms, I have learned it in the drawing room, or in the nursery, if you will, for when I see my small son running about the room, so joyful, so happy, I then think, "Who knows if after all I have not had an injurious influence upon him? God knows I take all possible care of him, but this thought does not tranquilize me." Then I say to myself, "There will come a moment in his life when his spirit will be ripened by the instant of choice, then he will choose himself, then also he will repent what guilt of mine may rest upon him. And it is a beautiful thing for a son to repent his father's fault, and yet he will not do this for my sake but because he only thus can choose himself. So come what may, that which one regards as the best may after all have the most injurious consequences for a person, and yet all this is nothing. I can be of much use to him, that I

shall endeavor to do, but the highest thing he alone can do for himself." Here is the reason why it is so painful for men to choose themselves, it is because absolute isolation is in this case identical with the profoundest continuity, because so long as one has not chosen oneself there is, as it were, the possibility of being somewhat different either in one way or another.

Here you have my humble opinion about what it is to choose and to repent. It is unseemly to love a young girl as if she were one's mother, or to love one's mother as though she were a young girl. Every kind of love has its distinct characteristic, love for God has its absolute characteristic, its expression is repentance. And what is all other love in comparison with this? It is only childish prattle in this contrast. I am not a fantastic youth who seeks to recommend his theories, I am a married man, I dare let my wife hear me say that all love in comparison with repentance is only childish prattle; and yet I know that I am a proper husband, "I who as a married man still fight under the triumphant banner of first love"; I know that she shares my view, and therefore, I love her even more dearly, and therefore, I would not love that young girl we spoke about, because she did not share this view.

That new paths, devious and dangerous, present themselves at this point, that he who creeps upon the ground is not so much exposed to the danger of falling as is he who climbs to the mountain summit, that he who remains in the chimney corner is less liable to go astray than is he who ventures out into the world, all this I know, but for all that I hold no less confidently to my choice.

Here a theologian will discover a point of departure for manifold reflections. I will not go into them further since I am only a layman. I will only try to illuminate the foregoing discussion by the observation that in Christianity repentance found for the first time its true expression. The

pious Jew felt the iniquity of the fathers resting upon him, and yet he did not feel this nearly so deeply as the Christian, for the pious Jew could not repent it, because he could not absolutely choose himself. The guilt of his forefathers weighed upon him, brooded over him, he sank under this burden, he sighed, but he could not lift it; that he only can do who absolutely chooses himself through repentance. The greater the freedom the greater the guilt, and this is one of the secrets of blessedness, and if it be not cowardice, it is at least faint-heartedness not to be willing to repent the guilt of the forefathers; if not paltriness, it is at least pettiness and lack of magnanimity.

So then the choice of despair is "my self" — for though when I despair it is true that, among all the other things I despair of, I despair also of myself, yet this self of which I despair is a finite thing like every other finitude, whereas the self I choose is the absolute self, or myself according to its absolute validity. Such being the case, you will see again in this instance why I said in the foregoing and continue to say that the either/or I posited between living aesthetically and living ethically is not a complete dilemma because it properly has to do with only one object of choice, since in this choice I am not really choosing between good and evil but I choose the good, but in the fact that I choose the good I make *eo ipso* the choice between good and evil. The original choice is constantly present in every subsequent choice.

So, then I bid you despair, and never more will your frivolity cause you to wander like an unquiet spirit, like a ghost, amid the ruins of a world which to you is lost. Despair, and never more will your spirit sigh in melancholy, for again the world will become beautiful to you and joyful, although you see it with different eyes than before, and your liberated spirit will soar up into the world of freedom.

Here I might break off, for I have now brought you to the point where I would have you, that is, if you yourself will to be there. I wanted you to tear yourself loose from the illusions of the aesthetic life and awake from a dream of half despair to the earnestness of the spirit. It is not my intention, however, to break off, for from this point of vantage I would give you a reflection upon life, an ethical life view. It is but a frugal gift I offer you, partly because my talent is not adequate to the task, partly because frugality is a prime characteristic of everything ethical, a characteristic which may seem strange to one who comes from the abundance of the aesthetical. Here it is in point to say, *nil ad ostentationem, omnia ad conscientiam* [Nothing for appearance, everything for conscience]. For still another reason it might seem precarious to break off here, because it might easily appear as if I ended in a sort of quietism where the personality comes to repose with the same necessity as thought comes to repose in the absolute. What, then, would be the advantage of having gained oneself? What is the advantage of procuring a sword which is able to conquer the whole world if one were to make no other use of it but to thrust it into the scabbard?

But before I go on to set forth more in detail such an ethical view of life I would indicate in a few words the danger which lies before a man at the instant of despair, the reef upon which he may run aground and be totally shipwrecked. The Scripture says: “What would it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and suffer damage to his soul?” What compensation would he have? The converse of this is not expressly stated in the Scripture but it is implied in this sentence. It would read thus: what harm would it do a man if he were to lose the whole world and yet receive no damage to his soul? What compensation would he need? There are expressions which in themselves seem simple and yet fill the soul with an uncanny dread because they become almost more obscure the more one thinks over them. With respect to religion the sin against the Holy Ghost is such an expression. I do

not know if the theologians have succeeded in giving a precise explanation of this; I do not count myself capable of doing so, but then I am only a layman. On the other hand, the expression, "suffer damage to one's soul," is an ethical expression, and he who pretends to have an ethical life view must be supposed to have an explanation of it. One often hears this saying used, and yet every man who would understand it must have experienced profound emotions in his soul, yea, he must have been in despair, for it is properly the movements of despair which are described here: on the one side the whole world; on the other side one's own soul. You will easily see that by following up this expression one reaches the same abstract definition of "soul" which was reached earlier as the definition of the "self" when we were considering the fact that wishing does not imply wanting to be another person. For if I may gain the whole world and yet suffer damage to my soul, then the expression "whole world" must comprise all the finite things of which I, as such, am immediately in possession. My soul appears, then, to be indifferent to these things. If I lose the whole world without suffering damage to my soul, then again the expression "whole world" comprises all the determinants which I as such immediately have, and yet my soul is unharmed, and so it is indifferent to them. I may lose my wealth, my honor in the eyes of others, my intellectual powers, and suffer no damage to my soul. I could gain it all and yet suffer damage. What then is my soul? What is this inmost being of mine which can remain unaffected by this loss and suffer damage by this gain?

Before the eyes of the despairing man this movement is manifest, it is no rhetorical expression but the only adequate one, when on the one side he sees the whole world, and on the other side his self, his soul. In the instant of despair this distinction is manifest, and then all depends upon how a man despairs. For, as I have expounded this in a previous passage dealing with every aesthetical view of life, it is despair to gain the whole world, and to

gain it in such a way that one suffers damage to one's soul, and yet it is my sincere conviction that it is a man's true salvation to despair. Here again is manifest the importance of willing one's despair, of willing it in an infinite sense, in an absolute sense, for such a willing is identical with the absolute resignation. If, on the other hand, I will in a finite sense, then I suffer damage to my soul, for then my inmost being does not undergo its transformation in despair; on the contrary it shuts itself up, it is hardened, so that finally despair is obduracy, whereas the absolute despair is an experience which infinitizes. So when in my despair I gain the whole world I suffer damage to my soul for the fact that I finitize myself by living for it; when I despair at having lost the whole world I suffer damage to my soul, for I finitize it in quite the same way, since here again I regard my soul as posited by finiteness. That a man by his crimes can gain the whole world and yet suffer damage to his soul goes without saying, but there is a seemingly far more innocent way by which this may come about. Hence, I said that the young girl we spoke about was just as much in despair whether she got the man she loved or not.

Every finite despair is a choice of finiteness, for I choose it just as really when I lose it as when I gain it; whether I shall obtain it does not depend upon my power, but whether I choose it does. The finite despair is, therefore, an unfree despair, it does not really will to be in despair, it wills to possess finitude, but to will this is despair. Upon this narrow point a man may maintain his position, and so long as he holds himself there I cannot quite resolve to venture to declare that he has suffered damage to his soul. He is standing upon an exceedingly dangerous point. Every instant there is a possibility of damage. Despair is there, but it has not yet attacked his inmost being; only when in a finite sense he hardens himself in despair has he suffered damage to his soul. His soul is, as it were, anaesthetized by despair, and only when upon awakening he chooses a finite way out of

despair has he suffered damage to his soul, for then he has shut himself up, then his rational soul is smothered and he is transformed into a beast of prey which will shun no expedient because all is self-defense. There is a horrible dread suggested by this thought that a man has suffered damage to his soul, and yet everyone who has despaired will have had a presentiment of this false way, this way of perdition. That a man may thus suffer damage to his soul is certain; how far such is the case with the particular individual can never be determined, and let no man venture on this point to judge another. A man's life may appear strange, and one may be tempted to believe that such is the case with him, and yet he may possess an entirely different interpretation which assures him of the contrary. On the other hand, he may have suffered damage to his soul without anybody suspecting it, for the damage does not lie in the outward semblance, it lies in man's inmost being, it is like the decay which dwells in the heart of the fruit while the outward appearance may be pleasant to look upon, it is like the hollowness of the nut of which the shell gives no intimation.

So when you choose yourself absolutely you easily discover that this self is not an abstraction or a tautology; at the most it may seem so at the moment of orientation in which one is employed in separating until one finds the most abstract expression for the self, and yet for all that it is an illusion to suppose that the self is entirely abstract and empty, for it is not conscious simply of freedom in general, as thought might conceive it, but it was produced by a choice and is conscious of this definite free being who is himself and no other. This self contains a rich concretion, a manifold variety of determinants and characteristics, being the whole aesthetical self which is chosen ethically. Therefore, the deeper down you go into yourself, the more you will feel the significance even of insignificance (not in a finite but in an infinite sense) because it is posited by you, and when a man thus chooses himself in an ethical sense this does not mean merely a reflection

about himself, but one might characterize this act by recalling the passage of Scripture which speaks of giving an account for every idle word. For when the passion of freedom is aroused, the self is jealous of itself and will by no means allow it to remain undetermined what belongs to it and what does not. Hence, in the first instant of choice the personality issues forth apparently as naked as does a child from the body of its mother; the next instant it is concrete in itself and only by an arbitrary abstraction can it come to pass that a man is able to remain at this point. He becomes himself, quite the same self he was before, down to the least significant peculiarity, and yet he becomes another, for the choice permeates everything and transforms it. Thus his finite personality is infinitized by the choice whereby he infinitely chooses himself.

Now he is in possession of his self as posited by himself, that is, as chosen by himself, as free; but in the fact that he thus possesses himself there comes to evidence an absolute difference, the difference between good and evil. So long as he has not chosen himself this difference is latent. How is it possible at all that the difference between good and evil emerges? Is it something we can think, that is to say, is it an affair for thought? No. With this I have again reached the point where we were in the foregoing discussion when I raised the question why it could seem as if philosophy had abolished the principle of contradiction when as a matter of fact it had not got so far as that. In the act of thinking, my relation to the thing thought is one of necessity, but precisely for this reason the difference between good and evil does not exist. Think anything you will, think the most abstract of all categories, think the most concrete, you never think under the rubric of good and evil; think the whole of history, and you think the necessary movements of ideas, but you never think under the rubric of good and evil. You are constantly thinking relative differences, never the absolute difference. As I see it, therefore, one can readily concede to philosophy that

it cannot think an absolute contradiction, but it by no means follows from this that such a contradiction does not exist. In thinking I infinitize myself too, but not absolutely, for I disappear in the absolute. Only when I absolutely choose myself do I infinitize myself absolutely, for I myself *am* the absolute, for only myself can I choose absolutely, and this absolute choice of myself is my freedom, and only when I have absolutely chosen myself have I posited an absolute difference, the difference, that is to say, between good and evil.

In order to abolish the factor of self-determination in thinking, philosophy says, “The absolute *is* for the fact that I think it,” but since philosophy itself perceives that by this way of expressing it free thinking is indicated, not the necessary thinking it is wont to extol, it substitutes in place of this another expression, to wit, that my thinking of the absolute is the self-thinking of the absolute in me. This expression is by no means identical with the foregoing, but it is exceedingly significant, nevertheless. For it represents that my thought is a constituent factor of the absolute, and this implies the necessity of my thinking, it implies the necessity which obliges me to think this thought. Such is not the case with the good. The good *is* for the fact that I will it, and apart from my willing it, it has no existence. This is the expression for freedom. It is so also with evil, it *is* only when I will it. By this the distinctive notes of good and evil are by no means belittled or disparaged as merely subjective distinctions. On the contrary, the absolute validity of these distinctions is affirmed. The good is the *an-und-fursich-Seiende* posited by the *an-und-für-sich-Seiende* [being in and of itself], and this is freedom.

It might seem as though with doubtful propriety I use the expression, “to choose oneself absolutely,” for this might seem to imply that with the same absoluteness I choose both good and evil and that with the same necessity both good and evil belong to me. In order to prevent this misunderstanding I

use the expression that I "repent myself out of the whole of existence." For repentance is the expression for the fact that evil belongs to me necessarily, and at the same time the expression for the fact that it does not necessarily belong to me. If the evil in me did not belong to me essentially, I could not choose it, but if there were something in me which I could not choose absolutely, I would not be able to choose myself absolutely at all, so I would not myself be the absolute but only a product.

Here I will bring these reflections to an end in order to show how an ethical view of life regards personality and life and their significance. For regularity's sake I will return to a few observations which were made at an earlier point with regard to the relation between the aesthetical and the ethical. Every aesthetical life view is despair, it was said. This was attributed to the fact that it was built upon what may be and may not be. Such is not the case with the ethical life view, for it builds life upon what essentially belongs to being. The aesthetical, it was said, is that in a man whereby he immediately is the man he is; the ethical is that whereby a man becomes what he becomes. By this I do not intend to say that the man who lives aesthetically does not develop, but he develops by necessity not by freedom, no metamorphosis takes place in him, no infinite movement whereby he reaches the point from whence he becomes what he becomes.

When an individual regards his self aesthetically he becomes conscious of this self as a manifold concretion very variously characterized; but in spite of the inward diversity, all of it taken together is, nevertheless, his nature; each component has just as much right to assert itself, just as much right to demand satisfaction. His soul is like a plot of ground in which all sorts of herbs are planted, all with the same claim to thrive; his self consists of this multifariousness, and he has no self which is higher than this. If, then, he has the aesthetic seriousness you talk about so often and a little worldly wisdom, he will see that all cannot possibly thrive equally, so he

will choose, and what determines his choice is a more or less, which is a relative difference. So let us imagine that a man might live without coming in contact with the ethical; he would then be able to say, “I have a bent to be a Don Juan, a Faust, or a robber chieftain; this bent I must cultivate, for the aesthetical seriousness requires that I become something definite, that I permit the germ deposited in me to develop completely.” Such a view of the personality and its development would be perfectly correct aesthetically. You see from this what an aesthetic development means, it is a development like that of the plant, and although the individual becomes, he becomes what he immediately is. He who regards personality ethically is at once in possession of an absolute difference, viz., that between good and evil, and if in himself he finds more of the evil than of the good, this does not mean that the evil is what is to come forth, but it means that the evil is to be repressed and the good is to come forth. So when the individual develops ethically he becomes that which he becomes; for even when he allows the aesthetical within him to possess validity (which for him has not at all the same meaning as for the man who lives aesthetically) it is nevertheless dethroned.

Even the aesthetic seriousness, like seriousness of every sort, is profitable to a man, but it can never save him completely. To a certain extent this is true in your case, I believe; for just as the ideal has always done you harm for the fact that you have stared yourself blind in gazing at it, so also it has been profitable to you, inasmuch as the bad ideal has always exercised a repellent effect upon you. Of course your aesthetic seriousness cannot cure you, for you never get further than letting the bad alone for the reason that it cannot be ideally carried out, but you do not let it alone because it is bad or because you abhor it. You have not got further than the feeling that you are just as impotent with relation to the good as with relation to the evil. Moreover, evil never exercises, perhaps, a more

seductive influence than when it makes its appearance in an aesthetic guise. It requires a very high degree of ethical seriousness never to be willing to construe evil under aesthetical categories. Such a conception of it sneaks cunningly into every man, and the predominant aesthetical culture of our age is in no small measure contributory to this. Hence, one hears not infrequently even a moralizer inveigh against evil in a way which makes it evident that the orator, although he extols the good, takes satisfaction, nevertheless, in the thought that he might have been the most intriguing and crafty of men but had disdained this possibility in comparison with being a good man. Yet this betrays a secret weakness and shows that the difference between good and evil does not stand out clearly before him in all its seriousness. After all, there is so much good left in every man that, while he feels that to be a good man is the highest thing, yet for the sake of having some little mark of distinction from the common herd he demands a high degree of appreciation for the fact that he who had so many qualifications for becoming bad had nevertheless become good. Just as if having many qualifications for becoming bad were a merit, and just as if by dwelling upon these qualifications he did not show a predilection for them.

So, too, one often finds men who really in their inmost heart are good but have not the courage to acknowledge it because they would thereby come under categories which they account too trivial. These men also recognize the good as the highest, but they have not the courage to own that evil is what it is. One also hears people say very often, “That was a poor ending to the story,” and as a rule one can be sure that what is in this way hailed and advertised is the ethical. When, in whatever way it may be, a man has become an enigma to other men, and then there is an explanation and it turns out that he was not, as people hoped and delighted to think, a sly and crafty deceiver, but is a good-natured and worthy man, then they say, “Nothing but that! Was that all?” Yes, verily, it requires much ethical

courage to acknowledge the good as the highest, because thereby one falls under perfectly general categories. To that people stoutly object, they would like to have for themselves the distinction of difference. For everyone can be a good man who wills it, but it always requires talent to be bad. Hence, many would like to be philosophers, not Christians, for to be a philosopher talent is required, to be a Christian humility, and that everyone can have who wills it. What I say here you are well able to take to heart, for in your inmost nature you are not a bad man. Now do not be angry with me; I have no intention of offending you; you know that I have had to make a virtue of necessity, and as I have not your talents I must try to hold in some honor the thing of being a good man.

In our time they have sought also in other ways to enervate the ethical view of life. For although they find that the business of being a good man is a pretty poor career in life, they nevertheless retain a certain respect for it and are disquieted when they see its claim asserted. I do not mean, of course, that a man should make display of his virtue and flaunt before the eyes of everybody the fact that he is a good man; but on the other hand, neither should he take pains to hide it or fear to acknowledge his effort to be good. If he does acknowledge it, they will at once raise against him the cry that he wants to make himself important, wants to make out that he is better than others, they unite in the same flippant expression: “Let us be men. Before God we are all miserable sinners.” I do not need to tell you this, but I do need to warn you against far too much activity into which your mockery often carries you. It is quite natural, therefore, that in the modern drama the bad is always represented by the most shining talents; the good, the upright, by a grocer’s clerk. The spectators find this a matter of course and learn from the play what they knew beforehand, that it is far beneath their dignity to be put in the same class with a grocer’s clerk. Yes, my young friend, it requires much ethical courage not to wish to be

distinguished by differences but to be content with the universal. In this respect our age needs a thorough shaking-up — which also will not tarry, for there surely will come the instant when our age will have a chance to see how the individuals most distinguished in an aesthetic sense, being singled out by differences, are in despair over these differences and want to find the universal. That may be good for us little people, inasmuch as we, too, sometimes feel embarrassed at not being distinguished by differences because we are too insignificant for that... and not because we have been great enough to disdain them.

Every man who lives merely aesthetically has for this reason a secret terror at the thought of despair, for he knows very well that what is brought forth by despair is the universal, and he knows also that it is the differences which make him what he is. The higher an individual stands, the more differences he has annihilated or despaired over, but he always has one difference left which he is not willing to annihilate, that, namely, in which his life consists. It is remarkable how even the simplest men discover with admirable promptitude what might be called their aesthetic difference, however unimportant it may be; and one of the pitiful things in life is the foolish strife commonly carried on to determine which difference is more significant than the other. The aesthetic minds also express their aversion to despair by saying that it is a sudden break. This expression is quite correct on the assumption that life's development ought to consist in the necessary unfolding of the immediate. If this is not the case, despair is no break but a transfiguration. Only the man who despairs over something in particular suffers a break, but that is due precisely to the fact that he does not fully despair. Aestheticists are also afraid that life will lose the diverting multifariousness it possesses as long as it is so conceived that every single individual is living under aesthetic categories. This, again, is a misunderstanding, occasioned, it may be, by various rigoristic theories. By

despair nothing is destroyed, all of the aesthetical remains in a man, only it is reduced to a ministering role and thereby precisely is preserved. Yes, it is true that one does not live in it as before, but from this it by no means follows that it has been lost; it may perhaps be employed in a different way, but from this it by no means follows that it is gone. The ethicist simply carries through the despair which the higher aestheticist began but arbitrarily broke off; for however great the differences may be, they are only relative. And when the aestheticist himself admits that even the difference which lends significance to his life is transitory and yet adds that it is always best to take delight in it so long as one has it, this is really cowardice which loves a certain sort of snugness where it is not too high to reach the ceiling, and this is unworthy of a man. It is as though a man were to take delight in a relationship based on a misunderstanding which sooner or later must come to light and had not courage to become conscious of it or to admit it but would enjoy the relationship as long as possible. You, however, are not in this case, but you are like one who has admitted the misunderstanding, broken off the relationship, and yet would now be constantly taking leave of it.

The aesthetic view takes account of the personality in its relation to the environment, and the expression for this relation in its repercussion upon the individual is pleasure. But the aesthetic expression for pleasure in its relation to the individual is mood. In mood the personality is present but only dimly present. For he who lives aesthetically seeks as far as possible to be absorbed in mood, he seeks to hide himself entirely in it, so that there remains nothing in him which cannot be inflected into it; for such a remainder has always a disturbing effect, it is a continuity which would hold him back. The more the personality disappears in the twilight of mood, so much the more is the individual in the moment, and this, again, is the most adequate expression for the aesthetic existence: it is in the moment.

Hence the prodigious oscillations to which the man who lives aesthetically is exposed. He, too, who lives ethically experiences mood, but for him this is not the highest experience; because he has infinitely chosen himself he sees the mood below him. The remainder which will not "go into" mood is precisely the continuity which is to him the highest thing. He who lives ethically has (if I may recall an earlier expression) memory of his life — and he who lives aesthetically has not. He who lives ethically does not annihilate mood, he takes it for an instant into consideration, but this instant saves him from living in the moment, this instant gives him mastery over the lust for pleasure, for the art of mastering lust consists not so much in annihilating it, or entirely renouncing it, as in determining the instant. Take whatever lust you will, the secret of it, the power in it, consists in the fact that it is absolutely in the moment. One often hears people say that the only remedy is for one to abstain from it entirely. This is a very wrong method, which also can be successful only for a short time. Imagine a man who is addicted to gambling. Lust awakens with all its passion, it is as if his life were in jeopardy if the lust were not satisfied. If he is capable of saying to himself, "This instant I will not do it, in an hour I will," he is cured. This hour is the continuity which saves him. When a man lives aesthetically his mood is always eccentric because he has his center in the periphery. Personality has its center within itself, and he who has not his self is eccentric. When a man lives ethically his mood is centralized, he is not moody, he is not in a mood, but he has mood and he has mood in himself. What he labors for is continuity, and this is always master over mood. His life does not lack mood, yea, it has a total mood; but this is acquired, it is what one might call *aequale temperamentum,* but this is no aesthetic mood, and no one has it by nature or immediately.

But he who has now infinitely chosen himself — can he say, "Now I possess myself, I require nothing more, and to all the changes of the world I

oppose the proud thought: I am the man I am"? By no manner of means! In case a man were to express himself thus he would easily see that he was on a wrong path. The fundamental error would, in that case, too, lie in the fact that in the strictest sense he had not chosen himself. He had chosen himself maybe, but outside himself. He had interpreted quite abstractly what it is to choose and had not grasped himself in his concretion, he had not chosen in such a way that by the choice he became himself, became invested with his self; he had chosen himself from necessity, not with freedom; aesthetically he had taken in vain the ethical choice. The more significant the result which is to issue from the choice, the more dangerous are the byways, and here there appears a dreadful byway. When the individual has grasped himself in his eternal validity this overwhelms him by its fullness. The temporal vanishes from before his eyes. At the first instant this fills him with indescribable bliss and gives him a sense of absolute security. If then he begins to gaze upon this bliss, the temporal advances its claim. This is scorned. What the temporal can give, the more or the less which now presents itself, is so very unimportant in comparison with what he eternally possesses. Everything comes with him to a standstill, he has, as it were, reached eternity before the time. He relapses into contemplation, he gazes at himself, but this gaze cannot fill up the time. Then it appears to him that time, that the temporal, is his ruin; he demands a more perfect form of existence, and at this point there comes to evidence a fatigue, an apathy, which resembles the languor which is the attendant of pleasure. This apathy may rest so broodingly upon a man that suicide appears to him the only way of escape. No power can wrest from him his self, the only power is time, but neither can that wrest from him his self; it checks him and delays, it arrests the embrace of the spirit with which he grasps his self. He has not chosen himself; like Narcissus he has fallen in love with himself. Such a situation has certainly ended not infrequently in suicide.

The error lies in the fact that he has not chosen in the right way, not simply in the sense that he had no eye for his error, but that he has seen himself under the category of necessity — himself, this personality, with all these manifold characteristics, he has seen as part and parcel of the world-process, he has seen this self confronted by the eternal Power the fire of which pervades it without consuming it. But he has not seen himself in his freedom, has not chosen himself with freedom. If he does that, then the very instant he chooses himself he is in motion; concrete as his self is, he has nevertheless chosen himself in accordance with his possibility, in repentance he has ransomed himself for the sake of remaining in his freedom, but he can remain in his freedom only by constantly realizing it. He, therefore, who has chosen himself is *eo ipso* active.

This perhaps may be the place to mention a life view in which you take a high degree of pleasure, especially in your quality as *docent,* sometimes as practitioner. It comes to nothing less than that sorrow is, after all, the real meaning of life and to be the unhappiest man is to be the happiest. At first glance this view does not seem to be an aesthetic life view, for pleasure can hardly be the solution it offers. Neither is it ethical, however, but it has its place in the perilous transition from the aesthetical to the ethical, when the soul is so easily ensnared by one expression or another of the theory of predestination. You hold many false doctrines; this is nearly the worst, but you know also that it is the most serviceable when it is a question of stealing up to men and sucking them into your power. You can be as heartless as anybody, you can make jest of everything, even of a man's pain. You are not unaware that this is tempting to youth, yet in the end you put yourself by this conduct at a considerable distance from the young, for such behavior is just as repellent as it is attractive. If it is a young woman you would deceive in this way, it does not escape you that a womanly soul has too much depth to be captivated long by such devices; yea, even though for

a moment you have engaged her attention, yet it soon will end by her getting tired of the thing and almost conceiving an aversion for you, for her soul does not require such stimulants. Then the method is changed. By random enigmatic outbursts which only she can understand you let it be suspected that the explanation of it all is to be found in a far away melancholy. With her only are you open — but in so cautious a way that she never really gets to know; you leave it to her imagination to picture the deep sadness which you hide profoundly within you. You are shrewd, one cannot deny that, and true it is, as a young girl said of you, that you would end presumably by becoming a Jesuit. The more cunningly you know how to spin the thread which leads deeper and deeper into the secret places of melancholy, the more joyful you are, the more sure of drawing her to you. You do not make long speeches, you do not proclaim your pain by a faithful grasp of the hand, by "a romantic gaze into a kindred soul's romantic eyes"; you are too shrewd for that. You shun witnesses and rarely allow yourself to be taken off your guard. There is an age when no poison is more dangerous to a young girl than sadness; that you know, and in itself this knowledge, like every sort of knowledge, may be all right, but on the other hand, the use you make of it I shall not praise.

Since you have hardened your mind to construe the whole of existence under aesthetic categories, it is a matter of course that sorrow has not escaped your attention, for in itself it is as interesting as joy. The tenacity with which you hold on to the interesting wherever it is to be found gives constant occasion to your companions to misunderstand you and at one moment to regard you as absolutely heartless, at another as a good-natured man, whereas, in fact, you are neither. Such a misunderstanding may even be occasioned by the fact that one quite as often sees you seeking out sorrow as attending upon joy — if, be it noted, there is in sorrow as well as in joy an idea, for only by that is the aesthetic interest awakened. If you

could be light-minded enough to make a person unhappy, you might give occasion to the strangest delusion. Unlike others who faithlessly are seeking only for joy, you would not retire then and pursue joy along other paths; no, sorrow exhibited in the same individual would become even more interesting to you than joy, you would remain with the man, you would be absorbed in his sorrow. You have experience, inwardness, the power of words, the pathos of tragedy, you know how to proffer to the afflicted the only assuagement sorrow yearns for — the expression. You delight in seeing how the sorrower finds repose in the string-music of mood when you are the performer; you soon become indispensable to him, for your expressive rendering lifts him up above the dark waves of care. He, on the other hand, is not indispensable to you, and soon you are tired. For to you it is not merely joy which

Is like a fleeting friend

One meets upon the road, but it is sorrow too, since you are a traveler always on the road. So when you have comforted the sorrower, and as a compensation have distilled the interesting out of this experience, you leap into your carriage and shout, "Away!" If the question is asked, "Whither?" you respond like the hero Don Juan, "To pleasure and merriment." For you are weary of sorrow, and your soul craves the opposite.

You do not really behave quite so badly as I have described; I will not deny that you often take a genuine interest in the afflicted person, that you really want to heal him and win him back to joy. Then, as you say, you strain like a mettlesome steed to work him out of the snares of sorrow, you spare neither time nor strength, and once in a while you succeed. Even then I cannot praise you, for under all this something is concealed. In fact, you are jealous of sorrow, you cannot bear to think that anybody else has sorrow, or has a sorrow which it might not be possible to overcome. So when you heal the afflicted you enjoy the satisfaction of saying to yourself,

"But my sorrow no one can heal." That is the result. Whether you are seeking the distraction of joy or of sorrow you always keep *in mente,* have firmly fixed in your soul, that there is one sorrow which cannot be relieved.

So I have reached the point where you affirm that the meaning of life is sorrow. The whole more recent development is characterized by the fact that people have a greater inclination to be sorrowful than to be joyful. This is regarded as a higher view of life — and it is too, in the sense that to want to be joyful is natural, the other unnatural. And there is the further consideration that being joyful does, after all, impose upon the individual a certain obligation to be thankful, even if his thoughts are so confused that he doesn't quite know whom to thank; sorrow exempts one from that, and so vanity is all the more content. Our age, moreover, has in so many ways had experience of the vanity of life that it does not believe in joy, and so to have something to believe in, it believes in sorrow. Joy, it says, passes away but sorrow lasts, and therefore, he who constructs his view of life upon this builds upon solid ground.

If we inquire now more expressly what sort of a sorrow it is you talk about, you are shrewd enough to evade the ethical sorrow. It is not repentance you mean; no, it is aesthetic sorrow, especially reflective sorrow. That has its ground not in guilt but in misfortune, in fate, in a sad disposition, in the effect others produce, etc. All of that is what you know very well from romances. If you read it in books, you laugh at it; if you hear others speak of it, you mock them; but when you yourself hold forth on this theme, there is sense in it, you think, and truth.

Now the view which takes sorrow to be the meaning of life might in itself seem sorry enough, yet I cannot refrain from pointing out one aspect which perhaps you did not expect to hear mentioned: that it is a disconsolate view. I say here again, as I said before, that in the same sense that joy passes away, so also does sorrow. This is something I do not need

to tell you, for you can learn it from your master Scribe, the famous French playwright, who has often derided the sentimentality which believes in an eternal sorrow. He who says that sorrow is the meaning of life has joy outside him in the same way that he who would be joyful has sorrow outside him. Joy may take him by surprise in exactly the same way that sorrow may take the other by surprise. His life view thus hinges upon a condition which is not in his power, for it is really just as little in a man's power to give up being joyful as to give up being sorrowful. But every life view which hinges upon a condition outside itself is despair. And so, wanting to sorrow is despair in exactly the same sense as wanting to be joyful, since it always is despair to have one's life dependent upon that which may pass away. Be therefore as shrewd and as inventive as you will, frighten joy away by a tearful exterior, or, if you prefer, deceive it by your exterior in order to conceal your sorrow, joy is able nevertheless to take you by surprise; for time devours the children of time, and such a sorrow is one of time's children, and the eternity it falsely pretends to is a deceit.

The deeper the reason for sorrow, the more plausible it may seem that it might be possible to preserve it for a whole lifetime, yea, that one had no need to do anything, but that it would remain as a matter of course. If it is sorrow for a particular occurrence, it will appear indeed very difficult to preserve it. That you perceive clearly enough, and therefore, when you would express yourself about the significance of sorrow for the whole life you think more especially of unfortunate individuals and tragic heroes. The whole disposition of the unfortunate individual is characterized by the fact that he cannot become happy or joyful, there broods over him a fate, as there does over the tragic hero. Here, then, it is quite in place to say that sorrow is the meaning of life, and here we have reached an out and out fatalism, which always has something seductive about it. Here you put forward your pretension which amounts to neither more nor less than that

you are the most unfortunate man. And yet it is undeniable that this is the proudest and most defiant thought that can arise in the brain of a man.

Let me make answer to you as you deserve. First of all, you do not sorrow. That you know full well, for it is your favorite expression that the unhappiest man is the happiest. But this is a falsehood more dreadful than any other, it is a falsehood which turns against the eternal Power which governs the world, it is a rebellion against God, like laughing when one ought to weep, and yet there is a despair which is capable of this, there is a defiance which sets at naught even God Himself. But this is also treason against the human race. It is true you too make a distinction, but still you think that there is to be distinguished a sorrow so great that it is impossible to bear it. But if there exists such a sorrow, it is not for you to determine which it is, the one distinction is as good as the other, and you have betrayed man's most sacred right and the grace he relies upon. There is a treason against greatness, a base envy, which affirms substantially that the great men have not been tested by the most perilous temptations, that they have slipped easily into their honors, and that they too would have succumbed if the superhuman temptation you talk about had come upon them. And is it thus you think to honor greatness... by belittling it? thus you propose to bear witness to it... by denying it?

Now do not misunderstand me. I am not the sort of person who thinks that one has no business to sorrow; I despise that petty common sense, and if I have a vote in this matter, I choose sorrow. No, I am well aware that it is beautiful to sorrow, that there is sense in tears, but I know too that a man should not sorrow as one without hope. Between us two there is an absolute opposition which cannot be resolved. I am unable to live under aesthetic determinants, I feel that with this the things I hold most sacred perish, I require a higher expression, and the ethical gives me that. And here it is that sorrow receives its true and profound significance. Be not shocked by what

I am about to say, be not amazed that when I speak of a sorrow which heroes can scarcely bear I talk of children. It is a mark of a well-behaved child that it is disposed to ask permission without taking too much into account whether it may reasonably assume a right to do the thing, and so too it is a mark of a magnanimous man, of a profound soul, that he is disposed to repent, that he does not take the matter up legally with God but repents and loves God in his repentance. Without this his life is nothing, merely froth upon water. Yea, I assure you that though without fault of mine my life were so fraught with sorrow and suffering that I might call myself the greatest tragic hero, take delight in my pain, and appal the world by reciting it, my choice is made, I divest myself of the hero's dress and the pathos of tragedy, I am not the victim who can be proud of his sufferings, I am the humbled man, conscious of my guilt, I have only one expression for what I suffer... guilt, one expression for my pain... repentance, one hope before my eyes... forgiveness, and if I find this difficult, ah, I have only one prayer, I would cast myself upon the ground and implore of the eternal Power who guides the world one boon, that sooner or later it might be granted me to repent. For I know only one sorrow which could bring me to despair and with that hurl down all things, the sorrow of discovering that repentance was a delusion, not a delusion with respect to the forgiveness it seeks but with respect to the accountability forgiveness implies.

And do you think that by treating it thus I do not give sorrow its due, that I run away from sorrow? By no manner of means! I deposit it in my very being, and therefore, never forget it. It is nothing but disbelief in the competency of spirit if I do not dare to believe that I can possess something within me without looking at it every instant. Ordinarily what one would treasure most securely one deposits in a place where one does not go every day, and so it is too in a spiritual sense. I have sorrow within me, and I

know that it will continue to be a part of my being, I know this far more surely than does he who for dread of losing it takes it out every day.

Never has my life been so tumultuous that I have felt tempted by the wish to confound chaotically the whole of existence, but in my everyday life I have often realized how profitable it is to give sorrow an ethical expression — not to obliterate the aesthetical factor in sorrow but to master it ethically. So long as sorrow is quiet and humble I do not fear it; if it becomes vehement and passionate, becomes sophistical and beguiles me into despondency, then I arise, I brook no rebellion, I will not suffer anything in the world to trick me out of that which I have received from God's hand as a gift of grace. I do not chase sorrow away, do not seek to forget it, but I repent. And even if sorrow is of such a sort that I myself am not to blame for it, I repent of letting it acquire power over me, I repent that I did not at once carry it to God, and if this had been done, it would have had no power to beguile me.

Forgive me for speaking here again about children. When a child begins to whimper and is not content with either this or that, then people say, "I will give you something to cry about," and this is accounted an excellent method. So it is with me, for even when one has reached maturity one always retains something of the child. So when I whimper I say to myself, "You will get something to cry about," and then I undergo a transformation. And this I can assure you is very salutary for a man, for the tears an aesthetic sorrower sheds in behalf of himself are hypocritical tears and bear no fruit, but to feel oneself guilty is truly something to cry about, and in the tears of repentance there is an eternal benediction. When the Saviour went up to Jerusalem and wept over the great city that knew not the things which belonged to its peace, it is possible that He might have moved it also to weep with Him; but if it had been aesthetic tears the city shed, it would

have been of little avail, and yet surely the world has not seen many tragedies like that which was in store for the chosen people.

If they had been tears of repentance, yes, then there would have been substance in them, and yet in this case it was a question of repenting more than one's own guilt, for it was not the generation then living which alone was guilty, it was the iniquity of the fathers which rested upon them. And here repentance is revealed in its deeper significance, for while in a sense it isolates me, in another way it unites me with the whole race, for my life does not begin in time with nothing, and if I cannot repent the past, freedom is a dream.

You now perceive, perhaps, why I deal with this life view. Personality is here again viewed under the category of necessity, and only so much freedom is left that like a restless dream it is able to keep the individual half awake and lead him astray in the labyrinth of sufferings and fateful dispensations where he everywhere beholds himself and yet cannot come to himself. It is incredible how frivolously one often sees such a problem treated. Even systematic thinkers treat it as a natural phenomenon which they can only describe and have nothing more to say — without ever reflecting that if there were such a natural phenomenon, all the rest of their wisdom is nonsense and illusion. Hence it is that one feels so much more helped by the Christian view than by the wisdom of all philosophers. The Christian view concludes all under sin, a thing which philosophy has not the ethical courage to do, being too aesthetic. And yet this courage is the only thing that can save life and save man — unless a man expects to be helped by breaking off his scepticism capriciously and combining with several like-minded persons to determine what the truth is.

The first form which the choice takes is complete isolation. For in choosing myself I detach myself from the whole world till by this detachment I end in abstract identity. The individual having chosen himself

in terms of his freedom, is *eo ipso* active. His action, however, has no relation to any surrounding world, for the individual has reduced this to naught and exists only for himself. The life view here revealed is none the less an ethical view. It found expression in Greece in the effort of the single individual to develop himself into a paragon of virtue. Like the anchorites in Christendom of a later time he withdrew from the activities of life, not to be absorbed in metaphysical ruminations, but in order to act — not outwardly but in himself. This inward action was at once his task and his satisfaction, for in fact it was not his purpose to cultivate himself for the sake of being able later to serve the state all the better; no, in this self-cultivation he was sufficient unto himself, and he forsook civic life never to return to it. He did not, therefore, in a real and proper sense withdraw from life; on the contrary, he remained in its multifarious relationships because contact with it was pedagogically necessary for his own sake, but civic life as such had no significance for him; by one magic formula or another he had made it innocuous, indifferent, unimportant to him. The virtues he developed were thus not civic virtues (as were the true virtues in paganism, corresponding to the religious virtues in Christendom), they were the personal virtues — courage, valor, temperance, moderation, etc. Naturally one very seldom sees this view of life realized in our age, because everyone is too much affected by the religious to stop with this abstract definition of virtue. The imperfection of this life view is easily seen. The fault lay in the fact that this individual had chosen himself altogether abstractly, and hence the perfection he aspired after and attained was likewise abstract. It was for this reason I emphasized the fact that choosing oneself is identical with repenting oneself; for repentance puts the individual in the most intimate connection and the most exact cohesion with a surrounding world.

There has often been seen, and even in the Christian world one may sometimes see, analogies to this Greek view of life, only that in Christianity

by the admixture of mystical and religious elements it becomes fuller and more beautiful. A Greek who developed himself into a perfect compendium of all the personal virtues, by however high a degree of virtuosity, finds his life nevertheless no more immortal than the world whose temptations his virtue overcame, his blessedness is a lonely self-satisfaction, as transient as everything else. The life of a mystic is far deeper. He has chosen himself absolutely. For although one rarely hears a mystic express himself in these terms, although he generally uses the seemingly opposite expression that he has chosen God, yet substantially, as was shown above, this comes to the same thing. For if he has not chosen himself absolutely, he is not in any free relation to God, and precisely in freedom consists the characteristic Christian piety. This free relation is often expressed in the language of the mystic by saying that he is the absolute Thou. The mystic has chosen himself absolutely and so in terms of his freedom, and thus he is *eo ipso* active, but his action is inward action. The mystic chooses himself in his complete isolation; the whole world is for him dead and reduced to naught, and the weary soul chooses God or itself. This expression, "the weary soul," must not be misunderstood, must not be misused to belittle the mystic, as though it were a questionable thing that the soul chose God only when it had become weary of the world. By this expression the mystic doubtless indicates his repentance that he has not chosen God before, and his weariness must not be regarded as identical with being tired of life. You will see already at this point how little the life of the mystic is ethically determined, since it is the highest expression of his repentance to repent that earlier, before he became concrete in the world, while his soul was merely abstractly defined, that is, as a child, he had not chosen God.

The mystic, in the fact that he has made a choice, is *eo ipso* active, but his action is an inward action. Inasmuch as he is active his life has a movement, a development, a history. A development may, however, be

metaphysical or aesthetical in such a degree that it is doubtful whether in a proper sense one dare call it a history, since this word implies development in the form of freedom. A movement may be desultory to such a degree that it is doubtful whether one dare call it a development. When such a movement consists in the fact that one experience returns again and again, we have undoubtedly a movement, yea, we may perhaps be able to discover a law for this movement, but we have no development. The repetition in time is without significance, and continuity is lacking. This is true in a high degree of the life of the mystic. It is appalling to read a mystic's lament over the dull moments. Then when the dull moment is past comes the luminous moment, and thus his life is constantly changing, it has movement indeed, but no development. His life lacks continuity. What really supplies the continuity is a feeling, the feeling of longing, whether this longing be directed towards what is past or towards what is to come. But the fact that a feeling fills the intervening space shows precisely that cohesion is lacking. The life of the mystic is determined metaphysically and aesthetically to such a degree that one dare not call it a history except in the sense in which one speaks of the history of a plant. The whole world is a dead world for the mystic, he has fallen in love with God. The development of his life is then the unfolding of this love. As there are instances of lovers who have a certain resemblance to one another, also in their outward appearance, their looks, the shape of the face, so too the mystic is absorbed in the contemplation of the Deity, whose image is more and more reflected in his loving soul, and thus the mystic renews and revives the lost divine image in man. The more he contemplates, the more clearly this image is reflected in him, the more he himself comes to resemble this image. His inward action therefore does not consist in the acquisition of the personal virtues but in the development of the religious or contemplative virtues. But even this is too ethical an expression for his life, and we must say that his real life is

prayer. I will not deny that prayer, too, belongs to the ethical life, but the more ethically a man lives the more purposeful is his prayer, so that even in the prayer of thanksgiving there is an element of purpose. It is not so with the prayer of the mystic. Prayer is all the more significant for him the more erotic it is, the more it is inflamed by a burning love. His prayer is the expression of this love, is the only language in which he can address the Deity with whom he is in love. As in earthly life the lovers long for the moment when they can breathe out their love for one another and let their souls fuse in a gentle whisper, so the mystic longs for the moment when he in prayer can, as it were, steal in to the presence of God. As the lovers experience the highest degree of bliss in this whispering when really they have nothing to talk about, so for the mystic his soul is all the more blissful, his love a happier one; the less content his prayer has, the more nearly with his sigh he disappears from before his own eyes.

It might, perhaps, not be amiss to characterize more in detail the falseness of such a life, especially in view of the fact that every deeper personality always feels an attraction to mysticism. Thus you are by no means lacking in the factors which might dispose you, for a time at least, to become a mystic. Here is a field on which the greatest contrasts meet, the purest and most innocent soul with the most culpable, the most talented man and the simplest.

First I will state quite simply what it is that offends me most in such a life. This is my personal judgment. Later I shall seek to show that I correctly indicated the perils, and I shall show too the reasons for them and point out the false paths which lie so near.

In my opinion one cannot acquit the mystic of a certain intrusiveness in his relation to God. Who will deny that a man shall love God with all his heart and with all his mind, yea, that he is not only to do this but that to do it is blessedness itself? From this, however, it by no means follows that the

mystic is to disdain the reality of existence to which God has assigned him, for thereby he really disdains God's love or requires a different expression of it from that which God is willing to give. Here applies the serious saying of Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams." But this intrusiveness may assume an even more questionable form. As for example when a mystic proves his relationship to God by the fact that he himself is precisely what he is, regarding himself because of some accidental trait or another as the object of the partiality of the Deity. For thereby he degrades the Deity and himself. Degrades himself, for it is always degrading to be distinguished from others by reason of some accidental trait; and degrades God, for he makes of the Deity a false god in whose court he is a favorite.

What in the next place is displeasing to me in the life of a mystic is the softness and weakness of which one cannot acquit him. That a man wishes to be assured in his inmost heart that he loves God in truth and sincerity, that many a time he feels prompted to convince himself thoroughly of this, that he may pray God to let His Spirit bear witness along with his own spirit that he does so love Him — who would deny the beauty and the truth in this? But from this it by no means follows that every instant he will repeat the experiment, will every instant make trial of his love. He will have enough greatness of soul to believe in God's love, and then he will also have the frank-heartedness to believe in his own love and to continue gladly in the situation assigned to him, knowing that this continuance is the surest expression of his love, of his humility.

Finally, the life of the mystic displeases me because I regard it as a deceit against the world in which he lives, against the men to whom he is bound by obligations and with whom he might have come into relationship if he had not been pleased to become a mystic. Generally the mystic chooses the solitary life, but with that the situation is not clear, for the question is

whether he has a right to choose it. In choosing the solitary life he practices no deceit upon the others, for thereby he says to them in effect, “I will have no relationship with you”; but the question is whether he has a right to say this, a right to do this. It is especially as a husband, as a father, that I am an enemy of mysticism. My household has also its *aduton*, but in case I were a mystic I must have still another for myself alone, and then I would be a pretty poor husband. Now since in my opinion, which I shall set forth later, it is the duty of every man to marry, and as it cannot possibly be my meaning that a man shall marry in order to become a poor husband, you will easily see that I must have an aversion to all mysticism.

He who devotes himself one-sidedly to the mystical life becomes at last so alien to all men that every relationship, even the tenderest, the most heartfelt, becomes indifferent to him. It is not in this sense one is to love God more dearly than father and mother; God is not so self-loving as that, neither is He a poet who wishes to torment men with the most frightful collisions — and hardly could a more frightful thing be conceived than that there might be a collision between love for God and love for the persons for whom love has been planted by Him in our hearts.

You surely have not forgotten young Ludvig Blackfeldt with whom a few years ago we both of us, and I especially, were in pretty close touch. He certainly was a very talented fellow, his misfortune was that he lost himself in a mysticism which was not so much Christian as Indian. If he had lived in the Middle Ages, he doubtless would have found refuge in the cloister. Our age has no such helps. If a man goes astray, he must necessarily perish if he be not entirely healed. We have no such relative salvation to offer him. You know that he ended with suicide. With me he had a sort of intimacy and to that extent contradicted his pet theory that one should not put oneself in relationship to any man but only to God immediately. Hence his intimacy with me was not great, and he never opened himself to me fully. During the

last half year of his life I was an anxious witness of his eccentric movements. It is possible that I stopped him several times. I cannot know this definitely since he never opened himself to any one. He had an unusual gift for concealing his psychic condition and for giving to one passion the semblance of another. Finally he put an end to his life without anyone being able to explain the reason for it. His physician expressed the opinion that it was due to partial insanity. Well, that was a very sensible thing for him to say. In fact, his mind was unimpaired up to the last moment. Perhaps you do not know that there exists a letter which he wrote to his brother, the Councillor of Justice, in which he informs him of his intention. I enclose herewith a copy of it. It has harrowing evidence of genuineness and is a highly objective expression of the last agony of complete isolation.

"Honorable Mr. Councillor, I write to you because in a way you are my nearest of kin, and yet in another way you are not nearer to me than other men. When you receive these lines I am no more. Should anyone ask you the reason, you can say that once there was a princess called Morning Glory, or something else like that; for so it is I myself would reply if I had the joy to survive myself. Should anyone ask you the occasion for it, you can say that it was on the occasion of the great conflagration. Should anyone ask you about the time, you can say that it was in the month of July, so notable for me. Should no one ask you any of these questions, you are to make no reply.

Poor Ludvig was certainly not affected religiously, yet he was affected mystically; for the characteristic of mysticism is not the religious factor but the isolation in which the individual, heedless of every relation with the given reality, would put himself in immediate rapport with the Eternal. The fact that as soon as the word mysticism is mentioned one thinks at once and most naturally of something religious is accounted for by the consideration that religion has a tendency to isolate the individual, as you may be

convinced by the simplest observation. You perhaps go to church rather seldom, but you are likely to be all the more observant. Have you not noticed that, though in a sense one gets an impression of a congregation, yet the individual feels isolated? People are as strangers to one another, and it is only by a long detour, as it were, they are again united. And to what is this due but to the fact that one's God-relationship is so strongly felt in all of its inwardness that alongside of this the earthly relationships lose their importance? In the case of a healthy man this instant of isolation will not be long, and such a momentary withdrawal is so far from being an illusion that it rather increases the inwardness of the earthly relationship. But what may be wholesome as a transient factor becomes a very serious sickness when it is one-sidedly developed.

Since I cannot boast of theological culture, I do not feel capable of setting forth more fully the character of religious mysticism. I have regarded it only from my ethical standpoint and therefore I am justified, I believe, in attaching to the word mysticism a much broader meaning than it generally has. I do not doubt that in religious mysticism there I do not regard suicide as a praiseworthy thing. It is not out of vanity I have resolved upon it. On the contrary, I believe in the correctness of the proposition hat no man can bear to behold he infinite. That once became evident to me in an intellectual respect, and he expression for this is ignorance. That is to say, ignorance is he negative expression for infinite knowledge. Suicide is he negative expression for infinite freedom. It is a form of he infinite freedom, but he negative form. Hail to him who finds he positive form.

With he highest respect, I am deferentially yours." is to be found much that is beautiful, that the many deep and earnest natures who devoted themselves to it have experienced much in their lives and were thereby qualified to give counsels and directions and hints which are of service to others who venture upon that perilous path; but in spite of all that, this path

is not only a perilous path but a wrong path. There is always an inconsistency implied. When the mystic has no respect for reality in general it is not obvious why he does not regard with equal distrust that moment in reality when he was affected by the higher experience.

So the fault of the mystic is not that he chooses himself, for in my opinion he does well in doing that, but his fault is that he does not choose rightly, he chooses with freedom, and yet he does not choose ethically; but one can choose oneself with freedom only when one chooses oneself ethically, but one can choose oneself ethically only by repenting oneself, and only by repenting does one become concrete, and only as a concrete individual is one a free individual. The fault of the mystic does not therefore consist in any later phase but in the very first movement. If this first movement is right, then every further withdrawal from life, every ascetic self-torment, is only a further and correct consequence. The fault of the mystic is that by his choice he does not become concrete for himself, nor for God either; he chooses himself abstractly and therefore lacks transparency. For it is a mistake to think that the abstract is the transparent. The abstract is the turbid, the foggy. Therefore, his love for God reaches its highest expression in a feeling, a mood: in the dusk of evening when fogs prevail he melts with vague movements into one with his God. But when one chooses oneself abstractly one does not choose oneself ethically. Only when in his choice a man has assumed himself, is clad in himself, has so totally penetrated himself that every movement is attended by the consciousness of a responsibility for himself, only then has he chosen himself ethically, only then has he repented himself, only then is he concrete, only then is he in his total isolation in absolute continuity with the reality to which he belongs.

I cannot often enough repeat the proposition, however simple it may be in itself, that choosing oneself is identical with repenting oneself. For upon

this everything turns. The mystic too repents, but he repents himself out of himself, not into himself; he repents metaphysically, not ethically. To repent aesthetically is detestable because it is effeminate; to repent metaphysically is an untimely superfluity, for the individual did not in fact create the world and so does not need to take it so much to heart if the world really turns out to be vanity. The mystic chooses himself abstractly and so must repent abstractly. This one can see best from the judgment the mystic passes upon existence, the finite reality in which nevertheless he lives. For the mystic teaches that it is vanity, illusion, sin. But every such judgment is a metaphysical judgment and does not define ethically my relation to existence. Even when he says that finiteness is sin he says after all about the same thing as when he calls it vanity. If on the other hand he would hold fast the ethical meaning of the word sin, he does not define his relation to it ethically but metaphysically, for the ethical expression would not be to flee from it but to enter into it, to abolish it or to bear it. Ethical repentance has only two movements; either to abolish its object or to bear it. These two movements indicate also a concrete relationship between the repentant individual and the object of his repentance, whereas fleeing away indicates an abstract relationship.

The mystic chooses himself abstractly. One can therefore say that he constantly chooses himself out of the world. But the consequence is that he is unable to choose himself back again into the world. The truly concrete choice is that wherewith at the very same instant I choose myself out of the world I am choosing myself back into the world. For when I choose myself repentantly I gather myself together in all my finite concretion, and in the fact that I have thus chosen myself out of the finite I am in the most absolute continuity with it.

Since the mystic chooses himself abstractly his misfortune is that he has so much difficulty in starting to move, or rather that this is an impossibility

for him. As it is in your case with your earthly first love, so it is in the case of the mystic with his religious first love: he has tasted the whole bliss of it and now has nothing to do but wait to see if it will come again in just as much glory, and of this he can easily be tempted to nourish a doubt which I have so often pointed out when I remark that development is retrogression, a postponement. Reality is for the mystic a delay, indeed a delay of so perilous a sort that he almost incurs the danger that life may deprive him of that which he once possessed. If therefore one were to ask a mystic what is the significance of life, he would perhaps reply, "The significance of life is to learn to know God and become in love with Him." This, however, is not an answer to the question, for here the significance of life is conceived as a moment, not as succession. Hence, if I were to ask him what significance it has for life that life has this significance, or in other words, what is the significance of the temporal as a whole, he has not much to answer, at any rate not much that is cheerful. If he says that the temporal is an enemy which must be overcome, then one could ask him further whether it might have any significance that this enemy was overcome. In fact this is not what the mystic really means, what he wants rather is to be through with the temporal. Consequently, just as he misunderstood reality and construed it metaphysically as vanity, so, too, he misunderstands the historical and construes it metaphysically as unprofitable labor. The highest significance he can ascribe to the temporal is that it is a time of probation in which again and again one is put to the test without anything really resulting from it and without the individual getting further than he was at the beginning. This, however, is a misunderstanding of the temporal, for though it always retains something characteristic of the *ecclesia pressa,* it constitutes at the same time the possibility of the glorification of the finite spirit. It is precisely the beauty of the temporal that in it the infinite Spirit and the finite spirit are separated, and it is precisely the greatness of the finite spirit that the

temporal is assigned to it. The temporal therefore, if I may venture to say so, does not exist for God's sake, in order that in it, speaking mystically, He may test and try the loved one, but it exists for man's sake and is the greatest of all the gifts of grace. For man's eternal dignity consists in the fact that he can have a history, the divine element in him consists in the fact that he himself, if he will, can impart to this history continuity, for this it acquires only when it is not the sum of all that has happened to me or befallen me but is my own work, in such a way that even what has befallen me is by me transformed and translated from necessity to freedom. The enviable thing in human life is that one can come to the aid of the Deity, can understand Him, and again the only way of understanding Him which is worthy of a man is by freely appropriating everything which comes to one, both the joyful and the sorrowful. Does it not seem so to you? It does to me, indeed it seems to me as if one had only to say this aloud to a man to make him envious of himself.

The two standpoints here suggested might be regarded as an attempt to realize an ethical view of life. The only reason why this attempt does not succeed is that the individual has chosen himself in his isolation or has chosen himself abstractly. This can also be expressed by saying that the individual has not chosen himself ethically. He is therefore not in connection with reality, and such being the case, no ethical view of life can be consistently carried out. He on the other hand who chooses himself ethically chooses himself concretely as this definite individual, and he attains this concretion by the fact that this act of choice is identical with this act of repentance which sanctions the choice. The individual thus becomes conscious of himself as this definite individual, with these talents, these dispositions, these instincts, these passions, influenced by these definite surroundings, as this definite product of a definite environment. But being conscious of himself in this way, he assumes responsibility for all this. He

does not hesitate as to whether he shall include this particular trait or the other, for he knows that he stands to lose something much higher if he does not. Thus at the instant of choice he is in the most complete isolation, for he withdraws from the surroundings; and yet at the same moment he is in absolute continuity, for he chooses himself as product; and this choice is the choice of freedom, so that when he chooses himself as product he can just as well be said to produce himself. Thus at the instant of choice he is at the conclusion, for he concludes himself in a unity, and yet the same instant he is at the beginning, for he chooses himself freely. As product he is pressed into the forms of reality, in the choice he makes himself elastic, transforming all the outwardness into inwardness. He has his place in the world, with freedom he chooses his place, that is, he chooses this very place. He is a definite individual, in the choice he makes himself a definite individual, for he chooses himself.

So the individual chooses himself as a concretion determined in manifold ways, and he chooses himself therefore in accord with his continuity. This concretion is the reality of the individual, but as he chooses it in accord with his freedom one can also say that it is his possibility, or (to avoid an expression so aesthetical) that it is his task. For he who lives aesthetically sees only possibilities everywhere, they constitute for him the content of the future, whereas he who lives ethically sees tasks everywhere. The individual therefore sees this actual concretion of his as his task, his goal, his aim. But the fact that the individual sees his possibility as his task expresses precisely his sovereignty over himself, which he never relinquishes, even though he can find no pleasure in the very embarrassing sovereignty which characterizes a king without a country. This gives the ethical individual a sense of assurance which he who lives merely aesthetically lacks entirely. He who lives aesthetically expects everything from without. Hence, the morbid dread with which many people speak of

the appalling experience of not having found one's place in the world. Who will deny that it is a pleasant thing to have been fortunate in this respect? But such a dread always indicates that the individual expects everything from the place, nothing from himself. He, too, who lives ethically will try to choose his place rightly; however, if he notices that he has made a mistake, or that obstacles arise over which he has no control, he does not lose courage, for he never relinquishes the sovereignty over himself. He at once sees his task and is instantly active. In like manner one often sees men who are afraid that if once they were to fall in love they might not get the girl who is exactly the ideal which suits them. Who will deny that it is pleasant to get such a girl? But nevertheless, it is a superstition to believe that what is outside a man is what is able to make him happy.

He, too, who lives ethically wishes to be fortunate in his choice; however, if it turns out that the choice was not completely in accordance with the wish, he does not lose coinage, he at once sees his task and knows that the art is not to wish but to will. Many, though they have a just conception of what a human life is, wish to be contemporary with great events, to be involved in important situations. Who will deny that such things have their validity? But nevertheless, it is superstition to think that an event or a situation as such is capable of making a man something. He who lives ethically knows that it all depends upon what one sees in every situation, with what energy he regards it, and that he who thus cultivates himself in the unimportant situations may experience more than he who has been a witness to, yea, a part in the most notable events. He knows that everywhere there is a dancing floor, that even the lowliest man has his, that his dance, if he will, can be as beautiful, as graceful, as mimic, as brisk as that of those who were assigned a place in history. It is this proficiency of the fencer, this suppleness, which is properly the immortal life of the ethical. To him who lives aesthetically applies the old saying, "to be/or not

to be," and the more he is allowed to live aesthetically, the more requirements his life makes, and if merely the least of these is not fulfilled, he is dead. He who lives ethically has always a way of escape when everything goes against him; when the storm broods over him so darkly that his neighbor cannot see him, he nevertheless has not perished, there is always a point he holds fast, and that is... his self.

Only one thing I would not omit to mention, namely, that so soon as the gymnastic of the ethicist becomes an experimentation he has ceased to live ethically. All such gymnastic experimentation is nothing else but what sophistry is in the realm of knowledge.

Here I would recall the definition I gave a while ago of the ethical, as that by which a man becomes what he becomes. The ethical then will not change the individual into another man but makes him himself, it will not annihilate the aesthetical but transfigures it. It is essential to a man who is to live ethically that he become so radically conscious of himself that no adventitious trait escapes him. This concretion the ethical would not obliterate but it sees in this its task, it sees what it has to build upon and what it has to build. Commonly one regards the ethical quite abstractly and therefore has a secret horror of it. The ethical is thus regarded as something foreign to the personality, and one shrinks from abandoning oneself to it since one cannot be quite certain what it may lead to in the course of time. So it is that many men are afraid also of death because they entertain dark and obscure conceptions of the soul passing over in death to another dispensation where the prevailing laws and conventions differ from those with which they have become acquainted in this world. The reason for such a fear is the reluctance of the individual to become transparent to himself; for, provided one is willing, one easily sees the absurdity of this fear. So it is also with the ethical. When a man is afraid of being transparent he always shuns the ethical, for precisely this is what the ethical wills.

In opposition to an aesthetical view which would enjoy life, one often hears of another view which finds the significance of life in living for the fulfillment of its duties. With this one intends to indicate an ethical life view. However, the expression is very imperfect, and one might almost believe that it was invented in order to bring the ethical into disrepute. At all events, in our age one often hears it used in such a way that one is almost inclined to smile, as for example when Scribe allows this thesis to be expressed with a sort of burlesque seriousness which contrasts very unfavorably with the joy and merriment of pleasure. The fault is that the individual is placed in an outward relation to duty. The ethical is defined as duty, and duty in turn is defined as a congeries of particular propositions, but the individual and duty stand outside of one another. Such a life of duty is of course very uncomely and tiresome, and if the ethical had not a far deeper connection with personality, it would be very difficult to defend it against the aesthetical. I will not deny that there are men who get no further, but that is not due to duty but to the man himself.

It is strange that the word duty can suggest an outward relation, inasmuch as the very derivation of the word [Pligt] indicates an inward relation; for what is incumbent upon me, not as this fortuitous individual but in accordance with my true nature, that surely stands in the most inward relation to my self. For duty is not an imposition [Paalaeg] but something which is incumbent [paaligger]. When duty is viewed thus it is a sign that the individual is in himself correctly oriented. For him, therefore, duty will not split up into a congeries of particular definitions, for that is always an indication that he stands in an outward relation to it. He has clad himself in duty, for him it is the expression of his inmost nature. When he has thus oriented himself he has become absorbed in the ethical and will not chase breathlessly after the fulfillment of his duties. The genuine ethical individual therefore possesses calmness and assurance because he has not

duties outside himself but in himself. The more profoundly a man has planned his life ethically, the less will he feel the need of talking every instant about duty, of being fearful every instant as to whether he has fulfilled it, of taking counsel every instant with others about what his duty is. When the ethical is rightly viewed it makes the individual infinitely secure in himself, when it is not rightly viewed it makes the individual insecure, and I cannot imagine a more unhappy and agonizing existence than that of a man who manages to put duty outside himself and yet would endeavor to realize it.

If one views the ethical as outside the personality and in an external relation to it, then one has abandoned everything, then one has fallen into despair. The aesthetical as such is despair, the ethical is the abstract and as such it is incapable of producing anything whatever. Therefore, when one sometimes sees men with a certain honest zeal toiling and moiling to realize the ethical which constantly flees like a shadow as soon as they seek to lay hold of it, the sight is at once comic and tragic.

The ethical is the universal and so it is the abstract. In its complete abstraction the ethical is therefore always prohibitive. So it appears as law. Whenever the ethical has the form of a positive command it already contains something of the aesthetical. The Jews were the people of the Law. Hence they understood perfectly most of the commandments in the Laws of Moses, but the commandment they seem not to have understood was that commandment to which Christianity most closely attached itself: "Thou shalt love God with all thy heart." This commandment is not at all negative, neither is it abstract, it is in the highest degree positive and in the highest degree concrete. When the ethical becomes more concrete it passes over into the definition of morals and customs. But so regarded the reality of the ethical consists in the reality of a national individuality, and here the ethical has already appropriated an aesthetical factor. Nevertheless, the ethical is still abstract and cannot be fully realized because it lies outside the individual. Only when the individual himself is the universal is it possible to realize the ethical. This is the secret of conscience, it is the secret which the individual life shares with itself, that it *is* at once an individual life and at the same time the universal, if not immediately as such, yet according to its possibility. He who regards life ethically sees the universal, and he who lives ethically expresses the universal in his life, he makes himself the universal man, not by divesting himself of his concretion, for then he becomes nothing, but by clothing himself with it and permeating it with the universal. For the universal man is not a phantom, but every man as such is the universal man, that is to say, to every man the way is assigned by which he becomes the universal man. He who lives aesthetically is the accidental man; he believes himself to be the perfect man by reason of the fact that he is the only man. He who lives ethically labors to become the universal man. So for example when a man is aesthetically in love the adventitious plays a prodigious role, and it is a matter of importance to him that no one has

loved as he does, with all the nuances. When he who lives ethically marries he realizes the universal. Therefore he does not become a hater of the concrete but has one concrete expression the more, deeper than every aesthetical expression, in the fact that in love he sees a revelation of the universal human. So he who lives ethically has himself as his task. His self in its immediacy is accidentally determined, and the task is to work up together the accidental and the universal.

So the ethical individual has duty not outside him but in him; at the moment of despair it makes its appearance and then works itself out through the aesthetical and in it and with it. One can say of the ethical individual that he is like quiet waters which run deep, whereas he who lives aesthetically is only superficially moved. Hence, when the ethical individual has completed his task, has fought the good fight, he has then reached the point where he has become the one man, that is to say, that there is no other man altogether like him; and at the same time he has become the universal man. To be the one man is not in itself anything so great, for that everybody has in common with every product of nature; but to be that in such a way that he is also the universal man is the true art of living.

So personality has not the ethical outside it but in it, and out of this depth it breaks forth. Then, as I have said, we must take care that it shall not with an abstract and empty tempestuousness reduce the concrete to naught but rather that it shall assimilate it. Since, then, the ethical lies deepest in the soul it is not always visible to the eye, and the man who lives ethically may do exactly the same things as the man who lives aesthetically, so that for a time this may create a deception, but finally there comes an instant when it is evident that he who lives ethically has a limit which the other does not recognize. In this assurance that his life is ethically planned the individual reposes with secure confidence and therefore does not torment himself and

others with captious apprehensions about this and that. The fact that the man who lives ethically leaves a large space for the indifferent I find quite natural, and it is indicative of veneration for the ethical that one will not press it into every insignificant affair. The effort to do this always fails and it is to be found only in those who do not possess courage to believe in the ethical and who lack inward confidence in a deeper sense. There are men whose pusillanimity is recognizable precisely in the fact that they are never ready with the sum total because for them this is not single but manifold. But this, too, lies outside the ethical, and there is, of course, no other ground for it but weakness of will, which like all other weakness of mind may be regarded as a sort of insanity. The life of such men is employed in straining at gnats. They have no conception either of the pure and beautiful earnestness of the ethical or of the carefree gladness of the indifferent. But of course for the ethical individual the indifferent is dethroned and every instant he is able to set limits to it. Thus one believes also in the existence of a providence, and the soul reposes securely in this assurance, and yet it would not occur to one to try to permeate every accidental circumstance with this thought or to become convinced of this faith every minute. To will the ethical without being disturbed by the indifferent, to believe in providence without being disturbed by the accidental, represents a condition of sound health which every man can acquire and retain if he will. In this case, too, the point is to see the task, to perceive that when a man has a tendency to be distracted in this way the task is to put up a resistance, to hold fast the infinite and not go on a wild-goose chase.

He who chooses himself ethically has himself as his task, and not as a possibility merely, not as a toy to be played with arbitrarily. He can choose himself ethically only when he chooses himself in continuity, and so he has himself as a task which is manifoldly defined. This manifoldness he does not try to obliterate or to volatilize; on the contrary, he repents himself

tightly into it, because this manifoldness is himself and only by being repentantly absorbed in it can he come to himself, since he does not assume that the world begins with him or that he creates himself. Language itself has stamped this last view with contempt, and one always says contemptuously of a man that he is self-made. But when repentantly he chooses himself he is active, not in the direction of isolation but in the direction of continuity.

Let us now for once compare an ethical and an aesthetical individual. The principal difference, and one on which everything hinges, is that the ethical individual is transparent to himself and does not live *ins Blaue hinein* as does the aesthetical individual. This difference states the whole case. He who lives ethically has seen himself, knows himself, penetrates with his consciousness his whole concretion, does not allow indefinite thoughts to potter about within him, nor tempting possibilities to distract him with their jugglery; he is not like a witch's letter from which one sense can be got now and then another, depending upon how one turns it. He knows himself. The expression *gnothi seauton* has been repeated often enough and in it has been seen the goal of all human endeavor. That is quite right, too, but it is equally certain that it cannot be the goal if it is not at the same time the beginning. The ethical individual knows himself, but this knowledge is not a mere contemplation (for with that the individual is determined by his necessity), it is a reflection upon himself which itself is an action, and therefore I have deliberately preferred to use the expression "choose oneself" instead of know oneself. So when the individual knows himself he is not through; on the contrary, this knowledge is in the highest degree fruitful, and from it proceeds the true individual. If I desired to be clever I might say at this point that the individual knew himself in such a way as Adam "knew" Eve in the Old Testament sense of the word. By the individual's intercourse with himself he impregnates himself and brings

himself to birth. This self which the individual knows is at once the actual self and the ideal self which the individual has outside himself as the picture in likeness to which he has to form himself and which, on the other hand, he nevertheless has in him since it is the self. Only within him has the individual the goal after which he has to strive, and yet he has this goal outside him, inasmuch as he strives after it. For if the individual believes that the universal man is situated outside him, that from without it will come to him, then he is disoriented, then he has an abstract conception and his method is always an abstract annihilation of the original self. Only within him can the individual acquire information about himself. Hence, the ethical life has this duplex character, that the individual has his self outside himself and in himself. The typical self, however, is this yet imperfect self, for this is only a prophecy and therefore not the real self. Nevertheless, this typical self accompanies him constantly, but the more he realizes it, the more it vanishes within him, until at last, instead of being visible in front of him, it lies behind him like a pallid possibility. With this picture it is as with man's shadow: in the morning man casts his shadow before him, at midday it goes almost unobserved beside him, in the evening it falls behind him. When the individual knows himself and has chosen himself he is about to realize himself, but as he has to realize himself freely he must know what it is he would realize. What he would realize is in fact himself, but it is his ideal self which he acquires nowhere but in himself. If one does not hold fast to the fact that the individual has the ideal self in himself, his *Dichten und Trachten* [thought, aspirations, endeavors, studies] remain abstract. He who would copy another man and he who would copy the normal man become both of them, though in different ways, equally affected.

The aesthetic individual views himself in his concretion and then distinguishes *inter et inter.* He regards some things as belonging to him accidentally, other things as belonging to him essentially. This distinction,

however, is exceedingly relative, for so long as a man lives merely aesthetically one thing belongs to him as accidentally as another, and it is merely for lack of energy an aesthetic individual maintains this distinction. The ethical individual has learned this in despair, hence he has another distinction, for he, too, distinguishes between the essential and the accidental. Everything posited by his freedom belongs to him essentially, however accidental it may seem to be; everything else is for him accidental, however essential it may seem to be. In the case of the ethical individual, however, this distinction is not the fruit of his arbitrary determination and does not imply that he has plenary power to make himself what he would. The ethical individual, to be sure, may venture to use the expression that he is his own editor, but at the same time he is fully conscious that he is responsible-responsible to himself personally, inasmuch as what he chooses will have decisive influence upon him, responsible in view of the order of things in which he lives, and responsible in the sight of God. Thus regarded, the distinction, I believe, is correct; for only that belongs to me essentially which I ethically accept as my task. If I refuse to accept it, then what essentially belongs to me is that I have refused it. When a man views himself aesthetically he perhaps distinguishes as follows, saying, "I have a talent for painting, which I regard as accidental; but I have wit and cleverness of mind, which I regard as the essential thing, and it could not be taken away from me without my becoming another man." To this I would reply, 'This whole distinction is an illusion, for if you do not accept this wit or cleverness ethically as a task, as something for which you are responsible, it does not belong to you essentially, and this principally for the reason that so long as you are merely living aesthetically your life totally is unessential." He who lives ethically abolishes to a certain degree the distinction between the accidental and the essential, for he accepts himself, every inch of him, as equally essential. But the distinction returns, for when

he has done this he distinguishes again, yet in such a way that for the accidental which he excludes he accepts an essential responsibility for excluding it.

In case the aesthetic individual sets a task for his life with "aesthetic seriousness," it is properly nothing but the task of being more and more absorbed in his own accidentality, of becoming an individual whose irregularity and paradoxicality no one has seen the match of, a grimace of a man. The reason why one so seldom meets such a figure in real life is that people so seldom have a conception of what it is to live. On the other hand, since many have a positive predilection for chattering, one meets on the streets, in society and in books with a great deal of chatty nonsense which bears unmistakably the stamp of the rage for originality which being transferred to real life would enrich the world with a multitude of artifacts each one more ludicrous than the other. The task which the ethical individual sets himself is to transform himself into the universal man. Only the ethical individual seriously renders an account to himself and is therefore honest with himself, only he has the paradigmatic grace and decorum which is more beautiful than any other. But to transform oneself into the universal man is only possible if already *kata dunamin* I have this in myself. For this universal can very well coexist with and in the particular without consuming it; it is like the fire which burned in the bush without consuming it. If the universal man is situated outside of me, only one method is possible, and that is to divest myself of my whole concretion. One often sees this striving after unbridled abstraction. Among the Hussites there was a sect of men who thought that the most obvious way to become the normal man was to go naked like Adam and Eve in paradise. Often enough one encounters in our age people who in a spiritual sense teach the same thing, that one becomes the normal man by becoming utterly stark naked, as one can become by divesting oneself of one's whole concretion.

But it is not so. In the act of despair the universal man comes forth and now is behind the concretion, breaking out through it. In a language there are many more paradigmatic verbs than the one which in the grammar is set forth as the paradigm. It is accidental that this one is presented, since all the others were equally suited for this use. So it is also with men. Every man can, if he will, become the paradigmatic man, not by wiping out his accidentality but by remaining in it and ennobling it. But he ennobles it by choosing it You now will have perceived that the ethical individual has gone through in the course of his life the stages which earlier we showed to be distinctive stages. In the course of his life he will develop the personal, the civic, the religious virtues, and his life and its progress consist in the fact that he constantly translates himself from one stage to another. So soon as a man thinks that one of these stages is sufficient and that a person may venture one-sidedly to concentrate upon it, that man has not chosen himself ethically but has overlooked the importance either of isolation or of continuity, and above all has not apprehended that the truth consists in the identity of the two.

He who has ethically chosen and found himself possesses himself as he is determined in his whole concretion. He has himself, then, as an individual who has these talents, these passions, these inclinations, these habits, who is under these influences, who in this direction is affected thus, in another thus. Here, then, he has himself as a task, in such a sort that the task is principally to order, cultivate, temper, enkindle, repress, in short, to bring about a proportionality in the soul, a harmony, which is the fruit of the personal virtues. Here the aim of his activity is himself, but not as arbitrarily determined, for he has himself as a task which is set for him, even though it has become his by the fact that he has chosen it. But although he himself is his aim, this aim is nevertheless another, for the self which is the aim is not an abstract self which fits everywhere and hence

nowhere, but a concrete self which stands in reciprocal relations with these surroundings, these conditions of life, this natural order. This self which is the aim is not merely a personal self but a social, a civic self. He has, then, himself as a task for an activity wherewith as this definite personality he takes a hand in the affairs of life. Here his task is not to cultivate himself but to exert an influence, and yet at the same time he cultivates himself, for, as I remarked earlier, the ethical individual so lives that he is constantly passing from one stage to the other. If the individual has not originally understood himself as a concrete personality in continuity, neither will he acquire this subsequent continuity. If he thinks that the trick is to begin like a Robinson Crusoe, he remains a fanciful adventurer to the end of his days. On the other hand, when he perceives that if he does not begin concretely he will never get to the point of beginning, and that if he does not begin he will not end, then he will be at once in continuity with the past and with the future. From the personal life he translates himself into the civic, and from this into the personal. The personal life as such was an isolation and hence imperfect; in the fact that through the civic life he comes back into his personality the personal life manifests itself in a higher form. Personality manifests itself as the absolute which has its teleology in itself.

When the performance of duty has been represented as the task for a man’s life people have often recalled that duty itself vacillates, that laws may change. You easily see that the latter expression has in view especially the fluctuations to which the civic virtues are always exposed. Yet this scepticism does not apply to negative morals, for they remain unchanged. There is another scepticism, however, which applies to all duty, namely, the consideration that I am utterly unable to do duty. Duty is the universal, what is required of me is the universal; what I am able to do is the particular. This scepticism, however, has great significance, inasmuch as it shows that personality is the absolute. But this must be more closely defined. It is to be

noted that language itself emphasizes this scepticism. I never say of a man that he does duty or duties, but I say that he does *his* duty, I say, "I am doing *my* duty, do *yours*." This shows that the individual is at once the universal and the particular. Duty is the universal which is required of me; so if I am not the universal, I am unable to perform duty. On the other hand, my duty is the particular, something for me alone, and yet it is duty and hence the universal. Here personality is displayed in its highest validity. It is not lawless, neither does it make laws for itself, for the definition of duty holds good, but personality reveals itself as the unity of the universal and the particular. That such is the case is clear, it can be made comprehensible to a child; for I can do duty and yet not do *my* duty, and I can do *my* duty and yet not do duty. I cannot see why for this cause the world should sink into scepticism, for the difference between good and evil always remains, and so do responsibility and duty; even though it is impossible for another to say what *my* duty is, it will always be possible for him to say what is *his* duty, and this would not be the case if the unity of the universal and the particular were not posited. One may seem perhaps to have disposed of all scepticism by getting duty turned into something external, something fixed and definite, of which one can say simply, this is duty. But that is a misunderstanding, for in this instance the doubt lies not in the external but in the internal, in my relation to the universal. As a particular individual I am not the universal, and to require that of me is absurd. So if I am to be able to perform the universal, I must be the universal at the same time that I am the particular; but thus the dialectic of duty is within me. As I have said, this doctrine involves no danger to the ethical, on the contrary it upholds it. If one does not adopt this doctrine, personality becomes abstract, its relation to duty abstract, its immortality abstract. The distinction between good and evil is not abolished, for I doubt if there ever has been a man who maintained that it is a duty to do evil. That he did evil is another matter, but

he tried at the same time to make himself and others believe that it was good. It is unthinkable that he might be able to continue in this vain conceit, since he himself is the universal and so has the enemy not outside himself but within him. If, on the contrary, I assume that duty is something external, the distinction between good and evil is abolished, for if I am not myself the universal I can come only into an abstract relationship with it; but the distinction between good and evil is incommensurable for an abstract relationship.

Precisely when one perceives that personality is the absolute, is its own end and purpose, is the unity of the universal and the particular, precisely then will all scepticism which takes the historical as its point of departure be effectually overcome. Freethinkers have often sought to confuse the concepts by remarking that sometimes one race of people has declared holy and lawful the very thing which in the eyes of other peoples was an abomination and a crime. Here they have allowed themselves to be dazzled by the external; for in the ethical realm there is never any question about the external but only about the internal. But however much the external may change, the moral content of action may nevertheless remain the same. Thus, for example, there certainly has never been a race of men who taught that children should hate their parents. However, in order to nourish doubt, it has been recalled that, whereas all civilized nations made it a duty for children to take care of their parents, savages have the custom of putting their aged parents to death. It is quite possible that such is the case; but with this one has got no further, for the question remains whether the savages mean thereby to do anything evil. The ethical always consists in the consciousness of wanting to do the good, whereas it is another question whether the savages are not chargeable with defective knowledge. The freethinker perceives very clearly that the easiest way to volatilize the ethical is by opening the door to the historical infinity. And yet there is

something true in his position, for in the last resort, if the individual is not himself the absolute, empiricism is the only road open to him, and this road has with respect to its issue the same peculiarity as has the river Niger with respect to its source, that no one knows where it is. If finiteness is my lot, it is arbitrary to come to a stop at any particular point. On this road, therefore, one never gets to the point of beginning, for in order to begin one must have got to the end, but this is an impossibility. If personality is the absolute, then it is itself the Archimedean point from which one can lift the world. That this consciousness cannot mislead the individual to want to cast reality from him you can readily see, for if he would be the absolute in this sense, he is nothing at all, an abstraction. Only as the particular is he the absolute, and this consciousness will save him from all revolutionary radicalism.

Here I will bring my theorizing to an end. I feel keenly that I am not suited to this part, nor do I desire to be, but I should be completely satisfied if I might be regarded as a fairly practical fellow. Besides, all theorizing takes so much time. What I can do as an active agent in an instant, or can at once begin to do, requires much ado and difficulty before one can manage to express and describe it. Now it is not my intention to lecture you on the doctrine of duties and to talk in the usual way about duties towards God, towards oneself, and towards one's neighbor. Not at all as though I scorned this classification or as though what I have to teach were too profound to be associated with Balle's "Lesson-Book" or might presuppose greater preliminary knowledge than that book presupposes; not at all for such reasons, but because I believe that in the matter of ethics it is not a question of the multifariousness of duty but of its intensity. When with all his energy a person has felt the intensity of duty he is then ethically mature, and in him duty will emerge of itself. The chief thing is, not whether one can count on one's fingers how many duties one has, but that a man has once felt the intensity of duty in such a way that the consciousness of it is for him the

assurance of the eternal validity of his being. I, therefore, by no means extol a man for being a man of duty, any more than I would commend him for being a bookworm, and yet it is certain that the man before whom duty has never revealed itself in its whole significance is quite as poor a sort as is the scholar who thinks like the foolish inhabitants of the village of Mol that learning comes to one *mir nichts und dir nichts*. Let the casuists be absorbed in discovering the multifariousness of duties, the chief thing, the only saving thing, is that in relation to his own life a man is not his uncle but his father.

Let me illustrate what I mean by an example. I choose for this purpose the impression I have retained from my earliest childhood. When I was five years of age I was sent to school. It is natural that such an event always makes an impression upon a child, but the question is, what impression. Childish curiosity is engrossed by the various confusing conceptions as to what significance this may properly have. That this was the case with me too is quite likely; however, the chief impression I got was an entirely different one. I made my appearance at school, was introduced to the teacher, and then was given as my lesson for the following day the first ten lines of Balle's "Lesson-Book," which I was to learn by heart. Every other impression was then obliterated from my soul, only my task stood out vividly before it. As a child I had a very good memory, so I had soon learned my lesson. My sister had heard me recite it several times and affirmed that I knew it. I went to bed, and before I fell asleep I catechized myself once more; I fell asleep with the firm purpose of reading the lesson over the following morning. I awoke at five o'clock, got dressed, got hold of my lesson-book, and read it again. At this moment everything stands as vividly before my eyes as if it had occurred yesterday. To me it was as if heaven and earth might collapse if I did not learn my lesson, and on the other hand as if, even if heaven and earth were to collapse, this would not

exempt me from doing what was assigned to me, from learning my lesson. At that age I knew so little about duties, I had not yet, as you see, learned to know them from Balle's "Lesson-Book," I had only one

duty, that of learning my lesson, and yet I can trace my whole ethical view of life to this impression. I may smile at a little nipper of five years who takes hold of a thing so passionately, and yet I assure you I have no higher wish than that at every time of life I may take hold of my work with the same energy, with the same ethical earnestness as then. It is true that in later life one acquires a better conception of what one's work is, but still the chief thing is the energy. I owe it to my father's serious-mindedness that this event made such an impression upon me, and if I owed him nothing else, this would suffice to put me eternally in his debt. What is really important in education is not that the child learns this and that, but that the mind is matured, that energy is aroused. You often talk about how glorious a thing it is to have a good head. Who will deny that this is important? And yet I am nearly inclined to believe that one can make oneself that if one will. Give a man energy, passion, and with that he is everything. Take a young girl, let her be silly, high-flown, a perfectly foolish ninny, think of her as deeply and sincerely in love, and you will see that the good head comes of itself, you will see how shrewd and cunning she becomes in scenting out whether she is loved in return; let her become fortunate in love, and you will see how enthusiasm blossoms upon her lips; let her become unfortunate, and you will hear the cool reflections of wit and understanding.

I can say that in this respect my childhood has been fortunate because it has enriched me with ethical impressions. Permit me to dwell upon it a moment longer; it recalls to me my father, and that is the most precious recollection I possess, and being by no means a poor and unfruitful memory it gives me occasion to illustrate once again my dictum that the total impression of duty is the principal thing and not by any means the

multifariousness of duties. If the latter is made prominent, the individual is reduced and ruined. Now in this respect I was fortunate as a child, for I never had many duties but generally only one, but that was a duty in earnest. When I was two years older I was sent to the Latin School. Here began a new life, but here again the principal impression was the ethical, although I enjoyed the greatest freedom. I went amongst the other pupils, heard with amazement their complaints of their teachers, beheld the marvelous event of a pupil being taken out of school because he could not get on with his teacher. If from an earlier time I had not been so profoundly influenced, an event such as this might have had an injurious effect upon me. Now such was not the case. I knew it was my duty to go to school, to the school where for good and all I had been sent. Even though everything else were to be changed, this could not be changed. It was not merely fear of my father's seriousness which instilled into me this notion, but it was the lofty impression of what a person's duty is. Even though my father were dead and I placed under the supervision of another whom I might have induced to take me out of the school, I never would have ventured, or indeed, really wished to do it, it would have been as though my father's shade had come following me to school; for here again I would have had an infinite impression of what my duty was, so that no lapse of time would have obliterated the recollection that I had violated his will. For the rest I enjoyed my freedom, I knew only one duty, that of attending to my school, and in this respect I was left entirely to my own responsibility.

When I was sent to this school and the prescribed schoolbooks had been bought, my father handed them to me with the words, "William, when the month is up, you are the third in your class." I was exempted from all parental twaddle. He never asked me about my lessons, never heard me recite them, never looked at my exercise book, never reminded me that now it was time to read, now time to leave off, never came to the aid of the

pupil's conscience, as one sees often enough when noble-minded fathers chuck their children under the chin and say, "You had better be doing your work." When I wanted to go out he asked me first whether I had time. That I was to decide for myself, not he, and his query never went into details. That nevertheless he was deeply concerned about what I was doing I am perfectly certain, but he never let me observe it, in order that my soul might be matured by responsibility. Here again it was the same, I had not many duties — and how many children are spoiled by being overwhelmed by a regular ceremonial of duties! So I got a thoroughly deep impression of the fact that there was something called duty and that it had eternal validity. In my time we studied Latin grammar with a thoroughness which in this age is unknown. Through this instruction I received an impression which in another way had a singular influence upon my soul. In so far as I dare give myself credit for a capacity to view things philosophically, I owe it to this impression of my childhood. The unconditional respect with which I regarded the rule, the reverence I cherished for it, the contempt with which I looked down upon the miserable life the exception led, the righteous way, so it seemed to me, in which it was tracked down in my exercise book and always stigmatized — what else is this but the distinction which lies at the bottom of every philosophical way of thinking? When under this influence I regarded my father, he appeared to me an incarnation of the rule; what came from any other source was the exception, in so far as it was not in agreement with his command. When I regarded that fellow pupil who was taken out of the school, I felt that he must be an exception unworthy of my attention, and that all the more because the fuss they made about him proved sufficiently that he was an exception. The childish rigorism with which I then distinguished between the rule and the exception, in grammar as well as in life, has now indeed become softened, but I still have that distinction within me, I know how to call it forth, especially when I see you

and your like who seem to propound the doctrine that the exception is the most important thing, yea, that the rule only exists in order that the exception may show off to advantage.

The energy with which I become ethically conscious is therefore the thing that counts, or rather I cannot become ethically conscious without energy. I can therefore never become ethically conscious without becoming conscious of my eternal nature. This is the true proof of the immortality of the soul. It is, of course, not a full-grown proof unless the task is congruous with duty, but what for eternity is my duty is an eternal task. The circumstance that the first ten lines of Balle's "Lesson-Book" were assigned to me as a task from which nothing else in the world could ransom me was in a certain sense the first proof presented to me of the immortality of my soul. The imperfection of it consisted, not in any lack of energy on my part, but in the casual character of the task.

It is not my intention to lead you into a consideration of the multifariousness of duty. If I would express duty negatively, it would be easy; if I would express it positively, it would be very difficult and prolix; indeed, upon reaching a certain point it would be impossible. On the contrary, what my purpose was, what to the best of my ability I have endeavored to do, was to illuminate the absolute importance of duty, the eternal validity for personality of the relationship of duty. For so soon as in despair a person has found himself, has absolutely chosen himself, has repented himself, he has himself as a task under an eternal responsibility, and thus duty is posited in its absoluteness. However, since this person has not created himself but chosen himself, duty is the expression of his absolute dependence and of his absolute freedom as identical with one another. The particular duty he will teach himself, and in vain will seek enlightenment upon it from any other man, and yet he will again in this case be autodidact as well as theo-didact, and vice versa. His duty is in no case

something abstract, partly because for him it is not anything external (for when this is the case it is always abstract), and partly because he himself is concrete, for he has chosen himself ethically, has chosen himself in all his concretion, and relinquished all claim to the abstractness of arbitrary will.

What remains is to show how life looks when it is regarded ethically. You and all aestheticists are very willing to go halves, you concede that the ethical has its importance, you say that it is respectable for a man to live for his duties, that it is worthy of all honor, indeed, you even let fall some ambiguous words to the *effect* that it is quite fitting that there are men who live for their duties, that it is well the majority of people do so — and you meet with men of duty who are good-natured enough to find that there is sense in this talk, in spite of the fact that like all scepticism it is, of course, nonsensical. On the other hand, you for your part are not willing to have anything to do with the ethical. That would deprive life of its significance and above all of its beauty. The ethical, you think, is something totally different from the aesthetical, and when it prevails it destroys the other entirely.

Now if this were so, I should nevertheless have no doubt what to choose. In despair there is an instant when it seems to be as you say, and if a man has not felt this, his despair has been deceitful and he has not ethically chosen himself. However, it is not so, and therefore the next instant despair reveals itself not as a breach but as a metamorphosis. Everything comes back, but comes back transfigured. Therefore, only when one regards life ethically does it acquire beauty, truth, significance, firm consistence; only when a man lives ethically does his life acquire beauty, truth, significance, security; and only in the ethical life view are the autopathetic doubt and the sympathetic doubt set at rest. For in fact the autopathetic and the sympathetic doubt only come to rest in one and the same thing, because both are essentially the same doubt. For the autopathetic doubt is not an

expression of egoism but a claim [*Fordring*] of the self-love which promotes *[fordre]* its own self in the same sense that it promotes the self of everyone else. This observation, I think, is of great moment. Thus, supposing that every imaginable favor has fallen to his lot, an aestheticist who is not an egoist must be in despair over his happiness, because he must say, “What makes me happy is something which cannot be given in the same way to any other man and which no other man can himself acquire.” He must, in fact, be fearful lest someone should ask him why he sought his happiness, for he had become happy in order that other men might feel that they could not become happy. If such a man had any sympathy, he would give himself no rest till he had found a higher principle of life. When he had found it he would not be afraid to talk about his happiness, for then, if he were to talk about it rightly, he would say something along with this which would absolutely reconcile him with every man, with humanity as a whole.

However, let us pause to consider the category which aesthetics claims as its own, namely, beauty. Life loses its beauty, you say, so soon as the ethical prevails. “Instead of the happiness, beauty, and freedom from care which life has when we regard it aesthetically, we get conscientious activity, praiseworthy industry, indefatigable and unremitting zeal.” In case you were present here with me I would beg you to give me a definition of the beautiful in order that I might make a beginning. Since you are not present I will take the liberty of attaching my argument to the definition you are accustomed to give: “The beautiful is that which has its teleology in itself.” You take as illustration a young girl, you say, “She is beautiful, joyful, carefree, perfect harmony complete in itself, and it is stupid to ask why she exists, for she has her teleology in herself.” I shall not annoy you by questioning whether the young girl is really profited by having her teleology only in herself, or whether you, being granted the opportunity of expounding to her your view of the divine character of her existence, would

not flatter yourself that she might at last make a mistake and believe that she existed for the sake of listening to your insinuations. You regard nature and find it equally beautiful and are ready to anathematize every finite view of it. Nor shall I torment you here by inquiring whether it is not essentially characteristic of nature to exist for something else. You regard the works of art and of poetry, and you cry out with the poet, Procul, o procul *este profani!* and by the *profani* you understand those who would degrade poetry and art by giving them a teleology which lies outside of them.

As for poetry and art, I would remind you again that they provide only an imperfect reconciliation with life, and also that when you fix your gaze upon poetry and art you are not beholding reality — and properly, it was of this we were supposed to be speaking. So we come back to reality, and since it is likely that in real life you will find very little that is beautiful if you strictly apply the requirements of art, you give another meaning to the beautiful. The beautiful about which you talk is the individually beautiful. You view every particular man as a tiny factor or moment of the whole, you view him precisely in his characteristic peculiarity, and thus even the accidental, the insignificant, acquires significance, and life has the impress of beauty. So then you regard every particular man as a moment. But in fact the beautiful according to your definition was that which has its teleology in itself, but when a man is merely a moment he has his teleology not in himself but outside himself. So even though the whole be beautiful, the parts in themselves are not. And now for your own life. Has that its teleology in itself? Whether a man is justified in leading such a life of mere contemplation I will not decide — but *eh bien* let us assume that the significance of your life is to contemplate others, then after all you would not have your teleology in yourself. Only when every particular man is a moment and at the same time the whole can he be regarded with a view to his beauty; but when he is regarded thus he is regarded ethically, and if he is

regarded ethically, he is regarded in terms of his freedom. Let him be qualified as characteristically as you please, if this qualification is a necessity, he is merely a moment, and his life is not beautiful.

When you define the beautiful as that which has its teleology in itself and adduce by way of illustration a young girl or nature or a work of art, I can make nothing out of it but that the whole rant about all these things having their teleology in themselves is an illusion. If there is to be any question of teleology there must be a movement, for as soon as I think of a goal I think of a movement; even when I think of one who is at the goal I always think of a movement, for I reflect that he has reached it by a movement. What you call beautiful manifestly lacks movement; for the beautiful in nature simply *is,* and when I view a work of art and penetrate its thought with my thought, it is really in me the movement occurs, not in the work of art. It may be you are right in saying that the beautiful has its teleology in itself, but as you construe this definition and employ it, it is no more than a negative expression which signifies that the beautiful has not its teleology in anything else. Therefore, you will not be able to employ a seemingly synonymous expression to the effect that the beautiful about which you talk has inner teleology or immanent teleology. For so soon as you employ this expression you require movement, history, and with this you have passed beyond the spheres of nature and of art and are in the sphere of freedom and of ethics.

Now when I say that the individual has his teleology in himself this cannot be misunderstood, as though I meant by this that the individual is the central thing, or that the individual in an abstract sense ought to be sufficient unto himself; for if this is understood abstractly, I get no movement after all. The individual has his teleology in himself, has inner teleology, is himself his teleology. His self is thus the goal towards which he strives. This self of his, however, is not an abstraction but is absolutely

concrete. In the movement towards himself the individual cannot relate himself negatively towards his environment, for if he were to do so his self is an abstraction and remains such. His self must be opened in due relation to his entire concretion; but to this concretion belong also the factors which are designed for taking an active part in the world. So his movement, then, is from himself through the world to himself. Here the movement is a real movement, for it is a work of freedom, but at the same time it is immanent teleology, and hence it is here only there can be any question of beauty. If this is the case, the individual is seen to be higher than every relationship in which he stands. But from this it by no means follows that he is not in this relationship, nor can anything tyrannical be discerned in this, inasmuch as the same thing is true of every individual. I am a married man, and you know that I have the profoundest respect for this relationship, and I know that I humble myself under it lovingly; and yet I know that in another sense I am higher than this relationship; but I know also that in exactly the same sense this is the case with my wife — and therefore, as you know, I would not love the young girl we spoke about, because she did not share this view.

Therefore, only when I regard life ethically do I see it with a view to its beauty, and only when I regard my own life ethically do I see it with a view to its beauty. And if you were to say that this beauty is invisible, I would make answer: in a certain sense it is, in another sense it is not; that is to say, it is visible in the trace it leaves in history, visible in the sense in which it was said, *Loquere ut videam te*. It is indeed true that I do not see the consummation but the struggle, but after all, I see the consummation every instant I will, if I have the courage for it, and without courage I see absolutely nothing eternal, and accordingly nothing beautiful.

When I regard life ethically I regard it with a view to its beauty; life then to me becomes rich in beauty, not poor in beauty as it really is for you. I do not need to travel all over the land to discover beauties, nor to follow them

up in the streets, I do not need to appraise and reject. Well, that is natural, I haven't as much time for it as you, for when with joy but also with seriousness I see my life with a view to its beauty I always have enough to do. If sometimes I have an hour free, I stand at my window and regard men, and I see every one with a view to his beauty. Though he be ever so insignificant, ever so lowly, I see him with a view to his beauty; for I see him as this particular man who is yet at the same time the universal man, I see him as one who has this concrete task in life, he does not exist for the sake of any other person, even though he were a hired servant; he has his teleology in himself, he is victorious, he accomplishes this task, that I see; for the man of courage does not see spooks, but on the other hand he sees victorious heroes; the coward does not see heroes but only spooks. He must conquer, of that I am certain, therefore his strife is beautiful. As a rule I am not much inclined to strive, at least not with anybody but myself, but you may be sure that for this faith in the victory of the beautiful I will fight in deadly earnest, and nothing shall wrest it from me. Though with prayers one would wrest from me this faith, though one would wrest it from me by force, I should not let it be taken from me for anything in the world, nor for the whole world, since only by losing this faith would I lose the whole world. By means of this faith I see the beauty of life, and the beauty I see has not the trait of sadness and melancholy which is inseparable from all beauty of nature and of art, inseparable even from the eternal youth of the Greek gods. The beauty I see is joyful and victorious and stronger than the whole world. And this beauty I see everywhere, even where your eye sees nothing.

Stand here by my window for once. A young girl is going by. Do you remember that we once met her in the street? She was not pretty, you remarked; but when you had regarded her a little more closely you recognized her and went on to say, "Several years ago she was charming

and was a great success at the balls, then she had a love affair, and an unhappy one at that. The deuce only knows how she stood it, she took the thing so much to heart that her beauty faded away with grief, now she is no longer beautiful, and there the story ends." Well, that can be called regarding life with a view to its beauty! To my eyes, however, she has lost nothing, and to me she seems more beautiful than ever. Your way of regarding the beauty of life appears to me therefore to have a great resemblance to the *joie de vivre* which prevailed in the period when drinking songs were in vogue, when men became merry and gay by singing airs like this:

> But for the grape's red juice
> Who would stay longer here?
> Only crime and abuse
> Are heard of far and near.
> Brothers, drink and forget
> That earth is a vale of tears.
> Drink then and do not let
> The soul be appalled by fears.

Let us now come a little closer to some of the situations in real life, especially those where the aesthetical and the ethical come into contact, in order to consider to what extent the ethical may deprive us of some beauty, or whether it does not rather impart to everything a higher beauty. So I think of a definite individual who in a certain sense is "like most people are," in another sense is concrete in himself. Let us be quite prosaic. This man has to live, he has to clothe himself, in short, he has to exist. Perhaps he addressed himself to an aestheticist to find out how he was to manage, nor would he fail to get enlightenment. The aestheticist would perhaps say to him, "When a man is single he requires three thousand dollars a year to live comfortably, if he has four thousand dollars, he needs that too. If he would marry, he must have at least six thousand. Money, after all, is and remains

the *nervus rerum gerendarum* [the power to get things done], the true *conditio sine qua non* for living; for of course it is beautiful to read about rural contentment, about idyllic frugality, and I am fond of reading such poetic fiction, but of such a mode of life one would soon tire, and those who live thus do not enjoy this life half so much as those who have money and then in repose and comfort read the songs of the poets. Money is and remains the absolute condition for living. If one has no money, he is and remains excluded from the list of patricians, he is and remains a plebeian. Money is the prime condition, but from this it by no means follows that every one who has money knows how to use it. Those who understand this are in turn the optimates among the patricians."

By this explanation our hero evidently was not profited, all this practical wisdom did not apply to him at all, and he must have felt like a sparrow at a dance of cranes. For suppose, for example, he were to say to the aestheticist, "That's all well enough, but I have neither three thousand dollars a year nor six thousand, either in capital or in interest, I have absolutely nothing at all, hardly a hat." Then his counselor would likely shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, that's another matter, then you must be content with going to the workhouse." If the aestheticist were very good-natured, he would perhaps call back the poor wretch and say to him, "I don't want to bring you to despair before I have tried my *utmost.* There are a few remedies for distress which one should not leave untried before bidding farewell to joy and taking the vow and putting on the strait-jacket. Marry a rich girl, play the lottery, go to the colonies, spend some years scraping money together, worm yourself into the favor of an old bachelor that he may appoint you his heir. For the moment our ways separate, make money, and you will always find in me a friend who knows how to forget that there was a time when you had no money." After all, there is something dreadfully heartless in such a view of life — thus to murder in cold blood

all joy in life for him who has no money. And that is what the moneyed man does, for at least it is his opinion that without money there is no joy in life. If I were to put you in comparison with that aestheticist, were to point to you as one who cherishes or utters such thoughts, I should be doing you a very great injustice. For on the one hand, your heart is too good *to be* the abode of such abominable baseness, and on the other hand, your soul is too sympathetic to utter such thoughts even if you had them. I do not say this as though I meant that he who is without money has need of such compassionate consideration, but because this, after all, is the least one might require of a man who imagined that he was specially favored: that he should not be proud of it nor take pleasure in wounding others not so favored. Let a man be proud, in God's name! It would be better if he were not, but let him be proud, only let him not be proud of money, for there is nothing that so degrades a man.

Now you are accustomed to having money and have sense enough to know what it implies. You insult no one (differing in this respect from the aestheticist we were talking about), you are glad to help when you can, indeed when you lay stress upon the misery of not having money it is done out of sympathy. Your mockery, therefore, is directed not against men but against existence where now things are simply so arranged that not all men can have money. "Prometheus and Epimetheus," you say, "were undeniably very wise, but all the same it is incomprehensible that when in other respects they endowed men so gloriously it did not occur to them to give them money also." If you had been present on this occasion and had known what you now know, you would have come forward and said, "Ye good gods, you deserve thanks for all you have done, but (pardon me for speaking to you so frankly) you have no knowledge of the world; for a man to be happy he needs one thing more, namely, money. What good does it do him to be created to rule over the world when he can't find time for this

because of the necessity of making a living. What a way to act! thrusting out into the world a rational creature, and then letting him toil and moil! Is that the way to treat a human being?" On that topic you are inexhaustible. "Most men," you say, "live to get a living, when they have got that they live to get a good living, when they have got that they die. With genuine emotion, therefore, I read a while ago a notice in the newspaper in which a wife announced the death of her husband. Instead of commenting diffusely upon the pain of losing the best husband and most loving father, she said very briefly that this death was such an affliction because only a short time before it her husband had obtained a pretty good living.

"A good deal more is implied in this than the sorrowing widow and the ordinary reader of the obituary notice can see in it. This way of looking at things can be fashioned into a proof of the immortality of man. This proof might be formulated as follows: It is every mans destiny to get a good living. If a man dies before he got it, he has not attained his destiny, and everyone is free to surmise whether in another world he will attain his destiny. On the other hand, if he gets a good living, he has attained his destiny, but the destiny of getting a good living cannot mean that he shall die, but on the contrary that he shall live well on his good living, *ergo* man is immortal. This proof might be called the popular proof, or the proof from a living. If this proof were added to the previous proofs, every reasonable doubt concerning immortality must be regarded as overcome. This proof can perfectly well be associated with the previous proofs, indeed, it is precisely in this connection that it appears in its full glory, seeing that as the conclusion it refers back to the others and proves them. The other proofs start out with the consideration that man is a rational being; now inasmuch as someone might doubt this, the proof from a living is adjoined to prove this assumption by the following syllogism: to whom God gives a living He gives an understanding, to whom God gives a good living He gives a good

understanding, *ergo.* That sorrowing widow had a presentiment of this, she felt the profound tragedy in life's contradictions."

So mockery and flippancy is what you have to contribute in the face of this situation. Presumably it never occurs to you that your view might be profitable and instructive to anybody. Nor presumably does it ever occur to you that by such a declamation you may do harm. For it is quite possible to think that a man who in himself harbored resentment enough at being forced into the labor of life might become still more impatient, still more fretful, by paying attention to the passionateness not devoid of wit with which you would think on his behalf and by giving heed to your sympathetic mockery. I advise you to proceed with caution.

So along the path our hero has taken he will seek in vain for enlightenment. Let us hear now what an ethicist would reply to him. He would say, "It is every man's duty to work in order to live." In case he had nothing more to say, you presumably would reply, "There we have again the old fudge about duty and duty, everywhere it is duty, it is not possible to think of anything more tiresome than this prudery which cows everybody and clips their wings." At this point be so kind as to remember that our hero had no money, that the heartless aestheticist had none to spare for him, and that you had not so much left over that you could assure him of his future. So if he didn't want to sit down and reflect what he would have done if he had had money, he must consider some other expedient. In the next place you will see that the ethicist addressed him with perfect courtesy, he did not treat him as an exception, he did not say to him, "Good Lord! You are simply so unfortunate that you must try to learn to put up with it." On the contrary, he made the aestheticist an exception, for he said, "It is every man's duty to work in order to live." In so far, then, as a man does not need to work he is an exception, but to be an exception is, as we agreed above, not great but little. Therefore, if a man will view the matter ethically he will

see that to have money is a humiliation, for every special favor is a humiliation. When he views it thus he will not be enamored of any special favor. He will then humble himself under it, and when he has done that he will again be exalted by the thought that this favor is an expression for the fact that a great claim is made upon him.

If that ethicist from whom our hero sought advice is himself acquainted with what it means to work in order to live, his words will have still more weight. It is to be wished that in this respect people had more courage, and the reason why one often hears so loudly uttered this despicable talk about money being the principal thing is to be found partly in the fact that those who must work lack ethical energy to own up to the significance of work, lack conviction of its significance. Marriage is not harmed by seducers but by cowardly husbands. So it is in this case. The despicable talk we have listened to does no harm, but those people harm the good cause who, being compelled to work in order to live, desire one moment to have their life recognized as meritorious in comparison with that of idlers, the next moment they lament and sigh, and say that after all it is far more beautiful to be independent. What respect will younger people have for life when they hear such talk from older people? Here again you have done yourself much harm by your experimentation, for you have learned to know much which is not good and gladdening. You know very well how to tempt a man and coax from him the admission that he would prefer, after all, to be exempt from work, and so you triumph.

The question whether it might not be possible to imagine a world in which it was not necessary to work in order to live is really an idle question since it does not deal with the given reality but with a feigned situation. This, however, is always an attempt to belittle the ethical view. For if it were a perfection on the part of existence not to have to work, then that man's life would be the most perfect who didn't have to. Then one could

say that it was a duty to work only by attaching to the word duty the sense of a dolorous necessity. Duty then would express, not the universal-human but the common, and in this case duty would not be the expression for the perfect. Therefore, I would reply quite aptly that it must be regarded as an imperfection on the part of existence that man did not need to work. The lower the scale of human life, the less evident is the necessity of working; the higher the scale, the more evident it is. The duty of working in order to live expresses the universal-human, and it expresses the universal also in another sense because it expresses freedom. It is precisely by working that man makes himself free, by working he becomes lord over nature, by working he shows that he is higher than nature.

Or might life lose its beauty for the fact that a man must work in order to live? We are back again at the same old point: everything depends upon what one understands by beauty. It is beautiful to see the lilies of the field (though they sew not neither do they spin) so clothed that even Solomon in all his glory was not so magnificent; it is beautiful to see the birds without anxiety finding their food; it is beautiful to see Adam and Eve in Paradise where they could get everything they pointed at; but it is still more beautiful to see a man earning by his work what he has need of. It is beautiful to see a providence satisfying all and caring for all, but it is still more beautiful to see a man who is, as it were, his own providence. Man is great, greater than any other creature, for the fact that he can provide for himself. It is beautiful to see a man possessing an affluence which he himself has earned, but it is also beautiful to see a man doing the still greater trick of transforming little into much. It is an expression of man's perfection that he can work, it is a still higher expression for it that he must.

In case our hero will adopt this view, he will not feel tempted to wish for a fortune which comes to him while he sleeps, he will not be in love with the prerequisites of life, he will feel the beauty of working in order to live,

he will sense in this his human dignity; for it is not greatness in the case of plants that they do not spin, but it is their imperfection that they cannot. He will not desire to strike up a friendship with that opulent aestheticist. With levelheadedness he will discern what is great, and will not let himself be frightened by men of money. Strangely enough, I have seen men who joyfully felt the significance of working, were satisfied with their work, happy in their frugal competence, and yet had not courage as it were to admit this. When they talked about what they needed they always made it seem as if they needed much more than they really did, they did not want to seem industrious, although they really were, just as though it were a greater thing to need much than to need little, greater to be an idler than to be industrious. How seldom one encounters a man who says calmly and with cheerful dignity, “I don’t do this or that, I have not the means for it.” It is as though a man had a bad conscience, as though he were afraid of getting the answer the raven got. In this way all true virtue is destroyed or transformed into a phantom. For why should people be frugal who don’t need to be? And those who are obliged to be frugal make a virtue of necessity. Just as though one could not be frugal unless one had at hand the possibility of affluence, just as though need were not just as great an enticement to frugality.

So presumably our hero would resolve to work, and yet he would find himself exempted to a certain extent from sordid cares about daily bread. Such sordid cares I have never known, for though in a way I must work in order to live I have always had a liberal competence and cannot therefore speak from experience, but I have always had an eye open to the hardship of this situation... and to its beauty also, its educating and ennobling effect, for I believe that there is no care which educates like this. I have known men whom I would not think of calling cowardly or effeminate, who were not in the least disposed to think that man’s life ought to be without strife,

who felt strength and courage and inclination to fight in a cause where others would lose heart, at the same time I have often heard them say, "God preserve me from care for daily bread. There is nothing which so stifles the higher aspirations in a man." Such utterances have often given me occasion to reflect (and my own life has given me occasion to verify it) that there is nothing so deceitful as the human heart. A man will have courage to venture out into the most dangerous conflicts, but is not willing to engage in a conflict for daily bread, and at the same time he would make out that it is a greater thing to engage in the other conflicts than in this latter one. Well, that's obviously convenient. One chooses an easier conflict which, nevertheless, in the eyes of the multitude seems more dangerous; one persuades oneself that this is the truth; one conquers and so of course is a hero, and a hero of a very different sort than if he had conquered in that other paltry conflict which is unworthy of a man. Indeed, when besides care for daily bread one has within oneself such a hidden enemy to combat, it is no wonder one wishes to be rid of this other conflict. Yet a man ought, at least, to be honest enough with himself to admit that the reason why he shunned this conflict was that it is far harder than the other. But if it is harder, then the victory also is for more beautiful. In case a man is not himself tried in this conflict, he owes every combatant the admission that his conflict is the most dangerous, he owes him this *amende honorable.* If one looks at care for daily bread as an affair of honor in a still stricter sense than any other combat, one has already made some progress. Here as in every other case the important thing is to be in the correct position, not to be wasting one's time on wishes but to comprehend one's task. If this task is apparently lowly and insignificant, petty and disheartening, then one knows that this only makes the strife more difficult and victory more beautiful. There are men who are honored by the insignia of orders, and there are men who shed honor upon the orders. Let that man apply this to himself who

while he feels strength and inclination to engage in glorious conflicts must be content with the most lowly of all, the conflict for daily bread.

Then, too, the conflict for daily bread has the highly educative characteristic that the reward is so small, or rather is nothing at all, the combatant striving merely to procure the possibility of being able to continue to strive. The greater the reward of battle and the more it is external to a man, so much the more does the combatant dare to rely also upon all the ambiguous passions which dwell in every man. Ambition, vanity, pride — these are powers which possess a prodigious elasticity which is able to drive a man far. He who strives for daily bread sees at once that these passions fail him. For how could he suppose that such a strife might interest others or arouse their admiration? If he has no other powers, he is disarmed. The reward is so small; for when he has drudged and toiled and moiled he has perhaps earned precisely what is needful — what is needful to keep him alive, in order again to be able to toil and moil. The conflict for daily bread is so ennobling and educative because it does not permit a man to deceive himself with regard to his own situation. If he sees nothing higher in this conflict, it is wretched, and he is right in regarding it as an affliction to have to strive to be able to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. But this strife is so ennobling because it compels him to see something else in it, compels him, if he will not throw himself away entirely, to see in it a combat of honor, and to perceive that the reward is so small in order that the honor may be the greater. So he strives, indeed, to acquire a competence, but what after all he is striving for first and foremost is to acquire himself; and we who have not been subjected to this test but yet have preserved a feeling for the truly great will look on, and if he permits it we will honor him as an honorary member of society. He has, then, a double conflict; he may lose in the one conflict and yet at the same time conquer in the other. If I were to imagine the almost unimaginable, that

all his efforts to earn a livelihood were to fail, then indeed he has lost, and yet at the same time he may have won the most beautiful victory it is possible to win. It is upon this I will fix my glance, not upon the reward he missed, for that is too trifling a thing. He who has a reward before his eyes forgets the other conflict; if he does not win the reward, he has lost all; if he wins it, it nevertheless always remains dubious how he won it.

Indeed, what conflict could be more educative than that for daily bread? How much of the spirit of childhood is required in order sometimes almost to smile at all the earthly trouble and travail an immortal spirit has to put up with in order to live, how much humility in order to be content with that little which is earned with difficulty, how much faith in order to see a guidance of providence in one's own life too; for it is easy enough to say that God is greatest in the least manifestations, but to see Him in them requires the strongest faith! What love for mankind to rejoice with the fortunate and to be able to cheer those who are alike in misfortune! What an intense and penetrating consciousness of oneself to make sure one is doing all one can, what perseverance and what vigilance! For what enemy is more crafty than this solicitude? A man does not get rid of it with a few stirring movements, does not frighten it away by noise and racket. What grace and distinction one must have to turn away from it and yet not shun it! How often the weapons must be changed: now one must work, now wait, now brave it out, now pray! And with what delight and joy and ease and dexterity the weapons must be changed, for otherwise the enemy has conquered!

And with this, time passes, a man is not granted opportunity to see his beautiful plans realized, the wishes of his youth fulfilled. He sees others who succeed in this. They gather the crowd around them and reap its applause, they take delight in its jubilation, while he stands as a solitary artist upon the stage of life, having no public and no one who has time to

look at him — of course not, for it takes time, his exhibition is not a half hour of juggling, the tricks he performs are of a finer sort and require more than a "cultivated public" to understand them. But neither does he covet this applause. "When I was twenty years of age," he says perhaps, "I too dreamed of combat, I imagined myself in the lists, I looked up at the balcony, I saw the circle of maidens, saw them anxious on my behalf, saw them wave to me their applause, and I forgot the toil of the combat; now I have grown older, my combat is now a different one, but my soul is not less proud. I demand another umpire, a connoisseur, I demand an eye which seeth in secret, which doth not grow weary of seeing, which beholds the strife and perceives the danger; I demand an ear which hears the labor of thought, which divines how my better nature twists itself out of the torture of temptation. To that umpire I will look up, after His applause I will aspire, even though I am not able to deserve it. And when the cup of suffering is held out to me, I will not fix my glance upon the cup but upon Him who holds it, I will not stare at the bottom of the cup if at once I have not drained it, but will fix my gaze immovably upon Him from whom I receive it. Joyfully I will take the cup in my hand, not as when on a festive occasion I drain it to the health of another and am myself gladdened by the delicious taste of the beverage; no, I will taste its bitterness, and as I taste it I will cry out to myself, "To my health!' because I know and am convinced that by this cup I am purchasing for myself an eternal health."

So it is, I believe, one must ethically conceive the combat fought for daily bread. I will not stand up so doggedly for my rights as to challenge you to indicate exactly at what point in your theory of aesthetics you deal with this subject, but I merely leave it to your own consideration whether by this conflict life loses its beauty if one does not will that it should, or whether it does not gain a higher beauty. To deny that such a conflict exists is indeed madness, to forget it because it bypasses one's own house is

thoughtlessness, and, in case one lays claim to a reasoned view of life, it is heartlessness and cowardice.

The fact that many men do not regard the conflict for daily bread in this way is no valid objection, and it surely is a good and pious desire when for such people I wish that they might be magnanimous enough to regard it thus, be inspired not to see amiss like those men in the apocryphal story in Daniel who "did not look up to heaven but looked upon Susanna."

The ethical view that it is every man's duty to work in order to live has accordingly two advantages over the aesthetical view. In the first place, it is consonant with reality and explains something universal in it, whereas the aesthetical view propounds something accidental and explains nothing. In the second place, it construes man with a view to his perfection, sees him in his true beauty. This may be regarded as all that is necessary and more than is sufficient concerning this subject. If you wish to have a few empirical observations, I throw them into the bargain — not as though the ethical view stood in need of any such support, but because you perhaps may profit by them.

An old man whom I once knew always used to say that it was well for a man to learn to work for his living, that what applies to children applies to grown-ups: they've got to learn young. Now it is not my meaning that it would be good for a young man to be at once disheartened by the need of making a living. But only let him work in order to live. The financial independence so highly extolled is often a snare: every desire can be satisfied, every inclination followed, every whim gratified, until they all conspire against oneself. He who must work will remain unacquainted with the vain joy of being able to get everything, he will not learn to trust defiantly in his wealth, to remove with money every obstacle, to purchase for himself every liberty; but then neither will his mind be embittered, he will not be tempted to turn his back upon existence with proud disdain, as

many a rich youth has done, and to say as Jugurtha said of Rome, “Here is a city which is for sale if it finds a purchaser,” he will not in a brief space of time have acquired a wisdom whereby he does men an injustice and makes himself unhappy.

So when I often hear people complain that they are compelled to work, compelled to trouble themselves about such things, men whose souls’ high flight ought not to be thus checked, then I cannot deny that I sometimes become impatient, that I could wish that Harun al Raschid still went about amongst us dealing out a bastinado to everyone who complained unseasonably. Now you are not in the position of needing to work in order to live, and it is by no means my purpose to counsel you to throw away your fortune so that it may become a necessity for you to work; that is of no avail, and all experimentation is foolishness which comes to nothing. In another sense, however, I believe that you are in the position of needing to acquire the conditions requisite for living. In order to live you must acquire mastery over your innate melancholy. With a view to this situation I apply to you the words of that old acquaintance of mine, that you be taken in time. This melancholy has been your misfortune, but you will see the day when you yourself will admit that it has been your good fortune. So acquire the condition for being able to live. You are not one of those who will make me impatient by complaints, for I believe rather that you would do anything but complain, and you know exceedingly well how to bite back your sufferings within yourself. Beware, however, lest you fall into the opposite extreme, into a mad defiance which consumes one’s strength in the effort to conceal pain, instead of using it to bear pain and to vanquish it.

Our hero, then, is willing to work, not because it is for him a *dura necessitas,* but because he regards it as the most beautiful thing and the most perfect. (The notion that he might not be able to regard it thus because, after all, he is compelled to put up with it, is one of those foolish and partly

malicious misapprehensions which locate a man's value outside of him in the accidental.) But precisely because he is willing to work, his occupation can be work and not slave-labor. He requires, then, a higher expression for his occupation, an expression which indicates the relation of his occupation to his own person and to that of other men, an expression which is able to define it for him as pleasure and at the same time to assert its importance. Here a deliberation will again be necessary. With the wise man of the three thousand dollars he counts it beneath his dignity to have any dealings, but our hero is like most people. To be sure, he learned young, but nevertheless, he has acquired a taste for living aesthetically, he is like most people, ungrateful. Although it was the ethicist who helped him out of his former embarrassment, it is not to him he first has recourse. Perhaps as a last resort he secretly relies upon the ethicist to help him out of this fix, for our hero is far from being so petty as not to be ready to admit that the ethicist really helped him out of his embarrassment, although he had no money to give him. He has recourse then to a more humane aestheticist. So this man will also know how to give him a dissertation about the importance of working. Without work life at last becomes tiresome. "One's work, however, ought not to be work in the strictest sense but ought constantly to be a work which could be defined as pleasure. One discovers in oneself some aristocratic talent or another whereby one distinguishes oneself from the mob. This one cultivates — not frivolously, for then one soon becomes tired of it, but with all possible aesthetic seriousness. Life then has for one a new significance because one has one's work, a work which yet really is one's pleasure. Being financially independent, one takes good care of this talent in order that, unhampered by the necessities of life, it may develop into its full vigor. This talent, however, one does not treat as a plank whereby one is saved in the shipwreck of life, but as a wing by means of which one may soar over the world; one does not treat it as a toiling nag but as a prancing steed." Our

hero, however, has no such aristocratic talent, he is like most people. So the aestheticist knows nothing better for him to do than "to put up with being classified by the mob's trivial definition of what it is to be a laboring man. But do not lose courage, this too has its importance, it is honest and respectable. Become a diligent and industrious man, a useful member of society. I already take delight in seeing you, for the more multifarious life is, the more interesting it is for the onlooker. Hence it is that I and all aesthetes hate a national costume because it would be so tiresome to look at people if all were dressed alike. So then let every individual pursue his own occupation in life, for with that, life becomes all the more beautiful for me and my kind who make it their profession to be onlookers." Our hero, I should hope, becomes a little impatient at this treatment, he is indignant at the insolence of such a classification of men. Moreover, independence played after all a considerable role in the aestheticist's view of life, and independent is simply what he is not.

Perhaps he cannot yet make up his mind to have recourse to the ethicist. He ventures to make one more attempt. He meets a man who says, "One must work in order to live, that's the way life is." Here he seems to have found the man he sought, for this is precisely what he thinks. So he is willing to pay attention to this discourse. "One must work in order to live, that's the way life is, it is the seamy side of existence. One sleeps seven hours every day, that is time wasted, but it has to be; one works five hours of the day, that is time wasted, it has to be. With five hours' work one has one's livelihood, and when one has that, then one begins to live. So one's work had better be as dull and meaningless as possible, so long as one gets one's livelihood from it. If one has a special talent, one must not commit against it the sin of making it one's means of livelihood. No, one's talent must be coddled, that is a thing one possesses for its own sake, one takes greater joy in it than a mother takes in her child, one cultivates and develops

it in the twelve hours of the day, sleeps seven hours, is hardly human for five hours, and so life becomes after all pretty tolerable, yea, even rather beautiful; for the five hours' work is not so dreadful after all, for since one's thoughts are never on the work, one gathers strength for the avocation which is one's delight."

Our hero is again no nearer his goal than before. For in the first place he has no special talent with which to fill up the twelve hours at home, in the second place he has already got a more beautiful notion of what it is to work and he is not willing to give that up. So he will likely resolve to seek help again from the ethicist. The ethicist speaks briefly: "It is every man's duty to have a calling." More he cannot say, for the ethical as such is always abstract, and there is no such thing as an abstract calling for all men; he presupposes, on the contrary, that every man has a particular calling. What calling our hero should choose the ethicist cannot inform him, for this requires a detailed knowledge of the aesthetical components of his entire personality, and even if the ethicist had this knowledge, he would still refrain from choosing for him, since by doing so he would be renouncing his own view of life. What the ethicist can teach him is that there is a calling for every man, and when our hero has found his the ethicist can admonish him to choose it ethically. For what the aestheticist had to say about the aristocratic talents is a confused and sceptical discourse about the very thing which the ethicist clearly explains. The life views of the aestheticists always imply differences: some men have talents, others have not, and yet what distinguishes them is a more or a less, a quantitative determinant. Hence it is arbitrary on their part to draw the line at a particular point, and yet the nerve of their life view consists precisely in this arbitrary distinction. Their life view therefore posits a discord in existence which they find themselves unable to resolve, and so they frivolously and heartlessly arm themselves against it. The ethicist, on the other hand,

reconciles man with life, for he says, “Every man has a calling.” He does not do away with the differences, but he says, “In all the differences there is the common factor left that each is a calling. The most eminent talent is a calling, and the individual who is in possession of it cannot lose sight of reality, he does not stand outside of the universal-human, for his talent is a calling. The most insignificant individual has a calling, he shall not be cast out, not be reduced to living on a par with the beasts, he does not stand outside of the universal-human, he has a calling.”

The ethical thesis that every man has a calling is the expression for the fact that there is a rational order of things in which every man, if he will, fills his place in such a way that he expresses at once the universal-human and the individual. With this way of regarding it has existence become less beautiful? One has no occasion to rejoice in an aristocracy which is founded upon an accident and accidentally founded upon it; no, one has a realm of gods.

When the talent is not construed as a call (and when it is so construed every man has a call), then the talent is absolutely egoistic. Everyone, therefore, who founds his life upon a talent leads, so far as he can, a robber existence. He has no higher expression for the talent than that it is a talent. So this talent wants to come to the fore in its unique difference. Every talent has, therefore, a tendency to make itself the central factor, every condition must be present to promote it, for only in this wild bursting forth consists the real aesthetic enjoyment of the talent. If there is a simultaneous talent with another direction, the two collide in mortal conflict, for they have no concentric direction, no higher expression in common.

So our hero has got what he sought, a work whereby he might live; he has got at the same time a more significant expression for its relation to his personality: it is his calling, and so the accomplishment of it is associated with a satisfaction of his whole personality; he has got also a more

significant expression for the relation of his work to other men, for since his work is his calling he is thereby put essentially on an equal footing with all other men, he is then doing by his work the same thing that every other man does, he is performing his calling. He claims recognition of this, more he does not claim, for this is the absolute. "If my calling is an insignificant one," says he, "I can be faithful to my calling and am essentially just as great as the greatest, without being for an instant so foolish as to forget the differences; that would do me no good, for were I to forget them there would be an abstract calling for all, but an abstract calling is no calling, and I would have lost again just as much as the greatest stands to lose. If my calling is insignificant, I can be unfaithful to my calling, and if I am, I commit just as great a sin as does the greatest. I shall not be so foolish as to want to forget the differences or to think that my unfaithfulness might have consequences just as dreadful for the whole as has the unfaithfulness of the greatest; that does me no good, I myself am the one who would lose most by it."

The ethical consideration that everyone has a calling possesses a double advantage over the aesthetic theory of talent. In the first place, it explains [*forklarer*] talent not as something accidental in existence but as the universal; in the second place, it exhibits the universal in its true beauty. For talent is beautiful only when it is transfigured [*forklaret*] as a call, and existence is beautiful only when everyone has a call. Such being the case, I beg you not to disdain a simple empirical observation which so far as concerns the principal theme of this discourse you will have the kindness to regard as a superfluity. When a man has a calling he generally has a norm outside himself which, without making him a slave, does nevertheless prescribe in a measure what he must do, apportions for him the time, often gives him occasion to begin. If for once he does not make a success of his business, he hopes to do it better next time, and this next time is not too far

distant. On the other hand, the man who has no calling must generally work very much more *uno tenore,* in case he proposes a task for himself. There is no place for him to break off except as he does it of his own accord. If he fails in it, then the failure is complete, and he has great difficulty in beginning again since he lacks an occasion which prompts him to do so. So he is easily tempted to become a pedant, if he would not become an idler. It is such a common thing to accuse of pedantry people who have definite official duties. Generally such a man cannot become a pedant. He, on the other hand, who has no official duties is tempted to become a pedant in order to put up at least a little resistance to the too great freedom by reason of which he may easily be tempted to go astray. One therefore may very properly be inclined to forgive him for his pedantry, since it is a sign of something good in him. But on the other hand, it may be regarded as his punishment for wanting to emancipate himself from the universal.

Our hero found a more significant expression for the relation of his work to other men in the fact that it was a calling. Thus he has recognition, he has obtained his credentials. But now when he is discharging the duties of his calling he finds in that his personal satisfaction, but at the same time he requires an expression for the relation of this activity to other men, he requires to be *accomplishing* something. Here, perhaps, he will again go astray. The aestheticist will explain to him that this satisfaction of the talent is the highest thing, and that the question whether he is accomplishing anything or not is entirely secondary. He will, perhaps, adopt a practical bigotry which believes in its inept zeal that it is accomplishing everything, or he will assume an aesthetic air of importance which thinks that to accomplish anything in the world is something which falls to the lot of a few elect individuals, that there are certain eminent talents which accomplish something, the men left over are *numerus,* a superfluity in

existence representing the prodigality of the Creator. But none of these explanations is of any use to our hero, for he is like most people.

Let us again have recourse to the ethicist. He says, “What every man accomplishes and can accomplish is to do *his* job in life. For in case it were true that certain men accomplish something and others do not, and the reason for this was an accidental difference, then scepticism has again obtained the upper hand.” We must therefore say that looking at it essentially every man “accomplishes as much as another.” I am by no means preaching indolence, but on the other hand one must be cautious in using the expression “accomplish.” This has always been a theme for your derision, and, as you once expressed it, you have “studied profoundly integral and differential and infinitesimal calculus in order to reckon how much is accomplished on the whole by a clerk in the Admiralty who in the entire bureau is regarded as a smart worker.” Use your talent for mockery only against persons who would make themselves important, but do not abuse it to confuse men’s minds.

The expression “to accomplish” indicates a relation between my action and another man outside of me. Now it is easy to perceive that this relation is not subject to my control, and that in view of this one can say with as much justification of the most eminent talent that it accomplished nothing as this can be said of the most insignificant man. There is no distrust of life implied in this, on the contrary, it implies a recognition of my own unimportance and a respect for the importance of every other man. The man who possesses the most eminent talent is able to do his job, and the most insignificant man can do that too. Neither of them can do more. Whether they might accomplish something does not lie in their power, but it does lie in their power to hinder themselves from doing it. I therefore give up all the self-importance which often looks so big, I do my job, and I do not waste my time on calculating whether I am accomplishing anything. So what I

accomplish follows upon my job as a piece of good luck in which I may well take delight but which I dare not impute absolutely to myself. A beech grows up, forms its crown of leaves, and men delight to sit in its shade. If it were to become impatient, if it were to say, “Here in this place where I stand there hardly ever comes a living being. What use is it for me to grow, to shoot out my branches, what do I accomplish by it?” it would with that only delay its growth, and perhaps there came a wayfarer who said, “If this tree instead of being stunted had been a leafy tree, I now might have taken rest in its shade.” Imagine that the tree had been able to hear!

So every man can accomplish something, he can accomplish his job. The job may be of very various kinds, but we are always to hold fast to this, that every man has his job, and that all men are reconciled by the expression that each of them does his job. The relation of my job to the other man, or what I shall accomplish (taking this word in its usual sense), is not under my control. Even the man whose job in life is to develop himself, even he accomplishes, if we look at it essentially, just as much as every other man. It might therefore seem as if that aestheticist was right when he expressed the opinion that one should not consider what one was accomplishing but merely enjoy the satisfaction of unfolding one’s talent. However, his mistake was that he stopped with the selfish definition of talent. He accounted himself one of the elect and was unwilling to accomplish in his life the universal, to regard his talent as his job. The person, however, of whom one could say that his job in life consists simply and solely in developing himself belongs of course to the class of persons who humanly speaking are the least talented. Take a young girl for instance. She belongs to the class of people of whom one is not tempted to say that they are able to accomplish something. In addition, suppose that she has been unhappy in love, that she has been deprived of the last prospect of accomplishing

anything; if nevertheless she does her job, if she develops herself, she accomplishes, if we look at it essentially, just as much as the greatest.

Accomplishing, then, is identical with doing one's job. Think of a man who is profoundly and sincerely moved; to him it never occurs to question whether he will accomplish something or not; it is only that an idea is intent upon realizing itself in him with all its might. Let him be an orator, a priest, or whatever you will. He does not speak to the multitude in order to accomplish something, but the melody within him must ring out, only then does he feel happy. Do you believe that he accomplished less than one who became puffed up with the idea of what he will accomplish, who keeps himself going with the thought of what he himself will accomplish? Think of an author; to him it never occurs to question whether he will obtain a reader or whether he will accomplish anything by his book; he is only intent upon apprehending the truth. Do you believe that such a writer accomplishes less than one whose pen is under the supervision and direction of the thought that he will accomplish something?

Strangely enough, though neither you nor I nor our hero himself nor that shrewd aestheticist has noticed it, it is nevertheless true, our hero possesses an extraordinary talent. Thus it is that the spiritual quality in a man may lie for a long time concealed till its quiet growth has reached a certain point and then it proclaims itself with all its power. The aestheticist will likely say, "Well, now it's too late, now he's botched once for all, poor man!" The ethicist, on the contrary, will say, "It was lucky for him, for now that he has come to realize the truth his talent will not become a snare unto his feet, he will perceive that a man needs neither financial independence nor five hours of slave-labor in order to conserve his talent, but that his talent is precisely his calling."

So our hero works in order to live; this work is at the same time his pleasure; he fulfills the duties of his calling, he accomplishes his job — to

say it all in one word, and with a word which inspires you with dread... he has a living. Do not be impatient, let the poet say it, and it sounds prettier:

> Instead of childhood's golden promise,
> He makes a living scant but honest.

And then what next? You will smile, you think I have something up my sleeve. You already shudder at my prosaic intention, for you say, "Now it comes to nothing less than getting him married; yes, do be so kind, you had better have his banns published, I shall have no objection to make against your and his godly resolution. It is incredible how rationally consistent everything is in existence: a living and a wife. Indeed, even that poet with his chime of bells struck a phrase which indicates not obscurely that with the living comes the wife. Against one thing only I must protest, that you call your client a hero. I have been tractable and compliant, I had no wish to condemn the man, I always had hopes of him, but really you must now excuse me if I go around by another street and no longer am inclined to hear a word about him. An office-seeker and a wife-seeker — I have all respect for him, but as for being a hero, surely he himself would not lay claim to that." You think then that in order to be called a hero one must do something extraordinary. In that case your prospects are really brilliant. Suppose now that it required much courage to do the extraordinary, and of course he who shows such courage is a hero. In calling a man a hero one must reflect not so much upon what he does as upon how he does it. One man may conquer kingdoms and lands without being a hero, another may show himself a hero by ruling his own spirit. One man may show courage by doing the extraordinary, another by doing the ordinary. The question in every case is, how he does it. You will not deny that in the foregoing recital our hero showed a disposition to do the extraordinary, indeed, I cannot yet entirely vouch for him that he will not try it. Presumably it was upon this

you based your hope that he would become a real hero. Upon this I based my fear that he would become... a fool. So I have showed the same forbearance towards him that you have, from the beginning I had hopes of him, I have called him “hero,” in spite of the fact that several times he seemed on the point of wanting to make himself unworthy of this title. Therefore if I get him married, I tranquilly get him off my hands and gladly deliver him into the hands of his wife. By reason of the refractory disposition he previously displayed he has qualified himself to be put under a more special supervision. This work his wife will undertake, and so all will go well, for whenever he is tempted to want to be an extraordinary man his wife will at once orient him again, and thus in all quietness he will earn the name of hero, and his life will not be without exploits. Then I have nothing more to do with him, unless he might feel himself drawn to me in the same way that I shall feel myself drawn to him if he continues his heroic course. He will then see in me a friend, and our relationship will not be without significance. He will know how to put up with the fact that at that juncture you withdrew from him, and all the more because he might easily become a little suspicious if it should please you to take an interest in him. With a view to this situation I wish him good fortune, and to every married man I wish the same good fortune.

However, we have not yet got so far along as that, not by a long shot. So for a long time you can still hope — as long, that is to say, as I need to fear. For our hero is like most people and consequently has a certain propensity for the extraordinary; he is also a little ungrateful, and hence at this juncture he wants to try again his luck with the aestheticists before turning for help to the ethicist. He knows also how to gloss over his ingratitude, for he says, “The ethicist really did help me out of my confusion; the view of my activity which I owe to him still satisfies me entirely, the seriousness of it uplifts me. However, so far as my love is concerned, I surely might wish in

this respect to enjoy my freedom, to follow the promptings of my heart. Love has no liking for this seriousness, it demands the lightness and grace of aesthetics."

You see, I still may have trouble enough with him. It seems almost as though he had not entirely understood the foregoing experiences. He still continues to believe that the ethical lies outside the aesthetical, and this in spite of the fact that he himself has to admit that by the ethical view of it life acquired beauty. Well, we shall see. Just puff a little, and then I can get out of this situation all the misunderstandings I want.

Although you have never replied to my previous letter either verbally or in writing, you presumably remember its content, and will remember particularly how I there sought to show that, by means of the ethical, marriage is the aesthetic expression of love. So presumably you will forgive me for my self-confidence in believing that the thought I there developed, seeing that I made it fairly comprehensible to you, I shall easily be able, if need be, to explain to our hero. He had recourse to the aestheticists and left them no wiser as to what he should do, but rather as to what he should not do. For a while he was witness to the craftiness of a seducer, he listened to his indecent talk but has learned to despise his art, has learned to see through him, to see that he is a liar, a liar when he feigns love, when he pretends to feelings in which perhaps there once was truth when by them he belonged to another, to see that he deceives doubly, both her whom he would make believe that he cherishes such feelings, and her to whom they rightfully belong, that he is a liar when he makes himself believe that there is something beautiful in his lust. He has learned to despise the clever mockery which would make love a childish prank at which one could only smile. He has seen your favorite play, *The First Love*, by Scribe. He does not claim to have culture enough to appraise the play aesthetically, but he finds it unjust on the part of the poet to let Charles sink so low in the course

of eight years. He is ready to admit that such things may happen in real life, but he does not think that this is what one should learn from a poet. He finds that there is a contradiction in the play for the fact that it represents Emmeline as at once a high-flown fool and a really lovable girl — as Rinville at the first glance is at once convinced that she is, in spite of his prejudice against her. He finds that in view of this it is again an injustice to let Charles in the course of eight years become a depraved man. It seems to him that the play ought not to be a comedy but a tragedy. He finds that it is unjust of the poet to let Emmeline yield so frivolously to her misapprehension, forgive Rinville frivolously for deceiving her, forget Charles frivolously and thus to mock frivolously her own feelings, build frivolously her whole future upon her own frivolity, upon Rinville's frivolity, and upon the frivolity of Charles. He finds that the original Emmeline is indeed sentimental and high-flown, but the reformed Emmeline, the shrewd type, is a being far inferior in his eyes to the former notwithstanding all her imperfections.

He finds it inexcusable on the part of the poet to represent love as a prank it takes a man eight years to live into and half an hour to get out of, head over heels, without the slightest impression being left by this change. He was glad to observe that it was not exactly the men he most respects who laugh especially at such plays. For an instant the mockery made his blood run cold, but again he is sensible of the flood of feelings which arises in his breast, he is convinced that this pulsation is the life-principle of the soul, and that he who would suppress it is dead and doesn't need to have himself buried. For a little while he let himself be lulled by the mistrust of life which would teach him that everything is transitory, that time changes everything, that there is nothing one can venture to build upon and so conceive a plan for one's whole life. His indolence and cowardice found this talk thoroughly acceptable, it was a comfortable costume to assume,

and in men's eyes not unbecoming. However, he has examined this talk sharply, he has seen the hypocrite, the pleasure-lover who came in humble dress, the wolf in sheep's clothing, and he has learned to despise this talk. He has perceived that it is an insult and consequently is unfair to want to love a person for the obscure and not for the conscious elements in her nature, to want to love in such a way that one could think of the possibility that this love might cease and that one might then dare to say, "I can't help it. Feeling is not under a man's control." He has perceived that it is an insult and consequently is unfair to want to love with one side of the soul but not with the whole soul, to treat one's love as fractional quantity and yet take the whole love of another, to want to be to a certain degree a riddle and a secret. He has perceived that it would be unfair for him to have a hundred arms so that he might embrace many, he has only one bosom and wishes only for one whom he may embrace. He has perceived that it is an insult to want to attach oneself to another person in the way one attaches oneself to a finite and casual thing, conditionally, so that if later difficulties were to arise one could change one's attachment again. He does not believe that for a man who loves it is possible to change, unless it be for the better. And were this to come to pass, he believes in the power of the relationship to make it all right again. He recognizes that what love requires is like the Temple tribute, a holy tax which is paid in its own peculiar coin, and that one does not accept all the riches of the world as quittance for the most insignificant claim if the impress of the coinage is counterfeit.

Our hero, you see, is on the right path, he has lost faith in the hardened common sense of the aestheticists and in their obscure feelings which are supposed to be too delicate to be expressed as duty. He has accepted the ethicist's declaration that it is the duty of every man to marry; he has understood this correctly, to the effect that he does not sin who fails to marry, except in so far as he himself is to blame for it, since in that case he

offends against the universal-human which is set before him too as a task which must be realized, but that he who marries realizes the universal. Further than this the ethicist cannot bring him, for as we have said the ethical is always the abstract; it can only tell him what the universal is. So in this instance it cannot possibly tell him whom he ought to marry. For that would require a precise acquaintance with all his aesthetic qualifications; but this the ethicist does not possess, and even if he did possess it, he would nevertheless beware of demolishing his own theories by undertaking to make the choice for him. So when he himself has chosen, the ethical will consecrate the choice and ennoble his love; and to a certain degree it will also be helpful in choosing, since it will save him from a superstitious faith in the accidental, for a merely aesthetic choice is really an indefinite choice; and unconsciously the ethical helps every man, but since this assistance is unconscious it has the semblance of being a disparagement of life, reflecting its wretchedness, instead of which it is an enhancement of life, reflecting its divine character.

“A man with such excellent principles,” you say, “one surely may trust to walk alone and may venture to expect great things of him.” I am of the same opinion and hope that his principles are so firm that they will not be shaken by your derision. However, there is still a sharp corner we have to turn before we are safe in port. For our hero has heard a man for whose judgment he has great respect express the opinion that in tying oneself by a marriage to a person for one’s whole life one must be cautious in making the choice; it must be an extraordinary girl who, precisely by reason of her extraordinary qualities, would provide security for his whole future. Might you not now feel inclined to hope a little while longer for our hero? At all events I fear for him.

Let us take up this question in a thorough way. You, in fact, believe that in the solitary stillness of the forest there dwells a nymph, a being, a

maiden. Very well then, this nymph, being, maiden, leaves her solitude, makes her appearance in Copenhagen, or like Kaspar Hauser in Nürnberg — the place makes no difference — suffice it to say, she makes her appearance. Believe me, there will be a wooing! I leave it to you to develop this theme in detail. You can write a romance entitled, "The Nymph, the Being, the Maiden in the Solitude of the Forest," *ad modum* the celebrated romance found in all lending libraries, "The Urn in the Solitary Dale." She has made her appearance, and our hero has become the lucky man, she has bestowed her love upon him. Might we agree to this? I have no objection — I, in fact, am married. You, on the other hand, would perhaps feel offended that such a common everyday person was preferred before you. But since you are interested in my client, and since this is the only way left for him to become a hero in your eyes, do give your consent. Let us now see if his love and his marriage became beautiful. The gist of his love and of his marriage consisted in the fact that she was the one only girl of her kind in the whole world. So the point lay in her difference. For such good fortune no equal could be found in the whole world, and precisely in this his good fortune consisted. It is possible he may be unwilling to marry her. For would it not be a degradation of such a love to give expression to it in so common and vulgar a form as marriage? Would it not be presumptuous to require that two such lovers should enter the great company of wedded people, so that in a certain sense there would be nothing more to say about them than about every wedded couple, that they were married? This you will perhaps find quite right, and the only objection you would have to make would be that it is wrong for such a clown as my hero to run off with such a maiden. If on the other hand, he had been an extraordinary man, like you for example, or just as extraordinary a man as she was a girl, then it would be all right, and their love relationship the most perfect that could be imagined.

Our hero has got himself into a critical position. About the girl there is only one opinion, she is an extraordinary girl. I myself, married man that I am, say with Donna Clara, "In this case rumor has not said too much, she is a marvelous maiden, the beautiful Preciosa." It is so tempting to lose sight of the ordinary and to float in the airy medium of the fairy tale. And yet he has himself perceived the beauty in marriage. What is it that marriage does? Does it deprive him of anything, does it take away from her any beauty, does it abolish one single difference? By no means. But it shows to him all these things as accidents so long as marriage is external to him, and only when he gives to the difference the universal expression is he in secure possession of it. The ethical teaches him that this relationship is the absolute. For the relationship is the ordinary and universal. It deprives him of the vain joy of being the extraordinary in order to give him the true joy of being the universal. It brings him into harmony with existence as a whole, teaching him to rejoice in this; for as the exception, as the extraordinary, he is in conflict, and since what constitutes the extraordinary is in this instance his good fortune, he must be conscious of his existence as a vexation to the ordinary or universal, provided there was truth in his good fortune, and after all, it might be in truth a misfortune to be fortunate in such a way that one's good fortune, viewed essentially, was different from that of others. In this way he wins the accidental beauty and loses the true beauty. This he will perceive, and he will again return to the maxim of the ethicist that it is the duty of every man to marry, and he will see that he has not only truth but beauty too on his side. Suppose, then, he gets that marvelous maiden. He will not be enamored of the differences. He will rejoice right heartily in her beauty, in her charm, in the wealth of intelligence and the warmth of feeling she possesses, he will count himself fortunate, but essentially he will say, "I am not different from any other married man, for the relationship is the absolute." Suppose he gets a less gifted girl. He will be joyful in his good

fortune, for he will say, “Even though she stands far beneath others, essentially she makes me just as happy, for the relationship is the absolute.” He will not fail to appreciate the importance of the differences, for just as he perceived that there was no abstract calling but that every man has his, so he will perceive that there is no abstract marriage. Ethics tells him merely that he shall marry; it does not tell him with whom. Ethics explains *[forklarer]* to him the universal in the difference, and he transfigures *[forklarer]* the difference into the universal.

So the ethical view of marriage has several advantages over every aesthetic interpretation of love. It elucidates the universal, not the accidental. It does not show how a couple of very singular people with extraordinary traits might become happy, but how every married couple may become so. It regards the relationship as the absolute, and so does not apprehend the differences as guarantees but comprehends them as tasks. It regards the relationship as the absolute and hence beholds love with a view to its beauty, that is, its freedom; it understands historical beauty.

So our hero lives by his work, his work is at the same time his calling, hence he works with pleasure. The fact that it is his calling brings him into association with other men, and in performing his job he accomplishes what he could wish to accomplish in the world. He is married, contented with his home, and time passes swiftly for him, he cannot comprehend how time might be a burden to a man or be an enemy of his happiness; on the contrary, time appears to him a true blessing. He admits that in this respect he owes a great deal to his wife. It is true (I forgot to mention it) there was a misunderstanding about the nymph from the forest, he did not become the fortunate man, he had to content himself with a girl who was like most girls, in the same sense that he as a man is like most people. However, he is very joyous for all that; indeed, he once confided to me that he thought it pretty lucky he didn’t get the marvelous maiden, the task would perhaps have been

too great for him; when, before one begins, everything is so perfect, it is so easy to do harm. Now, on the contrary, he is full of courage and confidence and hope, he is perfectly enthusiastic, he says fervently, “The relationship after all is the absolute.” More firmly than of anything else he is convinced that the relationship will have power to develop this ordinary girl into everything great and beautiful; his wife in all humility is of the same opinion. Yea, my young friend, the way of the world is strange; I did not in the least believe that there existed in the world a marvelous maiden such as you talk about, and now I am ashamed almost of my incredulity, for this ordinary girl with her great faith is a marvelous maiden, and her faith is more precious than gold or green forests. In one respect I remain in my old unbelief that such a marvelous maiden is to be found in the solitude of the forest.

My hero (or would you deny him the right to this appellation? A courage which dares to believe in transforming an ordinary girl into a marvelous maiden, does this not seem to you the true heroic courage?) — my hero thanks his wife particularly for the fact that time has acquired for him such a beautiful significance, and this he ascribes in a certain degree to marriage — and in that he and I, we two married men, are in perfect agreement. In case he had got that nymph from the forest and had not married, he then would have been apprehensive that their love would flare up in particular moments of singular beauty, which would leave behind them vapid intervals. They would then perhaps have wished to see one another only when the sight might be very significant; if several times they were disappointed in this expectation, he is then apprehensive that the whole relationship had gradually resolved itself into nothing. On the other hand, the humble marriage which made it a duty to see one another daily, for richer for poorer, had spread over the whole relationship an equality and evenness which made it so delicious to him. The prosaic marriage had in its

lowly incognito concealed a poet which not only glorified life on particular occasions but was always at hand and with his music thrilled even the poorer hours.

In this respect I share completely my hero’s opinion of marriage, and here it clearly shows its superiority, not only over the single life but over every merely erotic union. The latter consideration my new friend has this instant set forth, only the former, therefore, I will stress with a few words. One may be as intelligent as you please, one may be industrious, one may be enthusiastic for an idea, there come moments, nevertheless, when time becomes a bit long. You so often deride the other sex. I have often admonished you to desist. Regard, if you will, a young girl as an incomplete being; I should like to say to you, however, “My good wise man, go to the ant and become wise, learn from a girl how to make time pass, for in this she has an innate virtuosity.” Perhaps she has no conception such as a man has of severe and persistent labor, but she is never idle, is always occupied, time is never long for her. I can speak of this from experience. It befalls me at times (more rarely now because I try to resist it, believing as I do that it is a husband’s duty to be pretty much of an even age with his wife) — at times it befalls me that I sit and subside into myself. I have attended to my work, I have no desire for any diversion, something melancholy in my temperament acquires ascendency over me; I become very many years older than I really am, I become almost a stranger to my domestic life, I can see that it is beautiful, but I look at it with unaccustomed eyes, it seems to me as if I were an old man, my wife a younger sister happily married, in whose house I now sit. At such hours time naturally becomes long for me. Now if my wife were a man, it would perhaps be the same with her, and we would perhaps both of us come to a standstill; but she is a woman and stands on good terms with time. Is it a perfection on the part of a woman, this secret rapport with time? Is it an imperfection? Is it because she is a more earthly

being than man? Or because she has more eternity within her? It is for you to make answer. You are a philosophic mind.

When I am sitting thus lost and abandoned and then look at my wife walking about the room lightly and beautifully, always occupied, always with something to attend to, my eye involuntarily follows her movements, I participate in all that she undertakes, and it ends with my being again reconciled with time, finding that again time acquires significance for me, that the instant again moves swiftly. What is it she has in hand? Well, with all the will in the world I cannot say, not if it were to cost me my life, it remains a riddle to me. What it is to work far into the night, to be so tired that I am almost unable to arise from my chair, what it is to think, what it is to be so completely empty of thoughts that it is not possible to get the least thing through my head, that I know; what it is to be lazy I know also, but this way of being occupied as my wife is remains a riddle to me. She is never tired and yet never inactive, it is as though her occupation were a game, a dance, as though to play were her occupation. What is it she fills up the time with? For you can well understand that it naturally is not with acquired dexterities, not with these tomfooleries in which bachelors generally excel. And speaking of bachelors, I see with my mind's eye that your youth is coming to an end; you ought to be prepared to fill in the idle moments, you should learn to handle the flute or try to invent an ingenious instrument for scraping your pipe. However, I don't like to think of such things, I soon tire of thinking of them, I return to my wife, I never grow tired of looking at her. What she has in hand I cannot explain, but she does it all with a charm, with a grace, with an indescribable ease, straight away, without ceremony, as a bird sings its aria, and I believe also that it is with a bird's labor her occupation can best be compared, and yet her arts seem to me true witchery. In this respect she is my absolute refuge. So when I sit in my study, when I become tired, when time becomes long for me, I steal into

the parlor, I sit down in a corner, I say not a word for fear of disturbing her in her job, for though it looks like a game it is accomplished with a dignity, a decorum which inspires respect, and she is very far from being, as you say of Mrs. Hansen, a busybody who buzzes about and by her buzzing spreads abroad in the parlor the matrimonial music.

Yes, my good wise man, it is incredible what innate virtuosity a woman possesses; she explains in the most interesting and beautiful way the problem which has cost many a philosopher his reason, the problem of time. A problem upon which in vain one seeks enlightenment from many philosophers with all their prolixity, she explains without ado at any time of the day. As she explains this problem, so she explains many others in a way which arouses the profoundest admiration. Although I am not a husband of many years' standing I believe I could write a whole book about this. That I will not do, but I will recount to you a story which to me has been very suggestive. Somewhere in Holland there lived a learned man, he was an orientalist and was married. One day he did not come to the midday meal, although he was called. His wife waits longingly, looking at the food, and the longer this lasts the less she can explain his failure to appear. Finally she resolves to go over to his room and exhort him to come. There he sits alone in his work-room, there is nobody with him. He is absorbed in his oriental studies. I can picture it to myself. She has bent over him, laid her arm about his shoulders, peered down at the book, thereupon looked at him and said, "Dear friend, why do you not come over to eat?" The learned man perhaps has hardly had time to take account of what was said, but looking at his wife he presumably replied, "Well, my girl, there can be no question of dinner, here is a vocalization I have never seen before, I have often seen the passage quoted, but never like this, and yet my edition is an excellent Dutch edition. Look at this dot here! It is enough to drive one mad." I can imagine that his wife looked at him, half-smiling, half-deprecating that such a little

dot should disturb the domestic order, and the report recounts that she replied, “Is that anything to take so much to heart? It is not worth wasting one’s breath on it.” No sooner said than done. She blows, and behold the vocalization disappears, for this remarkable dot was a grain of snuff. Joyfully the scholar hastens to the dinner table, joyful at the fact that the vocalization had disappeared, still more joyful in his wife.

Do I need to draw out the moral from this story? If that scholar had not been married, he perhaps would have gone crazy, perhaps he would have taken several orientalists with him, for I doubt not that he would have raised a terrible alarm in the literary organs. You see why I say that one ought to live on good terms with the other sex, for (be it said between us) a young girl explains everything and doesn’t give a fig for the whole consistory, and if a man is on good terms with her he delights in her information, but if not, she makes sport of him. But this story teaches also in what way one is to live on good terms with her. If that scholar had not been married, if he had been an aestheticist who had in his power all the requisites, perhaps then he would have become the lucky man to whom that marvelous maiden wished to belong. He would not have married, their sentiments were too superior for that. He would have built her a palace and would have spared no refinement to make her life rich in enjoyment, he would have visited her in her castle, for so she wished it to be; with erotic coquetry he would have made his way to her on foot while his valets followed him in a carriage, bringing rich and costly gifts. So, then, in the course of his oriental studies he stumbled upon that remarkable vocalization. He would have stared at it without being able to explain it. The moment, however, was come when he should make his visit to the ladylove. He would have cast this care aside, for how could he becomingly make a visit to a ladylove with thoughts of anything else but of her charms and of his own love? He would have assumed an air of the utmost amiability, he would have been more

fascinating than ever, and would have pleased her beyond all measure because in his voice there was a distant resonance of many passions, because out of despondency he had to contend for cheerfulness. But when at dawn he left her, when he had thrown her the last kiss and then sat in his carriage, his brow was darkened. He arrived home, the shutters were closed in his study, the lamps lit, he would not be undressed but sat and stared at the dot he could not explain. He had indeed a girl whom he loved, yea, perhaps adored, but he visited her only when his soul was rich and strong, but he had no helpmeet who came in and called him at midday, no wife who could blow the dot away.

In general woman has an innate talent, a primitive gift and an absolute virtuosity for explaining finiteness. When man was created he stood there as the master and lord of all nature; nature's pomp and splendor, the entire wealth of finiteness awaited only his beck and call, but he did not comprehend what he was to do with it all. He looked at it, but it was as though at the glance of the spirit everything vanished, he felt as though if he were to move he would with one step be beyond it all. Thus he stood, an imposing figure, thoughtfully absorbed in himself, and yet comic, for one must indeed smile at this rich man who did not know how to use his wealth — but also tragic, for he could not use it. Then was woman created. She was in no embarrassment, she knew at once how one had to handle this affair; without fuss, without preparation, she was ready at once to begin. This was the first comfort bestowed upon man. She drew near to him, humble as a child, joyful as a child, pensive as a child. She wanted only to be a comfort to him, to make up for his lack (a lack which she did not comprehend, having no suspicion that she was supplying it), to abbreviate for him the intervals. And, lo, her humble comfort became life's richest joy, her innocent pastimes life's most beautiful adornment, her childish play life's deepest meaning.

A woman comprehends finiteness, she understands it from the bottom up, therefore she is beauteous (essentially regarded, every woman is beauteous), therefore she is charming (and that no man is), therefore she is happy (happy as no man is or should be), therefore she is in harmony with existence (as no man is or should be). Therefore one may say that her life is happier than that of man; for finiteness can perhaps make a human being happy, infinitude as such can never do so. She is more perfect than man, for surely one who can explain something is more perfect than one who is in pursuit of an explanation. Woman explains finiteness, man is in chase of infinitude. So it should be, and each has one's own pain; for woman bears children with pain, but man conceives ideas with pain, and woman does not have to know the anguish of doubt or the torment of despair, she is not obliged to stand outside the idea, but she has it at secondhand. But because woman thus explains finiteness she is man's deepest life, but a life which should always be concealed and hidden as the root of life always is. For this reason I hate all talk about the emancipation of woman. God forbid that ever it may come to pass. I cannot tell you with what pain this thought is able to pierce my heart, nor what passionate exasperation, what hate I feel toward everyone who gives vent to such talk. It is my comfort that those who proclaim such wisdom are not as wise as serpents but are for the most part blockheads whose nonsense can do no harm. Yea, in case the serpent were able to make her believe this, able to tempt her with the apparently delectable fruit, in case this contagion were to spread, in case it were to penetrate also to her whom I love, my wife, my joy, my refuge, my life's very root, then indeed would my courage be broken, then the passion of freedom in my soul would be quenched, then I know well what I would do, I would sit down in the marketplace and weep, weep like that artist whose work had been destroyed and who did not even remember what he himself had painted.

But this will not come to pass; it must not and cannot. Let evil spirits attempt it, or stupid men who have no faintest notion of what it is to be a man, either of the greatness or the lowliness of it, no notion of the perfection of woman in her imperfection. Might there be one single woman simple and vain and pitiable enough to believe that in man's category she might be more perfect than man, and not to perceive that her loss would be irreparable? No base seducer could think out a more dangerous doctrine for woman, for once he has made her believe this she is entirely in his power, at the mercy of his will, she can be nothing for man except a prey to his whims, whereas as woman she can be everything for him. But the poor wretches know not what they do, they are not able to be men, and instead of learning to be that they would ruin woman and would be united with her on terms of remaining what they were, half-men, woman being promoted to the same paltry condition. I remember reading once a rather clever satire upon the emancipation of woman. The author dwelt especially upon the form of dress, which in this case he thought ought to be alike for men and women. Imagine such an abomination! It seemed to me that the author had not conceived his task profoundly enough, that the contrasts he dwelt upon were not essentially relevant to the idea. For an instant I will venture to think the unseemliness of this, knowing that in doing so the seemliness and beauty will be manifest in all their truth. What is more beautiful than a woman's plentiful hair, than her abundant tresses? And yet the Scripture says that this is a token of her imperfection and adduces several reasons for this. And is it not so? Look at her when she bows her head toward the earth, when the luxuriant braids almost touch the ground, and it looks as though they were tendrils of a flowering plant by which she was firmly attached to the earth. Does she not stand there as a more imperfect being than man who looks up to heaven and barely touches the earth? And yet this hair is her beauty, yea, it is her power too, for it is indeed by this, as the poet says, she

catches man, by this she takes man prisoner and binds him to the earth. I should like to say to such blockheads as preach emancipation, “Behold, there she stands in all her imperfection, a lowlier being than man; if you have the courage, clip the rich tresses, sheer asunder these heavy chains — and let her run like a crazy woman, like a criminal, a horror to men.”

Let man give up the claim to be the lord and master of nature, let him yield this place to woman, she is its mistress, it understands her, and she understands it, every hint of hers it follows. For this reason she is everything to man, for she bestows upon him finiteness, without her he is an unstable spirit, an unhappy creature who cannot find rest, has no abiding place. I have often had joy in viewing woman in this light; to me she is a symbol of the congregation, and the spirit is in great embarrassment when it has not a congregation to dwell in, and when it dwells in the congregation it is the spirit of the congregation. Hence it is, as I have already remarked, that the Scripture does not say that a maiden shall leave father and mother and shall cleave unto her husband (as might be expected, since the woman is in fact the weaker who seeks refuge in man); no, it says, “A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife,” for in so far as she gives him finiteness she is stronger than he. Therefore nothing can provide so beautiful an image of the congregation as does woman. If people would view the matter thus, I really believe that many prospects for the beautification of divine worship would be opened up. What bad taste it is in our chinches that the congregation, when it does not represent itself, is represented by the parish clerk or the bell ringer! It ought always to be represented by a woman.

In our church services the congregation has always failed to make upon me a truly salutary impression. And yet there was one year of my life when I came pretty close to my idealized conception. It was in one of our churches here in the city. The church itself attracted me greatly, the

clergyman whom I heard every Sunday was a right reverend personality, a unique figure, who knew how to bring out old and new from the experiences of an eventful life; he was perfectly in place in the pulpit. As a priest he satisfied completely my soul's ideal demand, he satisfied it as a figure, satisfied it as an orator. I was glad every Sunday to think that I was to go to hear him. But what increased my joy and made perfect for me the impression of divine worship in this church was another figure, an elderly woman, who likewise attended every Sunday. She used to come a little before the service began, and I likewise. Her personality was for me an image of the congregation, and thinking of her I forgot the disturbing impression of the parish clerk at the church door. She was a woman of a certain age, apparently about sixty years old, but was still beautiful, her features noble, her look full of a certain humble dignity, her countenance expressive of deep, pure, feminine character. She looked as if she had experienced much, not precisely stormy events, but as a mother who had borne life's burdens and yet had preserved and attained the ability to rejoice over the world. So when I saw her coming far down the aisle, when the sexton had met her at the church door and now as a servant was deferentially escorting her to her seat, then I knew she would also pass the pew where I sat. So when she went by I always rose and bowed to her. For me there was so much implied in this bow, it was as though I would beg her to include me in her supplications. She entered her pew, giving a kindly greeting to the sexton, she remained an instant on her feet, she bowed her head, held a handkerchief an instant before her eyes as she prayed — it would take a pithy preacher to make so strong and salutary an impression as did the solemnity of that venerable woman.

It sometimes came into my mind that perhaps I, too, was included in her prayer, for to woman it belongs essentially to pray for others. Think of her in whatever position of life you will, at whatever age, think of her in prayer,

and as a rule you will find her praying for others, for her parents, for her loved one, for her husband, for her children, always for others. To man it belongs essentially to pray for himself. He has his definite task, his definite place. The character of his resignation is therefore different; he strives even in prayer. He relinquishes the fulfillment of his wish, and what he prays for is strength to renounce it. Even when he wishes something this thought is constantly present. Woman's prayer is far more substantial, the character of her resignation is different. She prays for the fulfillment of her wish, she is resigned to the thought that she can do nothing about it, but for this reason she is also far more apt to pray for others than is man, for if he would pray for another, he essentially would pray that there might be granted him strength to bear and joyfully to triumph over the pain due to the fact that his wish was not fulfilled; but such a prayer of intercession is imperfect if regarded as intercession, though as a prayer for oneself it is true and right. In this respect man and woman march, as it were, in two ranks. First comes woman with her intercession, moving the Divinity, as it were, with her tears; then comes man with his prayer, bringing to a stop the first rank when it would fearfully betake itself to flight; he has a different tactic which always results in victory. This is due again to the fact that man is in pursuit of infinitude. If woman loses the fight, she must learn from man to pray, and yet intercession belongs to her so essentially that even in this case her intercession for man will be different from his own prayer. In a certain sense, therefore, woman is more believing than man, for woman believes that with God all things are possible; man believes that for God there is something impossible. Woman becomes more and more intense in her humble craving; man gives up more and more, until he finds the immovable point from which he cannot be expelled. This is due to the fact that it belongs essentially to man to have doubted, and all his wisdom will bear an impress of this.

The joy I derived from the beauty of divine worship in that church was, however, of short duration. In the course of the year that priest was transferred, the venerable matron, my pious mother I might almost call her, I saw no more. I often thought of her however. Later when I was married she often hovered before my mind. If the Church paid attention to such matters, our worship would surely gain in beauty and solemnity. Imagine yourself at a baptism where such a venerable woman stood beside the priest and said the Amen, instead of having the bell ringer bleat it out as he now does. Imagine yourself at a wedding where she assisted — would not this be beautiful? For who can give one so lofty an impression of the beauty of a prayer of intercession as such a woman?

But here I sit and preach, forgetting what I properly have to talk about, forgetting that it is to you I have to speak. This is due to the fact that my new friend has put you quite out of my mind. With him, you see, I would gladly talk about such things, for in the first place he is no mocker, and in the second place he is a married man, and only one who has an eye for the beauty of marriage will also be able to see the truth in my remarks.

So I return to our hero. This title he certainly deserves, but for all that I will not continue to use it henceforth, for I prefer another designation which is dearer to me, and with a sincere heart will call him my friend, as with joy I call myself his friend. You see then that life has provided him with "the article of luxury called a friend." You thought perhaps that I would pass over in silence the subject of friendship and its ethical validity, or rather that it would be impossible for me to introduce this subject, seeing that it has no ethical significance at all but falls entirely under aesthetical categories. You are perhaps surprised that wanting to mention this subject I mention it in this place; for friendship is in fact the first dream of youth, it is precisely in early youth the soul is so soft and romantic that it seeks friendship. It would have been more in place, you think, to speak about friendship before I let

my friend enter into the holy estate of matrimony. I might reply that as far as this goes it happened, strangely enough, to my friend that before he was married he had not felt himself drawn so strongly to any person that he could venture to characterize the relation as friendship. I might add that I am glad of this because I wanted to deal with friendship last, believing as I do that the ethical factor in it has not the same degree of validity as it has in marriage, and that in this fact precisely is to be seen its imperfection. This reply might appear inadequate in view of the fact that this situation on the part of my friend might be thought abnormal, and for this reason I am disposed to treat this subject a little more carefully.

You are an observer, you will therefore concede the justice of my observation that marked individual difference in character is indicated by considering whether the season of friendship falls in the period of very early youth or emerges only at a later age. Volatile natures have no difficulty in adjusting themselves to themselves, their self is from the very beginning current coin; so then trade begins at once. It is not so easy for the deeper natures to find themselves, and until they have found their self they cannot wish that anyone should offer them a friendship they cannot requite. Such natures are commonly absorbed in themselves, and they are observers — but an observer is no friend. So the situation might be explained if such were the case with my friend. However, he has been married. Now the question is whether there is something abnormal in the fact that friendship only appeared after this — for in the foregoing discussion we agreed that it was proper for friendship to come about in later years, but we did not speak of its relation to marriage. Let us here make use again of our common observation. We must now take into consideration a man's relation to the other sex. To those who at a very early age seek the relation of friendship it not rarely happens that when love begins to assert itself friendship fades completely. They discover that friendship was an imperfect form, break off

the earlier relationship and concentrate their whole soul exclusively upon love. Others have the opposite experience. Those who too early tasted the sweetness of love, relishing its joys in the intoxication of youth, acquired perhaps an erroneous impression of the other sex. They became perhaps unjust towards the other sex. By their frivolity they purchased perhaps costly experiences, perhaps believed in feelings within themselves which proved not to be durable, or they believed in feelings on the part of others which vanished like a dream. So they gave up love; it was both too little and too much for them, for they had encountered the dialectical difficulty in love without being able to solve it. They then chose friendship. Both of these formations may be regarded as abnormal. My friend is in neither of these situations. He had not made a youthful trial of friendship before he learned to know love, but neither had he harmed himself by enjoying too early the unripe fruit of love. In his love he found the deepest and most complete satisfaction, but precisely because he was thus absolutely set at rest, there now was opened up to him the possibility of a different relationship which in another way might acquire for him a profound and beautiful significance, for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. *A propos* of this he often remembers that there are trees which bear flowers after the fruit, so that both flowers and fruit are contemporary. With such a tree he compares his life.

But precisely because it was by and with his marriage he learned to see the beauty in having a friend or friends, he has not been for an instant perplexed as to how he ought to regard friendship, or in doubt that it loses its significance if one does not regard it ethically. The many experiences of his life had pretty much destroyed his faith in the aestheticists, but marriage had entirely eradicated every trace of this from his soul. So he felt no inclination to let himself be infatuated by aesthetical jugglery but acquiesced in the view of the ethicists.

In case my friend had not been of such a mind I might have found pleasure in referring him to you, for what you have to say on this topic is confused to such a degree that presumably he would have become completely perplexed at listening to you. You treat friendship as you do everything else. Your soul lacks ethical concentration to such a degree that one can get from you opposite explanations about the same thing, and you are in the highest degree a proof of the thesis that sentimentality and heartlessness are one and the same. Your view of friendship can best be likened to a witch's letter, and he who is willing to adopt this view must become crazy, as to a certain degree the one who propounds it must be assumed to be. If when you are incited to it one hears you propounding the divinity of love for young men, the beauty of encountering a kindred soul, one may be almost tempted to fear that your sentimentality will cost you your young life. At other times you talk in such a way that one would almost think you were an old practitioner who had become sufficiently acquainted with the emptiness and inanity of the world. "A friend," you say, "is an enigmatical thing; like fog he can be seen only at a distance, for only when one has become unfortunate does one remark that one *has had* a friend." It is easy to see that at the bottom of such a judgment upon friendship there lies a different requirement from that which you previously made. Previously you were talking about intellectual friendship, about the beauty of a spiritual erotic with a common enthusiasm for ideas; now you talk about a practical friendship on a business basis, about mutual assistance in the difficulties of earthly life. There is something true in both requirements, but if one cannot find for them a point of unity, it is doubtless best to conclude with your final result, that friendship is nonsense, a result which you deduce from each of your theses and from both in their reciprocal contradiction.

The absolute condition for friendship is agreement in a life view. If one has that, one will not be tempted to found one's friendship upon obscure feelings or upon inexplicable sympathies. Consequently, one will not experience these ludicrous reversals of one day having a friend and the next day having none. One will not fail to appreciate the importance of the inexplicable sympathies, for one is not in a stricter sense a friend of everybody who shares the same life view, but it is not alone upon the enigmatic factor of sympathy one has to count. A true friendship always requires consciousness of its motives and is thereby saved from being a vain enthusiasm.

The moral view in which friends are united must be a positive view. Thus my friend and I have a positive view in common. Therefore, when we look at one another we do not laugh like those augurs of the Roman story, on the contrary, we become serious. It was quite natural for the augurs to laugh, for their view of life was a negative one. You understand that very well, for it is one of your romantic wishes "to find a kindred soul with whom one could laugh at the whole thing." And you say that "the dreadful thing about life, the thing that almost terrifies one, is that hardly anybody notices how miserable it is, and of these few there is only a rare exception who knows how to retain his good humor and laugh at it all." If this longing of yours for a kindred soul is not satisfied, you know how to make the best of it, "for it is in conformity with the idea that there can only be one who laughs; such a one is the true pessimist; if there were more of that kind, it would be proof in fact that the world was not entirely miserable." Now your thought is in full swing and knows no limit. So you express the opinion that "even laughter is only an imperfect expression of the derision the world deserves. If it is to be perfect, one ought properly to be serious. It would be the most perfect mockery of the world if one who propounded the deepest truth was not an enthusiastic believer but a doubter. And this would not be

unthinkable, for no one can propound positive truth so admirably as a doubter, the only drawback is that he doesn't believe it. If he were a hypocrite, the mockery would rebound upon him; if he were a doubter, wishing perhaps to believe what he propounded, the mockery would be entirely objective, existence would be mocking itself through him; he propounded a doctrine which could explain everything, the whole race could repose in it securely, but this doctrine could not explain the founder of it. If a man were so shrewd as to be able to conceal the fact that he was mad, he would be able to make the whole world mad." Having such a notion of life, it is difficult to find a friend with a common moral view. Or have you perhaps found such a friend in the mystical society of Symparanekromenoi you sometimes talk about? Are you perhaps an association of friends who mutually regard one another as so shrewd that you know how to conceal your madness?

There lived in Greece a wise man; he enjoys the singular honor of being reckoned among the seven wise men if it is assumed that this number was fourteen. If my memory is not very much at fault, his name was Myson. An ancient author relates that he was a misanthrope. This author tells his story very briefly: "It is related of Myson that he was a misanthrope and that he laughed when he was alone. When someone asked why he did so, he replied, 'Just because I am alone.'" You see that you have a predecessor; you will aspire in vain to be admitted into the number of the seven wise men, even though this were defined as twenty-one, for Myson stands in your way. This, however, is of minor importance; but you yourself will perceive that he who laughs when he is alone cannot possibly have a friend, and that for two reasons: first, because he doesn't get a chance to laugh so long as the friend is present; secondly, because the friend must be afraid that he is only waiting for him to go in order that he may have a chance to laugh at him. Therefore, behold, the devil must be your friend! I might almost be

tempted to beg you to take this literally, for it is said also of the devil that he laughs when he is alone. It appears to me that there is something very disconsolate in such an isolation, and I cannot help thinking how dreadful it is when a man awakes to another life on the Day of Judgment and again stands there quite alone.

So then friendship requires a positive view of life. But a positive life view cannot be conceived unless it has in it an ethical factor. To be sure, in our age one often enough encounters people who have a system in which there is no place for the ethical. Let them have ten times a system, a life view they have not. In our age such a phenomenon can be explained readily; for as our age is preposterous in so many ways, so it *is* also in the fact that one is initiated into the greater mysteries before being initiated into the lesser ones. The ethical factor in the life view is thus the starting-point for friendship, and only when one regards friendship in this way does it acquire significance and beauty. If one stops with the sympathetic, the mysterious, then friendship will find its most perfect expression in the relation which exists between the social birds, the so-called lovebirds, whose solidarity is so heartfelt that the death of one is also the death of the other. Although in nature such a relation is beautiful, it is unseemly in the world of spirit. Agreement in a moral view is the constituent factor in friendship. If this is present, the friendship endures even though the friend dies, for the transfigured friend lives on in the other; if this ceases to be, friendship is over even though the friend goes on living.

If one regards friendship thus, one regards it ethically and therefore with a view to its beauty. It thus acquires both significance and beauty. Do I have to cite an authority on my side against you? Very well, then! How did Aristotle interpret friendship? Did he not make this the starting-point for his whole ethical view of life? For with friendship, he says, the concepts of justice are so broadened that they coalesce with it. He bases the concept of

justice upon the idea of friendship. His category is thus in a certain sense more perfect than the modern view which bases justice upon duty, the abstract categorical — he bases it upon the social sense. One easily sees from this that for Aristotle the idea of the state becomes the highest idea — but this in turn is the imperfection in his category.

However, I shall not venture to enter into such investigations as the relation between the Aristotelian and the Kantian interpretation of the ethical. I cited Aristotle only to remind you that he too perceived that friendship contributes to help one ethically in gaining reality.

He who regards friendship ethically sees it as a duty. I might therefore say that it is every man's duty to have a friend. However, I prefer to use another expression which exhibits the ethical element in friendship and in everything else which was dealt with in the foregoing discussion, and at the same time emphasizes sharply the difference between the ethical and the aesthetical: I say that it is every man's duty to become revealed. The Scripture teaches that every man must die, and then comes the Judgment when everything shall be revealed. Ethics says that it is the significance of life and of reality that every man become revealed. So if he is not, the revelation will appear as a punishment. The aestheticist, on the contrary, will not attribute significance to reality, he remains constantly concealed, because, however frequently and however much he gives himself up to the world, he never does it totally, there always remains something that he keeps back; if he were to do it totally, he would be doing it ethically. But this thing of playing hide and seek always avenges itself, and of course it does so by the fact that one becomes enigmatical to oneself. Hence it is that all mystics, when they do not recognize the claim of reality upon every man that he become revealed, stumble upon difficulties and terrors which no one else knows of. It is as though they discovered an entirely different world, as

though their nature was reduplicated in itself. He who will not contend with realities gets phantoms to fight with.

Herewith I am through for the present. To propound a doctrine of morals was never my intention. What I wanted to do was to show how the ethical, in the regions which border on the aesthetical, is so far from depriving life of its beauty that it bestows beauty upon it. It affords peace, assurance, and security, for it calls to us constantly: *quod petis, hic est.* It saves from every vain enthusiasm which would enfeeble the soul and bestows upon it health and strength. It teaches one not to overvalue the adventitious or to deify fortune. It teaches one to be joyful in good fortune (and even this the aestheticist is not able to do), for good fortune merely as such is an endless relativity; it teaches one to be joyful in misfortune.

Regard what I have written as of no importance, regard it as notes appended to Balle's "Lesson-Book" — that is of no consequence; what I have said nevertheless has an authority which I hope you will respect. Or might it seem to you perhaps that I have wrongfully wished to usurp authority, that I have improperly confounded my official station with this litigation, behaving as a judge, not as a party to it? I cheerfully relinquish every pretension, I am not even a party in this dispute with you; for while I willingly admit that aesthetics might well give you power of attorney to appear in its behalf, I am far from ascribing to myself enough importance to appear with power of attorney for ethics. I am nothing more than a witness, and it was only in this sense I expressed the opinion that this letter has a certain authority, for he who speaks of what he has experienced always speaks with authority. I am only a witness, and here you have my declaration *in optima forma.*

I perform my duties as judge assessor, I am glad to have such a calling, I believe it is in keeping with my faculties and with my whole personality, I know that it makes demands upon my powers. I seek to fit myself for it

more and more, and in doing so I feel that I am developing myself more and more. I love my wife and am happy in my home; I hear my wife’s lullaby, and it appears to me more beautiful than any other song — without my having to believe that she is a singer. I hear the cry of the little one, and to my ear it is not inharmonious; I see his elder brother growing up and being promoted in school, I contemplate his future joyfully and confidently — not impatiently, for I have plenty of time to wait, and this waiting is in itself a joy to me. My work has importance for me, and I believe that to a certain degree it has also for others, even though I cannot define and exactly measure its importance. I feel joy in the fact that the personal life of others has importance for me, and I desire and hope that mine also may have importance for those with whom in my whole view of life I am in sympathy. I love my fatherland, and I cannot well imagine that I could thrive in any other land. I love my mother tongue which liberates my thought, I find that what I have to say in the world I can capitally express in this tongue. Thus my life has significance for me, so much so that I feel joyful and content with it. With all that, I live at the same time a higher life, and when sometimes it occurs that I inhale and infuse this higher life in the respiration of my earthly and domestic life, I count myself blessed, and art and grace coalesce before me. Thus I love existence because it is beautiful and hope for an existence still more beautiful.

Here you have my declaration as a witness. If I could be dubious whether it was proper to make this deposition, it would be out of consideration for you, for I am almost afraid that it may hurt you to hear that life in its simplicity may be so beautiful. Accept, nevertheless, my testimony; let it cause you a little pain, but may it also have a joyful effect upon you; it has one quality which your life unfortunately lacks — trustworthiness. You can build upon it securely.

Lately I have often talked with my wife about you. She is really very much attached to you. I hardly need to say this, however, for you have many gifts for pleasing when you want to, but you have still more eyes for observing whether you succeed. Her feeling for you has my entire approval. I do not readily become jealous, and in my case this would be inexcusable — not because I am too proud (as you think a man ought to be, proud enough, as you say, "to be able to be quit at once with thanks"), but because my wife is too lovable for that. I am not afraid. I believe that in this respect I dare say that even Scribe would despair over our prosaic marriage, for I believe that even for him it would be impossible to make it poetic. That he has extraordinary powers and talents I do not deny; that according to my notion he abuses them I do not deny either. Does he not do everything to make young women believe that the assured love of marriage is not enough to make life poetic, that marriage would be intolerable if one could not count upon little love affairs alongside of it? Does he not represent that a woman even though she defiles herself and her marriage by a culpable love still continues to be lovable? Does he not hint obscurely that, since generally it is by an accident such a relationship is discovered, a person in real life may hope that when she has added her own slyness to what she has learned from the heroine in his plays she will succeed in remaining concealed all her life? Does he not seek in every way to alarm husbands, does he not take the most respected women against whom no one would dare to harbor the least suspicion and represent that they are defiled by a secret guilt? Does he not show over and over again how vain the best means of defending marriage really are, how vain it is for a man to repose infinite confidence in his wife and trust her above all things? And in spite of this Scribe is pleased to say that every husband is only a sluggish and drowsy marmot, an imperfect being who is himself to blame for his wife going astray. I wonder if Scribe is so modest as to assume that nobody learns

anything from his plays, for otherwise he must perceive that every married man must learn at once to discover that his position is anything but secure and peaceful, indeed that no police spy can lead such a restless and sleepless life as he is compelled to lead — unless he will be reassured by Scribe's consolation and himself seek a diversion like that of his wife, concluding that marriage exists for the sake of divesting the union with others of every tiresome appearance of innocence and making it quite interesting.

However, I leave Scribe alone, I am not capable of contending with him, but all the same I sometimes think with a certain pride that I, a humble and insignificant man, give the lie to the great writer Scribe by my marriage. Perhaps this pride is only beggar's pride, perhaps I am so fortunate because I am an ordinary man, an outsider to poetry.

So my wife is attached to you, and in this respect I am in sympathy with her feelings, all the more because I believe that her liking for you is due in part to the fact that she sees your weaknesses. She sees very clearly that what you lack is a certain degree of womanliness. You are too proud to be able to devote yourself to anyone. This pride does not tempt her in the least, for she regards the ability to devote oneself as the sign of true greatness. You perhaps will not believe it, but I assure you that I actually have to plead your cause against her. She affirms that in your pride you appraise all men and reject them. I try to explain that perhaps it is not quite as she thinks, that you reject men in an infinite sense, that the restlessness with which your soul aspires after the infinite makes you unfair to men. *That* she will not understand, and I can well comprehend it, for when one is so easily contented as she is (and how easily contented she is you can see from this fact among others, that she feels herself indescribably fortunate in being united to me) it is difficult to avoid condemning you. So my marriage too has its conflict, and in a way you are responsible for it. We shall get through

that all right, and I have only to wish that to a married couple you may never become an occasion of a different sort of strife. You might, however, contribute a little to settle this strife between my wife and me. Do not think that I want to insinuate myself into your secrets, but I have just one question I would put to you, which I believe you can answer without encroaching on your rights. Answer me honestly and without circumlocution: do you really laugh when you are alone? You know what I mean. I do not ask whether it sometimes or even frequently occurs to you to laugh when you are alone, but whether you take satisfaction in this lonely laughter. For if not, then I have won and I shall surely be able to convince my wife.

Now whether you really do spend your time when you are alone by laughing I do not know, but at all events that appears to me a way of wanting to be a little more than queer; for it may be that your life has developed in a way which prompts you to feel the need of solitude, but not, so far as I can judge, in order to laugh. Even the most cursory observation shows that your life is planned on an uncommon scale. You do not seem by any means to find satisfaction in following the highways but rather in going your own gait. One can easily forgive a young man for a certain romanticism; it is another matter when it gets the upper hand to such a degree that it would pass itself off as the normal and the real. One owes it to a man who has thus gone astray to cry out to him, "*Respice finem*" [consider the end], and to explain that the word *finem* does not mean death (for even that is not the hardest problem for a man), but that it means life, that there comes an instant when it is a question of really beginning to live, and that it is a perilous thing to have so dispersed oneself that it becomes a matter of the greatest difficulty to collect oneself, yea, that this has to be done with such speed and haste that one cannot get everything together and consequently, instead of being an extraordinary man, one ends by being a defective specimen of humanity.

In the Middle Ages one went about it another way: one abruptly broke off life's regular development and went into a monastery. The faultiness of this step did not, of course, consist in the fact of entering the monastery but in the erroneous conceptions associated with it. For my part, I can very well reconcile myself to the fact that a man forms this resolution, indeed, I am able to regard it as very pretty; but on the other hand I require of him that he be clear about what this means. In the Middle Ages they thought that in choosing the cloister a man chose the extraordinary and himself became an extraordinary man; from the elevation of the monastery one looked down proudly, almost compassionately, upon the ordinary men. So it was no wonder that people entered the monasteries in droves when at so cheap a price one could become an extraordinary man! But the gods do not sell the extraordinary at a bargain price. If the men who retired from active life had been honest and sincere with themselves and with others, above all if they had loved the thing of being a man, if they had felt with enthusiasm all the beauty implied in this, if their heart had not been unacquainted with a genuine and profound feeling for humanity, they too would perhaps have retired to the solitude of the cloister, but they would not have prided themselves foolishly upon being extraordinary men, except in the sense that they were less perfect than others; they would not have looked down condescendingly upon the ordinary men but would have contemplated them sympathetically, feeling a melancholy joy in the fact that these men had succeeded in performing the beautiful and the great things of which they were not capable.

In our age the monastic life has fallen considerably in price, so one rarely sees a man who breaks with the whole of existence, with the whole universal-human. On the other hand, if one has a fairly close acquaintance with men, one will sometimes encounter in a particular individual an erroneous doctrine which vividly recalls the monastic theory. For the sake

of regularity I will here pronounce at once my view of what an extraordinary man is. The truly extraordinary man is the truly ordinary man. The more of the universal-human an individual is able to realize in his life, the more extraordinary he is. The less of the universal he is able to take up into his life, the more imperfect he is. He is then an extraordinary man to be sure, but not in a good sense.

If, then, a man who is desirous of realizing the task which is assigned to every man, the task of expressing the universal-human in his individual life, were to stumble upon difficulties, if it seems that there is something of the universal which he is not able to take up into his life — what then does he do? In case his head is haunted by the monastic theories, or by an aesthetic view which is quite analogous to them, he is then joyful, from the first instant he feels haughtily that he is an exception, an extraordinary man, he is proud of it — just as childishly as if a nightingale which had acquired a red feather in its wing were to rejoice in the fact that no other nightingale had the like of it. If, on the other hand, his soul is ennobled by love for the universal, if he loves the life of men in this world — what then does he do?

He deliberates whether and in how far this is true. A man may be to blame for this imperfection, or he may have it without blame, but it may be true that he is unable to realize the universal. If men in general were more conscious of themselves, many more perhaps would come to this conclusion. He will know also that indolence and cowardice may make a man believe such a thing, and that he can reduce the pain to an insignificance by transforming the universal into the particular and conserving an abstract possibility in relation to the universal. For in fact the universal exists nowhere as such, and it depends upon me, upon my energy of consciousness, whether in the particular I will see the universal or merely the particular.

Perhaps such a deliberation will not seem to him sufficient, he will venture to make an experiment. He will easily perceive that in case the experiment leads him to the same result, the truth will be impressed upon him all the more emphatically, and, if he would coddle himself, it would be best perhaps for him to desist, since he will have to wince more than ever. He will know that no particular is the universal. So if he would not delude himself, he will transform the particular into the universal. He will see in the particular much more than is contained in it as such: for him it is the universal. He will assist the particular by giving it the importance of the universal. If he notices that the experiment is not succeeding, he will have arranged everything in such a way that it is not the particular which wounds him but the universal. He will be on his guard not to let any confusion take place, lest he be wounded by the particular, for its wound will be too light for him and he will love himself too earnestly to count it of the greatest consequence to him that he get a light wound; he will love the universal too sincerely to wish to substitute the particular for it with the aim of escaping unscathed. He will be on his guard not to smile at the impotent reaction of the particular, will take care not to view the situation light-mindedly, even if the particular as such tempts him to do so; he will not allow himself to be disturbed by the strange misunderstanding that the particular has in him a greater friend than it has in itself. When he has done this he will calmly advance to meet the pain — although his mind is shaken, he does not waver.

Now if it happens that the universal which he is unable to realize is precisely that for which he was desirous, then if he is a magnanimous man he will in a sense rejoice at this. He will then say, “I have fought under the most unfavorable conditions. I have fought against the particular, I have set my desire upon the side of the enemy; to make the thing complete I have transformed the particular into the universal. It is true that all this will make

the defeat harder for me, but it will also strengthen my consciousness, it will give it energy and clarity."

So at this point he has emancipated himself from the universal. He will not for an instant be in any obscurity about what such a step signifies, for it was really he himself who made the defeat complete and gave it significance; for he knew where he was vulnerable and how, and he inflicted upon himself the wound which the particular, as such, was not capable of inflicting. So he will be convinced that there is something of the universal which he is not able to realize. With this conviction, however, he is not through with the thing, for it will engender a profound sorrow in his soul. He will rejoice over the others to whom it was granted to accomplish this thing, he will perhaps perceive better than they how beautiful it is, but he himself will sorrow, not in a cowardly and despondent spirit, but deeply and frankly, for he will say, "I love the universal, nevertheless. If it was the happy lot of the others to bear witness to the universal by the fact that they realized it, well then, I bear witness to it by my sorrow." And this sorrow is beautiful, is itself an expression of the universal-human, a movement of its heart within him, and it will bring about his reconciliation with it.

With this conviction which he won he is not through with the matter, for he will feel that he has laid upon himself a great responsibility. "At this point," he says, "I have put myself outside the universal, I have deprived myself of the guidance, the security and tranquility which the universal gives, I stand alone, without sympathy, I am an exception." But he will not become cowardly and disconsolate, he will go his lonely way with confidence, he has indeed produced the proof of the rightness of what he did, he has his pain. He will not be in any obscurity with regard to this step, he possesses a deposition which he can produce any moment; no alarm can confuse it for him, no absence of mind; though he were to wake up in the middle of the night, he will instantly be able to render an account of

everything. He will feel that the upbringing he is subjected to is hard, for the universal is a severe master when one has it outside of him, it constantly holds over him the sword of justice and says, "Why wilt thou be outside?" And even though a man says, "It is not my fault," it ascribes the blame to him nevertheless, and requires itself of him. So he will sometimes return to the same point, producing the proof again and again, and will then cheerfully go further. He reposes in the conviction he has fought for, and he will say, "What I rely upon, nevertheless, in the last resort is this, that there exists a righteous rationality, and I put my trust in its compassion, believing that it is compassionate enough to be just; for it would not be so dreadful if I were to suffer punishment which I had deserved because I had done wrong, but it would be dreadful if I should be able to do wrong in such a way that no one punished it; and it would not be so dreadful if in the infatuation of my heart I were to awaken with anguish and horror, but this is the dreadful thing, that I might so infatuate my heart that no one could awaken it."

However, this whole conflict is a purgatorial fire of which I can at least form a conception. People therefore should not be desirous of becoming extraordinary men, for that means something different from the capricious satisfaction of one's wilful lust.

He, on the other hand, who with pain was convinced that he was an extraordinary man is by his sorrow over it reconciled again with the universal; he will perhaps some day experience the joy that what caused him pain and made him lowly in his own eyes proves to be an occasion for his being lifted up again and becoming in a nobler sense an extraordinary man. What he lost in compass he gained perhaps in intensive inwardness. For not every man whose life is a mediocre expression of the universal is for this reason an extraordinary man, for this would be to idolize triviality: before he can truthfully be called such, one must ask also with what

intensive strength he does this. Now that other man will be in possession of that strength at the points where he is able to realize the universal. His sorrow will thus vanish again, it will be resolved into harmony; for he will perceive that he had reached the confines of his individuality. He knows indeed that every man develops himself with freedom, but he knows too that a man does not create himself out of nothing, that he has his self in its concretion as his task; he will again be reconciled with existence, perceiving that in a certain sense every man is an exception, and that it is equally true that every man is the universal-human and at the same time an exception.

Here you have my notion of what it is to be an extraordinary man. I have too much love for existence and for what it is to be a man to be willing to believe that the path by which one becomes an extraordinary man is easy or without temptations. But even though a man be thus in a nobler sense an extraordinary man, he will nevertheless constantly admit that it would be still more perfect to take into himself the universal as a whole.

So receive my greeting, accept my friendship; for though I dare not in the strictest sense characterize our relation as friendship, yet I hope that my young friend will one day become so much older that I may truthfully use this word. Be assured of my sympathy. Receive a greeting from her whom I love, whose thoughts are hidden in my thoughts, receive a greeting which is inseparable from mine, but receive also a special greeting from her, a greeting friendly and sincere as hers always is.

When some days ago you were at our house you perhaps had no idea that again I had so big a letter ready. I know that you do not like to have people talk to you about your inner history, therefore I have chosen to write, and I will never talk to you about it. That you receive such a letter remains a secret, and I should be very sorry if it might have the effect of altering your relationship to me and my family. I know that you have enough virtuosity to

hinder this, if you will, and therefore I beg you to do so for your sake and for mine. I have never wished to intrude upon your personal affairs, and I can well love you at a distance even though we often see one another. Your nature is too closely reserved to permit me to believe that it would be profitable to talk to you, but on the other hand I hope that my letter may not be without significance. So when you set to work upon yourself within the closed machinery of your personality, I put in my pleas and am convinced that they will have a part in the motion.

Since our epistolary relationship is thus to remain a secret, I observe all the formalities: I say farewell, as though we were far remote from one another, although I hope to see you at my house just as often as before.

ULTIMATUM

PERHAPS WITH THE letters I wrote you a while ago you have had the same experience as I, that much has been forgotten. If that be so, I would that in your case it might also be the same as in mine, that at any season, in spite of changing moods, you may be able to render an account to yourself of the thought and the movements. The expression, the form of presentation in which the thoughts are clothed, resembles the flowers which from one year to another are the same and yet not the same; but the attitude, the movement, the position are unchanged. If I were to write to you now, I might perhaps express myself differently. Perhaps in my letters I might even succeed here and there in being eloquent, although this is a grace to which I certainly make no claim and which my profession in life does not require of me. If I were to write now, I might perhaps succeed better; I do not know, for expression is a gift. "And every age, like every season, is with its special flowers bedecked." The thought, on the other hand, is and remains, and I hope that in the course of time the movements may become easier and more natural, unaltered even when they are dumb because the flowers of expression have faded.

However, it is not to write a new letter I now grasp my pen, but because you have been vividly recalled to me by a letter I have received from an older friend who is a pastor in Jutland. So far as I know, you are unacquainted with him. My friendship with him began in my student days, and although there was a difference of five or six years between us, our relationship was rather intimate. He was a little man with a squarely built figure, merry, light-hearted and uncommonly jovial. Although in the depths his soul was serious, his outward life seemed gaily inconsequent. Learning enthralled him, but he was only a "pass" man, and in his final theological

examination he managed to get no more than *haud illaudabilis* [not unpraiseworthy]. About four years ago he was thrust into a little parish on the Jutland heath. Outwardly he had a stentorian voice, and intellectually he had an originality which always distinguished him in the small circle with which I was acquainted. No wonder, then, that at the beginning he did not find himself thoroughly content, and that his post seemed to him unimportant. Now, however, he has regained his contentment, and it has had a very cheering effect upon me to read the letter I lately received from him. "The Jutland heath," he says, "is after all a good exercise ground for me and an incomparable study room for a parson. There I go on Saturdays to prepare my sermon, and everything widens out before me. I forget every actual auditor and gain an ideal one, gain complete self-forgetfulness, so that when I mount the pulpit it is as though I were still standing upon the heath where my eye discovers not a single soul, where my voice lifts itself with all its strength to outdo the violence of the storm."

I am not writing, however, in order to tell you this, but to send you a sermon of his which he inclosed with the letter. I did not wish to show it to you in person for fear of inciting your criticism, but I send the manuscript in order that it may make its impression upon you in a quiet hour. My friend has not yet delivered this sermon but expects to do so next year and is confident he will make every peasant understand it. You should not despise it on this account, for the beauty of the universal consists precisely in the fact that all can understand it. In this sermon he has apprehended what I said to you and also what I was desirous of saying. He has expressed it more felicitously than I find myself capable of doing. Take it then, read it, I have nothing to add, except that I have read it and thought of myself — read it then and think of yourself.

THE EDIFICATION IMPLIED IN THE THOUGHT THAT AS AGAINST GOD WE ARE ALWAYS IN THE WRONG

PRAYER

OUR FATHER IN heaven, teach us to pray aright, that our hearts may disclose themselves to Thee in prayer and supplication, and may conceal no hidden thought which we know is not well-pleasing to Thee, nor any secret fear that Thou wilt deny us anything which is truly to our advantage; so that the laboring thoughts, the restless mind, the fearful heart may there find rest where alone it is to be found, as we rejoice always in giving thanks to Thee, and gladly confess that as against Thee we are always in the wrong. Amen.

The Holy Gospel is written in the nineteenth Chapter of St. Luke, beginning at the forty-first Verse.

“And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this thy day, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

“And he entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold, saying unto them, It is written, And my house shall be a house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of robbers.

“And he was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him: and they could not find what they might do; for the people all hung upon him, listening.”

What the Spirit through visions and dreams had revealed to the prophets, what they in a premonitory voice had proclaimed to one generation after another, the rejection of the elect people, the dreadful destruction of proud Jerusalem — that was drawing nearer and nearer. Christ goes up to Jerusalem. He is not a prophet who proclaims future events, His speech does not awaken anxiety and alarm, for what still is hidden He sees directly before His eyes. He does not prophesy, since the time for that is past — He weeps over Jerusalem. And yet the city was still standing in its glory, and the temple still held its head high, higher than any structure in the world, and Christ Himself says, "If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which are for thy good!" But to this he adds, "Now they are hid from thine eyes." In God's eternal counsel its destruction is determined, and salvation is hid from the eyes of its inhabitants. Was the generation then living more wicked than the foregoing generations to which it owed its life? Was the whole nation corrupt, was there none righteous in Jerusalem, not a single one who could check God's wrath? Among all those from whom salvation was hid was there no pious man? And if there was one, then was no gate opened for him in the time of anguish and distress when the enemy besieged the city round about and pressed it upon every side? Did no angel descend and save him when all the gates were still shut, was no miracle wrought for his sake? No, its destruction was determined; in vain the besieged city looked in anguish for a way out, the army of the enemy crushed it in its mighty embrace, and no one escaped, and heaven remained shut and sent forth no angel except the angel of death which brandished its sword over the city. For the sin of the people this generation must suffer, for the sin of this generation every individual in it must suffer. Shall then the righteous suffer with the unrighteous? Is this the jealousy of God, that He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation in such a way that He does not punish the fathers but the

children? What answer should we make? Should we say, “There have elapsed now nearly two thousand years since those days; such a horror the world never saw before and never again will see; we thank God that we live in peace and security, that the scream of anguish from those days reaches us only very faintly; we will hope and believe that our days and those of our children may pass in quietness, unaffected by the storms of existence? We do not feel strong enough to reflect upon such things, but we are ready to thank God that we are not subjected to such trials.”

Can anything be imagined more cowardly and more disconsolate than such talk? Is then the inexplicable explained by saying that it has occurred only once in the world? Or is not this the inexplicable, that it did occur? And has not this fact, the fact that it did occur, the power to make everything inexplicable, even the most explicable events? If once it occurred in the world that man’s lot was essentially different from what it ordinarily is, what assurance is there that this will not recur, what assurance that this is not the true thing, and what ordinarily occurs is the untrue? Or is the true proved to be such by the fact that it most often occurs? And does not that really often occur which those ages witnessed? Is it not what we all of us in so many ways have experienced, that what occurs on a great scale is experienced also in a minor degree? “Think ye,” said Christ, “that those Galileans whose blood Pilate commanded to be shed were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered these things? Or the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem?” So then those Galileans were not sinners above other men, those eighteen were not offenders above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem — and yet the innocent shared the same lot as the guilty. It was a providential dispensation, perhaps you will say, not a punishment. But the destruction of Jerusalem was a punishment, and it fell with equal severity upon the innocent and the guilty. Hence you will not

alarm yourselves by pondering such things. For that a man may have adversity and suffering, that these things as well as the rain may fall upon the just and upon the unjust, that you can comprehend, but that it should be a punishment! — and yet the Scripture so represents it. Is then the lot of the righteous like that of the unrighteous, has godly fear no promise for the life which now is, is then every uplifting thought which once made you so rich in coinage and confidence only an illusion, a juggler's trick in which the child believes, the youth still hopes, but in which one who is a little older finds no blessing but only mockery and offense?

This thought shocks you, but yet it cannot and shall not acquire power to beguile you, it shall not be able to dull your soul. Righteousness you will love, righteousness you will practice early and late, though it have no reward, you still will practice it, you feel that it advances a claim which must in the end be satisfied; you will not sink back languidly and conclude that righteousness has promises but that you had forfeited them by not doing righteousness. You will not strive with men, but with God you will strive, and will not let Him go until He has blessed you. Yet the Scripture saith, "Thou shalt not contend with God." Is it not this you are doing? Is this then again a disconsolate speech, is the Holy Scripture only given to man to humiliate him, to annihilate him? By no manner of means! When it is said, "Thou shalt not contend with God," the meaning of this is that you shall not wish to prove yourself in the right before Him. There is only one way of supporting the claim that you are in the right before God — by learning that you are in the wrong. Yea, this is what you yourselves ought to wish. So when you are forbidden to contend against God, this is an indication of your lofty station and by no means affirms that you are a lowly being which has no importance for Him. The sparrow falls to the ground-in a way it is in the right before God. The lily fades — in a way it is in the right before God. Only man is in the wrong, for to him alone is reserved

that which to all other creatures was denied... to be in the wrong before God.

Ought I to speak differently, ought I to remind you of a wisdom which knows how to explain everything easily enough without doing injustice either to God or man? “Man is a frail creature,” it says, “and it would be unreasonable of God to require of him the impossible. One does what one can, and if a person is once in a while a little remiss, God will never forget that we are weak and imperfect men.” Ought I to admire most the lofty conception of the Deity which this shrewd saying betrays, or the deep insight into the human heart, the searching consciousness which scrutinizes itself and then comes to the comfortable conclusion that one does what one can? Would it be so easy a thing for you, my hearer, to determine how much it is one can? Were you never in such danger that almost in despair you exerted your strength to the utmost and yet ardently wished you could do more? And perhaps another man was watching you with a dubious and beseeching look, wondering if you might not do more. Or were you never alarmed about yourself, so much alarmed that it seemed to you as if there were no sin so black, no selfishness so odious, that it might not sneak into you and as a foreign power gain mastery over you? Did you never sense this dread? For if you never sensed it, then do not open your mouth to reply, for you are unable to answer the question here put to you. But if you have sensed this dread, then, my hearer, I ask you, Did you find repose in that saying: One does what one can? Or were you never in dread for others, have you not seen those men tottering to whom you were wont to look up with trust and confidence, and did you not hear a low voice whispering to you, “If even these men cannot accomplish the great, what then is life but vain *toil* and trouble, and what is faith but a snare which drags us out into the infinity in which we are unable to live? Far better, then, to forget, to relinquish every such pretension”? Did you not hear this voice? If you did

not hear it, then do not open your mouth to reply, for you are unable to answer the question here put to you. But if you have heard it, my hearer, I ask you, Was this your consolation that you said: One does what one can? Was not this precisely the reason for your disquietude, that you did not know within yourself how much it is a man can do, that at one moment it seemed to you so infinitely much, at another so very little? Was it not for this reason your anxiety was so painful, that your soul could not penetrate your consciousness, that the more earnestly you desired to act, the more heartily you wished to, so much the more dreadful became the duplicity in which you found yourself involved, wondering whether you may not have done what you could, or whether you had done what you could, but no one came to your aid?

Therefore, no earnest doubt, no really deep concern, is put to rest by the saying that one does what one can. If a man is sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong, to a certain degree in the right, to a certain degree in the wrong, who, then, is to decide this except man; but in deciding it may he not be to a certain degree in the right, to a certain degree in the wrong? Or is he when he judges his action a different man from the man who acted? Must doubt then prevail, constantly discovering new difficulties, and must concern walk alongside of the alarmed soul and imprint upon it the experiences it has had? Or might we prefer to be constantly in the right, in the sense that the irrational creatures are? We have, then, only the choice of being nothing before God, or the eternal torture of beginning over again every instant, but without being able to begin. For if we are to be able to determine definitely whether at the present instant we are in the right, this question must be definitely determined with a view to the preceding instant, and then further and further back.

Doubt is again stirred up, concern is again aroused; so let us strive to set them at rest by meditating upon

THE EDIFICATION IMPLIED IN THE THOUGHT THAT AS AGAINST GOD WE ABE ALWAYS IN THE WRONG.

Being in the wrong — can any feeling be thought of more painful than this? And do we not see that men would rather suffer anything than admit that they are in the wrong? We do not approve of such stiff-necked pride either in ourselves or in others. We think it would be wiser and better to admit it when we really are in the wrong, and accordingly we say that the pain attendant upon this admission is like a bitter medicine which will prove to be healing; but we do not attempt to conceal the fact that it is painful to be in the wrong and painful to admit it. So we endure the pain because we know that it is for our good, we trust that some day we shall succeed in opposing a stronger resistance; perhaps we may carry it so far that we very seldom are really in the wrong. This way of thinking is so natural, so obvious to everybody. There is something edifying in being in the wrong, for when we admit it, we build ourselves up with prospects of its occurring more and more rarely. And yet it was not by this consideration we proposed to set doubt at rest, it was rather by meditating upon the fact that we are always in the wrong. But if the former way of looking at it was edifying for the hope it held out that in time we might no longer be in the wrong, how can the opposite consideration also be edifying which teaches us that with respect to the future as well as the past we are always in the wrong?

Your life brings you into manifold relationships with other people, some of whom love right and justice, while others do not seem willing to practice them. They do you a wrong. Your soul is not callous to the suffering they inflict upon you, but you search and examine yourself and are convinced that you are in the right. You repose quietly and staunchly in this conviction. However much they injure me, you say, they shall not be able to deprive me of the peace of knowing that I am in the right and suffer wrong. There is a satisfaction, a joy, in this reflection which surely every one of us

has tasted, and when you continue to suffer wrong, you are edified by the thought that you are in the right This consideration is so natural, so comprehensible, so often put to the test, and yet it is not by this we would quiet doubt and allay concern, but by reflecting upon the edification implied in the thought that we are always in the wrong. Can, then, this opposite consideration have the same effect?

Your life brings you into manifold relationships with other people, to some of whom you are drawn by a more heartfelt love than you feel for others. Now if such a man who was the object of your love were to do you a wrong, it would pain you deeply, would it not? You would carefully rehearse everything that had occurred — but then would you say, I know of myself that I am in the right, this thought shall tranquilize me? Oh, if you loved him, this thought would not tranquilize you, you would explore anew every possibility. You would not be able to come to any other conclusion but that he was in the wrong, and yet this certainty would disquiet you, you would wish that you might be in the wrong, you would try to find something which might speak in his defense, and if you did not find it, you would first find comfort in the thought that you were in the wrong. Or if the responsibility were laid upon you of caring for the welfare of such a person, you would do everything in your power, and if in spite of that the other showed no appreciation and only caused you sorrow, would you cast up the account and say, I know that I have done right by him? Oh, no! If you loved him, this thought would only distress you, you would grasp at every probability, and if you found none, you would tear up the reckoning in order to be able to forget it, and you would endeavor to edify yourself with the thought that you were in the wrong.

So it is painful to be in the wrong, and the more painful the more frequently it occurs; it is edifying to be in the wrong, and the more edifying the more frequently it occurs! That is clearly a contradiction. How can it be

explained except by the fact that in the one case you are compelled to recognize that which in the other case you wish to recognize? But was not the recognition the same in both cases, and does the consideration that one wishes or does not wish exert any influence upon it? How is this to be explained, except by the consideration that in the one case you loved and in the other you did not, in other words, that in the one case you found yourself in an infinite relationship to a person, in another case in a finite relationship? Hence, to wish to be in the wrong is the expression for an infinite relationship; to wish to be in the right or to find it painful to be in the wrong is the expression for a finite relationship! So, then, it is edifying always to be in the wrong, for only the infinite edifies, not the finite!

If, then, there was a man whom you loved, and in favor of him you succeeded in deceiving your thought and yourself, you would still be in a perpetual contradiction, because you knew that you were in the right but wished that you were in the wrong and wished to believe it. On the other hand, if it was God you loved, could there be any question of such a contradiction, could you then have knowledge of anything else but what you wished to believe? Might He who is in heaven not be greater than you who dwell on the earth? Might His riches not be more abundant than your scant measure? His wisdom no deeper than your shrewdness? His holiness no greater than your righteousness? Must you not recognize this necessarily? But if you must recognize it, then there is no contradiction between your knowledge and your wish. And yet if you necessarily must recognize it, then there is no edification in the thought that you are always in the wrong, for we have said that the reason why at one time it could prove so painful to be in the wrong, and at another time edifying, was because in the one case you were compelled to recognize that which in the other case you wished to recognize. So in your relationship to God you would, it is true, be freed from the contradiction, but you would have lost

the edification — and yet what we wished to ponder was precisely this: the edification in the fact that as against God we are always in the wrong.

Might it really be thus? Why was it you wished to be in the wrong with respect to a person? Because you loved. Why did you find this edifying? Because you loved. The more you loved, the less time you had to deliberate whether you were in the right or not; your love had only one wish, that you might constantly be in the wrong. So also in your relation to God. You loved God, and hence your soul could find repose and joy only in the thought that you must always be in the wrong. It was not by the toil of thought you attained this recognition, neither was it forced upon you, for it is in love that you find yourself in freedom. So if thought convinced you that such was the case, that it could not be otherwise than that you must always be in the wrong, or that God must always be in the right, then this recognition followed as a logical consequence — but in fact you did not attain the certainty that you were in the wrong as a deduction from the knowledge that God was always in the right; but from love's dearest and only wish, that you might always be in the wrong, you reached the apprehension that God was always in the right. But this wish is the affair of love, hence, of freedom, and you were not in any way compelled to recognize that you were always in the wrong. So it was not by reflection you became certain that you were always in the wrong, but the certainty was due to the fact that you were edified by this thought.

So it is an edifying thought that against God we are always in the wrong. If this were not the case, if this conviction did not have its source in your whole being, that is, did not spring from the love within you, then your reflection also would have taken a different turn; you would have recognized that God is always in the right, this you are compelled to recognize, and as a consequence of this you are compelled to recognize that you are always in the wrong. This conclusion would, in fact, be rather

difficult, for you may well be compelled to recognize that God is always in the right, but to make application of this to yourself, to take up this perception into your whole being, is a thing you really cannot be compelled to do. So you recognize that God is always in the right, and, as a consequence of this, that you are always in the wrong; but this recognition does not edify you. There is no edification in recognizing that God is always in the right, and so, too, there is none in any thought which follows from this by necessity. When you recognize that God is always in the right you stand aloof from God, and so, too, when you recognize as a consequence of this that you are always in the wrong. On the other hand, if in virtue of no foregoing recognition you claim and are convinced that you are always in the wrong, then you are hidden in God. This is your divine worship, your religious devotion, your godly fear.

You loved a person, you wished that with respect to him you might always be in the wrong; but, alas, he was unfaithful to you, and however reluctantly you admitted it, however much it pained you, you nevertheless would have to recognize that you were in the right in your behavior towards him, and in the wrong for loving him so dearly. And yet your soul insisted upon loving him thus, only in this could you find peace and rest and happiness. Then your soul turned away from the finite to the infinite; there it found its object, there your love became a happy love. God I will love, you said; He bestows upon the lover all things, He fulfills my dearest, my only wish, that against Him I must be always in the wrong. Never shall any alarming doubt tear me away from Him, never shall I be terrified by the thought that I could ever find myself in the right against Him, against God I am always in the wrong.

Or is this not true, was not this your only wish, your dearest wish, and were you not seized by a terrible dread when for an instant the thought could enter into your mind that you might be in the right, that God's

governance was not wisdom, but that your plans were; that God's thoughts were not righteousness, but that your pursuits were; that God's heart was not love, but that your sentiments were? And was it not your bliss that you never could love as you were loved? So, then, this thought that against God you are always in the wrong is not a truth you are Compelled to recognize, not a comfort which assuages your pain, not a compensation for the loss of something better, but it is a joy in which you triumph over yourself and over the world, it is your delight, your anthem of praise, your divine worship, a demonstration that your love is a happy one, as only that love can be wherewith one loves God.

So, then, the thought that against God we are always in the wrong is an edifying thought. It is edifying that we are in the wrong, edifying that we always are. It proves its edifying power in a double way: partly by the fact that it checks doubt and allays the solicitude of doubt; partly by the fact that it animates to action.

Surely, my hearer, you will still bear in mind the wisdom which I described above. It appeared to be so trustworthy and reliable, it explained everything so easily, it was willing to conduct every man safely through life, unaffected by the storms of doubt. "One does what one can," it called out to the man who stood perplexed. And indeed it is undeniable that when one has done what one can, one is the better for it. It had nothing more to say, it vanished like a dream, or it remained as a monotonous repetition in the ear of the doubter. Then when he would put it to use, it appeared that he could not use it, it entangled him in a mesh of difficulties. He could not find time to deliberate how much he could do, for at the same time he had to be doing what he could. Or if he found time to deliberate, the test resulted in a more or less, an approximation, but never anything exhaustive of his possibilities. How might a man be able to depict his relationship to God by a more or a less, or by an approximate definition? He then convinced

himself that this wisdom was a treacherous friend, who, under the pretext of helping him, involved him in doubt, drew him alarmingly into a perpetual circle of confusion. What before had been obscure to him, but had not troubled him, became now, not any clearer, but alarming to his mind and troubling. Only by an infinite relationship to God could the doubt be calmed, only by an infinitely free relationship to God could his anxiety be transformed into joy. He is in an infinite relationship to God when he recognizes that God is always in the right, in an infinitely free relationship to God when he recognizes that he himself is always in the wrong. In this way, therefore, doubt is checked, for the movement of doubt consists precisely in the fact that at one instant he might be in the right, at another in the wrong, to a certain degree in the right, to a certain degree in the wrong, and this was supposed to characterize his relationship to God. But such a relationship to God is no relationship, and it was the nutriment of doubt. In his relationship to another man it was quite possible that he might be partly in the wrong, partly in the right, to a certain degree in the wrong, to a certain degree in the right, because he, like every other man, is a finite being, and his relation to other men is a finite relation which consists in a more or a less. Therefore, so long as doubt would make the infinite relationship finite, and so long as wisdom would fill up the infinite relationship with finiteness, just so long would he remain in doubt. So whenever doubt would alarm him by the particular instance, would teach him that he suffers too much, that he is tried beyond his powers, he thereupon forgets the finite in the infinite thought that he is always in the wrong. Whenever the affliction of doubt would make him sad, he thereupon raises himself above the finite into the infinite; for the thought that he is always in the wrong is the wing whereby he soars above finitude, it is the longing wherewith he seeks God, it is the love wherein he finds God.

Against God we are always in the wrong. But does not this thought produce anaesthesia? Edifying as it may be, is it not dangerous to a person, does it not lull him into a slumber in which he dreams of a relationship to God which yet is not a real relationship, does it not consume the power of a man's will and the strength of his resolution? Not by any means! Or the man who wished to be always in the wrong with respect to another, was he dull and inactive, did he not do everything in his power to be in the right? And yet he wished only to be in the wrong. And how could the thought that as against God we are always in the wrong be anything but an animating thought? For what else does it express but that God's love is greater than our love? Does not this thought make a man glad to act? For when he is in doubt he has no power to act. Does it not make him fervent in spirit? For when he reckons finitely the fire of the Spirit is quenched. So when your only wish is denied to you, my hearer, you are joyful nevertheless; you do not say, "God is always in the right," for in that there is no joy; you say, "Against God I am always in the wrong." Though it were you, you yourself, that had to deny yourself your dearest wish, you are joyful nevertheless, my hearer; you do not say, "God is always in the right," for in that there is no jubilation; you say, "Against God I am always in the wrong." Though that which was your wish were what others, and you yourself in a certain sense, might call your duty, though you must not only forego your wish but in a way be unfaithful to your duty, though you were to lose not only your joy but even your honor, you are joyful nevertheless; "Against God," you say, "I am always in the wrong." Though you were to knock but it was not opened unto you, though you were to seek but you did not find, though you were to labor but acquired nothing, though you were to plant and water but saw no blessing, though heaven were to remain closed and the witness failed to appear, you are joyful in your work nevertheless; though the punishment which the iniquity of the fathers had called down were to fall

upon you, you are joyful nevertheless, for against God we are always in the wrong.

Against God we are always in the wrong. This thought then checks doubt and calms its distress, it encourages and inspires to action.

Your thought has now followed the course of this exposition, perhaps hurrying swiftly ahead when it was along familiar paths it led you, slowly and perhaps reluctantly when the way was strange to you. But nevertheless you must admit that the case is as it was set forth, and your thought had no objection to raise against it. Before we separate, one question more, my hearer: Did you wish, could you wish, that the case might be different? Could you wish that you might be in the right? Could you wish that that beautiful law which for thousands of years has supported the race and every generation in the race, that beautiful law, more glorious than the law which supports the stars in their courses upon the vault of heaven, could you wish that this law might burst, with more dreadful effect than if that law of nature were to lose its force and everything were to be resolved into appalling chaos? Could you wish this? I have no word of wrath with which to terrify you; your wish must not proceed from dread of the presumptuous thought of willing to be in the right against God; I ask only, could you wish that it might be otherwise? Perhaps my voice does not possess enough strength and heartiness to penetrate into your inmost thought — O, but ask yourself, ask with the solemn uncertainty with which you would address yourself to a man who was able, you knew, by a single word to decide your happiness in life, ask yourself still more seriously, for verily it is a question of salvation. Do not check your soul's flight, do not grieve the better promptings within you, do not dull your spirit with half wishes and half thoughts. Ask yourself, and continue to ask until you find the answer. For one may have known a thing many times and acknowledged it, one may have willed a thing many times and attempted it; and yet it is only by the deep inward

movements, only by the indescribable emotions of the heart, that for the first time you are convinced that what you have known belongs to you, that no power can take it from you; for only the truth which edifies is truth for you.

Fear and Trembling (1843)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1941

First published in 1843 under the pseudonym Johannes de silentio (John of the Silence), the title for this work is a reference to a line from *Philippians 2:12:* "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." The Philippians verse is sometimes thought to reference *Psalm 55:5*: "Fear and trembling came upon me." The work proposes and analyses an understanding of the anxiety that must have been present in the biblical Abraham during the Binding of Isaac. Abraham had a choice to complete the task or to refuse to comply with God's orders. He resigns himself to the three-and-a-half-day journey and to the loss of his son. "He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer. Who, after all, could understand him, for did not the nature of temptation extract from him a pledge of silence? He split the firewood, he bound Isaac, he lit the fire, he drew the knife." As he keeps everything to himself and chooses not to reveal his feelings he "isolates himself as higher than the universal." Kierkegaard envisions two types of people in *Fear and Trembling* and the next work *Repetition*. One lives in hope (Abraham) and the other lives in memory, (The Young Man and Constantin Constantius). One hopes for happiness from something "out there" while the other finds happiness from within.

When one person, posits Kierkegaard, sees one thing and another sees something else in the same thing, then the one discovers what the other conceals. Insofar as the object viewed belongs to the external world, then how the observer is constituted is probably less important, or, more correctly then what is necessary for the observation is something irrelevant to his deeper nature. Yet, the more the object of observation belongs to the

world of the spirit, the more important is the way he himself is constituted in his innermost nature, as everything spiritual is appropriated only in freedom; but what is appropriated in freedom is also brought forth. The difference, then, is not the external but the internal, and everything that makes a person impure and his observation impure comes from within. Kierkegaard uses the ethical system of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and the aesthetic stories of Agnes and the merman, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and others to help the reader understand the difference between the inner world of the spirit and the outer world of ethics and aesthetics.

The first edition's title page

CONTENTS

EDITOR’S PREFACE
EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION
FEAR AND TREMBLING
PREFACE
PRELUDE
A PANEGYRIC UPON ABRAHAM
PRELIMINARY EXPECTORATION
PROBLEM I. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A TELEOLOGICAL SUSPENSION OF THE ETHICAL?
PROBLEM II. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN ABSOLUTE DUTY TOWARD GOD?
PROBLEM III. WAS ABRAHAM ETHICALLY DEFENSIBLE IN KEEPING SILENT ABOUT HIS PURPOSE BEFORE SARAH, BEFORE ELEAZAR, BEFORE ISAAC?
EPILOGUE

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THIS BOOK IS to be published on the same date as Kierkegaard's *Repetition*; for these two works, dissimilar as they are, are in reality twins, conceived in Berlin sometime during the month of May 1843 and born (i.e. published) on October 16 of the same year in Copenhagen. Thus the period of gestation was barely five months, and it would have been shorter had the delivery not been delayed by an untoward circumstance which I have related in the Introduction. These books are so dissimilar in form that the reader, if left to his own devices, would hardly guess that they both deal with the self-same theme, and that this theme is S.K.'s unhappy love; for the analogues he chooses as illustrations of his crisis (Abraham, Job, etc.) seem at first sight infinitely remote from the subject.

I have to remark that this work has already been published by the Oxford University Press in a translation by Mr. Payne. Unfortunately there was no general editor, I was only a promoter, and my reiterated protest against the publication of this translation went unheeded. After it was published Professor Swenson protested indignantly that this work must be retranslated. This is one of S.K.'s most beautiful works, it is important also for its content, and I am not content to let it remain in the form in which it issued from Oxford. Therefore I have taken the pains to make a new translation.

It was a good precedent established by the Oxford Press to publish S.K.'s shorter works in little volumes which can be carried in the pocket. It is fair to let the reader choose one of these books if he would not have both. But *Repetition* is a good deal shorter than *Fear and Trembling,* and in order to justify the same price for each of the two volumes I have padded the smaller one by adding an account of how S.K.

Princeton
April 26, 1941
WALTER LOWRIE

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

IT IS OBVIOUSLY appropriate that this book should be published on the same day as *Repetition*; for nearly a hundred years ago these two books were first published in Copenhagen on the same date, they were both written during a stay of barely two months in Berlin, and they both deal with the same theme, or rather with the same crisis in S.K.'s life, although they deal with it in ways as different as can be imagined, one being appropriately entitled "a dialectical lyric" and the other "an essay in experimental psychology." It may be expected therefore that a reader who wants to know one of them will want to know both, so that in a measure the introduction placed before one will serve also for the other.

The introduction to *Repetition* had to be exceptionally long because S.K., as it happened, was prompted by the misapprehension of a friendly review to expound the meaning of that book more explicitly than he did in any other case. He was hardly more intolerant of hostile reviewers than of friendly ones. Among his many animadversions upon this class of nuisances there happens to be one in the *Journal* of this period which is sufficiently expressive (IV A 166):

"For my part I deprecate every review. For to me a reviewer is just as disgusting as the street-urchin who serves as barber's boy and comes running up with the shaving-soap used for all customers and paws my face with his clammy fingers."

On the other hand, it is a strange fact that the *Journal* furnishes hardly any hint of preparation for *Fear and Trembling.* It was like lightning from a clear sky. In the Papers there is nothing that throws light backwards upon this book, and only one page is devoted to it and another to *Repetition* in that chapter of the *Postscript* in which Johannes Climacus, commenting

upon a "Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature," furnishes us with the most authentic introduction we could desire to have for the six pseudonymous works previously published. As this has already been published in Professor Swenson's translation, it need not be repeated here. S.K. rewrote carefully, as he was accustomed to do, the manuscript of *Fear and Trembling* before sending it to the printer, but no changes were made which need be noted in this place.

Here, as in the case of all the "aesthetic" works, the most essential introduction is a knowledge of S.K.'s story, in this case especially the story of his engagement and the tragic breach of it, which can be read in my *Kierkegaard,* p-271. I need give here only a dry list of dates, which, coming so close together as they do, serve to reveal the prodigious speed of S.K.'s literary production. October 11, 1841, was the date of his final rupture with Regina. Thereupon he fled to Berlin, ostensibly to pursue the study of philosophy. But he was away from home only from October 25, 1841, to March 6, 1842, and on February 20, 1843, appeared in two volumes his first great work, *Either/Or,* which he boasted of writing in eight months. This work was "accompanied" rather tardily by *Three Edifying Discourses*, which were through the hands of the printer on May 6 (to be published ten days later), and on the 8th S.K. again departed for Berlin. He was there barely two months, for we have evidence that he was back in Copenhagen sometime in July. Incredible as it seems, he began and finished in this brief period the two works we are here dealing with, which were published on October 16 of that year and, in spite of the haste with which they were written, are his most perfect poetical productions. They both recount his desperate struggle in renouncing every hope of earthly happiness when he gave up the prospect of marriage with the woman he loved. We know that while he was writing these two works the struggle to attain resignation was complicated by the hope that he might yet make Regina his wife. This was

so evident in *Repetition* that the text had to be altered when, on his return to Copenhagen, S.K. learned that Regina was already engaged to another. *Fear and Trembling*, being a "dialectical lyric," maintained itself throughout on so sublime a plane that no change had to be made in it; for it never was the chief point in the story that he might get Regina back as Abraham received Isaac alive. Even in the other book he had said that "the true repetition is eternity"; and in the *Journal* he says (I V A 169):

"Repetition is and remains a religious category. Hence Constantine Constantius can get no further than he does. He is shrewd, ironical, he stands for the interesting, but does not observe that he himself remains stuck in it. The first form of the interesting is love of change, the second is desire for repetition, but with *Selbstgenugsamkeit,* without suffering — hence Constantine founders upon that which he himself discovers, and the young man gets further."

Even while he hoped, he was hoping against hope. He says in the *Journal* of that time (IV A 108):

"Faith therefore hopes also for this life, but, be it noted, by virtue of the absurd, not by virtue of human understanding, otherwise it is only practical wisdom, not faith. Faith is therefore what the Greeks called the divine madness. This is not merely a witty remark but is a thought which can be clearly developed."

An entry in the *Journal* of this period shows that before publishing these books, which not only were drawn from his own experience but involved also his lady-love, S.K. reflected upon the possible impropriety of such a thing (IV A 161):

"The law of delicacy, according to which an author has a right to use what he himself has experienced, is that he is never to utter verity but is to keep verity for himself and only let it be refracted in various ways."

One may perhaps doubt whether in *Repetition* this canon of good taste was strictly observed, but certainly in *Fear and Trembling* there was no risk that anybody else might recognize Regina under the figure of Isaac, and even she might have had difficulty in recognizing herself as Agnes who was carried off by the merman. The white light of truth is here so thoroughly refracted that even the reader who has such acquaintance with S.K.'s story as his contemporaries did not have may need to be told that Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is a symbol of S.K.'s sacrifice of the dearest thing he had on earth. And the reader who is not acquainted with this story must be told that in order to liberate Regina from her attachment and to "set her afloat" S.K. felt obliged to be cruel enough to make her believe he was a scoundrel who had merely been trifling with her affections.

Apart from one entry in the *Journal* which suggested the possibility of remodeling the familiar story of Agnes and the merman (IV A 113), there is only one passage which suggests the plan of *Fear and Trembling.* I quote it in full because it is profoundly characteristic that the idea of a whole work often came to S.K. in a flash (IV A 76, early in May 1843):

"Let us assume (as neither the Old Testament nor the Koran reports) that Isaac knew that the object of the journey he had to make with his father to Mount Moria was that he should be offered as a sacrifice. — If there were living now a poet in our generation, he would be able to relate what these two men talked about on the way. One might also suppose that Abraham's previous life was not blameless, and might let him now mumble under his breath that it was God's punishment, one might even perhaps let him get the melancholy idea that he must assist God in making the punishment as heavy as possible. I suppose that at first Abraham looked upon Isaac with all his fatherly love; his venerable countenance, his broken heart, has made his speech the more impressive, he exhorts him to bear his fate with patience, he has let him darkly understand that he the father suffered from it still

more. However, that was of no avail. — Then I think that Abraham has for an instant turned away from him, and when again he turned toward him he was unrecognizable to Isaac, his eyes were wild, his venerable locks had risen like the locks of furies above his head. He seized Isaac by the throat, he drew the knife, he said: 'Thou didst believe it was for God's sake I would do this, thou art mistaken, I am an idolater, this desire has again awakened in my soul, I want to murder thee, this is my desire, I am worse than any cannibal; despair thou foolish boy who didst imagine that I was thy father, I am thy murderer, and this is my desire.' And Isaac fell upon his knees and cried to heaven, 'Merciful God, have mercy upon me!' But then said Abraham softly to himself, 'Thus it must be, for it is better after all that he believes I am a monster, that he curses me for being his father, rather than he should know it was God who imposed the temptation, for then he would lose his reason and perhaps curse God.'

"But where indeed is there a poet in our age who has a presentiment of such collisions! And yet Abraham's conduct was genuinely poetic, magnanimous, more magnanimous than anything I have read of in tragedies.

"When the child has to be weaned the mother blackens her breast, but her eyes rest just as lovingly upon the child. The child believes it is the breast that has changed, but that the mother is unchanged. And why does she blacken her breast? Because, she says, it would be a shame that it should seem delicious when the child must not get it. — This collision is easily resolved, for the breast is only a part of the mother herself. Happy is he who has not experienced more dreadful collisions, who did not need to blacken *himself,* who did not need to go to hell in order to see what the devil looks like, so that he might paint himself accordingly and in that way if possible save another person in that person's God-relationship at least. This would be Abraham's collision.

" — He who has explained this riddle has explained my life. Yet who was there among my contemporaries that understood this?"

S.K. did not expect this to be understood, he did not wish it to be. Accordingly the pseudonymous author of *Repetition* says at the end of the book that "like Clement Alexandrinus he writes in such a way that the heretics cannot understand him"; in *Fear and Trembling* the very name of the pseudonym, Johannes *de silentio,* suggests mystery, and the motto on the back of the title page, which he got from Hamann, recalls the well-known story of old Rome, which relates that when the son of Tarquinius Superbus had craftily gained the confidence of the people of Gabii he secretly sent a messenger to his father in Rome, asking what he should do next. The father, not willing to trust the messenger, took him into the field where as he walked he struck off with his cane the heads of the tallest poppies. The son understood that he was to bring about the death of the most eminent men in the city and proceeded to do so. S.K. says in his *Journal* that the motto he first thought of was a saying which originated with Herder, though this too he got directly from Hamann in the form (almost) in which he uses it here (III A 203, IV A 126, IV B 96 b and c):

"Write."— "For whom?"— "Write for the dead whom thou didst love in the past."— "Will they read me?"— "Yea, for they return as posterity." S.K. made a melancholy correction, for instead of the last reply he wrote simply, "Nay." In a more optimistic mood he thought of using as a motto the title of Shakespeare's play, "All's Well that Ends Well." Again, more tragically, he thought of using the motto he actually used for that part of the *Stages* which tells his love-story: *PerüSem nisi Perüsem,* "I had perished had I not perished." This too he got from Hamann, who in turn ascribed it to "a Greek."

The penury of the *Journal* with respect to allusions to *Fear and Trembling* seems all the more remarkable when we note that precisely at the

time when he was writing this book and *Repetition,* and because of this preoccupation made few entries in the *Journal,* at the most forty-nine, among these there were fifteen entries which show that his mind was teeming with thoughts which were to be developed in later works, and with as many more which were stillborn. Six of them adumbrate striking themes which the following year appeared in the *Stages.* The figure of the Fashion Tailor who spoke at the Banquet is here sketched in five entries. Of the remarkable stories told in Quidam's Diary in place of the entry for the fifth of each month at midnight four are suggested here: A Leper's Soliloquy; Solomon's Dream; The Mad Accountant (Possibility); and Nebuchadnezzar. In addition we find an adaptation to his case of the story of Abelard and Heloise, which strangely enough was not used to fill the place left vacant on the date of July 5. There is also a plan for "my Antigone," which had been treated in *Either/Or* but never was further developed, and for a book to be entitled "Conic Sections," a study of life in Copenhagen at different hours of the day when different classes were most in evidence. Not far separated from these entries in the *Journal,* though they probably are of a somewhat later date, are suggestions for The Banquet; for a "Diary of Seducer No. 2," a study in the demoniacal, which perhaps eventuated in the speech of the Seducer at the Banquet; and the study of a female seducer which was to have been called "The Diary of a Hetaera."

That a man's mind should at one moment be teeming with so many thoughts is certainly abnormal. It perhaps justifies S.K. in saying at this time in the *Journal* (IV A 107): "I am living through within myself more poetry than there is in all novels put together." Soon after his arrival in Berlin he wrote to his friend Boesen: "I have finished one work which I regard as important and am in full swing with a new one. At the beginning I was ill, now I am comparatively well, that is to say, my spirit expands and presumably is killing my body. I never have worked so hard as now. I go

out a little while in the morning. Then I come home and sit in my room uninterruptedly until about 3 o'clock. I am hardly able to see out of my eyes. Then I shuffle with my cane to the restaurant, but am so weak that I believe if one were to call my name aloud I should fall over and die. Then I go home and begin again. During the past months [in Copenhagen] I had been indolently pumping up a thorough shower-bath, now I have pulled the cord, and the ideas stream down upon me — healthy, joyful, thriving, merry, blessed children, easily brought to birth, and yet all of them bearing the birthmarks of my personality. Otherwise, as I have said, I am weak, my legs tremble, my knees give under me."

The joys and the sorrows of genius could hardly be more tellingly described. S.K. was aware that he was a genius, and sadly aware also how much he had to suffer for it. It is significant that at this very time he quoted in his *Journal* with qualified assent a Latin saying that "there never existed great genius without some madness" (IV A 148): "*Nullum exsistat magnum ingenium sine aliqua dementia.* This is the worldly expression for the religious affirmation that him whom God blesses He *eo ipso* curses in a worldly sense. Thus it must be. The first is due to the limitations of nature, the second to its duplicity."

Here I have introduced several observations which, though they may seem extraneous to this book, cast much light upon the author of it, for S.K.'s genius was nowhere more evident than in *Fear and Trembling.*

Now for a better introduction, written by Professor David F. Swenson for the "Philosophical Review," which had asked him to review the translation of *Fear and Trembling* published by the Oxford University Press in 1939 in spite of my insistent protest. Before this review was published Professor Swenson sent me a manuscript copy, remarking that because he did not wish to damn the translation he made no reference to it but dwelt exclusively upon the significance of S.K.'s work. Later his indignation

waxed hotter, and he wrote to me to express the conviction that this book must be retranslated, and that I have done. Because Professor Swenson's review is not a review of the earlier translation but an appraisal of S.K.'s work, it is the most apt introduction that could be desired, for it is the clearest exposition of the purport of this book that has ever been written, and I am glad to have Mrs. Swenson's permission to use it here.

"Having in an earlier work *(Either/Or)* delineated the ethical consciousness with a universal religious background, Kierkegaard is in this volume concerned with some of the distinctive traits of the religious concept of faith, taken in the more specific sense in which it is fundamental to the Christian consciousness. It is here depicted as a major human passion, affecting daily life at every point, its content being the entire essential reality of the individual's existence. By reason of its transcendence of the calculations of worldly wisdom and of the naïve illusions of immediacy, in consequence of the firmness of its grasp of the finite life as distinct from the withdrawal from it which ensues when resignation is the final word, and in view of its struggles with and victory over that fear and trembling which its sense of responsibility makes it feel, faith becomes the highest of human passions. It is here presented as heroic and is poetically apprehended with an authentic aesthetic pathos deriving from the realities of Kierkegaard's personal life. The pseudonym places himself admiringly outside, assigning to himself the lower plane of infinite resignation.

"The chief categorical determinants assigned to faith and developed in the essay are: (1) the *particularity* of its relationship to God, dispensing with every form of universal intermediary — community, state, humanity, tradition — so that the individual sustains *qua* individual an absolute relation to the Absolute; (2) the infinite *resignation* with respect to finite goods which it psychologically presupposes, thus dissociating itself *toto coelo* from those dreams of wish-fulfilment with which the inexperienced

confuse it; (3) the *double movement* of the spirit, by which after the infinite resignation it again lives in the finite, but only in virtue of a God-relationship which has no dependence upon calculations of the understanding; (4) the fearful *teleological suspension of the ethical* as exemplified in Abraham, whom the poetic imagination of the author makes to live vividly in the present.

"This suspension of the ethical consciousness finds a more essential and universal expression in the Christian consciousness of sin and its forgiveness, though the treatment of this *motif* is here withheld and given a place in a later volume, *The Concept of Dread.* Other aspects of faith are dealt with in a companion volume, *Repetition.*

"The various determinants of faith are by Kierkegaard concentrated in the single category of the *absurd,* since the movement of faith seems paradoxical to the ordinary consciousness from which faith emerges. The paradoxical is Kierkegaard's careful and precise development of a thought which the Greeks dimly shadowed forth as the divine madness (Plato's *Phaedrus).* Since even thoughtful readers may misunderstand this category when they approach it too exclusively through the traditional and imperfect contrast between faith and reason, I may perhaps be pardoned a word of comment. This category has nothing whatever to do with the supposed antithesis between intellect and will. Kierkegaard did indeed hold that any individual who permits his life to culminate in unutilized thought, speculation, or knowledge, is to be apprehended as essentially comical in his absentmindedness, and to be condemned ethically for attempting to evade the essential task of human existence, which in his view consists in realizing a *decisiveness of spirit* which forms and establishes the personality. But this involves no positing of an antithesis between intellect and will; on the contrary, it protests against leaving incomplete a movement in which intellect, feeling and will normally play their several roles.

The paradoxical is rooted in an entirely different antithesis, namely, that between God and man, between God's understanding of what human life ought to be, and man's. It makes its appearance only when the individual has become ethically mature, when he has been developed ethically and religiously to the point where there can be some question of his submitting himself to the divine in order to be radically transformed by the discipline of the relationship. In this conflict the individual's strength consists in his weakness, his victory in his defeat. The human, all-too-human understanding of life which he thus comes to renounce is no abstract intellectual function, but a concrete consciousness involving intellect, feeling and will. In other words, it is his *reason* as the expression for what he initially *is,* in contradistinction to what he strives in faith to *become.* Hence there exists indeed no paradox for faith in its perfection, but for the human individual who is in process of becoming the paradoxical cannot be avoided without arbitrarily limiting the spiritual process. Kierkegaard's insistence upon the paradoxical is a consequence of his deep-seated predilection for apprehending the spiritual life in process, and hence ethically, rather than aesthetically, in a foreshortened perspective, or altogether in static terms.

"Most writers on the philosophy of religion display no inkling of the existence of such a conflict, and much less do they reveal any sympathetic apprehension of its significance. Their descriptions of spiritual attitudes are much like those naive paintings which depict a landscape in general, fitting everything and nothing. To describe religion as devotion to an ideal, without distinguishing *inter et inter,* and without expending a single word upon the all-important question of the 'how' of this devotion, is about as illuminating as to describe iron as a physical element. For those whose religious experience has been concrete enough to need a more precise intellectual orientation, Kierkegaard offers a rich and concrete psychology

of the varied aspects of the life of the spirit; and his categories are sharply enough defined to satisfy the intellectually ambitious."

In my book on *Kierkegaard* (p*Aff.)* I ventured to express the opinion (which, as I learned later, Professor Hirsch supports by additional arguments) that *Repetition* was written first, *Fear and Trembling* second. That, however, is a question of no great importance, for essentially the plan of both was in S.K.'s mind at the same time, and both books were published on the same day. Following as they did very soon after the two volumes in which *Either/Or* first appeared on February 20, 1843 (nothing being published in the meanwhile except the *Three Edifying Discourses* of May 16), these two little volumes are to be regarded as a second either/or addressed to Regina, and I believe with Hirsch that what prompted S.K. to repeat the question in a different form was the profound disturbance he experienced at seeing Regina twice nod to him in church at evensong on Easter Day (April 16, 1843, cf. IV A 97). Doubtless it was this which prompted him again to take refuge in Berlin, and there he wrote these two books, as a year earlier he had written there a large part of *Either (Or.*

We are not left in doubt as to whether Regina read the books which were meant for her, for we read in Meyer's *Forlovelsen* (Preface,) that she read all his books — but she read them aloud with her husband. The question put to her by these four volumes, was answered, alas, before it was finally put.

Hirsch rightly insists that the brute fact of Regina's engagement, revealing as it did to S.K. the vanity of all his poetical production, and compelling him to recognize that his life up to this point, including his religious thought and experience, had no better foundation than "possibility," was the occasion of his deepest religious conversion.

From the aesthetic point of view S.K. accounted these two books the most perfect he ever wrote, in spite of the mutilation which *Repetition* had to undergo. Six years later (i.e. in the period of his religious maturity) he

wrote in his *Journal* (X2A 15, cf. Dru's translation, No. 965): "Oh, when once I am dead — then *Fear and Trembling* alone will be enough to give me the name of an immortal author. Then it will be read, then too it will be translated into foreign tongues. People will almost shudder at the frightful pathos of the book. But at the time when it was written, when the man who was regarded as the author went about in the incognito of a *flâneur* and seemed to be nothing but wantonness and wit and frivolity — then nobody could well comprehend the seriousness of it. O ye fools, never was the book so serious as then. Just that appearance was the genuine expression of the horror. If the author had appeared serious, the horror would have been less. Reduplication is the monstrous thing in this horror. But when I am dead people will make of me an imaginary figure, a gloomy figure — and then the book will be terrifying.

"But one true word was already uttered in it, when attention was directed to the difference between the poet and the hero. In me there is a predominant poetic tendency, and yet the mystification was essentially this, that *Fear and Trembling* reproduced my own life. It was in this sense also the theme was first suggested in the earliest journal." He refers here to the entry which has already been quoted.

But from a religious point of view these two books were antiquated before they were published. In view of his profounder experience S.K. could no longer rest satisfied with the easy position of a poet somewhere between the "knight of infinite resignation" and the "knight of faith." In fact these categories never again cropped up in his writings. They were plainly inadequate. His deeper apprehension of what it is to be a Christian is revealed in the *Three Edifying Discourses* which were published on the same date, October 16, but were written after the "thunderstorm," which cleared the air much more thoroughly than he knew when he rewrote the last pages of *Repetition.*

From his new point of view he perceived that not only the first either/or but the second also failed to state the case adequately. I agree with Professor Hirsch in surmising that he therefore felt impelled to restate it in the big book which he called *Stages on Life's Way.* The long "passion story" in that book may be understood as a rectification of *Repetition,* and the concluding remarks of Frater Taciturnus as a rectification of *Fear and Trembling.* Till this work was done S.K. was not free to go on to the *Postscript,* the belated sequel of the *Fragments,* and then to his decisive religious works.

FEAR AND TREMBLING

A DIALECTICAL LYRIC

BY JOHANNES DE SILENTIO

COPENHAGEN 1843

[OCTOBER 16]

Was Tarquinius Superbus in seinem Garten mit den Mohnköpfen sprach, verstand der Sohn, aber nicht der Bote.

Hamann.

PREFACE

NOT MERELY IN the realm of commerce but in the world of ideas as well our age is organizing a regular clearance sale. Everything is to be had at such a bargain that it is questionable whether in the end there is anybody who will want to bid. Every speculative price-fixer who conscientiously directs attention to the significant march of modern philosophy, every *Privatdocent,* tutor, and student, every crofter and cottar in philosophy, is not content with doubting everything but goes further. Perhaps it would be untimely and ill-timed to ask them where they are going, but surely it is courteous and unobtrusive to regard it as certain that they have doubted everything, since otherwise it would be a queer thing for them to be going further. This preliminary movement they have therefore all of them made, and presumably with such ease that they do not find it necessary to let drop a word about the how; for not even he who anxiously and with deep concern sought a little enlightenment was able to find any such thing, any guiding sign, any litde dietetic prescription, as to how one was to comport oneself in supporting this prodigious task. "But Descartes did it." Descartes, a venerable, humble and honest thinker, whose writings surely no one can read without the deepest emotion, did what he said and said what he did. Alas, alack, that is a great rarity in our times! Descartes, as he repeatedly affirmed, did not doubt in matters of faith. "*Memores tamen, ut jam dictum est, huic lumini naturali tamdiu tantum esse credendum, quamdiu nihil contrarium a Deo ipso revelatur…. Praeter caeter autem, memoriae nostrae pro summa regula est infigendum, ea quae nobis a Deo revelata sunt, ut omnium certissima esse credenda*; *et quamvis forte lumen rationis, quam maxime clarum et evidens, aliud quid nobis suggerere videretur, soli tamen auctoritati divinae potius quam proprio nostro judicio fidem esse*

adhibendam.” He did not cry, “Fire!” nor did he make it a duty for everyone to doubt; for Descartes was a quiet and solitary thinker, not a bellowing night-watchman; he modestly admitted that his method had importance for him alone and was justified in part by the bungled knowledge of his earlier years. “*Ne quis igitur putet me hic traditurum aliquam methodum quam unusquisque sequi debeat ad recte regendum rationem*; *illam enim tantum quam ipsemet secutus sum exponere decrevi.… Sed simul ac illum studiorum curriculum absolvi (sc. juventutis*), *quo decurso mos est in eruditorum cooptare, plane aliud coepi cogitare. Tot enim me dubiis totque erroribus imblicatum esse animadverti, ut omnes discendi conatus nihil aliud mihi profuisse judicarem, quam quod ignorantiam meam magis magisque detexissem.”*

What those ancient Greeks (who also had some understanding of philosophy) regarded as a task for a whole lifetime, seeing that dexterity in doubting is not acquired in a few days or weeks, what the veteran combatant attained when he had preserved the equilibrium of doubt through all the pitfalls he encountered, who intrepidly denied the certainty of sense-perception and the certainty of the processes of thought, incorruptibly defied the apprehensions of self-love and the insinuations of sympathy — that is where everybody begins in our time.

In our time nobody is content to stop with faith but wants to go further. It would perhaps be rash to ask where these people are going, but it is surely a sign of breeding and culture for me to assume that everybody has faith, for otherwise it would be queer for them to be… going further. In those old days it was different, then faith was a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that dexterity in faith is not acquired in a few days or weeks. When the tried oldster drew near to his last hour, having fought the good fight and kept the faith, his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten that fear and trembling which chastened the youth, which the man

indeed held in check, but which no man quite outgrows.-.except as he might succeed at the earliest opportunity in going further. Where these revered figures arrived, that is the point where everybody in our day begins to go further.

The present writer is nothing of a philosopher, he has not understood the System, does not know whether it actually exists, whether it is completed; already he has enough for his weak head in the thought of what a prodigious head everybody in our day must have, since everybody has such a prodigious thought. Even though one were capable of converting the whole content of faith into the form of a concept, it does not follow that one has adequately conceived faith and understands how one got into it, or how it got into one. The present writer is nothing of a philosopher; he is, *poetice et eleganter,* an amateur writer who neither writes the System nor *promises* of the System, who neither subscribes to the System nor ascribes anything to it. He writes because for him it is a luxury which becomes the more agreeable and more evident, the fewer there are who buy and read what he writes. He can easily foresee his fate in an age when passion has been obliterated in favor of learning, in an age when an author who wants to have readers must take care to write in such a way that the book can easily be perused during the afternoon nap, and take care to fashion his outward deportment in likeness to the picture of that polite young gardener in the advertisement sheet, who with hat in hand, and with a good certificate from the place where he last served, recommends himself to the esteemed public. He foresees his fate — that he will be entirely ignored. He has a presentiment of the dreadful event, that a jealous criticism will many a time let him feel the birch; he trembles at the still more dreadful thought that one or another enterprising scribe, a gulper of paragraphs, who to rescue learning is always willing to do with other peoples' writings what Trop "to save appearances" magnanimously resolved to do, though it were "the

destruction of the human race" — that is, he will slice the author into paragraphs, and will do it with the same inflexibility as the man who in the interest of the science of punctuation divided his discourse by counting the words, so that there were fifty words for a period and thirty-five for a semicolon.

I prostrate myself with the profoundest deference before every systematic "bag-peerer" at the custom house, protesting, "This is not the System, it has nothing whatever to do with the System." I call down every blessing upon the System and upon the Danish shareholders in this omnibus — for a tower it is hardly likely to become. I wish them all and sundry good luck and all prosperity.

Respectfully,

JOHANNES DE SILENTIO

PRELUDE

ONCE UPON A time there was a man who as a child had heard the beautiful story about how God tempted Abraham, and how he endured temptation, kept the faith, and a second time received again a son contrary to expectation. When the child became older he read the same story with even greater admiration, for life had separated what was united in the pious simplicity of the child. The older he became, the more frequently his mind reverted to that story, his enthusiasm became greater and greater, and yet he was less and less able to understand the story. At last in his interest for that he forgot everything else; his soul had only one wish, to see Abraham, one longing, to have been witness to that event. His desire was not to behold the beautiful countries of the Orient, or the earthly glory of the Promised Land, or that godfearing couple whose old age God had blessed, or the venerable figure of the aged patriarch, or the vigorous young manhood of Isaac whom God had bestowed upon Abraham — he saw no reason why the same thing might not have taken place on a barren heath in Denmark. His yearning was to accompany them on the three days' journey when Abraham rode with sorrow before him and with Isaac by his side. His only wish was to be present at the time when Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah afar off, at the time when he left the asses behind and went alone with Isaac up unto the mountain; for what his mind was intent upon was not the ingenious web of imagination but the shudder of thought.

That man was not a thinker, he felt no need of getting beyond faith; he deemed it the most glorious thing to be remembered as the father of it, an enviable lot to possess it, even though no one else were to know it.

That man was not a learned exegete, he didn't know Hebrew, if he had known Hebrew, he perhaps would easily have understood the story and

Abraham.

I

"And God tempted Abraham and said unto him, Take Isaac, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon the mountain which I will show thee."

It was early in the morning, Abraham arose betimes, he had the asses saddled, left his tent, and Isaac with him, but Sarah looked out of the window after them until they had passed down the valley and she could see them no more. They rode in silence for three days. On the morning of the fourth day Abraham said never a word, but he lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah afar off. He left the young men behind and went on alone with Isaac beside him up to the mountain. But Abraham said to himself, "I will not conceal from Isaac whither this course leads him." He stood still, he laid his hand upon the head of Isaac in benediction, and Isaac bowed to receive the blessing. And Abraham's face was fatherliness, his look was mild, his speech encouraging. But Isaac was unable to understand him, his soul could not be exalted; he embraced Abraham's knees, he fell at his feet imploringly, he begged for his young life, for the fair hope of his future, he called to mind the joy in Abraham's house, he called to mind the sorrow and loneliness. Then Abraham lifted up the boy, he walked with him by his side, and his talk was full of comfort and exhortation. But Isaac could not understand him. He climbed Mount Moriah, but Isaac understood him not. Then for an instant he turned away from him, and when Isaac again saw Abraham's face it was changed, his glance was wild, his form was horror. He seized Isaac by the throat, threw him to the ground, and said, "Stupid boy, dost thou then suppose that I am thy father? I am an idolater. Dost thou suppose that this is God's bidding? No, it is my desire." Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his terror, "O God in heaven, have compassion

upon me. God of Abraham, have compassion upon me. If I have no father upon earth, be Thou my father!" But Abraham in a low voice said to himself, "O Lord in heaven, I thank Thee. After all it is better for him to believe that I am a monster, rather than that he should lose faith in Thee."

When the child must be weaned, the mother blackens her breast, it would indeed be a shame that the breast should look delicious when the child must not have it. So the child believes that the breast has changed, but the mother is the same, her glance is as loving and tender as ever. Happy the person who had no need of more dreadful expedients for weaning the child!

II

It was early in the morning, Abraham arose betimes, he embraced Sarah, the bride of his old age, and Sarah kissed Isaac, who had taken away her reproach, who was her pride, her hope for all time. So they rode on in silence along the way, and Abraham's glance was fixed upon the ground until the fourth day when he lifted up his eyes and saw afar off Mount Moriah, but his glance turned again to the ground. Silently he laid the wood in order, he bound Isaac, in silence he drew the knife — then he saw the ram which God had prepared. Then he offered that and returned home.… From that time on Abraham became old, he could not forget that God had required this of him. Isaac throve as before, but Abraham's eyes were darkened, and he knew joy no more.

When the child has grown big and must be weaned, the mother virginally hides her breast, so the child has no more a mother. Happy the child which did not in another way lose its mother.

III

It was early in the morning, Abraham arose betimes, he kissed Sarah, the young mother, and Sarah kissed Isaac, her delight, her joy at all times. And

Abraham rode pensively along the way, he thought of Hagar and of the son whom he drove out into the wilderness, he climbed Mount Moriah, he drew the knife.

It was a quiet evening when Abraham rode out alone, and he rode to Mount Moriah; he threw himself upon his face, he prayed God to forgive him his sin, that he had been willing to offer Isaaq, that the father had forgotten his duty toward the son. Often he rode his lonely way, but he found no rest. He could not comprehend that it was a sin to be willing to offer to God the best thing he possessed, that for which he would many times have given his life; and if it was a sin, if he had not loved Isaac as he did, then he could not understand that it might be forgiven. For what sin could be more dreadful?

When the child must be weaned, the mother too is not without sorrow at the thought that she and the child are separated more and more, that the child which first lay under her heart and later reposed upon her breast will be so near to her no more. So they mourn together for the brief period of mourning. Happy the person who has kept the child as near and needed not to sorrow any more!

IV

It was early in the morning, everything was prepared for the journey in Abraham's house. He bade Sarah farewell, and Eleazar, the faithful servant, followed him along the way, until he turned back. They rode together in harmony, Abraham and Isaac, until they came to Mount Moriah. But Abraham prepared everything for the sacrifice, calmly and quietly; but when he turned and drew the knife, Isaac saw that his left hand was clenched in despair, that a tremor passed through his body — but

Then they returned again home, and Sarah hastened to meet them, but Isaac had lost his faith. No word of this had ever been spoken in the world,

and Isaac never talked to anyone about what he had seen, and Abraham did not suspect that anyone had seen it.

When the child must be weaned, the mother has stronger food in readiness, lest the child should perish. Happy the person who has

Thus and in many like ways that man of whom we are speaking thought concerning this event. Every time he returned home after wandering to Mount Moriah, he sank down with weariness, he folded his hands and said, “No one is so great as Abraham! Who is capable of understanding him?”

A PANEGYRIC UPON ABRAHAM

IF THERE WERE no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the foundation of all there lay only a wildly seething power which writhing with obscure passions produced everything that is great and everything that is insignificant, if a bottomless void never satiated lay hidden beneath all — what then would life be but despair? If such were the case, if there were no sacred bond which united mankind, if one generation arose after another like the leafage in the forest, if the one generation replaced the other like the song of birds in the forest, if the human race passed through the world as the ship goes through the sea, like the wind through the desert, a thoughtless and fruitless activity, if an eternal oblivion were always lurking hungrily for its prey and there was no power strong enough to wrest it from its maw — how empty then and comfortless life would be! But therefore it is not thus, but as God created man and woman, so too He fashioned the hero and the poet or orator. The poet cannot do what that other does, he can only admire, love and rejoice in the hero. Yet he too is happy, and not less so, for the hero is as it were his better nature, with which he is in love, rejoicing in the fact that this after all is not himself, that his love can be admiration. He is the genius of recollection, can do nothing except call to mind what has been done, do nothing but admire what has been done; he contributes nothing of his own, but is jealous of the intrusted treasure. He follows the option of his heart, but when he has found what he sought, he wanders before every man's door with his song and with his oration, that all may admire the hero as he does, be proud of the hero as he is. This is his achievement, his humble work, this is his faithful service in the house of the hero. If he thus remains true to his love, he strives day and night against the cunning of oblivion which would trick him out of his hero, then he has completed his

work, then he is gathered to the hero, who has loved him just as faithfully, for the poet is as it were the hero's better nature, powerless it may be as a memory is, but also transfigured as a memory is. Hence no one shall be forgotten who was great, and though time tarries long, though a cloud of misunderstanding takes the hero away, his lover comes nevertheless, and the longer the time that has passed, the more faithfully will he cling to him.

No, not one shall be forgotten who was great in the world. But each was great in his own way, and each in proportion to the greatness of that which he *loved.* For he who loved himself became great by himself, and he who loved other men became great by his selfless devotion, but he who loved God became greater than all. Everyone shall be remembered, but each became great in proportion to his *expectation.* One became great by expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal, but he who expected the impossible became greater than all. Everyone shall be remembered, but each was great in proportion to the greatness of that with which he *strove.* For he who strove with the world became great by overcoming the world, and he who strove with himself became great by overcoming himself, but he who strove with God became greater than all. So there was strife in the world, man against man, one against a thousand, but he who strove with God was greater than all. So there was strife upon earth: there was one who overcame all by his power, and there was one who overcame God by his impotence. There was one who relied upon himself and gained all, there was one who secure in his strength sacrificed all, but he who believed God was greater than all. There was one who was great by reason of his power, and one who was great by reason of his wisdom, and one who was great by reason of his hope, and one who was great by reason of his love; but Abraham was greater than all, great by reason of his power whose strength is impotence, great by reason of his wisdom whose secret is

foolishness, great by reason of his hope whose form is madness, great by reason of the love which is hatred of oneself.

By faith Abraham went out from the land of his fathers and became a sojourner in the land of promise. He left one thing behind, took one thing with him: he left his earthly understanding behind and took faith with him — otherwise he would not have wandered forth but would have thought this unreasonable. By faith he was a stranger in the land of promise, and there was nothing to recall what was dear to him, but by its novelty everything tempted his soul to melancholy yearning — and yet he was God's elect, in whom the Lord was well pleased! Yea, if he had been disowned, cast off from God's grace, he could have comprehended it better; but now it was like a mockery of him and of his faith. There was in the world one too who lived in banishment from the fatherland he loved. He is not forgotten, nor his Lamentations when he sorrowfully sought and found what he had lost. There is no song of Lamentations by Abraham. It is human to lament, human to weep with them that weep, but it is greater to believe, more blessed to contemplate the believer.

By faith Abraham received the promise that in his seed all races of the world would be blessed. Time passed, the possibility was there, Abraham believed; time passed, it became unreasonable, Abraham believed. There was in the world one who had an expectation, time passed, the evening drew nigh, he was not paltry enough to have forgotten his expectation, therefore he too shall not be forgotten. Then he sorrowed, and sorrow did not deceive him as life had done, it did for him all it could, in the sweetness of sorrow he possessed his delusive expectation. It is human to sorrow, human to sorrow with them that sorrow, but it is greater to believe, more blessed to contemplate the believer. There is no song of Lamentations by Abraham. He did not mournfully count the days while time passed, he did not look at Sarah with a suspicious glance, wondering whether she were

growing old, he did not arrest the course of the sun, that Sarah might not grow old, and his expectation with her. He did not sing lullingly before Sarah his mournful lay. Abraham became old, Sarah became a laughing-stock in the land, and yet he was God's elect and inheritor of the promise that in his seed all the races of the world would be blessed. So were it not better if he had not been God's elect? What is it to be God's elect? It is to be denied in youth the wishes of youth, so as with great pains to get them fulfilled in old age. But Abraham believed and held fast the expectation. If Abraham had wavered, he would have given it up. If he had said to God, "Then perhaps it is not after all Thy will that it should come to pass, so I will give up the wish. It was my only wish, it was my bliss. My soul is sincere, I hide no secret malice because Thou didst deny it to me" — he would not have been forgotten, he would have saved many by his example, yet he would not be the father of faith. For it is great to give up one's wish, but it is greater to hold it fast after having given it up, it is great to grasp the eternal, but it is greater to hold fast to the temporal after having given it up.

Then came the fulness of time. If Abraham had not believed, Sarah surely would have been dead of sorrow, and Abraham, dulled by grief, would not have understood the fulfilment but would have smiled at it as at a dream of youth. But Abraham believed, therefore he was young; for he who always hopes for the best becomes old, and he who is always prepared for the worst grows old early, but he who believes preserves an eternal youth. Praise therefore to that story! For Sarah, though stricken in years, was young enough to desire the pleasure of motherhood, and Abraham, though gray-haired, was young enough to wish to be a father. In an outward respect the marvel consists in the fact that it came to pass according to their expectation, in a deeper sense the miracle of faith consists in the fact that Abraham and Sarah were young enough to wish, and that faith had preserved their wish and therewith their youth. He accepted the fulfilment

of the promise, he accepted it by faith, and it came to pass according to the promise and according to his faith — for Moses smote the rock with his rod, but he did not believe.

Then there was joy in Abraham's house, when Sarah became a bride on the day of their golden wedding.

But it was not to remain thus. Still once more Abraham was to be tried. He had fought with that cunning power which invents everything, with that alert enemy which never slumbers, with that old man who outlives all things — he had fought with Time and preserved his faith. Now all the terror of the strife was concentrated in one instant. "And God tempted Abraham and said unto him, Take Isaac, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon the mountain which I will show thee."

So all was lost — more dreadfully than if it had never come to pass! So the Lord was only making sport of Abraham! He made miraculously the preposterous actual, and now in turn He would annihilate it. It was indeed foolishness, but Abraham did not laugh at it like Sarah when the promise was announced. All was lost! Seventy years of faithful expectation, the brief joy at the fulfilment of faith. Who then is he that plucks away the old man's staff, who is it that requires that he himself shall break it? Who is he that would make a man's gray hairs comfortless, who is it that requires that he himself shall do it? Is there no compassion for the venerable oldling, none for the innocent child? And yet Abraham was God's elect, and it was the Lord who imposed the trial. All would now be lost. The glorious memory to be preserved by the human race, the promise in Abraham's seed — this was only a whim, a fleeting thought which the Lord had had, which Abraham should now obliterate. That glorious treasure which was just as old as faith in Abraham's heart, many, many years older than Isaac, the fruit of Abraham's life, sanctified by prayers, matured in *conflict* — the blessing

upon Abraham's lips, this fruit was now to be plucked prematurely and remain without significance. For what significance had it when Isaac was to be sacrificed? That sad and yet blissful hour when Abraham was to take leave of all that was dear to him, when yet once more he was to lift up his head, when his countenance would shine like that of the Lord, when he would concentrate his whole soul in a blessing which was potent to make Isaac blessed all his days — this time would not come! For he would indeed take leave of Isaac, but in such a way that he himself would remain behind; death would separate them, but in such a way that Isaac remained its prey. The old man would not be joyful in death as he laid his hands in blessing upon Isaac, but he would be weary of life as he laid violent hands upon Isaac. And it was God who tried him. Yea, woe, woe unto the messenger who had come before Abraham with such tidings! Who would have ventured to be the emissary of this sorrow? But it was God who tried Abraham.

Yet Abraham believed, and believed for this life. Yea, if his faith had been only for a future life, he surely would have cast everything away in order to hasten out of this world to which he did not belong. But Abraham's faith was not of this sort, if there be such a faith; for really this is not faith but the furthest possibility of faith which has a presentiment of its object at the extremest limit of the horizon, yet is separated from it by a yawning abyss within which despair carries on its game. But Abraham believed precisely for this life, that he was to grow old in the land, honored by the people, blessed in his generation, remembered forever in Isaac, his dearest thing in life, whom he embraced with a love for which it would be a poor expression to say that he loyally fulfilled the father's duty of loving the son, as indeed is evinced in the words of the summons, "the son whom thou lovest." Jacob had twelve sons, and one of them he loved; Abraham had only one, the son whom he loved.

Yet Abraham believed and did not doubt, he believed the preposterous. If Abraham had doubted — then he would have done something else, something glorious; for how could Abraham do anything but what is great and glorious! He would have marched up to Mount Moriah, he would have cleft the fire-wood, lit the pyre, drawn the knife — he would have cried out to God, “Despise not this sacrifice, it is not the best thing I possess, that I know well, for what is an old man in comparison with the child of promise; but it is the best I am able to give Thee. Let Isaac never come to know this, that he may console himself with his youth.” He would have plunged the knife into his own breast. He would have been admired in the world, and his name would not have been forgotten; but it is one thing to be admired, and another to be the guiding star which saves the anguished.

But Abraham believed. He did not pray for himself, with the hope of moving the Lord — it was only when the righteous punishment was decreed upon Sodom and Gomorrha that Abraham came forward with his prayers.

We read in those holy books: “And God tempted Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, Abraham, where art thou? And he said, Here am I.” Thou to whom my speech is addressed, was such the case with thee? When afar off thou didst see the heavy dispensation of providence approaching thee, didst thou not say to the mountains, Fall on me, and to the hills, Cover me? Or if thou wast stronger, did not thy foot move slowly along the way, longing as it were for the old path? When a call was issued to thee, didst thou answer, or didst thou not answer perhaps in a low voice, whisperingly? Not so Abraham: joyfully, buoyandy, confidently, with a loud voice, he answered, “Here am I.” We read further: “And Abraham rose early in the morning” — as though it were to a festival, so he hastened, and early in the morning he had come to the place spoken of, to Mount Moriah. He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eleazar. Indeed who could understand him? Had not the temptation by its very nature exacted of him an oath of silence? He cleft the

wood, he bound Isaac, he lit the pyre, he drew the knife. My hearer, there was many a father who believed that with his son he lost everything that was dearest to him in the world, that he was deprived of every hope for the future, but yet there was none that was the child of promise in the sense that Isaac was for Abraham. There was many a father who lost his child; but then it was God, it was the unalterable, the unsearchable will of the Almighty, it was His hand took the child. Not so with Abraham. For him was reserved a harder trial, and Isaac's fate was laid along with the knife in Abraham's hand. And there he stood, the old man, with his only hope! But he did not doubt, he did not look anxiously to the right or to the left, he did not challenge heaven with his prayers. He knew that it was God the Almighty who was trying him, he knew that it was the hardest sacrifice that could be required of him; but he knew also that no sacrifice was too hard when God required it — and he drew the knife.

Who gave strength to Abraham's arm? Who held his right hand up so that it did not fall limp at his side? He who gazes at this becomes paralyzed. Who gave strength to Abraham's soul, so that his eyes did not grow dim, so that he saw neither Isaac nor the ram? He who gazes at this becomes blind. — And yet rare enough perhaps is the man who becomes paralyzed and blind, still more rare one who worthily recounts what happened. We all know it — it was only a trial.

If Abraham when he stood upon Mount Moriah had doubted, if he had gazed about him irresolutely, if when he drew the knife he had by chance discovered the ram, if God had permitted him to offer it instead of Isaac — then he would have betaken himself home, everything would have been the same, he has Sarah, he retained Isaac, and yet how changed! For his retreat would have been a flight, his salvation an accident, his reward dishonor, his future perhaps perdition. Then he would have borne witness neither to his faith nor to God's grace, but would have testified only how dreadful it is to

march out to Mount Moriah. Then Abraham would not have been forgotten, nor would Mount Moriah, this mountain would then be mentioned, not like Ararat where the Ark landed, but would be spoken of as a consternation, because it was here that Abraham doubted.

Venerable Father Abraham! In marching home from Mount Moriah thou hadst no need of a panegyric which might console thee for thy loss; for thou didst gain all and didst retain Isaac. Was it not so? Never again did the Lord take him from thee, but thou didst sit at table joyfully with him in thy tent, as thou dost in the beyond to all eternity. Venerable Father Abraham! Thousands of years have run their course since those days, but thou hast need of no tardy lover to snatch the memorial of thee from the power of oblivion, for every language calls thee to remembrance — and yet thou dost reward thy lover more gloriously than does any other; hereafter thou dost make him blessed in thy bosom; here thou dost enthral his eyes and his heart by the marvel of thy deed. Venerable Father Abraham! Thou who first wast sensible of and didst first bear witness to that prodigious passion which disdains the dreadful conflict with the rage of the elements and with the powers of creation in order to strive with God; thou who first didst know that highest passion, the holy, pure and humble expression of the divine madness which the pagans admired — forgive him who would speak in praise of thee, if he does not do it fittingly. He spoke humbly, as if it were the desire of his own heart, he spoke briefly, as it becomes him to do, but he will never forget that thou hadst need of a hundred years to obtain a son of old age against expectation, that thou didst have to draw the knife before retaining Isaac; he will never forget that in a hundred and thirty years thou didst not get further than to faith.

PROBLEMATA

PRELIMINARY EXPECTORATION

AN OLD PROVERB fetched from the outward aspect of the visible world says: "Only the man that works gets the bread." Strangely enough this proverb does not aptly apply in that world to which it expressly belongs. For the outward world is subjected to the law of imperfection, and again and again the experience is repeated that he too who does not work gets the bread, and that he who sleeps gets it more abundantly than the man who works. In the outward world everything is made payable to the bearer, this world is in bondage to the law of indifference, and to him who has the ring, the spirit of the ring is obedient, whether he be Noureddin or Aladdin, and he who has the world's treasure, has it, however he got it. It is different in the world of spirit. Here an eternal divine order prevails, here it does not rain both upon the just and upon the unjust, here the sun does not shine both upon the good and upon the evil, here it holds good that only he who works gets the bread, only he who was in anguish finds repose, only he who descends into the underworld rescues the beloved, only he who draws the knife gets Isaac. He who will not work does not get the bread but remains deluded, as the gods deluded Orpheus with an airy figure in place of the loved one, deluded him because he was effeminate, not courageous, because he was a cithara-player, not a man. Here it is of no use to have Abraham for one's father, nor to have seventeen ancestors — he who will not work must take note of what is written about the maidens of Israel, for he gives birth to wind, but he who is willing to work gives birth to his own father.

There is a knowledge which would presumptuously introduce into the world of spirit the same law of indifference under which the external world sighs. It counts it enough to think the great — other work is not necessary. But therefore it doesn't get the bread, it perishes of hunger, while

everything is transformed into gold. And what does it really know? There were many thousands of Greek contemporaries, and countless numbers in subsequent generations, who knew all the triumphs of Miltiades, but only one was made sleepless by them. There were countless generations which knew by rote, word for word, the story of Abraham — how many were made sleepless by it?

Now the story of Abraham has the remarkable property that it is always glorious, however poorly one may understand it; yet here again the proverb applies, that all depends upon whether one is willing to labor and be heavy laden. But they will not labor, and yet they would understand the story. They exalt Abraham — but how? They express the whole thing in perfectly general terms: "The great thing was that he loved God so much that he was willing to sacrifice to Him the best." That is very true, but "the best" is an indefinite expression. In the course of thought, as the tongue wags on, Isaac and "the best" are confidently identified, and he who meditates can very well smoke his pipe during the meditation, and the auditor can very well stretch out his legs in comfort. In case that rich young man whom Christ encountered on the road had sold all his goods and given to the poor, we should extol him, as we do all that is great, though without labor we would not understand him — and yet he would not have become an Abraham, in spite of the fact that he offered his best. What they leave out of Abraham's history is dread; for to money I have no ethical obligation, but to the son the father has the highest and most sacred obligation. Dread, however, is a perilous thing for effeminate natures, hence they forget it, and in spite of that they want to talk about Abraham. So they talk — in the course of the oration they use indifferently the two terms, Isaac and "the best." All goes famously. However, if it chanced that among the auditors there was one who suffered from insomnia — then the most dreadful, the profoundest tragic and comic misunderstanding lies very close. He went home, he would

do as Abraham did, for the son is indeed "the best." If the orator got to know of it, he perhaps went to him, he summoned all his clerical dignity, he shouted, "O abominable man, offscouring of society, what devil possessed thee to want to murder thy son?" And the parson, who had not been conscious of warmth or perspiration in preaching about Abraham, is astonished at himself, at the earnest wrath which he thundered down upon that poor man. He was delighted with himself, for he had never spoken with such verve and unction. He said to himself and to his wife, "I am an orator. What I lacked was the occasion. When I talked about Abraham on Sunday I did not feel moved in the least." In case the same orator had a little superabundance of reason which might be lost, I think he would have lost it if the sinner were to say calmly and with dignity, "That in fact is what you yourself preached on Sunday." How could the parson be able to get into his head such a consequence? And yet it was so, and the mistake was merely that he didn't know what he was saying. Would there were a poet who might resolve to prefer such situations, rather than the stuff and nonsense with which comedies and novels are filled! The comic and the tragic here touch one another at the absolute point of infinity. The parson's speech was perhaps in itself ludicrous enough, but it became infinitely ludicrous by its effect, and yet this consequence was quite natural. Or if the sinner, without raising any objection, were to be converted by the parson's severe lecture, if the zealous clergyman were to go joyfully home, rejoicing in the consciousness that he not only was effective in the pulpit, but above all by his irresistible power as a pastor of souls, who on Sunday roused the congregation to enthusiasm, and on Monday like a cherub with a flaming sword placed himself before the man who by his action wanted to put to shame the old proverb, that "things don't go on in the world as the parson preaches."

If on the other hand the sinner was not convinced, his situation is pretty tragic. Presumably he would be executed or sent to the lunatic asylum, in short, he would have become unhappy in relation to so-called reality — in another sense I can well think that Abraham made him happy, for he that labors does not perish.

How is one to explain the contradiction illustrated by that orator? Is it because Abraham had a prescriptive right to be a great man, so that what he did is great, and when another does the same it is sin, a heinous sin? In that case I do not wish to participate in such thoughtless eulogy. If faith does not make it a holy act to be willing to murder one's son, then let the same condemnation be pronounced upon Abraham as upon every other man. If a man perhaps lacks courage to carry his thought through, and to say that Abraham was a murderer, then it is surely better to acquire this courage, rather than waste time upon undeserved eulogies. The ethical expression for what Abraham did is, that he would murder Isaac; the religious expression is, that he would sacrifice Isaac; but precisely in this contradiction consists the dread which can well make a man sleepless, and yet Abraham is not what he is without this dread. Or perhaps he did not do at all what is related, but something altogether different, which is accounted for by the circumstances of his times — then let us forget him, for it is not worth while to remember *that* past which cannot become a present. Or had perhaps that orator forgotten something which corresponds to the ethical forgetfulness of the fact that Isaac was the son? For when faith is eliminated by becoming null or nothing, then there only remains the crude fact that Abraham wanted to murder Isaac — which is easy enough for anyone to imitate who has not faith, the faith, that is to say, which makes it hard for him.

For my part I do not lack the courage to think a thought whole. Hitherto there has been no thought I have been afraid of; if I should run across such a

thought, I hope that I have at least the sincerity to say, “I am afraid of this thought, it stirs up something else in me, and therefore I will not think it. If in this I do wrong, the punishment will not fail to follow.” If I had recognized that it was the verdict of truth that Abraham was a murderer, I do not know whether I would have been able to silence my pious veneration for him. However, if I had thought that, I presumably would have kept silent about it, for one should not initiate others into such thoughts. But Abraham is no dazzling illusion, he did not sleep into renown, it was not a whim of fate.

Can one then speak plainly about Abraham without incurring the danger that an individual might in bewilderment go ahead and do likewise? If I do not dare to speak freely, I will be completely silent about Abraham, above all I will not disparage him in such a way that precisely thereby he becomes a pitfall for the weak. For if one makes faith everything, that is, makes it what it is, then, according to my way of thinking, one may speak of it without danger in our age, which hardly extravagates in the matter of faith, and it is only by faith one attains likeness to Abraham, not by murder. If one makes love a transitory mood, a voluptuous emotion in a man, then one only lays pitfalls for the weak when one would talk about the exploits of love. Transient emotions every man surely has, but if as a consequence of such emotions one would do the terrible thing which love has sanctified as an immortal exploit, then all is lost, including the exploit and the bewildered doer of it.

So one surely can talk about Abraham, for the great can never do harm when it is apprehended in its greatness; it is like a two-edged sword which slays and saves. If it should fall to my lot to talk on the subject, I would begin by showing what a pious and God-fearing man Abraham was, worthy to be called God’s elect. Only upon such a man is imposed such a test. But where is there such a man? Next I would describe how Abraham loved

Isaac. To this end I would pray all good spirits to come to my aid, that my speech might be as glowing as paternal love is. I hope that I should be able to describe it in such a way that there would not be many a father in the realms and territories of the King who would dare to affirm that he loved his son in such a way. But if he does not love like Abraham, then every thought of offering Isaac would be not a trial but a base temptation *[Anfechtung]*. On this theme one could talk for several Sundays, one need be in no haste. The consequence would be that, if one spoke rightly, some few of the fathers would not require to hear more, but for the time being they would be joyful if they really succeeded in loving their sons as Abraham loved. If there was one who, after having heard about the greatness, but also about the dreadfulness of Abraham's deed, ventured to go forth upon that road, I would saddle my horse and ride with him. At every stopping-place till we came to Mount Moriah I would explain to him that he still could turn back, could repent the misunderstanding that he was called to be tried in such a conflict, that he could confess his lack of courage, so that God Himself must take Isaac, if He would have him. It is my conviction that such a man is not repudiated but may become blessed like all the others. But in time he does not become blessed. Would they not, even in the great ages of faith, have passed this judgment upon such a man? I knew a person who on one occasion could have saved my life if he had been magnanimous. He said, "I see well enough what I could do, but I do not dare to. I am afraid that later I might lack strength and that I should regret it." He was not magnanimous, but who for this cause would not continue to love him?

Having spoken thus and moved the audience so that at least they had sensed the dialectical conflict of faith and its gigantic passion, I would not give rise to the error on the part of the audience that "he then has faith in such a high degree that it is enough for us to hold on to his skirts." For I

would add, "I have no faith at all, I am by nature a shrewd pate, and every such person always has great difficulty in making the movements of faith — not that I attach, however, in and for itself, *any value to this difficulty which through the overcoming of it brought the clever head further than the point which the simplest and most ordinary man reaches more easily*."

After all, in the poets love has its priests, and sometimes one hears a voice which knows how to defend it; but of faith one hears never a word. Who speaks in honor of this passion? Philosophy goes further. Theology sits rouged at the window and courts its favor, offering to sell her charms to philosophy. It is supposed to be difficult to understand Hegel, but to understand Abraham is a trifle. To go beyond Hegel is a miracle, but to get beyond Abraham is the easiest thing of all. I for my part have devoted a good deal of time to the understanding of the Hegelian philosophy, I believe also that I understand it tolerably well, but when in spite of the trouble I have taken there are certain passages I cannot understand, I am foolhardy enough to think that he himself has not been quite clear. All this I do easily and naturally, my head does not suffer from it. But on the other hand when I have to think of Abraham, I am as though annihilated. I catch sight every moment of that enormous paradox which is the substance of Abraham's life, every moment I am repelled, and my thought in spite of all its passion cannot get a hairs-breadth further. I strain every muscle to get a view of it — that very instant I am paralyzed.

I am not unacquainted with what has been admired as great and noble in the world, my soul feels affinity with it, being convinced in all humility that it was in my cause the hero contended, and the instant I contemplate his deed I cry out to myself, *jam tua res agitur*. I *think* myself *into* the hero, but into Abraham I cannot think myself; when I reach the height I fall down, for what I encounter there is the paradox. I do not however mean in any sense to say that faith is something lowly, but on the contrary that it is the highest

thing, and that it is dishonest of philosophy to give something else instead of it and to make light of faith. Philosophy cannot and should not give faith, but it should understand itself and know what it has to offer and take nothing away, and least of all should fool people out of something as if it were nothing. I am not unacquainted with the perplexities and dangers of life, I do not fear them, and I encounter them buoyantly. I am not unacquainted with the dreadful, my memory is a faithful wife, and my imagination is (as I myself am not) a diligent little maiden who all day sits quietly at her work, and in the evening knows how to chat to me about it so prettily that I must look at it, though not always, I must say, is it landscapes, or flowers, or pastoral idyls she paints. I have seen the dreadful before my own eyes, I do not flee from it timorously, but I know very well that, although I advance to meet it, my courage is not the courage of faith, nor anything comparable to it. I am unable to make the movements of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd, for me that is an impossibility…but I do not boast of it. I am convinced that God is love, this thought has for me a primitive lyrical validity. When it is present to me, I am unspeakably blissful, when it is absent, I long for it more vehemently than does the lover for his object; but I do not believe, this courage I lack. For me the love of God is, both in a direct and in an inverse sense, incommensurable with the whole of reality. I am not cowardly enough to whimper and complain, but neither am I deceitful enough to deny that faith is something much higher. I can well endure living in my way, I am joyful and content, but my joy is not that of faith, and in comparison with that it is unhappy. I do not trouble God with my petty sorrows, the particular does not trouble me, I gaze only at my love, and I keep its virginal flame pure and clear. Faith is convinced that God is concerned about the least things. I am content in this life with being married to the left hand, faith is humble

enough to demand the right hand — for that this is humility I do not deny and shall never deny.

But really is everyone in my generation capable of making the movements of faith, I wonder? Unless I am very much mistaken, this generation is rather inclined to be proud of making what they do not even believe I am capable of making, viz. incomplete movements. It is repugnant to me to do as so often is done, namely, to speak inhumanly about a great deed, as though some thousands of years were an immense distance; I would rather speak humanly about it, as though it had occurred yesterday, letting only the greatness be the distance, which either exalts or condemns. So if *(in the quality of a tragic hero,* for I can get no higher) I had been summoned to undertake such a royal progress to Mount Moriah, I know well what I would have done. I would not have been cowardly enough to stay at home, neither would I have laid down or sauntered along the way, nor have forgotten the knife, so that there might be a little delay — I am pretty well convinced that I would have been there on the stroke of the clock and would have had everything in order, perhaps I would have arrived too early in order to get through with it sooner. But I also know what else I would have done. The very instant I mounted the horse I would have said to myself, "Now all is lost. God requires Isaac, I sacrifice him, and with him my joy — yet God is love and continues to be that for me; for in the temporal world God and I cannot talk together, we have no language in common." Perhaps one or another in our age will be foolish enough, or envious enough of the great, to want to make himself and me believe that if I really had done this, I would have done even a greater deed than Abraham; for my prodigious resignation was far more ideal and poetic than Abraham's narrow-mindedness. And yet this is the greatest falsehood, for my prodigious resignation was the surrogate for faith, nor could I do more than make the infinite movement, in order to find myself and again repose

in myself. In that case I would not have loved Isaac as Abraham loved. That I was resolute in making the movement might prove my courage, humanly speaking; that I loved him with all my soul is the presumption apart from which the whole thing becomes a crime, but yet I did not love like Abraham, for in that case I would have held back even at the last minute, though not for this would I have arrived too late at Mount Moriah. Besides, by my behavior I would have spoiled the whole story; for if I had got Isaac back again, I would have been in embarrassment. What Abraham found easiest, I would have found hard, namely to be joyful again with Isaac; for he who with all the infinity of his soul, *proprio motu et propriis auspiciis,* has performed the infinite movement [of resignation] and cannot do more, only retains Isaac with pain.

But what did Abraham do? He arrived neither too *soon* nor too late. He mounted the ass, he rode slowly along the way. All that time he believed — he believed that God would not require Isaac of him, whereas he was willing nevertheless to sacrifice him if it was required. He believed by virtue of the absurd; for there could be no question of human calculation, and it was indeed the absurd that God who required it of him should the next instant recall the requirement. He climbed the mountain, even at the instant when the knife glittered he believed…that God would not require Isaac. He was indeed astonished at the outcome, but by a double-movement he had reached his first position, and therefore he received Isaac more gladly than the first time. Let us go further. We let Isaac be really sacrificed. Abraham believed. He did not believe that some day he would be blessed in the beyond, but that he would be happy here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, could recall to life him who had been sacrificed. He believed by virtue of the absurd; for all human reckoning had long since ceased to function. That sorrow can derange a man's mind, that we see, and it is sad enough. That there is such a thing as strength of will which is able

to haul up so exceedingly close to the wind that it saves a man's reason, even though he remains a little queer, that too one sees. I have no intention of disparaging this; but to be able to lose one's reason, and therefore the whole of finiteness of which reason is the broker, and then by virtue of the absurd to gain precisely the same finiteness — that appalls my soul, but I do not for this cause say that it is something lowly, since on the contrary it is the only prodigy. Generally people are of the opinion that what faith produces is not a work of art, that it is coarse and common work, only for the more clumsy natures; but in fact this is far from the truth. The dialectic of faith is the finest and most remarkable of all; it possesses an elevation, of which indeed I can form a conception, but nothing more. I am able to make from the springboard the great leap whereby I pass into infinity, my back is like that of a tight-rope dancer, having been twisted in my childhood, hence I find this easy; with a one-two-three! I can walk about existence on my head; but the next thing I cannot do, for I cannot perform the miraculous, but can only be astonished by it. Yes, if Abraham the instant he swung his leg over the ass's back had said to himself, "Now, since Isaac is lost, I might just as well sacrifice him here at home, rather than ride the long way to Moriah" — then I should have no need of Abraham, whereas now I bow seven times before his name and seventy times before his deed. For this indeed he did not do, as I can prove by the fact that he was glad at receiving Isaac, heartily glad, that he needed no preparation, no time to concentrate upon the finite and its joy. If this had not been the case with Abraham, then perhaps he might have loved God but not believed; for he who loves God without faith reflects upon himself, he who loves God believingly reflects upon God.

Upon this pinnacle stands Abraham. The last stage he loses sight of is the infinite resignation. He really goes further, and reaches faith; for all these caricatures of faith, the miserable lukewarm indolence which thinks,

“There surely is no instant need, it is not worth while sorrowing before the time,” the pitiful hope which says, “One cannot know what is going to happen…it might possibly be after all” — these caricatures of faith are part and parcel of life’s wretchedness, and the infinite resignation has already consigned them to infinite contempt.

Abraham I cannot understand, in a certain sense there is nothing I can learn from him but astonishment. If people fancy that by considering the outcome of this story they might let themselves be moved to believe, they deceive themselves and want to swindle God out of the first movement of faith, the infinite resignation. They would suck worldly wisdom out of the paradox. Perhaps one or another may succeed in that, for our age is not willing to stop with faith, with its miracle of turning water into wine, it goes further, it turns wine into water.

Would it not be better to stop with faith, and is it not revolting that everybody wants to go further? When in our age (as indeed is proclaimed in various ways) they will not stop with love, where then are they going? To earthly wisdom, to petty calculation, to paltriness and wretchedness, to everything which can make man’s divine origin doubtful. Would it not be better that they should stand still at faith, and that he who stands should take heed lest he fall? For the movements of faith must constantly be made by virtue of the absurd, yet in such a way, be it observed, that one does not lose the finite but gains it every inch. For my part I can well describe the movements of faith, but I cannot make them. When one would learn to make the motions of swimming one can let oneself be hung by a swimming-belt from the ceiling and go through the motions (describe them, so to speak, as we speak of describing a circle), but one is not swimming. In that way I can describe the movements of faith, but when I am thrown into the water, I swim, it is true (for I don’t belong to the beach-waders), but I make other movements, I make the movements of infinity, whereas faith

does the opposite: after having made the movements of infinity, it makes those of finiteness. Hail to him who can make those movements, he performs the marvellous, and I shall never grow tired of admiring him, whether he be Abraham or a slave in Abraham's house whether he be a professor of philosophy or a servant-girl, I look only at the movements. But at them I do look, and do not let myself be fooled, either by myself or by any other man. The knights of the infinite resignation are easily recognized: their gait is gliding and assured. Those on the other hand who carry the jewel of faith are likely to be delusive, because their outward appearance bears a striking resemblance to that which both the infinite resignation and faith profoundly despise…to Philistinism.

I candidly admit that in my practice I have not found any reliable example of the knight of faith, though I would not therefore deny that every second man may be such an example. I have been trying, however, for several years to get on the track of this, and all in vain. People commonly travel around the world to see rivers and mountains, new stars, birds of rare plumage, queerly deformed fishes, ridiculous breeds of men — they abandon themselves to the bestial stupor which gapes at existence, and they think they have seen something. This does not interest me. But if I knew where there was such a knight of faith, I would make a pilgrimage to him on foot, for this prodigy interests me absolutely. I would not let go of him for an instant, every moment I would watch to see how he managed to make the movements, I would regard myself as secured for life, and would divide my time between looking at him and practising the exercises myself, and thus would spend all my time admiring him. As was said, I have not found any such person, but I can well think him. Here he is. Acquaintance made, I am introduced to him. The moment I set eyes on him I instantly push him from me, I myself leap backwards, I clasp my hands and say half aloud, "Good Lord, is this the man? Is it really he? Why, he looks like a tax-

collector!" However, it is the man after all. I draw closer to him, watching his least movements to see whether there might not be visible a little heterogeneous fractional telegraphic message from the infinite, a glance, a look, a gesture, a note of sadness, a smile, which betrayed the infinite in its heterogeneity with the finite. No! I examine his figure from tip to toe to see if there might not be a cranny through which the infinite was peeping. No! He is solid through and through. His tread? It is vigorous, belonging entirely to finiteness; no smartly dressed townsman who walks out to Fresberg on a Sunday afternoon treads the ground more firmly, he belongs entirely to the world, no Philistine more so. *I* One can discover nothing of that aloof and superior nature whereby one recognizes the knight of the infinite. He takes delight in everything, and whenever one sees him taking part in a particular pleasure, he does it with the persistence which is the mark of the earthly man whose soul is absorbed in such things. He tends to his work. So when one looks at him one might suppose that he was a clerk who had lost his soul in an intricate system of book-keeping, so precise is he. He takes a holiday on Sunday. He goes to church. No heavenly glance or any other token of the incommensurable betrays him; if one did not know him, it would be impossible to distinguish him from the rest of the congregation, for his healthy and vigorous hymn-singing proves at the most that he has a good chest. In the afternoon he walks to the forest. He takes delight in everything he sees, in the human swarm, in the new omnibuses, in the water of the Sound; when one meets him on the Beach Road one might suppose he was a shopkeeper taking his fling, that's just the way he disports himself, for he is not a poet, and I have sought in vain to detect in him the poetic incommensurability. Toward evening he walks home, his gait is as indefatigable as that of the postman. On his way he reflects that his wife has surely a special little warm dish prepared for him, e.g. a calf's head roasted, garnished with vegetables. If he were to meet a man like-minded, he *could*

continue as far as East Gate to discourse with him about that dish, with a passion befitting a hotel chef. As it happens, he hasn't four pence to his name, and yet he fully and firmly believes that his wife has that dainty dish for him. If she had it, it would then be an invidious sight for superior people and an inspiring one for the plain man, to see him eat; for his appetite is greater than Esau's. His wife hasn't it — strangely enough, it is quite the same to him. On the way he runs across another man. They talk together for a moment. In the twinkling of an eye he erects a new building, he has at his disposition all the powers necessary for it. The stranger leaves him with the thought that he certainly was a capitalist, while my admired knight thinks, "Yes, if the money were needed, I dare say I could get it." He lounges at an open window and looks out on the square on which he lives; he is interested in everything that goes on, in a rat which slips under the curb, in the children's play, and this with the nonchalance of a girl of sixteen. And yet he is no genius, for in vain I have sought in him the incommensurability of genius. In the evening he smokes his pipe; to look at him one would swear that it was the grocer over the way vegetating in the twilight. He lives as carefree as a ne' er-do-well, and yet he buys up the acceptable time at the dearest price, for he does not do the least thing except by virtue of the absurd. And yet, and yet I could become furious over it — for envy, if for no other reason — because the man has made and every instant is making the movements of infinity. With infinite resignation he has drained the cup of life's profound sadness, he knows the bliss of the infinite, he senses the pain of renouncing everything, the dearest things he possesses in the world, and yet finiteness tastes to him just as good as to one who never knew anything higher, for his continuance in the finite did not bear a trace of the cowed and fearful spirit produced by the process of training; and yet he has this sense of security in enjoying it, as though the finite life were the surest thing of all. And yet, and yet the whole earthly form he exhibits is a new

creation by virtue of the absurd. He resigned everything infinitely, and then he grasped everything again by virtue of the absurd. He constantly makes the movements of infinity, but he does this with such correctness and assurance that he constantly gets the finite out of it, and there is not a second when one has a notion of anything else. It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a dancer to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture, but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture. Perhaps no dancer can do it — that is what this knight does. Most people live dejectedly in worldly sorrow and joy; they are the ones who sit along the wall and do not join in the dance. The knights of infinity are dancers and possess elevation. They make the movements upward, and fall down again; and this too is no mean pastime, nor ungraceful to behold. But whenever they fall down they are not able at once to assume the posture, they vacillate an instant, and this vacillation shows that after all they are strangers in the world. This is more or less strikingly evident in proportion to the art they possess, but even the most artistic knights cannot altogether conceal this vacillation. One need not look at them when they are up in the air, but only the instant they touch or have touched the ground — then one recognizes them. But to be able to fall down in such a way that the same second it looks as if one were standing and walking, to transform the leap of life into a walk, absolutely to express the sublime and the pedestrian — that only these knights can do — and this is the one and only prodigy.

But since the prodigy is so likely to be delusive, I will describe the movements in a definite instance which will serve to illustrate their relation to reality, for upon this everything turns. A young swain falls in love with a princess, and the whole content of his life consists in this love, and yet the situation is such that it is impossible for it to be realized, impossible for it to be translated from ideality into reality. The slaves of paltriness, the frogs in

life's swamp, will naturally cry out, "Such a love is foolishness. The rich brewer's widow is a match fully as good and respectable?' Let them croak in the swamp undisturbed. It is not so with the knight of infinite resignation, he does not give up his love, not for all the glory of the world. He is no fool. First he makes sure that this really is the content of his life, and his soul is too healthy and too proud to squander the least thing upon an inebriation. He is not cowardly, he is not afraid of letting love creep into his most secret, his most hidden thoughts, to let it twine in innumerable coils about every ligament of his consciousness — if the love becomes an unhappy love, he will never be able to tear himself loose from it. He feels a blissful rapture in letting love tingle through every nerve, and yet his soul is as solemn as that of the man who has drained the poisoned goblet and feels how the juice permeates every drop of blood — for this instant is life and death. So when he has thus sucked into himself the whole of love and absorbed himself in it, he does not lack courage to make trial of everything and to venture everything. He surveys the situation of his life, he convokes the swift thoughts, which like tame doves obey his every bidding, he waves his wand over them, and they dart off in all directions. But when they all return, all as messengers of sorrow, and declare to him that it is an impossibility, then he becomes quiet, he dismisses them, he remains alone, and then he performs the movements. If what I am saying is to have any significance, it is requisite that the movement come about normally. So for the first thing, the knight will have power to concentrate the whole content of life and the whole significance of reality in one single wish. If a man lacks this concentration, this intensity, if his soul from the beginning is dispersed in the multifarious, he never comes to the point of making the movement, he will deal shrewdly in life like the capitalists who invest their money in all sorts of securities, so as to gain on the one what they lose on the other — in short, he is not a knight. In the next place the knight will have the power to

concentrate the whole result of the operations of thought in one act of consciousness. If he lacks this intensity, if his soul from the beginning is dispersed in the multifarious, he will never get time to make the movements, he will be constantly running errands in life, never enter into eternity, for even at the instant when he is closest to it he will suddenly discover that he has forgotten something for which he must go back. He will think that to enter eternity is possible the next instant, and that also is perfectly true, but by such considerations one never reaches the point of making the movements, but by their aid one sinks deeper and deeper into the mire.

So the knight makes the movement — but what movement? Will he forget the whole thing? (For in this too there is indeed a kind of concentration.) No! For the knight does not contradict himself, and it is a contradiction to forget the whole content of one's life and yet remain the same man. To become another man he feels no inclination, nor does he by any means regard this as greatness. Only the lower natures forget themselves and become something new. Thus the butterfly has entirely forgotten that it was a caterpillar, perhaps it may in turn so entirely forget it was a butterfly that it becomes a fish. The deeper natures never forget themselves and never become anything else than what they were. So the knight remembers everything, but precisely this remembrance is pain, and yet by the infinite resignation he is reconciled with existence. Love for that princess became for him the expression for an eternal love, assumed a religious character, was transfigured into a love for the Eternal Being, which did to be sure deny him the fulfilment of his love, yet reconciled him again by the eternal consciousness of its validity in the form of eternity, which no reality can take from him. Fools and young men prate about everything being possible for a man. That, however, is a great error. Spiritually speaking, everything is possible, but in the world of the finite

there is much which is not possible. This impossible, however, the knight makes possible by expressing it spiritually, but he expresses it spiritually by waiving his claim to it. The wish which would carry him out into reality, but was wrecked upon the impossibility, is now bent inward, but it is not therefore lost, neither is it forgotten. At one moment it is the obscure emotion of the wish within him which awakens recollections, at another moment he awakens them himself; for he is too proud to be willing that what was the whole content of his life should be the thing of a fleeting moment. He keeps this love young, and along with him it increases in years and in beauty. On the other hand, he has no need of the intervention of the finite for the further growth of his love. From the instant he made the movement the princess is lost to him. He has no need of those erotic tinglings in the nerves at the sight of the beloved etc., nor does he need to be constantly taking leave of her in a finite sense, because he recollects her in an eternal sense, and he knows very well that the lovers who are so bent upon seeing "her" yet once again, to say farewell for the last time, are right in being bent upon it, are right in thinking that it is the last time, for they forget one another the soonest. He has comprehended the deep secret that also in loving another person one must be sufficient unto oneself. He no longer takes a finite interest in what the princess is doing, and precisely this is proof that he has made the movement infinitely. Here one may have an opportunity to see whether the movement on the part of a particular person is true or fictitious. There was one who also believed that he had made the movement; but lo, time passed, the princess did something else, she married — a prince, let us say — then his soul lost the elasticity of resignation. Thereby he knew that he had not made the movement rightly; for he who has made the act of resignation infinitely is sufficient unto himself. The knight does not annul his resignation, he preserves his love just as young as it was in its first moment, he never lets it go from him, precisely because he

makes the movements infinitely. What the princess does, cannot disturb him, it is only the lower natures which find in other people the law for their actions, which find the premises for their actions outside themselves. If on the other hand the princess is like-minded, the beautiful consequence will be apparent. She will introduce herself into that order of knighthood into which one is not received by balloting, but of which everyone is a member who has courage to introduce himself, that order of knighthood which proves its immortality by the fact that it makes no distinction between man and woman. The two will preserve their love young and sound, she also will have triumphed over her pains, even though she does not, as it is said in the ballad, “lie every night beside her lord.” These two will to all eternity remain in agreement with one another, with a well-timed *harmonia praestabilita,* so that if ever the moment were to come, the moment which does not, however, concern them finitely (for then they would be growing older), if ever the moment were to come which offered to give love its expression in time, then they will be capable of beginning precisely at the point where they would have begun if originally they had been united. He who understands this, be he man or woman, can never be deceived, for it is only the lower natures which imagine they were deceived. No girl who is not so proud really knows how to love; but if she is so proud, then the cunning and shrewdness of all the world cannot deceive her.

In the infinite resignation there is peace and rest; every man who will, who has not abased himself by scorning himself (which is still more dreadful than being proud), can train himself to make these movements. The infinite resignation is that shirt we read about in the old fable. The thread is spun under tears, the cloth bleached with tears, the shirt sewn with tears; but then too it is a better protection than iron and steel. The imperfection in the fable is that a third party can manufacture this shirt. The secret in life is that everyone must sew it for himself, and the astonishing

thing is that a man can sew it fully as well as a woman. In the infinite resignation there is peace and rest and comfort in sorrow — that is, if the movement is made normally. It would not be difficult for me, however, to write a whole book, were I to examine the various misunderstandings, the preposterous attitudes, the deceptive movements, which I have encountered in my brief practice. People believe very little in spirit, and yet making these movements depends upon spirit, it depends upon whether this is not a one-sided result of a *dira necessitas,* and if this is present, the more dubious it always is whether the movement is normal. If one means by this that the cold, unfruitful necessity must necessarily be present, one thereby affirms that no one can experience death before he actually dies, and that appears to me a crass materialism. However, in our time people concern themselves rather little about making pure movements. In case one who was about to learn to dance were to say, "For centuries now one generation after another has been learning positions, it is high time I drew some advantage out of this and began straightway with the French dances" — then people would laugh at him; but in the world of spirit they find this exceedingly plausible. What is education? I should suppose that education was the curriculum one had to run through in order to catch up with oneself, and he who will not pass through this curriculum is helped very little by the fact that he was born in the most enlightened age.

The infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith, so that one who has not made this movement has not faith; for only in the infinite resignation do I become clear to myself with respect to my eternal validity, and only then can there be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith.

Now we will let the knight of faith appear in the rôle just described. He makes exactly the same movements as the other knight, infinitely renounces claim to the love which is the content of his life, he is reconciled in pain;

but then occurs the prodigy, he makes still another movement more wonderful than all, for he says, “I believe nevertheless that I shall get her, in virtue, that is, of the absurd, in virtue of the fact that with God all things are possible.” The absurd is not one of the factors which can be discriminated within the proper compass of the understanding: it is not identical with the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen. At the moment when the knight made the act of resignation, he was convinced, humanly speaking, of the impossibility. This was the result reached by the understanding, and he had sufficient energy to think it. On the other hand, in an infinite sense it was possible, namely, by renouncing it; but this sort of possessing is at the same time a relinquishing, and yet there is no absurdity in this for the understanding, for the understanding continued to be in the right in affirming that in the world of the finite where it holds sway this was and remained an impossibility. This is quite as clear to the knight of faith, so the only thing that can save him is the absurd, and this he grasps by faith. So he recognizes the impossibility, and that very instant he believes the absurd; for, if without recognizing the impossibility with all the passion of his soul and with all his heart, he should wish to imagine that he has faith, he deceives himself, and his testimony has no bearing, since he has not even reached the infinite resignation.

Faith therefore is not an aesthetic emotion but something far higher, precisely because it has resignation as its presupposition; it is not an immediate instinct of the heart, but is the paradox of life and existence. So when in spite of all difficulties a young girl still remains convinced that her wish will surely be fulfilled, this conviction is not the assurance of faith, even if she was brought up by Christian parents, and for a whole year perhaps has been catechized by the parson. She is convinced in all her childish naïveté and innocence, this conviction also ennobles her nature and imparts to her a preternatural greatness, so that like a thaumaturge she is

able to conjure the finite powers of existence and make the very stones weep, while on the other hand in her flurry she may just as well run to Herod as to Pilate and move the whole world by her tears. Her conviction is very lovable, and one can learn much from her, but one thing is not to be learned from her, one does not learn the movements, for her conviction does not dare in the pain of resignation to face the impossibility.

So I can perceive that it requires strength and energy and freedom of spirit to make the infinite movements of resignation, I can also perceive that it is feasible. But the next thing astonishes me, it makes my head swim, for after having made the movement of resignation, then by virtue of the absurd to get everything, to get the wish whole and uncurtailed — that is beyond human power, it is a prodigy. But this I can perceive, that the young girl's conviction is mere levity in comparison with the firmness faith displays notwithstanding it has perceived the impossibility. Whenever I essay to make this movement, I turn giddy, the very instant I am admiring it absolutely a prodigious dread grips my soul — for what is it to tempt God? And yet this movement is the movement of faith and remains such, even though philosophy, in order to confuse the concepts, would make us believe that it has faith, and even though theology would sell out faith at a bargain price.

For the act of resignation faith is not required, for what I gain by resignation is my eternal consciousness, and this is a purely philosophical movement which I dare say I am able to make if it is required, and which I can train myself to make, for whenever any finiteness would get the mastery over me, I starve myself until I can make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love to God, and for me this is higher than everything. For the act of resignation faith is not required, but it is needed when it is the case of acquiring the very least thing more than my eternal consciousness, for this is the paradoxical. The movements are frequently

confounded, for it is said that one needs faith to renounce the claim to everything, yea, a stranger thing than this may be heard, when a man laments the loss of his faith, and when one looks at the scale to see where he is, one sees, strangely enough, that he has only reached the point where he should make the infinite movement of resignation. In resignation I make renunciation of everything, this movement I make by myself, and if I do not make it, it is because I am cowardly and effeminate and without enthusiasm and do not feel the significance of the lofty dignity which is assigned to every man, that of being his own censor, which is a far prouder title than that of Censor General to the whole Roman Republic. This movement I make by myself, and what I gain is myself in my eternal consciousness, in blissful agreement with my love for the Eternal Being. By faith I make renunciation of nothing, on the contrary, by faith I acquire everything, precisely in the sense in which it is said that he who has faith like a grain of mustard can remove mountains. A purely human courage is required to renounce the whole of the temporal to gain the eternal; but this I gain, and to all eternity I cannot renounce it, that is a self-contradiction; but a paradox enters in and a humble courage is required to grasp the whole of the temporal by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith. By faith Abraham did not renounce his claim upon Isaac, but by faith he got Isaac. By virtue of resignation that rich young man should have given away everything, but then when he had done that, the knight of faith should have said to him, "By virtue of the absurd thou shalt get every penny back again. Canst thou believe that?" And this speech ought by no means to have been indifferent to the aforesaid rich young man, for in case he gave away his goods because he was tired of them, his resignation was not much to boast of.

It is about the temporal, the finite, everything turns in this case. I am able by my own strength to renounce everything, and then to find peace and

repose in pain. I can stand everything — even though that horrible demon, more dreadful than death, the king of terrors, even though madness were to hold up before my eyes the motley of the fool, and I understood by its look that it was I who must put it on, I still am able to save my soul, if only it is more to me than my earthly happiness that my love to God should triumph in me. A man may still be able at the last instant to concentrate his whole soul in a single glance toward that heaven from which cometh every good gift, and his glance will be intelligible to himself and also to Him whom it seeks as a sign that he nevertheless remained true to his love. Then he will calmly put on the motley garb. He whose soul has not this romantic enthusiasm has sold his soul, whether he got a kingdom for it or a paltry piece of silver. But by my own strength I am not able to get the least of the things which belong to finiteness, for I am constantly using my strength to renounce everything. By my own strength I am able to give up the princess, and I shall not become a grumbler, but shall find joy and repose in my pain; but by my own strength I am not able to get her again, for I am employing all my strength to be resigned. But by faith, says that marvellous knight, by faith I shall get her in virtue of the absurd.

So this movement I am unable to make. As soon as I would begin to make it everything turns around dizzily, and I flee back to the pain of resignation. I can swim in existence, but for this mystical soaring I am too heavy. To exist in such a way that my opposition to existence is expressed as the most beautiful and assured harmony, is something I cannot do. And yet it must be glorious to get the princess, that is what I say every instant, and the knight of resignation who does not say it is a deceiver, he has not had one only wish, and he has not kept the wish young by his pain. Perhaps there was one who thought it fitting enough that the wish was no longer vivid, *that* the barb of pain was dulled, but such a man is no knight. A free-born soul who caught himself entertaining such thoughts would despise

himself and begin over again, above all he would not permit his soul to be deceived by itself. And yet it must be glorious to get the princess, and yet the knight of faith is the only happy one, the heir apparent to the finite, whereas the knight of resignation is a stranger and a foreigner. Thus to get the princess, to live with her joyfully and happily day in and day out (for it is also conceivable that the knight of resignation might get the princess, but that his soul had discerned the impossibility of their future happiness), thus to live joyfully and happily every instant by virtue of the absurd, every instant to see the sword hanging over the head of the beloved, and yet to find repose in the pain of resignation, but joy by virtue of the absurd — this is marvellous. He who does it is great, the only great man. The thought of it stirs my soul, which never was niggardly in the admiration of greatness.

In case then everyone in my generation who will not stop at faith is really a man who has comprehended life's horror, who has understood what Daub means when he says that a soldier who stands alone at his post with a loaded gun in a stormy night beside a powder-magazine… will get strange thoughts into his head — in case then everyone who will not stop at faith is a man who had strength of soul to comprehend that the wish was an impossibility, and thereupon gave himself time to remain alone with this thought, in case everyone who will not stop at faith is a man who is reconciled in pain and is reconciled to pain, in case everyone who will not stop at faith is a man who in the next place (and if he has not done all the foregoing, there is no need of his troubling himself about faith) — in the next place did the marvellous thing, grasped the whole of existence by virtue of the absurd…then what I write is the highest eulogy of my contemporaries by one of the lowliest among them, who was able only to make the movements of resignation. But why will they not stop at faith, why does one sometimes hear that people are ashamed to acknowledge that

they have faith? This I cannot comprehend. If ever I contrive to be able to make this movement, I shall in the future ride in a coach and four.

If it is really true that all the Philistinism I behold in life (which I do not permit my word but my actions to condemn) is not what it seems to be — is it the miracle? That is conceivable, for the hero of faith had in fact a striking resemblance to it — for that hero of faith was not so much an ironist or a humorist, but something far higher. Much is said in our age about irony and humor, especially by people who have never been capable of engaging in the practice of these arts, but who nevertheless know how to explain everything. I am not entirely unacquainted with these two passions, I know a little more about them than what is to be found in German and German-Danish compendiums. I know therefore that these two passions are essentially different from the passion of faith. Irony and humor reflect also upon themselves, and therefore belong within the sphere of the infinite resignation, their elasticity is due to the fact that the individual is incommensurable with reality.

The last movement, the paradoxical movement of faith, I cannot make (be that a duty or whatever it may be), in spite of the fact that I would do it more than gladly. Whether a man has a right to make this affirmation, must be left to him, it is a question between him and the Eternal Being who is the object of faith whether in this respect he can hit upon an amicable compromise. What every man can do is to make the movement of infinite resignation, and I for my part would not hesitate to pronounce everyone cowardly who wishes to make himself believe he can do it. With faith it is a different matter. But what every man has not a right to do, is to make others believe that faith is something lowly, or that it is an easy thing, whereas it is the greatest and the hardest.

People construe the story of Abraham in another way. They extol God's grace in bestowing Isaac upon him again — the whole thing was only a

trial. A trial — that word may say much or little, and yet the whole thing is over as quickly as it is said. One mounts a winged horse, the same instant one is at Mount Moriah, the same instant one sees the ram; one forgets that Abraham rode only upon an ass, which walks slowly along the road, that he had a journey of three days, that he needed some time to cleave the wood, to bind Isaac, and to sharpen the knife.

And yet they extol Abraham. He who is to deliver the discourse can very well sleep till a quarter of an hour before he has to preach, the auditor can well take a nap during the discourse, for all goes smoothly, without the least trouble from any quarter. If there was a man present who suffered from insomnia, perhaps he then went home and sat in a corner and thought: "It's an affair of a moment, this whole thing; if only you wait a minute, you see the ram, and the trial is over." If the orator were to encounter him in this condition, he would, I think, confront him with all his dignity and say, "Wretched man, that thou couldst let thy soul sink into such foolishness! No miracle occurs. The whole of life is a trial." In proportion as the orator proceeds with his outpouring, he would get more and more excited, would become more and more delighted with himself, and whereas he had noticed no congestion of the blood while he talked about Abraham, he now felt how the nerves swelled in his forehead. Perhaps he would have lost his breath as well as his tongue if the sinner had answered calmly and with dignity, "But it was about this you preached last Sunday."

Let us then either consign Abraham to oblivion, or let us learn to be dismayed by the tremendous paradox which constitutes the significance of Abraham's life, that we may understand that our age, like every age, can be joyful if it has faith. In case Abraham is not a nullity, a phantom, a show one employs for a pastime, then the fault can never consist in the fact that the sinner wants to do likewise, but the point is to see how great a thing it was that Abraham did, in order that man may judge for himself whether he

has the call and the courage to be subjected to such a test. The comic contradiction in the behavior of the orator is that he reduced Abraham to an insignificance, and yet would admonish the other to behave in the same way.

Should not one dare then to talk about Abraham? I think one should. If I were to talk about him, I would first depict the pain of his trial. To that end I would like a leech suck all the dread and distress and torture out of a father's sufferings, so that I might describe what Abraham suffered, whereas all the while he nevertheless believed. I would remind the audience that the journey lasted three days and a good part of the fourth, yea, that these three and a half days were infinitely longer than the few thousand years which separate me from Abraham. Then I would remind them that, in my opinion, every man dare still turn around ere he begins such an undertaking, and every instant he can repentantly turn back. If the hearer does this, I fear no danger, nor am I afraid of awakening in people an inclination to be tried like Abraham. But if one would dispose of a cheap edition of Abraham, and yet admonish everyone to do likewise, then it is

It is now my intention to draw out from the story of Abraham the dialectical consequences inherent in it, expressing them in the form of *problemata,* in order to see what a tremendous paradox faith is, a paradox which is capable of transforming a murder into a holy act well-pleasing to God, a paradox which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can master, because faith begins precisely there.

PROBLEM I. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A TELEOLOGICAL SUSPENSION OF THE ETHICAL?

THE ETHICAL AS such is the universal, it applies to everyone, and the same thing is expressed from another point of view by saying that it applies every instant. It reposes immanently in itself, it has nothing without itself which is its *telos*, but is itself *telos* for everything outside it, and when this has been incorporated by the ethical it can go no further. Conceived immediately as physical and psychical, the particular individual is the particular which has its *telos* in the universal, and its task is to express itself constantly in it, to abolish its particularity in order to become the universal. As soon as the individual would assert himself in his particularity over against the universal he sins, and only by recognizing this can he again reconcile himself with the universal. Whenever the individual after he has entered the universal feels an impulse to assert himself as the particular, he is in temptation (*Anjechtung*), and he can labor himself out of this only by abandoning himself as the particular in the universal. If this be the highest thing that can be said of man and of his existence, then the ethical has the same character as man's eternal blessedness, which to all eternity and at every instant is his *telos,* since it would be a contradiction to say that this might be abandoned (i.e. teleologically suspended), inasmuch as this is no sooner suspended than it is forfeited, whereas in other cases what is suspended is not forfeited but is preserved precisely in that higher thing which is its *telos*.

If such be the case, then Hegel is right when in his chapter on "The Good and the Conscience," he characterizes man merely as the particular and regards this character as "a moral form of the evil" which is to be annulled in the teleology of the moral, so that the individual who remains in this

stage is either sinning or subjected to temptation (*Anfechtung)*. On the other hand, he is wrong in talking of faith, wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against the fact that Abraham enjoys honor and glory as the father of faith, whereas he ought to be prosecuted and convicted of murder.

For faith is this paradox, that the particular is higher than the universal — yet in such a way, be it observed, that the movement repeats itself, and that consequently the individual, after having been in the universal, now as the particular isolated himself as higher than the universal. If this be not faith, then Abraham is lost, then faith has never existed in the world … because it has always existed. For if the ethical (i.e. the moral) is the highest thing, and if nothing incommensurable remains in man in any other way but as the evil (i.e. the particular which has to be expressed in the universal), then one needs no other categories besides those which the Greeks possessed or which by consistent thinking can be derived from them. This fact Hegel ought not to have concealed, for after all he was acquainted with Greek thought.

One not infrequently hears it said by men who for lack of losing themselves in studies are absorbed in phrases that a light shines upon the Christian world whereas a darkness broods over paganism. This utterance has always seemed strange to me, inasmuch as every profound thinker and every serious artist is even in our day rejuvenated by the eternal youth of the Greek race. Such an utterance may be explained by the consideration that people do not know what they ought to say but only that they must say something. It is quite right for one to say that paganism did not possess faith, but if with this one is to have said something, one must be a little clearer about what one understands by faith, since otherwise one falls back into such phrases. To explain the whole of existence and faith along with it is easy, and that man does not make the poorest calculation in life who

reckons upon admiration when he possesses such an explanation; for, as Boileau says, *"un sot trouve toujours un plus sot qui l'admire."*

Faith is precisely this paradox, that the individual as the particular is higher than the universal, is justified over against it, is not subordinate but superior — yet in such a way, be it observed, that it is the particular individual who, after he has been subordinated as the particular to the universal, now through the universal becomes the individual who as the particular is superior to the universal, for the fact that the individual as the particular stands in an absolute relation to the absolute. This position cannot be mediated, for all mediation comes about precisely by virtue of the universal; it is and remains to all eternity a paradox, inaccessible to thought. And yet faith is this paradox — or else (these are the logical deductions which I would beg the reader to have *in mente* at every point, though it would be too prolix for me to reiterate them on every occasion) — or else there never has been faith…precisely because it always has been. In other words, Abraham is lost.

That for the particular individual this paradox may easily be mistaken for a temptation *(Anfechtung)* is indeed true, but one ought not for this reason to conceal it. That the whole constitution of many persons may be such that this paradox repels them is indeed true, but one ought not for this reason to make faith something different in order to be able to possess it, but ought rather to admit that one does not possess it, whereas those who possess faith should take care to set up certain criteria so that one might distinguish the paradox from a temptation (*Anfechtung*).

Now the story of Abraham contains such a teleological suspension of the ethical. There have not been lacking clever pates and profound investigators who have found analogies to it. Their wisdom is derived from the pretty proposition that at bottom everything is the same. If one will look a little more closely, I have not much doubt that in the whole world one will not

find a single analogy (except a later instance which proves nothing), if it stands fast that Abraham is the representative of faith, and that faith is normally expressed in him whose life is not merely the most paradoxical that can be thought but so paradoxical that it cannot be thought at all. He acts by virtue of the absurd, for it is precisely absurd that he as the particular is higher than the universal. This paradox cannot be mediated; for as soon as he begins to do this he has to admit that he was in temptation (*Anfechtung),* and if such was the case, he never gets to the point of sacrificing Isaac, or, if he has sacrificed Isaac, he must turn back repentantly to the universal. By virtue of the absurd he gets Isaac again. Abraham is therefore at no instant a tragic hero but something quite different, either a murderer or a believer. The middle term which saves the tragic hero, Abraham has not. Hence it is that I can understand the tragic hero but cannot understand Abraham, though in a certain crazy sense I admire him more than all other men.

Abraham's relation to Isaac, ethically speaking, is quite simply expressed by saying that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself. Yet within its own compass the ethical has various gradations. Let us see whether in this story there is to be found any higher expression for the ethical such as would ethically explain his conduct, ethically justify him in suspending the ethical obligation toward his son, without in this search going beyond the teleology of the ethical.

When an undertaking in which a whole nation is concerned is hindered, when such an enterprise is brought to a standstill by the disfavor of heaven, when the angry deity sends a calm which mocks all efforts, when the seer performs his heavy task and proclaims that the deity demands a young maiden as a sacrifice — then will the father heroically make the sacrifice. He will magnanimously conceal his pain, even though he might wish that he were "the lowly man who dares to weep," not the king who must act

royally. And though solitary pain forces its way into his breast, he has only three confidants among the people, yet soon the whole nation will be cognizant of his pain, but also cognizant of his exploit, that for the welfare of the whole he was willing to sacrifice her, his daughter, the lovely young maiden. O charming bosom! O beautiful cheeks! O bright golden hair! (v.687). And the daughter will affect him by her tears, and the father will turn his face away, but the hero will raise the knife. — When the report of this reaches the ancestral home, then will the beautiful maidens of Greece blush with enthusiasm, and if the daughter was betrothed, her true love will not be angry but be proud of sharing in the father's deed, because the maiden belonged to him more feelingly than to the father.

When the intrepid judge who saved Israel in the hour of need in one breath binds himself and God by the same vow, then heroically the young maiden's jubilation, the beloved daughter's joy, he will turn to sorrow, and with her all Israel will lament her maiden youth; but every free-born man will understand, and every stout-hearted woman will admire Jephtha, and every maiden in Israel will wish to act as did his daughter. For what good would it do if Jephtha were victorious by reason of his vow if he did not keep it? Would not the victory again be taken from the nation?

When a son is forgetful of his duty, when the state entrusts the father with the sword of justice, when the laws require punishment at the hand of the father, then will the father heroically forget that the guilty one is his son, he will magnanimously conceal his pain, but there will not be a single one among the people, not even the son, who will not admire the father, and whenever the law of Rome is interpreted, it will be remembered that many interpreted it more learnedly, but none so gloriously as Brutus.

If, on the other hand, while a favorable wind bore the fleet on with swelling sails to its goal, Agamemnon had sent that messenger who fetched Iphigenia in order to be sacrificed; if Jephtha, without being bound by any

vow which decided the fate of the nation, had said to his daughter, “Bewail now thy virginity for the space of two months, for I will sacrifice thee”; if Brutus had had a righteous son and yet would have ordered the lictors to execute him — who would have understood them? If these three men had replied to the query why they did it by saying, “It is a trial in which we are tested,” would people have understood them better?

When Agamemnon, Jephtha, Brutus at the decisive moment heroically overcome their pain, have heroically lost the beloved and have merely to accomplish the outward sacrifice, then there never will be a noble soul in the world who will not shed tears of compassion for their pain and of admiration for their exploit. If, on the other hand, these three men at the decisive moment were to adjoin to their heroic conduct this little word, “But for all that it will not come to pass,” who then would understand them? If as an explanation they added, “This we believe by virtue of the absurd,” who would understand them better? For who would not easily understand that it was absurd, but who would understand that one could then believe it?

The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is clearly evident. The tragic hero still remains within the ethical. He lets one expression of the ethical find its *telos* in a higher expression of the ethical; the ethical relation between father and son, or daughter and father, he reduces to a sentiment which has its dialectic in the idea of morality. Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical.

With Abraham the situation was different. By his act he overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher *telos* outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former. For I should very much like to know how one would bring Abraham’s act into relation with the universal, and whether it is possible to discover any connection whatever between what Abraham did and the universal…except the fact that he transgressed it. It was not for the sake of saving a people, not to maintain the idea of the state, that

Abraham did this, and not in order to reconcile angry deities. If there could be a question of the deity being angry, he was angry only with Abraham, and Abraham's whole action stands in no relation to the universal, is a purely personal undertaking. Therefore, whereas the tragic hero is great by reason of his moral virtue, Abraham is great by reason of a personal virtue. In Abraham's life there is no higher expression for the ethical than this, that the father shall love his son. Of the ethical in the sense of morality there can be no question in this instance. In so far as the universal was present, it was indeed cryptically present in Isaac, hidden as it were in Isaac's loins, and must therefore cry out with Isaac's mouth, "Do it not! Thou art bringing everything to naught."

Why then did Abraham do it? For God's sake, and (in complete identity with this) for his own sake. He did it for God's sake because God required this proof of his faith; for his own sake he did it in order that he might furnish the proof. The unity of these two points of view is perfectly expressed by the word which has always been used to characterize this situation: it is a trial, a temptation (*Fristelse*). A temptation — but what does that mean? What ordinarily tempts a man is that which would keep him from doing his duty, but in this case the temptation is itself the ethical…which would keep him from doing God's will.

Here is evident the necessity of a new category if one would understand Abraham. Such a relationship to the deity paganism did not know. The tragic hero does not enter into any private relationship with the deity, but for him the ethical is the divine, hence the paradox implied in his situation can be mediated in the universal.

Abraham cannot be mediated, and the same thing can be expressed also by saying that he cannot talk. So soon as I talk I express the universal, and if I do not do so, no one can understand me. Therefore if Abraham would express himself in terms of the universal, he must say that his situation is a

temptation (*Anfechtung),* for he has no higher expression for that universal which stands above the universal which he transgresses.

Therefore, though Abraham arouses my admiration, he at the same time appalls me. He who denies himself and sacrifices himself for duty gives up the finite in order to grasp the infinite, and that man is secure enough. The tragic hero gives up the certain for the still more certain, and the eye of the beholder rests upon him confidently. But he who gives up the universal in order to grasp something still higher which is not the universal — what is he doing? Is it possible that this can be anything else but a temptation *(Anfechtung)?* And if it be possible…but the individual was mistaken — what can save him? He suffers all the pain of the tragic hero, he brings to naught his joy in the world, he renounces everything…and perhaps at the same instant debars himself from the sublime joy which to him was so precious that he would purchase it at any price. Him the beholder cannot understand nor let his eye rest confidently upon him. Perhaps it is not possible to do what the believer proposes, since it is indeed unthinkable. Or if it could be done, but if the individual had misunderstood the deity — what can save him? The tragic hero has need of tears and claims them, and where is the envious eye which would be so barren that it could not weep with Agamemnon; but where is the man with a soul so bewildered that he would have the presumption to weep for Abraham? The tragic hero accomplishes his act at a definite instant in time, but in the course of time he does something not less significant, he visits the man whose soul is beset with sorrow, whose breast for stifled sobs cannot draw breath, whose thoughts pregnant with tears weigh heavily upon him, to him he makes his appearance, dissolves the sorcery of sorrow, loosens his corslet, coaxes forth his tears by the fact that in his sufferings the sufferer forgets his own. One cannot weep over Abraham. One approaches him with a *horror religiosus,* as Israel approached Mount Sinai. — If then the solitary man

who ascends Mount Moriah, which with its peak rises heaven-high above the plain of Aulis, if he be not a somnambulist who walks securely above the abyss while he who is stationed at the foot of the mountain and is looking on trembles with fear and out of reverence and dread dare not even call to him — if this man is disordered in his mind, if he had made a mistake! Thanks and thanks again to him who proffers to the man whom the sorrows of life have assaulted and left naked — proffers to him the fig-leaf of the word with which he can cover his wretchedness. Thanks be to thee, great Shakespeare, who art able to express everything, absolutely everything, precisely as it is — and yet why didst thou never pronounce this pang? Didst though perhaps reserve it to thyself — like the loved one whose name one cannot endure that the world should mention? For the poet purchases the power of words, the power of uttering all the dread secrets of others, at the price of a little secret he is unable to utter…and a poet is not an apostle, he casts out devils only by the power of the devil.

But now when the ethical is thus teleologically suspended, how does the individual exist in whom it is suspended? He exists as the particular in opposition to the universal. Does he then sin? For this is the form of sin, as seen in the idea. Just as the infant, though it does not sin, because it is not as such yet conscious of its existence, yet its existence is sin, as seen in the idea, and the ethical makes its demands upon it every instant. If one denies that this form can be repeated [in the adult] in such a way that it is not sin, then the sentence of condemnation is pronounced upon Abraham. How then did Abraham exist? He believed. This is the paradox which keeps him upon the sheer edge and which he cannot make clear to any other man, for the paradox is that he as the individual puts himself in an absolute relation to the absolute. Is he justified in doing this? His justification is once more the paradox; for if he is justified, it is not by virtue of anything universal, but by virtue of being the particular individual.

How then does the individual assure himself that he is justified? It is easy enough to level down the whole of existence to the idea of the state or the idea of society. If one does this, one can also mediate easily enough, for then one does not encounter at all the paradox that the individual as the individual is higher than the universal — which I can aptly express also by the thesis of Pythagoras, that the uneven numbers are more perfect than the even. If in our age one occasionally hears a rejoinder which is pertinent to the paradox, it is likely to be to the following effect: "It is to be judged by the result." A hero who has become a (*σκάνδαλον* to his contemporaries because they are conscious that he is a paradox who cannot make himself intelligible, will cry out defiantly to his generation, "The result will surely prove that I am justified." In our age we hear this cry rather seldom, for as our age, to its disadvantage, does not produce heroes, it has also the advantage of producing few caricatures. When in our age one hears this saying, "It is to be judged according to the result," a man is at once clear as to who it is he has the honor of talking with. Those who talk thus are a numerous tribe, whom I will denominate by the common name of *Docents.* In their thoughts they live secure in existence, they have a *solid* position and *sure* prospects in a well-ordered state, they have centuries and even millenniums between them and the concussions of existence, they do not fear that such things could recur — for what would the police say to that! and the newspapers! Their life-work is to judge the great, and to judge them according to the result. Such behavior toward the great betrays a strange mixture of arrogance and misery: of arrogance because they think they are called to be judges; of misery because they do not feel that their lives are even in the remotest degree akin to the great. Surely a man who possesses even a little *erections ingenii* has not become entirely a cold and clammy mollusk, and when he approaches what is great it can never escape his mind that from the creation of the world it has been customary for the result to

come last, and that, if one would truly learn anything from great actions, one must pay attention precisely to the beginning. In case he who should act were to judge himself according to the result, he would never get to the point of beginning. Even though the result may give joy to the whole world, it cannot help the hero, for he would get to know the result only when the whole thing was over, and it was not by this he became a hero, but he was such for the fact that he began.

Moreover, the result (inasmuch as it is the answer of finiteness to the infinite query) is in its dialectic entirely heterogeneous with the existence of the hero. Or is it possible to prove that Abraham was justified in assuming the position of the individual with relation to the universal…for the fact that he got Isaac by *miracle*? If Abraham had actually sacrificed Isaac, would he then have been less justified?

But people are curious about the result, as they are about the result in a book — they want to know nothing about dread, distress, the paradox. They flirt aesthetically with the result, it comes just as unexpectedly but also just as easily as a prize in the lottery; and when they have heard the result they are edified. And yet no robber of temples condemned to hard labor behind iron bars, is so base a criminal as the man who pillages the holy, and even Judas who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver is not more despicable than the man who sells greatness.

It is abhorrent to my soul to talk inhumanly about greatness, to let it loom darkly at a distance in an indefinite form, to make out that it is great without making the human character of it evident — wherewith it ceases to be great. For it is not what happens to me that makes me great, but it is what I do, and there is surely no one who thinks that a man became great because he won the great prize in the lottery. Even if a man were born in humble circumstances, I would require of him nevertheless that he should not be so inhuman toward himself as not to be able to think of the King's castle

except at a remote distance, dreaming vaguely of its greatness and wanting at the same time to exalt it and also to abolish it by the fact that he exalted it meanly. I require of him that he should be man enough to step forward confidently and worthily even in that place. He should not be unmanly enough to desire impudently to offend everybody by rushing straight from the street into the King's hall. By that he loses more than the King. On the contrary, he should find joy in observing every rule of propriety with a glad and confident enthusiasm which will make him frank and fearless. This is only a symbol, for the difference here remarked upon is only a very imperfect expression for spiritual distance. I require of every man that he should not think so inhumanly of himself as not to dare to enter those palaces where not merely the memory of the elect abides but where the elect themselves abide. He should not press forward impudently and impute to them kinship with himself; on the contrary, he should be blissful every time he bows before them, but he should be frank and confident and always be something more than a charwoman, for if he will not be more, he will never gain entrance. And what will help him is precisely the dread and distress by which the great are tried, for otherwise, if he has a bit of pith in him, they will merely arouse his justified envy. And what distance alone makes great, what people would make great by empty and hollow phrases, that they themselves reduce to naught.

Who was ever so great as that blessed woman, the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary? And yet how do we speak of her? We say that she was highly favored among women. And if it did not happen strangely that those who hear are able to think as inhumanly as those who talk, every young girl might well ask, "Why was not I too the highly favored?" And if I had nothing else to say, I would not dismiss such a question as stupid, for when it is a matter of favor, abstractly considered, everyone is equally entitled to it. What they leave out is the distress, the dread, the paradox. My thought is

as pure as that of anyone, and the thought of the man who is able to think such things will surely become pure — and if this be not so, he may expect the dreadful; for he who once has evoked these images cannot be rid of them again, and if he sins against them, they avenge themselves with quiet wrath, more terrible than the vociferousness of ten ferocious reviewers. To be sure, Mary bore the child miraculously, but it came to pass with her after the manner of women, and that season is one of dread, distress and paradox. To be sure, the angel was a ministering spirit, but it was not a servile spirit which obliged her by saying to the other young maidens of Israel, "Despise not Mary. What befalls her is the extraordinary." But the Angel came only to Mary, and no one could understand her. After all, what woman was so mortified as Mary? And is it not true in this instance also that one whom God blesses He curses in the same breath? This is the spirit's interpretation of Mary, and she is not (as it shocks me to say, but shocks me still more to think that they have thoughtlessly and coquettishly interpreted her thus) — she is not a fine lady who sits in state and plays with an infant god. Nevertheless, when she says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" — then she is great, and I think it will not be found difficult to explain why she became the Mother of God. She has no need of worldly admiration, any more than Abraham has need of tears, for she was not a heroine, and he was not a hero, but both of them became greater than such, not at all because they were exempted from distress and torment and paradox, but they became great through these.

It is great when the poet, presenting his tragic hero before the admiration of men, dares to say, "Weep for him, for he deserves it." For it is great to deserve the tears of those who are worthy to shed tears. It is great that the poet dares to keep the crowd in awe, dares to castigate men, requiring that every man examine himself whether he be worthy to weep for the hero. For the waste-water of blubberers is a degradation of the holy. — But greater

than all this it is that the knight of faith dares to say even to the noble man who would weep for him, “Weep not for me, but weep for thyself.”

One is deeply moved, one longs to be back in those beautiful times, a sweet yearning conducts one to the desired goal, to see Christ wandering in the promised land. One forgets the dread, the distress, the paradox. Was it so easy a matter not to be mistaken? Was it not dreadful that this man who walks among the others — was it not dreadful that He was God? Was it not dreadful to sit at table with Him? Was it so easy a matter to become an Apostle? But the result, eighteen hundred years — that is a help, it helps to the shabby deceit wherewith one deceives oneself and others. I do not feel the courage to wish to be contemporary with such events, but hence I do not judge severely those who were mistaken, nor think meanly of those who saw aright.

I return, however, to Abraham. Before the result, either Abraham was every minute a murderer, or we are confronted by a paradox which is higher than all mediation.

The story of Abraham contains therefore a teleological suspension of the ethical. As the individual he became higher than the universal. This is the paradox which does not permit of mediation. It is just as inexplicable how he got into it as it is inexplicable how he remained in it. If such is not the position of Abraham, then he is not even a tragic hero but a murderer. To want to continue to call him the father of faith, to talk of this to people who do not concern themselves with anything but words, is thoughtless. A man can become a tragic hero by his own powers — but not a knight of faith. When a man enters upon the way, in a certain sense the hard way of the tragic hero, many will be able to give him counsel; to him who follows the narrow way of faith no one can give counsel, him no one can understand. Faith is a miracle, and yet no man is excluded from it; for that in which all human life is unified is passion, and faith is a passion.

PROBLEM II. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN ABSOLUTE DUTY TOWARD GOD?

THE ETHICAL IS the universal, and as such it is again the divine. One has therefore a right to say that fundamentally every duty is a duty toward God; but if one cannot say more, then one affirms at the same time that properly I have no duty toward God. Duty becomes duty by being referred to God, but in duty itself I do not come into relation with God. Thus it is a duty to love one's neighbor, but in performing this duty I do not come into relation with God but with the neighbor whom I love. If I say then in this connection that it is my duty to love God, I am really uttering only a tautology, inasmuch as "God" is in this instance used in an entirely abstract sense as the divine, i.e. the universal, i.e. duty. So the whole existence of the human race is rounded off completely like a sphere, and the ethical is at once its limit and its content. God becomes an invisible vanishing point, a powerless thought, His power being only in the ethical which is the content of existence. If in any way it might occur to any man to want to love God in any other sense than that here indicated, he is romantic, he loves a phantom which, if it had merely the power of being able to speak, would say to him, "I do not require your love. Stay where you belong." If in any way it might occur to a man to want to love God otherwise, this love would be open to suspicion, like that of which Rousseau speaks, referring to people who love the Kaffirs instead of their neighbors.

So in case what has been expounded here is correct, in case there is no incommensurability in a human life, and what there is of the incommensurable is only such by an accident from which no consequences can be drawn, in so far as existence is regarded in terms of the idea, Hegel is right; but he is not right in talking about faith or in allowing Abraham to

be regarded as the father of it; for by the latter he has pronounced judgment both upon Abraham and upon faith. In the Hegelian philosophy *das Äussere (die Entäusserung)* is higher than *das Innere.* This is frequently illustrated by an example. The child is *das Innere,* the man *das Äussere.* Hence it is that the child is defined by the outward, and, conversely, the man, as *das Innere,* is defined precisely by *das Innere.* Faith, on the contrary, is the paradox that inwardness is higher than outwardness — or, to recall an expression used above, the uneven number is higher than the even. In the ethical way of regarding life it is therefore the task of the individual to divest himself of the inward determinants and express them in an outward way. Whenever he shrinks from this, whenever he is inclined to persist in or to slip back again into the inward determinants of feeling, mood, etc., he sins, he succumbs to a temptation (*Anfechtung).* The paradox of faith is this, that there is an inwardness which is incommensurable for the outward, an inwardness, be it observed, which is not identical with the first but is a new inwardness. This must not be overlooked. Modern philosophy has taken the liberty of substituting without more ado the word faith for the immediate. When one does that it is ridiculous to deny that faith has existed in all ages. In that way faith comes into rather simple company along with feeling, mood, idiosyncrasy, vapors, etc. To this extent philosophy may be right in saying that one ought not to stop there. But there is nothing to justify philosophy in using this phrase with regard to faith. Before faith there goes a movement of infinity, and only then, *necopinate*, by virtue of the absurd, faith enters upon the scene. This I can well understand without maintaining on that account that I have faith. If faith is nothing but what philosophy makes it out to be, then Socrates already went further, much further, whereas the contrary is true, that he never reached it. In an intellectual respect he made the movement of infinity. His ignorance is infinite resignation. This task in itself is a match for human powers, even though

people in our time disdain it; but only after it is done, only when the individual has evacuated himself in the infinite, only then is the point attained where faith can break forth.

The paradox of faith is this, that the individual is higher than the universal, that the individual (to recall a dogmatic distinction now rather seldom heard) determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal. The paradox can also be expressed by saying that there is an absolute duty toward God; for in this relationship of duty the individual as an individual stands related absolutely to the absolute. So when in this connection it is said that it is a duty to love God, something different is said from that in the foregoing; for if this duty is absolute, the ethical is reduced to a position of relativity. From this, however, it does not follow that the ethical is to be abolished, but it acquires an entirely different expression, the paradoxical expression — that, for example, love to God may cause the knight of faith to give his love to his neighbor the opposite expression to that which, ethically speaking, is required by duty.

If such is not the case, then faith has no proper place in existence, then faith is a temptation (*Anfechtung*), and Abraham is lost, since he gave in to it.

This paradox does not permit of mediation, for it is founded precisely upon the fact that the individual is only the individual. As soon as this individual desires to express his absolute duty in the universal, to become conscious of this duty in that, he is in temptation *(Anfechtung)* and, even supposing he puts up a resistance to this, he never gets to the point of fulfilling the so-called absolute duty, and if he does not resist, then he sins, even though *realiter* his act was that which it was his absolute duty to do. So what should Abraham do? If he would say to another person, “Isaac I love more dearly than everything in the world, and hence it is so hard for

me to sacrifice him"; then surely the other would have shrugged his shoulders and said, "Why will you sacrifice him then?" — or if the other had been a sly fellow, he surely would have seen through Abraham and perceived that he was making a show of feelings which were in strident contradiction to his act.

In the story of Abraham we find such a paradox. His relation to Isaac, ethically expressed, is this, that the father should love the son. This ethical relation is reduced to a relative position in contrast with the absolute relation to God. To the question, "Why?" Abraham has no answer except that it is a trial, a temptation (*Frislelse*) — terms which, as was remarked above, express the unity of the two points of view: that it is for God's sake and for his own sake. In common usage these two ways of regarding the matter are mutually exclusive. Thus when we see a man do something which does not comport with the universal, we say that he scarcely can be doing it for God's sake, and by that we imply that he does it for his own sake. The paradox of faith has lost the intermediate term, i.e. the universal. On the one side it has the expression for the extremest egoisim (doing the dreadful thing it does for one's own sake); on the other side the expression for the most absolute self-sacrifice (doing it for God's sake). Faith is this paradox, and the individual absolutely cannot make himself intelligible to anybody. People imagine maybe that the individual can make himself intelligible to another individual in the same case. Such a notion would be unthinkable if in our time people did not in so many ways seek to creep slyly into greatness. The one knight of faith can render no aid to the other. Either the individual becomes a knight of faith by assuming the burden of the paradox, or he never becomes one. In these regions partnership is unthinkable. Every more precise explication of what is to be understood by Isaac the individual can give only to himself. And even if one were able, generally speaking, to define ever so precisely what should be intended by

Isaac (which moreover would be the most ludicrous self-contradiction, i.e. that the particular individual who definitely stands outside the universal is subsumed under universal categories precisely when he has to act as the individual who stands outside the universal), the individual nevertheless will never be able to assure himself by the aid of others that this application is appropriate, but he can do so only by himself as the individual. Hence even If a man were cowardly and paltry enough to wish to become a knight of faith on the responsibility and at the peril of an outsider, he will never become one; for only the individual becomes a knight of faith as the particular individual, and this is the greatness of this knighthood, as I can well understand without entering the order; but this is also its terror, as I can comprehend even better.

In Luke 14:26, as everybody knows, there is a striking doctrine taught about the absolute duty toward God: “If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” This is a hard saying, who can bear to hear it? For this reason it is heard very seldom. This silence, however, is only an evasion which is of no avail. Nevertheless, the student of theology learns to know that these words occur in the New Testament, and in one or another exegetical aid he finds the explanation that μισεῖυ in this passage and a few others is used in the sense of μείσειν, signifying *minus diligo, posthabeo, non colo, nihili facio.* However, the context in which these words occur does not seem to strengthen this tasteful explanation. In the verse immediately following there is a story about a man who desired to build a tower but first sat down to calculate whether he was capable of doing it, lest people might laugh at him afterwards. The close connection of this story with the verse here cited seems precisely to indicate that the words are to be taken in as terrible a sense as possible, to the end

that everyone may examine himself as to whether he is able to erect the building.

In case this pious and kindly exegete, who by abating the price thought he could smuggle Christianity into the world, were fortunate enough to convince a man that grammatically, linguistically and κατ’ ἀυαλοϒίαυ this was the meaning of that passage, it is to be hoped that the same moment he will be fortunate enough to convince the same man that Christianity is one of the most pitiable things in the world. For the doctrine which in one of its most lyrical outbursts, where the consciousness of its eternal validity swells in it most strongly, has nothing else to say but a noisy word which means nothing but only signifies that one is to be less kindly, less attentive, more indifferent; the doctrine which at the moment when it makes as if it would give utterance to the terrible ends by driveling instead of terrifying — that doctrine is not worth taking off my hat to.

The words are terrible, yet I fully believe that one can understand them without implying that he who understands them has courage to do them. One must at all events be honest enough to acknowledge what stands written and to admit that it is great, even though one has not the courage for it. He who behaves thus will not find himself excluded from having part in that beautiful story which follows, for after all it contains consolation of a sort for the man who had not courage to begin the tower. But we must be honest, and not interpret this lack of courage as humility, since it is really pride, whereas the courage of faith is the only humble courage.

One can easily perceive that if there is to be any sense in this passage, it must be understood literally. God it is who requires absolute love. But he who in demanding a. person’s love thinks that this love should be proved also by becoming lukewarm to everything which hitherto was dear — that man is not only an egoist but stupid as well, and he who would demand such love signs at the same moment his own death-warrant, supposing that

his life was bound up with this coveted love. Thus a husband demands that his wife shall leave father and mother, but if he were to regard it as a proof of her extraordinary love for him that she for his sake became an indolent, lukewarm daughter etc., then he is the stupidest of the stupid. If he had any notion of what love is, he would wish to discover that as daughter and sister she was perfect in love, and would see therein the proof that she loved him more than anyone else in the realm. What therefore in the case of a man one would regard as a sign of egoism and stupidity, that one is to regard by the help of an exegete as a worthy conception of the Deity.

But how hate them? I will not recall here the human distinction between loving and hating — not because I have much to object to in it (for after all it is passionate), but because it is egoistic and is not in place here. However, if I regard the problem as a paradox, then I understand it, that is, I understand it in such a way as one can understand a paradox. The absolute duty may cause one to do what ethics would forbid, but by no means can it cause the knight of faith to cease to love. This is shown by Abraham. The instant he is ready to sacrifice Isaac the ethical expression for what he does is this: he hates Isaac. But if he really hates Isaac, he can be sure that God does not require this, for Cain and Abraham are not identical. Isaac he must love with his whole soul; when God requires Isaac he must love him if possible even more dearly, and only on this condition can he *sacrifice* him; for in fact it is this love for Isaac which, by its paradoxical opposition to his love for God, makes his act a sacrifice. But the distress and dread in this paradox is that, humanly speaking, he is entirely unable to make himself intelligible. Only at the moment when his act is in absolute contradiction to his feeling is his act a sacrifice, but the reality of his act is the factor by which he belongs to the universal, and in that aspect he is and remains a murderer.

Moreover, the passage in Luke must be understood in such a way as to make it clearly evident that the knight of faith has no higher expression of the universal (i.e. the ethical) by which he can save himself. Thus, for example, if we suppose that the Church requires such a sacrifice of one of its members, we have in this case only a tragic hero. For the idea of the Church is not qualitatively different from that of the State, in so far as the individual comes into it by a simple mediation, and in so far as the individual comes into the paradox he does not reach the idea of the Church, he does not come out of the paradox, but in it he must find either his blessedness or his perdition. Such an ecclesiastical hero expresses in his act the universal, and there will be no one in the Church — not even his father and mother etc. — who fails to understand him. On the other hand, he is not a knight of faith, and he has also a different answer from that of Abraham: he does not say that it is a trial or a temptation in which he is tested.

People commonly refrain from quoting such a text as this in Luke. They are afraid of giving men a free rein, are afraid that the worst will happen as soon as the individual takes it into his head to comport himself as the individual. Moreover, they think that to exist as the individual is the easiest thing of all, and that therefore people have to be compelled to become the universal. I cannot share either this fear or this opinion, and both for the same reason. He who has learned that to exist as the individual is the most terrible thing of all will not be fearful of saying that it is great, but then too he will say this in such a way that his words will scarcely be a snare for the bewildered man, but rather will help him into the universal, even though his words do to some extent make room for the great. The man who does not dare to mention such texts will not dare to mention Abraham either, and his notion that it is easy enough to exist as the individual implies a very suspicious admission with regard to himself; for he who has a real respect for himself and concern for his soul is convinced that the man who lives

under his own supervision, alone in the whole world, lives more strictly and more secluded than a maiden in her lady's bower. That there may be some who need compulsion, some who, if they were free-footed, would riot in selfish pleasures like unruly beasts, is doubtless true; but a man must prove precisely that he is not of this number by the fact that he knows how to speak with dread and trembling; and out of reverence for the great one is bound to speak, lest it be forgotten for fear of the ill effect, which surely will fail to eventuate when a man talks in such a way that one knows it for the great, knows its terror — and apart from the terror one does not know the great at all.

Let us consider a little more closely the distress and dread in the paradox of faith. The tragic hero renounces himself in order to express the universal, the knight of faith renounces the universal in order to become the universal. As had been said, everything depends upon how one is placed. He who believes that it is easy enough to be the individual can always be sure that he is not a knight of faith, for vagabonds and roving geniuses are not men of faith. The knight of faith knows, on the other hand, that it is glorious to belong to the universal. He knows that it is beautiful and salutary to be the individual who translates himself into the universal, who edits as it were a pure and elegant edition of himself, as free from errors as possible and which everyone can read. He knows that it is refreshing to become intelligible to oneself in the universal so that he understands it and so that every individual who understands him understands through him in turn the universal, and both rejoice in the security of the universal. He knows that it is beautiful to be born as the individual who has the universal as his home, his friendly abiding-place, which at once welcomes him with open arms when he would tarry in it. But he knows also that higher than this there winds a solitary path, narrow and steep; he knows that it is terrible to be born outside the universal, to walk without meeting a single traveller. He

knows very well where he is and how he is related to men. Humanly speaking, he is crazy and cannot make himself intelligible to anyone. And yet it is the mildest expression, to say that he is crazy. If he is not supposed to be that, then he is a hypocrite, and the higher he climbs on this path, the more dreadful a hypocrite he is.

The knight of faith knows that to give up oneself for the universal inspires enthusiasm, and that it requires courage, but he also knows that security is to be found in this, precisely because it is for the universal. He knows that it is glorious to be understood by every noble mind, so glorious that the beholder is ennobled by it, and he feels as if he were bound; he could wish it were this task that had been allotted to him. Thus Abraham could surely have wished now and then that the task were to love Isaac as becomes a father, in a way intelligible to all, memorable throughout all ages; he could wish that the task were to sacrifice Isaac for the universal, that he might incite the fathers to illustrious deeds — and he is almost terrified by the thought that for him such wishes are only temptations and must be dealt with as such, for he knows that it is a solitary path he treads and that he accomplishes nothing for the universal but only himself is tried and examined. Or what did Abraham accomplish for the universal? Let me speak humanly about it, quite humanly. He spent seventy years in getting a son of his old age. What other men get quickly enough and enjoy for a long time he spent seventy years in accomplishing. And why? Because he was tried and put to the test. Is not that crazy? But Abraham believed, and Sarah wavered and got him to take Hagar as a concubine — but therefore he also had to drive her away. He gets Isaac, then he has to be tried again. He knew that it is glorious to express the universal, glorious to live with Isaac. But this is not the task. He knew that it is a kingly thing to sacrifice such a son for the universal, he himself would have found repose in that, and all would have reposed in the commendation of his deed, as a vowel reposes in its

consonant, but that is not the task — he is tried. That Roman general who is celebrated by his name of Cunctator checked the foe by procrastination — but what a procrastinator Abraham is in comparison with him!…yet he did not save the state. This is the content of one hundred and thirty years. Who can bear it? Would not his contemporary age, if we can speak of such a thing, have said of him, “Abraham is eternally procrastinating. Finally he gets a son. That took long enough. Now he wants to sacrifice him. So is he not mad? And if at least he could explain why he wants to do it — but he always says that it is a trial.” Nor could Abraham explain more, for his life is like a book placed under a divine attachment and which never becomes *publici juris.*

This is the terrible thing. He who does not see it can always be sure that he is no knight of faith, but he who sees it will not deny that even the most tried of tragic heroes walks with a dancing step compared with the knight of faith, who comes slowly creeping forward. And if he has perceived this and assured himself that he has not courage to understand it, he will at least have a presentiment of the marvellous glory this knight attains in the fact that he becomes God’s intimate acquaintance, the Lord’s friend, and (to speak quite humanly) that he says “Thou” to God in heaven, whereas even the tragic hero only addresses Him in the third person.

The tragic hero is soon ready and has soon finished the fight, he makes the infinite movement and then is secure in the universal. The knight of faith, on the other hand, is kept sleepless, for he is constantly tried, and every instant there is the possibility of being able to return repentantly to the universal, and this possibility can just as well be a temptation as the truth. He can derive evidence from no man which it is, for with that query he is outside the paradox.

So the knight of faith has first and foremost the requisite passion to concentrate upon a single factor the whole of the ethical which he

transgresses, so that he can give himself the assurance that he really loves Isaac with his whole soul. If he cannot do that, he is in temptation (*Anfechtung).* In the next place, he has enough passion to make this assurance available in the twinkling of an eye and in such a way that it is as completely valid as it was in the first instance. If he is unable to do this, he can never budge from the spot, for he constantly has to begin all over again. The tragic hero also concentrated in one factor the ethical which he teleologically surpassed, but in this respect he had support in the universal. The knight of faith has only himself alone, and this constitutes the dreadfulness of the situation. Most men live in such a way under an ethical obligation that they can let the sorrow be sufficient for the day, but they never reach this passionate concentration, this energetic consciousness. The universal may in a certain sense help the tragic hero to attain this, but the knight of faith is left all to himself. The hero does the deed and finds repose in the universal, the knight of faith is kept in constant tension. Agamemnon gives up Iphigenia and thereby has found repose in the universal, then he takes the step of sacrificing her. If Agamemnon does not make the infinite movement, if his soul at the decisive instant, instead of having passionate concentration, is absorbed by the common twaddle that he had several daughters and *vielleicht* the *Auserordentliche* might occur — then he is of course not a hero but a hospital-case. The hero's concentration Abraham also has, even though in his case it is far more difficult, since he has no support in the universal; but he makes one more movement by which he concentrates his soul upon the miracle. If Abraham did not do that, he is only an Agamemnon — if in any way it is possible to explain how he can be justified in sacrificing Isaac when thereby no profit accrues to the universal.

Whether the individual is in temptation *(Anfechtung)* or is a knight of faith only the individual can decide. Nevertheless it is possible to construct

from the paradox several criteria which he too can understand who is not within the paradox. The true knight of faith is always absolute isolation, the false knight is sectarian. This sectarianism is an attempt to leap away from the narrow path of the paradox and become a tragic hero at a cheap price. The tragic hero expresses the universal and sacrifices himself for it. The sectarian punchinello, instead of that, has a private theatre, i.e. several good friends and comrades who represent the universal just about as well as the beadles in *The Golden Snuffbox* represent justice. The knight of faith, on the contrary, is the paradox, is the individual, absolutely nothing but the individual, without connections or pretensions. This is the terrible thing which the sectarian manikin cannot endure. For instead of learning from this terror that he is not capable of performing the great deed and then plainly admitting it (an act which I cannot but approve, because it is what I do) the manikin thinks that by uniting with several other manikins he will be able to do it. But that is quite out of the question. In the world of spirit no swindling is tolerated. A dozen sectaries join arms with one another, they know nothing whatever of the lonely temptations which await the knight of faith and which he dares not shun precisely because it would be still more dreadful if he were to press forward presumptuously. The sectaries deafen one another by their noise and racket, hold the dread off by their shrieks, and such a hallooing company of sportsmen think they are storming heaven and think they are on the same path as the knight of faith who in the solitude of the universe never hears any human voice but walks alone with his dreadful responsibility.

The knight of faith is obliged to rely upon himself alone, he feels the pain of not being able to make himself intelligible to others, but he feels no vain desire to guide others. The pain is his assurance that he is in the right way, this vain desire he does not know, he is too serious for that. The false knight of faith readily betrays himself by this proficiency in guiding which

he has acquired in an instant. He does not comprehend what it is all about, that if another individual is to take the same path, he must become entirely in the same way the individual and have no need of any man's guidance, least of all the guidance of a man who would obtrude himself. At this point men leap aside, they cannot bear the martyrdom of being uncomprehended, and instead of this they choose conveniently enough the worldly admiration of their proficiency. The true knight of faith is a witness, never a teacher, and therein lies his deep humanity, which is worth a good deal more than this silly participation in others' weal and woe which is honored by the name of sympathy, whereas in fact it is nothing but vanity. He who would only be a witness thereby avows that no man, not even the lowliest, needs another man's sympathy or should be abased that another may be exalted. But since he did not win what he won at a cheap price, neither does he sell it out at a cheap price, he is not petty enough to take men's admiration and give them in return his silent contempt, he knows that what is truly great is

Either there is an absolute duty toward God, and if so it is the paradox here described, that the individual as the individual is higher than the universal and as the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute / or else faith never existed, because it has always existed, or, to put it differently, Abraham is lost, or one must explain the passage in the fourteenth chapter of Luke as did that tasteful exegete, and explain in the same way the corresponding passages and similar ones.

PROBLEM III. WAS ABRAHAM ETHICALLY DEFENSIBLE IN KEEPING SILENT ABOUT HIS PURPOSE BEFORE SARAH, BEFORE ELEAZAR, BEFORE ISAAC?

THE ETHICAL AS such is the universal, again, as the universal it is the manifest, the revealed. The individual regarded as he is immediately, that is, as a physical and psychical being, is the hidden, the concealed. So his ethical task is to develop out of this concealment and to reveal himself in the universal. Hence whenever he wills to remain in concealment he sins and lies in temptation (*Anfechtung*), out of which he can come only by revealing himself.

With this we are back again at the same point. If there is not a concealment which has its ground in the fact that the individual as the individual is higher than the universal, then Abraham's conduct is indefensible, for he paid no heed to the intermediate ethical determinants. If on the other hand there is such a concealment, we are in the presence of the paradox which cannot be mediated inasmuch as it rests upon the consideration that the individual is higher than the universal, and it is the universal precisely which is mediation. The Hegelian philosophy holds that there is no justified concealment, no justified incommensurability. So it is self-consistent when it requires revelation, but it is not warranted in regarding Abraham as the father of faith and in talking about faith. For faith is not the first immediacy but a subsequent immediacy. The first immediacy is the aesthetical, and about this the Hegelian philosophy may be in the right. But faith is not the aesthetical — or else faith has never existed because it has always existed.

It will be best to regard the whole matter from a purely aesthetical point of view, and with that intent to embark upon an aesthetic deliberation, to which I beg the reader to abandon himself completely for the moment, while I, to contribute my share, will modify my presentation in conformity with the subject. The category I would consider a little more closely is *the interesting,* a category which especially in our age (precisely because our age lives in *discrimine rerum*) has acquired great importance, for it is properly the category of the turning-point. Therefore we, after having loved this category *pro virili,* should not scorn it as some do because we have outgrown it, but neither should we be too greedy to attain it, for certain it is that to be interesting or to have an interesting life is not a task for industrial art but a fateful privilege, which like every privilege in the world of spirit is bought only by deep pain. Thus, for example, Socrates was the most interesting man that ever lived, his life the most interesting that has been recorded, but this existence was allotted to him by the Deity, and in so far as he himself had to acquire it he was not unacquainted with trouble and pain. To take such a life in vain does not beseem a man who takes life seriously, and yet it is not rare to see in our age examples of such an endeavor. Moreover the interesting is a border-category, a boundary between aesthetics and ethics. For this reason our deliberation must constantly glance over into the field of ethics, while in order to be able to acquire significance it must grasp the problem with aesthetic intensity and concupiscence. With such matters ethics seldom deals in our age. The reason is supposed to be that there is no appropriate place for it in the System. Then surely one might do it in a monograph, and moreover, if one would not do it prolixly, one might do it briefly and yet attain the same end — if, that is to say, a man has the predicate in his power, for one or two predicates can betray a whole world. Might there not be some place in the System for a little word like the predicate?

In his immortal *poetics* (Chapter 11) Aristotle says, δύο μὲυ οὖν τοῦ μύθον μέρη περὶ ταῦτ' ἐστί, περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις. I am of course concerned here only with the second factor, ἀυαγυώρισις, recognition. Where there can be question of a recognition there is implied *eo ipso* a previous concealment. So just as recognition is the relieving, the relaxing factor in the dramatic life, so is concealment the factor of tension. What Aristotle has to say in the same chapter about the merits of tragedy which are variously appraised in proportion as περιπέτεια and ἀυαγυώρισις impinge upon one another, and also what he says about the "individual" and the "double recognition," I cannot take into consideration here, although by its inwardness and quiet concentration what he says is peculiarly tempting to one who is weary of the superficial omniscience of encyclopedic scholars. A more general observation may be appropriate here. In Greek tragedy concealment (and consequently recognition) is an epic survival grounded in the first instance upon a fate in which the dramatic action disappears from view and from which tragedy derives its obscure and enigmatic origin. Hence it is that the effect produced by a Greek tragedy is like the impression of a marble statue which lacks the power of the eye. Greek tragedy is blind. Hence a certain abstraction is necessary in order to appreciate it properly. A son murders his father, but only afterwards does he learn that it was his father. A sister wants to sacrifice her brother, but at the decisive moment she learns who he is. This dramatic motive is not so apt to interest our *reflective* age. Modern drama has given up fate, has emancipated itself dramatically, sees with its eyes, scrutinizes itself, resolves fate in its dramatic consciousness. Concealment and revelation are in this case the hero's free act for which he is responsible.

Recognition and concealment are also present as an essential element in modern drama. To adduce examples of this would be too prolix. I am courteous enough to assume that everybody in our age, which is so

aesthetically wanton, so potent and so enflamed that the act of conception comes as easy to it as to the partridge hen, which, according to Aristotle's affirmation, needs only to hear the voice of the cock or the sound of its flight overhead — I assume that everyone, merely upon hearing the word "concealment" will be able to shake half a score of romances and comedies out of his sleeve. Wherefore I express myself briefly and so will throw out at once a general observation. In case one who plays hide and seek (and thereby introduces into the play the dramatic ferment) hides something nonsensical, we get a comedy; if on the other hand he stands in relation to the idea, he may come near being a tragic hero. I give here merely an example of the comic. A man rouges his face and wears a periwig. The same man is eager to try his fortune with the fair sex, he is perfectly sure of conquering by the aid of the rouge and the periwig which make him absolutely irresistible. He captures a girl and is at the acme of happiness. Now comes the gist of the matter: if he is able to admit this embellishment, he does not lose all of his infatuating power; when he reveals himself as a plain ordinary man, and bald at that, he does not thereby lose the loved one. — Concealment is his free act, for which aesthetics also holds him responsible. This science is no friend of hypocrites, it abandons him to the mercy of laughter. This must suffice as a mere hint of what I mean — the comical cannot be a subject of interest for this investigation.

The path I have to take carries out the investigation of concealment through aesthetics and ethics, for the point is to show the absolute difference between the aesthetic concealment and the paradox.

A couple of examples. A girl is secretly in love with a man, although they have not definitely avowed their love to one another. Her parents compel her to marry another (there may be moreover a consideration of filial piety which determines her), she obeys her parents, she conceals her love, and "no one will ever know what she suffers." — A young man is able

by a single word to get possession of the object of his longings and his restless dreams. This little word, however, will compromise, yea, perhaps (who knows?) bring to ruin a whole family, he resolves magnanimously to remain in his concealment, "the girl shall never get to know that he may perhaps become happy by giving his hand to another." What a pity that these two men, both of whom were concealed from their respective lovers, were also concealed from one another, otherwise a remarkable higher unity might have been brought about. — Their concealment is a free act, for which they are responsible also to aesthetics. Aesthetics, however, is a courteous and sentimental science which knows of more expedients than a pawnbroker. So what does it do? It makes everything possible for the lovers. By the help of a chance the partners to the projected marriage get a hint of the magnanimous resolution of the other part, it comes to an explanation, they get one another and at the same time attain rank with real heroes. For in spite of the fact that they did not even get time to sleep over their resolution, aesthetics treats them nevertheless as if they had courageously fought for their resolution during many years. For aesthetics does not trouble itself greatly about time, whether in jest or seriousness time flies equally fast for it.

But ethics knows nothing about that chance or about that sentimentality, nor has it so speedy a concept of time. Thereby the matter receives a different aspect. It is no good arguing with ethics for it has pure categories. It does not appeal to experience, which of all ludicrous things is the most ludicrous, and which so far from making a man wise rather makes him mad if he knows nothing higher than this. Ethics has in its possession no chance, and so matters do not come to an explanation, it does not jest with dignities, it lays a prodigious responsibility upon the shoulders of the puny hero, it denounces as presumption his wanting to play providence by his actions, but it also denounces him for wanting to do it by his suffering. It bids a man

believe in reality and have courage to fight against all the afflictions of reality, and still more against the bloodless sufferings he has assumed on his own responsibility. It warns against believing the calculations of the understanding, which are more perfidious than the oracles of ancient times. It warns against every untimely magnanimity. Let reality decide — then is the time to show courage, but then ethics itself offers all possible assistance. If, however, there was something deeper which moved in these two, if there was seriousness to see the task, seriousness to commence it, then something will come of them; but ethics cannot help, it is offended, for they keep a secret from it, a secret they hold at their own peril.

So aesthetics required concealment and rewarded it, ethics required revelation and punished concealment.

At times, however, even aesthetics requires revelation. When the hero ensnared in the aesthetic illusion thinks by his silence to save another man, then it requires silence and rewards it. On the other hand, when the hero by his action intervenes disturbingly in another man's life, then it requires revelation. I am now on the subject of the tragic hero. I would consider for a moment Euripides' *Ephigenia in Aulis.* Agamemnon must sacrifice Iphigenia. Now aesthetics requires silence of Agamemnon inasmuch as it would be unworthy of the hero to seek comfort from any other man, and out of solicitude for the women too he ought to conceal this from them as long as possible. On the other hand, the hero, precisely in order to be a hero, must be tried by dreadful temptations which the tears of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia provide for him. What does aesthetics do? It has an expedient, it has in readiness an old servant who reveals everything to Clytemnestra. Then all is as it should be.

Ethics, however, has at hand no chance and no old servant. The ethical idea contradicts itself as soon as it must be carried out in reality. Hence ethics requires revelation. The tragic hero displays his ethical courage

precisely by the fact that it is he who, without being ensnared in any aesthetic illusion, himself announces to Iphigenia her fate. If the tragic hero does this, then he is the beloved son of ethics in whom it is well pleased. If he keeps silent, it may be because he thinks thereby to make it easier for others, but it may also be because thereby he makes it easier for himself. However, he knows that he is not influenced by this latter motive. If he keeps silent, he assumes as the individual a serious responsibility inasmuch as he ignores an argument which may come from without. As a tragic hero he cannot do this, for ethics loves him precisely because he expresses the universal. His heroic action demands courage, but it belongs to this courage that he shall shun no argumentation. Now it is certain that tears are a dreadful *argumentum ad hominem*, and doubtless there are those who are moved by nothing yet are touched by tears. In the play Ephigenia had leave to weep, really she ought to have been allowed like Jephtha's daughter two months for weeping, not in solitude but at her father's feet, allowed to employ her art "which is but tears," and to twine about his knees instead of presenting the olive branch of the suppliant.

Aesthetics required revelation but helped itself out by a chance; ethics required revelation and found in the tragic hero its satisfaction.

In spite of the severity with which ethics requiresrevelation, it cannot be denied that secrecy and silence really make a man great precisely because they are characteristics of inwardness. When Amor leaves Psyche he says to her, "Thou shalt give birth to a child which will be a divine infant if thou dost keep silence, but a human being if thou dost reveal the secret." The tragic hero who is the favorite of ethics is the purely human, and him I can understand, and all he does is in the light of the revealed. If I go further, then I stumble upon the paradox, either the divine or the demoniac, for silence is both. Silence is the snare of the demon, and the more one keeps

silent, the more terrifying the demon becomes; but silence is also the mutual understanding between the Deity and the individual.

Before going on to the story of Abraham, however, I would call before the curtain several poetic personages. By the power of dialectic I keep them upon tiptoe, and by wielding over them the scourge of despair I shall surely keep them from standing still, in order that in their dread they may reveal one thing and another.

In his *Poetics* Aristotle relates a story of a political disturbance at Delphi which was provoked by a question of marriage. *The bridegroom, when the augurs foretell to him that a misfortune would follow his marriage, suddenly changes his plan at the decisive moment when he comes to fetch the bride* — he will not celebrate the wedding. I have no need of more. In Delphi this event hardly passed without tears; if a poet were to have adopted it as his theme, he might have dared to count very surely upon sympathy. Is it not dreadful that love, which in human life often enough was cast into exile, is now deprived of the support of heaven? Is not the old proverb that "marriages are made in heaven" here put to shame? Usually it is all the afflictions and difficulties of the finite which like evil spirits separate the lovers, but love has heaven on its side, and therefore this holy alliance overcomes all enemies. In this case it is heaven itself which separates what heaven itself has joined together. And who would have guessed such a thing? The young bride least of all. Only a moment before she was sitting in her chamber in all her beauty, and the lovely maidens had conscientiously adorned her so that they could justify before all the world what they had done, so that they not merely derived joy from it but envy, yea, joy for the fact that it was not possible for them to become more envious, because it was not possible for her to become more beautiful. She sat alone in her chamber and was transformed from beauty unto beauty, for every means was employed that feminine art was capable of to adorn

worthily the worthy. But there still was lacking something which the young maidens had not dreamed of: a veil finer, lighter and yet more impenetrable than that in which the young maidens had enveloped her, a bridal dress which no young maiden knew of or could help her to obtain, yea, even the bride herself did not know how to obtain it. It was an invisible, a friendly power, taking pleasure in adorning a bride, which enveloped her in it without her knowledge; for she saw only how the bridegroom passed by and went up to the temple. She saw the door shut behind him, and she became even more calm and blissful, for she only knew that he now belonged to her more than ever. The door of the temple opened, he stepped out, but maidenly she cast down her eyes and therefore did not see that his countenance was troubled, but he saw that heaven was jealous of the bride's loveliness and of his good fortune. The door of the temple opened, and the young maidens saw the bridegroom step out, but they did not see that his countenance was troubled, they were busy fetching the bride. Then forth she stepped in all her maidenly modesty and yet like a queen surrounded by her maids of honor, who bowed before her as the young maiden always bows before a bride. Thus she stood at the head of her lovely band and waited — it was only an instant, for the temple was near at hand — and the bridegroom came…but he passed by her door.

But here I break off — I am not a poet, I go about things only dialectically. It must be remembered first of all that it is at the decisive instant the hero gets this elucidation, so he is pure and blameless, has not light-mindedly tied himself to the fiancée. In the next place, he has a divine utterance for him, or rather against him, he is therefore not guided like those puny lovers by his own conceit. Moreover, it goes without saying that this utterance makes him just as unhappy as the bride, yea, a little more so, since he after all is the occasion of her unhappiness. It is true enough that the augurs only foretold a misfortune to *him,* but the question is whether this

misfortune is not of such a sort that in injuring him it would also affect injuriously their conjugal happiness. What then is he to do? Shall he preserve silence and celebrate the wedding? — with the thought that “perhaps the misfortune will not come at once, at any rate I have upheld love and have not feared to make myself unhappy. But keep silent I must, for otherwise even the short moment is wasted. This seems plausible, but it is not so by any means, for in doing this I have insulted the girl.” He has in a way made the girl guilty by his silence, for in case she had known the truth she never would have consented to such a union. So in the hour of need she would not only have had to bear the misfortune but also her responsibility for his keeping silent and to feel a justified indignation that he had kept silent. Or (2) shall he keep silent and give up celebrating the wedding? In this case he must embroil himself in a mystification by which he reduces himself to naught in her eyes. Aesthetics would perhaps approve of this. The catastrophe might then be fashioned like that of the real story, except that at the last instant an explanation would be forthcoming — however, that would be after it was all over, since aesthetically viewed it is a necessity to let him die…unless this science should see its way to annul the fateful prophecy. Still, by this behavior, magnanimous as he is, he implies an offense against the girl and against the reality of her love. Or (3) shall he speak? One of course must not forget that our hero is a little too poetical for us to suppose that to sign away his love might not have for him a significance very different from the result of an unsuccessful business speculation. If he speaks, the whole thing becomes a story of unhappy love in the style of Axel and Valborg. This is a pair which heaven itself separates. However, in the present case the separation is to be conceived somewhat differently since it results at the same time from the free act of the individual. What is so very difficult in the dialectic of this case is that the misfortune is to fall only upon him. So the two lovers do not find like

Axel and Valborg a common expression for their suffering, inasmuch as heaven levels its decree equally against Axel and Valborg because they are equally near of kin to one another. If this were the case here, a way out would be thinkable. For since heaven does not employ any visible power to separate them but leaves this to them, it is thinkable that they might resolve between them to defy heaven and its misfortune too.

Ethics, however, will require him to speak. His heroism then is essentially to be found in the fact that he gives up aesthetic loftiness, which in this case, however, could not easily be thought to have any admixture of the vanity which consists in being hidden, for it must indeed be clear to him that he makes the girl unhappy. The reality of this heroism depends, however, upon the fact that he had had his opportunity [for a genuine love] and annulled it; for if such heroism could be acquired without this, we should have plenty of heroes in our age, in our age which has attained an unparalleled proficiency in forgery and does the highest things by leaping over the intermediate steps.

But then why this sketch, since I get no further after all than the tragic hero? Well, because it is at least possible that it might throw light upon the paradox. Everything depends upon how this man stands related to the utterance of the augurs which is in one way or another decisive for his life. Is this utterance *publici juris,* or is it a *privatissimum*? The scene is laid in Greece, the utterance of the augur is intelligible to all. I do not mean merely that the ordinary man is able to understand its content lexically, but that the ordinary man can understand that an augur announces to the individual the decision of heaven. So the utterance of the augur is not intelligible only to the hero but to all, and no private relationship to the deity results from it. Do what he will, that which is foretold will come to pass, and neither by doing nor by leaving undone does he come into closer relationship with the deity, or become either the object of its grace or of its wrath. The result

foretold is a thing which any ordinary man will be just as well able as the hero to understand, and there is no secret writing which is legible to the hero only. Inasmuch as he would speak, he can do so perfectly well, for he is able to make himself intelligible; inasmuch as he would keep silent, it is because by virtue of being the individual he would be higher than the universal, would delude himself with all sorts of fantastic notions about how she will soon forget the sorrow, etc. On the other hand, in case the will of heaven had not been announced to him by an augur, in case it had come to his knowledge in an entirely private way, in case it had put itself into an entirely private relationship with him, then we encounter the paradox (supposing there is such a thing — for my reflection takes the form of a dilemma), then he could not speak, however much he might wish to. Then he did not compel himself to maintain silence but he suffered from the pain of it — but this precisely was the assurance that he was justified. So the reason for his silence is not that he as the individual would place himself in an absolute relation to the *universal,* but that he as the individual was placed in an asbolute relation to the *absolute.* In this then he would also be able to find repose (as well as I am able to figure it to myself), whereas his magnanimous silence would constantly have been disquieted by the requirements of the ethical. It is very much to be desired that aesthetics would for once essay to begin at the point where for so many years it has ended, with the illusory magnanimity. Once it were to do this it would work directly in the interest of the religious, for religion is the only power which can deliver the aesthetical out of its conflict with the ethical. Queen Elizabeth sacrificed to the State her love for Essex by signing his death-warrant. This was a heroic act, even if there was involved a little personal grievance for the fact that he had not sent her the ring. He had in fact sent it, as we know, but it was kept back by the malice of a lady of the court. Elizabeth received intelligence of this (so it is related, *ni Jailor*), there-upon

she sat for ten days with one finger in her mouth and bit it without saying a word, and thereupon she died. This would be a theme for a poet who knew how to wrench the mouth open — without this condition it is at the most serviceable to a conductor of the ballet, with whom in our time the poet too often confuses himself.

I will follow this with a sketch which involves the demoniacal. The legend of *Agnes and the Merman* will serve my purpose. The merman is a seducer who shoots up from his hiding-place in the abyss, with wild lust grasps and breaks the innocent flower which stood in all its grace on the seashore and pensively inclined its head to listen to the howling of the ocean. This is what the poets hitherto have meant by it. Let us make an alteration. The merman was a seducer. He had called to Agnes, had by his smooth speech enticed from her the hidden sentiments, she has found in the merman what she sought, what she was gazing after down at the bottom of the sea. Agnes would like to follow him. The merman has lifted her up in his arms, Agnes twines about his neck, with her whole soul she trustingly abandons herself to the stronger one; he already stands upon the brink, he leans over the sea, about to plunge into it with his prey — then Agnes looks at him once more, not timidly, not doubtingly, not proud of her good fortune, not intoxicated by pleasure, but with absolute faith in him, with absolute humility, like the lowly flower she conceived herself to be; by this look she entrusts to him with absolute confidence her whole fate — and, behold, the sea roars no more, its voice is mute, nature's passion which is the merman's strength leaves him in the lurch, a dead calm ensues — and still Agnes continues to look at him thus. Then the merman collapses, he is not able to resist the power of innocence, his native element is unfaithful to him, he cannot seduce Agnes. He leads her back again, he explains to her that he only wanted to show her how beautiful the sea is when it is calm, and Agnes believes him. — Then he turns back alone and the sea rages, but

despair in the merman rages more wildly. He is able to seduce Agnes, he is able to seduce a hundred Agneses, he is able to infatuate every girl — but Agnes has conquered, and the merman has lost her. Only as a prey can she become his, he cannot belong faithfully to any girl, for in fact he is only a merman. Here I have taken the liberty of making a little alteration in the merman; substantially I have also altered Agnes a little, for in the legend Agnes is not entirely without fault — and generally speaking it is nonsense and coquetry and an insult to the feminine sex to imagine a case of seduction where the girl is not the least bit to blame. In the legend Agnes is (to modernize my expression a little) a woman who craves "the interesting," and every such woman can always be sure that there is a merman in the offing, for with half an eye mermen discover the like of that and steer for it like a shark after its prey. It is therefore very stupid to suppose (or is it a rumor which a merman has spread abroad?) that the so-called culture protects a girl against seduction. No, existence is more righteous and fair: there is only one protection, and that is innocence.

We will now bestow upon the merman a human consciousness and suppose that the fact of his being a merman indicates a human preexistence in the consequences of which his life is entangled. There is nothing to prevent him from becoming a hero, for the step he now takes is one of reconciliation. He is loved by Agnes, the seducer is contrite, he has bowed to the power of innocence, he can never seduce again. But at the same instant two powers are striving for possession of him: repentance; and Agnes and repentance. If repentance alone takes possession of him, then he is hidden; if Agnes and repentance take possession of him, then he is revealed.

Now in case repentance grips the merman and he remains concealed, he has clearly made Agnes unhappy, for Agnes loved him in all her innocence, she believed that at the instant when even to her he seemed changed,

however well he hid it, he was telling the truth in saying that he only wanted to show her the beautiful calmness of the sea. However, with respect to passion the merman himself becomes still more unhappy, for he loved Agnes with a multiplicity of passions and had beside a new guilt to bear. The demoniacal element in repentance will now explain to him that this is precisely his punishment [for the faults of his preexistent state], and that the more it tortures him the better.

If he abandons himself to this demoniacal influence, he then perhaps makes still another attempt to save Agnes, in such a way as one can, in a certain sense, save a person by means of the evil. He knows that Agnes loves him. If he could wrest from Agnes this love, then in a way she is saved. But how? The merman has too much sense to depend upon the notion that an open-hearted confession would awaken her disgust. He will therefore try perhaps to incite in her all dark passions, will scorn her, mock her, hold up her love to ridicule, if possible he will stir up her pride. He will not spare himself any torment; for this is the profound contradiction in the demoniacal, and in a certain sense there dwells infinitely more good in a demoniac than in a trivial person. The more selfish Agnes is, the easier the deceit will prove for him (for it is only very inexperienced people who suppose that it is easy to deceive innocence; existence is very profound, and it is in fact the easiest thing for the shrewd to fool the shrewd) — but all the more terrible will be the merman’s sufferings. The more cunningly his deceit is planned, the less will Agnes bashfully hide from him her sufferings; she will resort to every means, nor will they be without effect — not to shake his resolution, I mean, but to torture him.

So by help of the demoniacal the merman desires to be the individual who as the individual is higher than the universal. The demoniacal has the same characteristic as the divine inasmuch as the individual can enter into an absolute relation to it. This is the analogy, the counterpart, to that

paradox of which we are talking. It has therefore a certain resemblance which may deceive one. Thus the merman has apparently the proof that his silence is justified for the fact that by it he suffers all his pain. However, there is no doubt that he can talk. He can thus become a tragic hero, to my mind a grandiose tragic hero, if he talks. Few people will be able to comprehend wherein this grandiose quality consists. He will then be able to wrest from his mind every self-deceit about his being able to make Agnes happy by his trick, he will have courage, humanly speaking, to crush Agnes. Here I would make in conclusion only one psychological observation. The more selfishly Agnes has been developed, the more dazzling will the self-deception be, indeed it is not inconceivable that in reality it might come to pass that a merman by his demoniac shrewdness has, humanly speaking, not only saved an Agnes but brought something extraordinary out of her; for a demon knows how to torture powers out of even the weakest person, and in his way he may have the best intentions toward a human being.

The merman stands at the dialectical turning-point. If he is delivered out of the demoniacal into repentance there are two paths open to him. He may hold back, remain in his concealment, but not rely upon his shrewdness. He does not come as the individual into an absolute relationship with the demoniacal but finds repose in the counter-paradox that the deity will save Agnes. (So it is the Middle Ages would perform the movement, for according to its conception the merman is absolutely dedicated to the cloister.) Or else he may be saved along with Agnes. Now this is not to be understood to mean that by the love of Agnes for him he might be saved from being henceforth a deceiver (this is the aesthetic way of performing a rescue, which always goes around the main point, which is the continuity of the merman's life); for so far as that goes he is already saved, he is saved inasmuch as he becomes revealed. Then he marries Agnes. But still he must have recourse to the paradox. For when the individual by his guilt has gone

outside the universal he can return to it only by virtue of having come as the individual into an absolute relationship with the absolute. Here I will make an observation by which I say more than was said at any point in the foregoing discussion. Sin is not the first immediacy, sin is a later immediacy. By sin the individual is already higher (in the direction of the demoniacal paradox) than the universal, because it is a contradiction on the part of the universal to impose itself upon a man who lacks the *conditio sine qua non.* If philosophy among other vagaries were also to have the notion that it could occur to a man to act in accordance with its teaching, one might make out of that a queer comedy. An ethics which disregards sin is a perfectly idle science; but if it asserts sin, it is *eo ipso* well beyond itself. Philosophy teaches that the immediate must be annulled (*aufgehoben*). That is true enough; but what is not true in this is that sin is as a matter of course the immediate, for that is no more true than that faith as a matter of course is the immediate.

As long as I move in these spheres everything goes smoothly, but what is said here does not by any means explain Abraham; for it was not by sin Abraham became the individual, on the contrary, he was a righteous man, he is God’s elect. So the analogy to Abraham will not appear until after the individual has been brought to the point of being able to accomplish the universal, and then the paradox repeats itself.

The movements of the merman I can understand, whereas I cannot understand Abraham; for it is precisely through the paradox that the merman comes to the point of realizing the universal. For if he remains hidden and initiates himself into all the torments of repentance, then he becomes a demon and as such is brought to naught. If he remains concealed but judges it imprudent on his part to be tortured in the bondage of repentance so as to be able to work Agnes loose from the shore where she is stranded, then in fact he attains peace, but he is lost for this world. If he

becomes revealed and lets himself be saved by Agnes, then he is the greatest man I can picture; for it is only aesthetics which is frivolous enough to think that it extols the power of love by letting the lost soul be loved by an innocent girl and thereby saved; it is only aesthetics which sees amiss and thinks the girl a heroine, whereas it is in fact the merman who is the hero. So the merman cannot belong to Agnes unless, after having made the infinite movement of repentance, he makes still one more movement by virtue of the absurd. By his own strength he can make the movement of repentance, but for that he uses up absolutely all his strength and hence he cannot by his own strength return and grasp reality. If a man has not enough passion to make either the one movement or the other, if he loiters through life, repenting a litde, and thinks that the rest will take care of itself, he has once for all renounced the effort to live in the idea — and then he can very easily reach and help others to reach the highest attainments, i.e. delude himself and others with the notion that in the world of spirit everything goes as in a well-known game of cards where everything depends on haphazard. One can therefore divert oneself by reflecting how strange it is that precisely in our age when everyone is able to accomplish the highest things doubt about the immortality of the soul could be so widespread, for the man who has really made even so much as the movement of infinity is hardly a doubter. The conclusions of passion are the only reliable ones, that is, the only convincing conclusions. Fortunately existence is in this instance more kindly and more faithful than the wise maintain, for it excludes no man, not even the lowliest, it fools no one, for in the world of spirit only he is fooled who fools himself.

It is the opinion of all, and so far as I dare permit myself to pass judgment it is also my opinion, that it is not the highest thing to enter the monastery; but for all that it is by no means my opinion that in our age when nobody enters the monastery everybody is greater than the deep and

earnest soul who found repose in a monastery. How many are there in our age who have passion enough to think this thought and then to judge themselves honestly? This mere thought of taking time upon one's conscience of giving it time to explore with its sleepless vigilance every secret thought, with such effect that, if every instant one does not make the movement by virtue of the highest and holiest there is in a man, one is able with dread and horror to discover and by dread itself, if in no other way, to lure forth the obscure *libido* which is concealed after all in every human life, whereas on the contrary when one lives in society with others one so easily forgets, is let off so easily, is sustained in so many ways, gets opportunity to start afresh — this mere thought, I would suppose, must chasten many an individual in our age which imagines it has already reached the highest attainment. But about this people concern themselves very little in our age which they think has reached the highest attainment, whereas in truth no age has so fallen victim to the comic as this has, and it is incomprehensible that this age has not already by a *generatio aequivoca* given birth to its hero, the demon who would remorselessly produce the dreadful spectacle of making the whole age laugh and making it forget that it was laughing at itself. Or what is existence for but to be laughed at if men in their twenties have already attained the utmost? And for all that, what loftier emotion has the age found since men gave up entering the monastery? Is it not a pitiable prudence, shrewdness, faint-heartedness, it has found, which sits in high places and cravenly makes men believe they have accomplished the greatest things and insidiously withholds them from attempting to do even the lesser things? The man who has performed the cloister-movement has only one movement more to make, that is, the movement of the absurd. How many in our age understand what the absurd is? How many of our contemporaries so live that they have renounced everything and gained all? How many are even so honest with themselves

that they know what they can do and what they cannot? And is it not true that in so far as one finds such people one finds them rather among the less cultured and in part among women? The age in a kind of clairvoyance reveals its weak point, as a demoniac always reveals himself without understanding himself, for over and over again it is demanding the comic. If it really were this the age needed, the theater might perhaps need a new play in which it was made a subject of laughter that a person died of love — or would it not rather be salutary for this age if such a thing were to happen among us, if the age were to witness such an occurrence, in order that for once it might acquire courage to believe in the power of spirit, courage to quench cravenly the better impulses in oneself and to quench invidiously the better impulses in others…by laughter? Does the age really need a ridiculous exhibition by a religious enthusiast in order to get something to laugh at, or does it not need rather that such an enthusiastic figure should remind it of that which has been forgotten?

If one would like to have a story written on a similar theme but more touching for the fact that the passion of repentance was not awakened, one might use to this effect a tale which is narrated in the book of Tobit. The young Tobias wanted to marry Sarah the daughter of Raguel and Edna. But a sad fatality hung over this young girl. She had been given to seven husbands, all of whom had perished in the bride-chamber. With a view to my plan this feature is a blemish in the narrative, for almost irresistably a comic effect is produced by the thought of seven fruitless attempts to get married notwithstanding she was very near to it — just as near as a student who seven times failed to get his diploma. In the book of Tobit the accent falls on a different spot, therefore the high figure is significant and in a certain sense is contributary to the tragic effect, for it enhances the courage of Tobias, which was the more notable because he was the only son of his parents (6:14) and because the deterrent was so striking. So this feature

must be left out. Sarah is a maiden who has never been in love, who treasures still a young maiden's bliss, her enormous first mortgage upon life, her *Vollmachtbrief zum Glucke*, the privilege of loving a man with her whole heart. And yet she is the most unhappy maiden, for she knows that the evil demon who loves her will kill the bridegroom the night of the wedding. I have read of many a sorrow, but I doubt if there is anywhere to be found so deep a sorrow as that which we discover in the life of this girl. However, if the misfortune comes from without, there is some consolation to be found after all. Although existence did not bring one that which might have made one happy, there is still consolation in the thought that one would have been able to receive it. But the unfathomable sorrow which time can never divert, which time can never heal! To be aware that it was of no avail though existence were to do everything it could! A Greek writer conceals so infinitely much by his simple naïveté when he says: πάυτως γὰρ οὐδείς ἐρωτα ἐφυγευ ἤ φεὐξεται, μέχρις ἄυ κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν (cf. *Longi Pastoralia)*. There has been many a girl who became unhappy in love, but after all she *became* so, Sarah *was* so before she became so. It is hard not to find the man to whom one can surrender oneself devotedly, but it is *unspeakably* hard not to be able to surrender oneself. A young girl surrenders herself, and then they say, "Now she is no longer free"; but Sarah was never free, and yet she had never surrendered herself. It is hard if a girl surrendered herself and then was cheated, but Sarah was cheated before she surrendered herself. What a world of sorrow is implied in what follows, when finally Tobias wishes to marry Sarah! What wedding ceremonies! What preparations! No maiden has ever been so cheated as Sarah, for she was cheated out of the most sacred thing of all, the absolute wealth which even the poorest girl possesses, cheated out of the secure, boundless, unrestrained, unbridled devotion of surrender — for first there had to be a fumigation by laying the heart of the fish and its liver upon

glowing coals. And think of how the mother had to take leave of her daughter, who as it were was herself cheated out of all and in continuity with this must cheat the mother out of her most beautiful possession. Just read the narrative. “Edna prepared the chamber and brought Sarah thither and wept and received the tears of her daughter. And she said unto her, Be of good comfort, my child, the Lord of heaven and earth give thee joy for this thy sorrow! Be of good courage, my daughter.” And then the moment of the nuptials! Let one read it if one can for tears. “But after they were both shut in together Tobias rose up from the bed and said, Sister, arise, and let us pray that the Lord may have mercy upon us” (8:4).

In case a poet were to read this narrative, in case he were to make use of it, I wager a hundred to one that he would lay all the emphasis upon the young Tobias. His heroic courage in being willing to risk his life in such evident danger — which the narrative recalls once again, for the morning after the nuptials Raguel says to Edna, “Send one of the maidservants and let her see whether he be alive; but if not, that we may bury him and no man know of it” (8:12) — this heroic courage would be the poet’s theme. I take the liberty of proposing another. Tobias acted bravely, stoutheartedly and chivalrously, but any man who has not the courage for this is a molly-coddle who does not know what love is, or what it is to be a man, or what is worth living for; he had not even comprehended the little mystery, that it is better to give than to receive, and has no inkling of the great one, that it is far more difficult to receive than to give — that is, if one has had courage to do without and in the hour of need did not become cowardly. No, it is Sarah that is the heroine. I desire to draw near to her as I never have drawn near to any girl or felt tempted in thought to draw near to any girl I have read about. For what love to God it requires to be willing to let oneself be healed when from the beginning one has been thus bungled without one’s fault, from the beginning has been an abortive specimen of humanity! What

ethical maturity was required for assuming the responsibility of allowing the loved one to do such a daring deed! What humility before the face of another person! What faith in God to believe that the next instant she would not hate the husband to whom she owed everything!

Let Sarah be a man, and with that the demoniacal is close at hand. The proud and noble nature can endure everything, but one thing it cannot endure, it cannot endure pity. In that there is implied an indignity which can only be inflicted upon one by a higher power, for by oneself one can never become an object of pity. A man has sinned, so he can bear the punishment for it without despairing; but without blame to be singled out as a sacrifice to pity, as a sweet-smelling savor in its nostrils, that he cannot put up with. Pity has a strange dialectic, at one moment it requires guilt, the next moment it will not have it, and so it is that to be predestinated to pity is more and more dreadful the more the individual's misfortune is in the direction of the spiritual. But Sarah had no blame attaching to her, she is cast forth as a prey to every suffering and in addition to this has to endure the torture of pity — for even I who admire her more than Tobias loved her, even I cannot mention her name without saying, "Poor girl." Put a man in Sarah's place, let him know that in case he were to love a girl a spirit of hell would come and murder his loved one — it might well be possible that he would choose the demoniacal part, that he would shut himself up within himself and say in the way a demoniacal nature talks in secret, "Many thanks, I am no friend of courteous and prolix phrases, I do not absolutely need the pleasure of love, I can become a Blue Beard, finding my delight in seeing maidens perish during the night of their nuptials." Commonly one hears little about the demoniacal, notwithstanding that this field, particularly in our time, has a valid claim to be explored, and notwithstanding that the observer, in case he knows how to get a little in *rapport* with the demon, can, at least occasionally, make use of almost

every man for this purpose. As such an explorer Shakespeare is and constantly remains a hero. That horrible demon, the most demoniacal figure Shakespeare has depicted and depicted incomparably, the Duke of Gloucester (afterwards to become Richard III) — what made him a demon? Evidently the fact that he could not bear the pity he had been subjected to since childhood. His monologue in the first act of Richard III is worth more than all the moral systems which have no inkling of the terrors of existence or of the explanation of them.

I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarse half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.

Such natures as that of Gloucester one cannot save by mediating them into an idea of society. Ethics in fact only makes game of them, just as it would be a mockery of Sarah if one were to say to her, "Why dost thou not express the universal and get married?" Essentially such natures are in the paradox and are no more imperfect than other men, but are either lost in the demoniacal paradox or saved in the divine. Now from time out of mind people have been pleased to think that witches, hobgoblins, gnomes etc. were deformed, and undeniably every man on seeing a deformed person has at once an inclination to associate this with the notion of moral depravity. What a monstrous injustice! For the situation must rather be inverted, in the sense that existence itself has corrupted them, in the same way that a stepmother makes the children wicked. The fact of being originally set outside of the universal, by nature or by a historical circumstance, is the

beginning of the demoniacal, for which the individual himself however is not to blame. Thus Cumberland's Jew is also a demon notwithstanding he does what is good. Thus too the demoniacal may express itself as contempt for men — a contempt, be it observed, which does not cause a man to behave contemptibly, since on the contrary he counts it his forte that he is better than all who condemn him. — In view of such cases the poets ought to lose no time in sounding the alarm. God knows what books are read now by the younger generation of verse makers! God knows what significance in existence these men have! Their study likely consists in learning rhymes by rote. At this moment I do not know what use they are except to furnish an edifying proof of the immortality of the soul, for the fact that one can say of them as Baggesen says of the poet of our town, Kildevalle, "If he is immortal, then we all are." — What I have said here with regard to the daimonia in poetic production (taking Sarah as the point of departure, and therefore a fantastic hypothesis) acquires full significance if with psychological interest one will absorb oneself in the significance of the saying: *nullum unquam exstetit magnum ingenium sine aliqua dementia*, For this *dementia* is the suffering allotted to genius in existence, it is the expression if I may say so, of the divine jealousy, whereas the gift of genius is the expression of the divine favor. So from the start the genius is disoriented in relation to the universal and is brought into relation with the paradox — whether it be that in despair at his limitation (which in his eyes transforms his omnipotence into impotence) he seeks a demoniacal reassurance and therefore will not admit such limitation either before God or men, or else he reassures himself religiously by love to the Deity. Here are implied psychological topics to which, it seems to me, one might gladly sacrifice a whole life — and yet one so seldom hears a word about them. What relation has madness to genius? Can we construct the one out of the other? In what sense and how far is the genius master of his madness? For it

goes without saying that to a certain degree he is master of it, since otherwise he would be actually a madman. For such observations, however, ingenuity in a high degree is requisite, and love; for to make observation upon a superior mind is very difficult. If with due attention to this difficulty one were to read through the works of particular authors most celebrated for their genius, it might in barely a single instance perhaps be possible, though with much pains, to discover a little.

I would consider still another case, that of an individual who by being hidden and by his silence would save the universal. To this end I make use of the legend of Faust. Faust is a doubter, an apostate against the spirit, who takes the path of the flesh. This is what the poets mean by it, and whereas again and again it is repeated that every age has its Faust, yet one poet after another follows indefatigably the same beaten track. Let us make a little alteration. Faust is the doubter *par excellence*, but he is a sympathetic nature. Even in Goethe's interpretation of Faust I sense the lack of a deeper psychological insight into the secret conversations of doubt with itself. In our age, when indeed all have experienced doubt, no poet has yet made a step in this direction. So I think I might well offer them Royal Securities to write on, so that they could write down all they have experienced in this respect — they would hardly write more than there is room for on the left hand margin.

Only when one thus deflects Faust back into himself, only then can doubt appear poetic, only then too does he himself discover in reality all its sufferings. He knows that it is spirit which sustains existence, but he knows too that the security and joy in which men live is not founded upon the power of spirit but is easily explicable as an unreflected happiness. As a doubter, as the doubter, he is higher than all this, and if anyone would deceive him by making him believe that he has passed through a course of training in doubt, he readily sees through the deception; for the man who

has made a movement in the world of spirit, hence an infinite movement, can at once hear through the spoken word whether it is a tried and experienced man who is speaking or a Münch-hausen. What a Tamberlane is able to accomplish by means of his Huns, that Faust is able to accomplish by means of his doubt: to frighten men up in dismay, to cause existence to quake beneath their feet, to disperse men abroad, to cause the shriek of dread to be heard on all sides. And if he does it, he is nevertheless no Tamerlane, he is in a certain sense warranted and has the warranty of thought. But Faust is a sympathetic nature, he loves existence, his soul is acquainted with no envy, he perceives that he is unable to check the raging he is well able to arouse, he desires no Herostratic honor — he keeps silent, he hides the doubt in his soul more carefully than the girl who hides under her heart the fruit of a sinful love, he endeavors as well as he can to walk in step with other men, but what goes on within him he consumes within himself, and thus he offers himself a sacrifice for the universal.

When an eccentric pate raises a whirlwind of doubt one may sometimes hear people say, "Would that he had kept silent." Faust realizes this idea. He who has a conception of what it means to live upon spirit knows also what the hunger of doubt is, and that the doubter hungers just as much for the daily bread of life as for the nutriment of the spirit. Although all the pain Faust suffers may be a fairly good argument that it was not pride possessed him, yet to test this further I will employ a little precautionary expedient which I invent with great ease. For as Gregory of Rimini was called *tortor infantium* because he espoused the view of the damnation of infants, so I might be tempted to call myself *tortor heroum*; for I am very inventive when it is a question of putting heroes to the torture. Faust sees Marguerite — not after he had made the choice of pleasure, for my Faust does not choose pleasure — he sees Marguerite, not in the concave mirror of Mephistopheles but in all her lovable innocence, and inasmuch as his soul

has preserved love for mankind he can perfectly well fall in love with her. But he is a doubter, his doubt has annihilated reality for him; for so ideal is my Faust that he does not belong among these scientific doubters who doubt one hour every term-time in the professorial chair, but at other times are able to do everything else and to do it too without the support of spirit or by virtue of spirit. He is a doubter, and the doubter hungers just as much for the daily bread of joy as for the food of the spirit. He remains, however, true to his resolution and keeps silent, and he talks to no man of his doubt, nor to Marguerite of his love.

It goes without saying that Faust is too ideal a figure to be content with the tattle that if he were to talk he would give occasion to an ordinary discussion and the whole thing would pass off without any consequences — or perhaps, and perhaps.… (Here, as every poet will easily see, the comic is latent in the plan, threatening to bring Faust into an ironical relation to these fools of low comedy who in our age run after doubt, produce an external argument, e.g. a doctor's diploma, to prove that they really have doubted, or take their oath that they have doubted everything, or prove it by the fact that on a journey they met a doubter — these express-messengers and foot-racers in the world of spirit, who in the greatest haste get from one man a little hint of doubt, from another a little hint of faith, and then turn it to account as best they can, according as the congregation wants to have fine sand or coarse sand.) Faust is too ideal a figure to go about in carpet-slippers. He who has not an infinite passion is not the ideal, and he who has an infinite passion has long ago saved his soul out of such nonsense. He keeps silent and sacrifices himself/or he talks with the consciousness that he desires to confound everything.

If he keeps silent, ethics condemns him, for it says, "Thou shalt acknowledge the universal, and it is precisely by speaking thou dost acknowledge it, and thou must not have compassion upon the universal."

One ought not to forget this consideration when sometimes one judges a doubter severely for talking. I am not inclined to judge such conduct leniently, but in this case as everywhere all depends upon whether the movements occur normally. If worse comes to worst, a doubter, even though by talking he were to bring down all possible misfortune upon the world, is much to be preferred to these miserable sweet-tooths who taste a little of everything, and who would heal doubt without being acquainted with it, and who are therefore usually the proximate cause of it when doubt breaks out wildly and with ungovernable rage. — If he speaks, then he confounds everything — for though this does not actually occur, he does not get to know it till afterwards, and the upshot cannot help a man either at the moment of action or with regard to his responsibility.

If he keeps silent at his own peril, he may indeed be acting magnanimously, but to his other pains he adds a little temptation (*Anfechtung),* for the universal will constantly torture him and say, "You ought to have talked. Where will you find the certainty that it was not after all a hidden price which governed your resolution?"

If on the other hand the doubter is able to become the particular individual who as the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, then he can get a warrant for his silence. In this case he must transform his doubt into guilt. In this case he is within the paradox, but in this case his doubt is cured, even though he may get another doubt.

Even the New Testament would approve of such a silence. There are even passages in the New Testament which commend irony — if only it is used to conceal something good. This movement, however, is as properly a movement of irony as is any other which has its ground in the fact that subjectivity is higher than reality. In our age people want to hear nothing about this, generally they want to know no more about irony than Hegel has said about it — who strangely enough had not much understanding of it,

and bore a grudge against it, which our age has good reason not to give up, for it had better beware of irony. In the Sermon on the Mount it is said, "When thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou be not seen of men to fast." This passage bears witness directly to the truth that subjectivity is incommensurable with reality, yea, that it has leave to deceive. If only the people who in our age go gadding about with vague talk about the congregational idea were to read the New Testament, they would perhaps get other ideas into their heads.

But now as for Abraham — how did he act? For I have not forgotten, and the reader will perhaps be kind enough to remember, that it was with the aim of reaching this point I entered into the whole foregoing discussion — not as though Abraham would thereby become more intelligible, but in order that the intelligibility might become more desultory. For, as I have said, Abraham I cannot understand, I can only admire him. It was also observed that the stages I have described do none of them contain an analogy to Abraham. The examples were simply educed in order that while they were shown in their own proper sphere they might at the moment of variation [from Abraham's case] indicate as it were the boundary of the unknown land. If there might be any analogy, this must be found in the paradox of sin, but this again lies in another sphere and cannot explain Abraham and is itself far easier to explain than Abraham.

So then, Abraham did not speak, he did not speak to Sarah, nor to Eleazar, nor to Isaac, he passed over three ethical authorities; for the ethical had for Abraham no higher expression than the family life.

Aesthetics permitted, yea, required of the individual silence, when he knew that by keeping silent he could save another. This is already sufficient proof that Abraham does not lie within the circumference of aesthetics. His silence has by no means the intention of saving Isaac, and in general his whole task of sacrificing Isaac for his own sake and for God's sake is an

offense to aesthetics, for aesthetics can well understand that I sacrifice myself, but not that I sacrifice another for my own sake. The aesthetic hero was silent. Ethics condemned him, however, because he was silent by virtue of his accidental particularity. His human foreknowledge was what determined him to keep silent. This ethics cannot forgive, every such human knowledge is only an illusion, ethics requires an infinite movement, it requires revelation. So the aesthetic hero *can* speak but will not.

The genuine tragic hero sacrifices himself and all that is his for the universal, his deed and every emotion with him belong to the universal, he is revealed, and in this self-revelation he is the beloved son of ethics. This does not fit the case of Abraham: he does nothing for the universal, and he is concealed.

Now we reach the paradox. Either the individual as the individual is able to stand in an absolute relation to the absolute (and then the ethical is not the highest) / or Abraham is lost — he is neither a tragic hero, nor an aesthetic hero.

Here again it may seem as if the paradox were the easiest and most convenient thing of all. However, I must repeat that he who counts himself convinced of this is not a knight of faith, for distress and anguish are the only legitimations that can be thought of, and they cannot be thought in general terms, for with that the paradox is annulled.

Abraham keeps silent — but he *cannot* speak. Therein lies the distress and anguish. For if I when I speak am unable to make myself intelligible, then I am not speaking — even though I were to talk uninterruptedly day and night. Such is the case with Abraham. He is able to utter everything, but one thing he cannot say, i.e. say it in such a way that another understands it, and so he is not speaking. The relief of speech is that it translates me into the universal. Now Abraham is able to say the most beautiful things any language can express about how he loves Isaac. But it is not this he has at

heart to say, it is the profounder thought that he would sacrifice him because it is a trial. This latter thought no one can understand, and hence everyone can only misunderstand the former. This distress the tragic hero does not know. He has first of all the comfort that every counter-argument has received due consideration, that he has been able to give to Clytemnestra, to Iphigenia, to Achilles, to the chorus, to every living being, to every voice from the heart of humanity, to every cunning, every alarming, every accusing, every compassionate thought, opportunity to stand up against him. He can be sure that everything that can be said against him has been said, unsparingly, mercilessly — and to strive against the whole world is a comfort, to strive with oneself is dreadful — he has no reason to fear that he has overlooked anything, so that afterwards he must cry out as did King Edward the Fourth at the news of the death of Clarence:

Who su'd to me for him? who, in my wrath,
Kneel'd at my feet and bade me advised?
Who spoke of brotherhood? who spoke of love?

The tragic hero does not know the terrible responsibility of solitude. In the next place he has the comfort that he can weep and lament with Clytemnestra and Iphigenia — and tears and cries are assuaging, but unutterable sighs are torture. Agamemnon can quickly collect his soul into the certainty that he will act, and then he still has time to comfort and exhort. This Abraham is unable to do. When his heart is moved, when his words would contain a blessed comfort for the whole world, he does not dare to offer comfort, for would not Sarah, would not Eleazar, would not Isaac say, "Why wilt thou do it? Thou canst refrain"? And if in his distress he would give vent to his feelings and would embrace all his dear ones, this might perhaps bring about the dreadful consequence that Sarah, that Eleazar, that Isaac would be offended in him and would believe he was a hypocrite. He is unable to speak, he speaks no human language. Though he

himself understood all the tongues of the world, though his loved ones also understood them, he nevertheless cannot speak — he speaks a divine language…he "speaks with tongues."

This distress I can well understand, I can admire Abraham, I am not afraid that anyone might be tempted light-heartedly to be the individual, but I admit also that I have not the courage for it, and that I renounce gladly any prospect of getting further — if only it were possible that in any way, however late, I might get so far. Every instant Abraham is able to break off, he can repent the whole thing as a temptation (*Anfechtung*), then he can speak, then all could understand him — but then he is no longer Abraham.

Abraham cannot *speak,* for he cannot utter the word which explains all (that is, not so that it is intelligible), he cannot say that it is a test, and a test of such a sort, be it noted, that the ethical is the temptation (*Versuchung*). He who is so situated is an emigrant from the sphere of the universal. But the next word he is still less able to utter. For, as was sufficiently set forth earlier, Abraham makes two movements: he makes the infinite movement of resignation and gives up Isaac (this no one can understand because it is a private venture); but in the next place, he makes the movement of faith every instant. This is his comfort, for he says: "But yet this will not come to pass, or, if it does come to pass, then the Lord will give me a new Isaac, by virtue viz. of the absurd." The tragic hero does at last get to the end of the story. Iphigenia bows to her father's resolution, she herself makes the infinite movement of resignation, and now they are on good terms with one another. She can understand Agamemnon because his undertaking expresses the universal. If on the other hand Agamemnon were to say to her, "In spite of the fact that the deity demands thee as a sacrifice, it might yet be possible that he did not demand it — by virtue viz. of the absurd," he would that very instant become unintelligible to Iphigenia. If he could say this by virtue of human calculation, Iphigenia would surely understand him,

but from that it would follow that Agamemnon had not made the infinite movement of resignation, and so he is not a hero, and so the utterance of the seer is a sea-captain's tale and the whole occurrence a vaudeville.

Abraham did not speak. Only one word of his has been preserved, the only reply to Isaac, which also is sufficient proof that he had not spoken previously. Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb is for the burnt offering. "And Abraham said, God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

This last word of Abraham I shall consider a little more closely. If this word were not, the whole event would have lacked something; if it were to another effect, everything perhaps would be resolved into confusion.

I have often reflected upon the question whether a tragic hero, be the culmination of his tragedy a suffering or an action, ought to have a last rejoinder. In my opinion it depends upon the life-sphere to which he belongs, whether his life has intellectual significance, whether his suffering or his action stands in relation to spirit.

It goes without saying that the tragic hero, like every other man who is not deprived of the power of speech, can at the instant of his culmination utter a few words, perhaps a few appropriate words, but the question is whether it is appropriate for him to utter them. If the significance of his life consists in an outward act, then he has nothing to say, since all he says is essentially chatter whereby he only weakens the impression he makes, whereas the ceremonial of tragedy requires that he perform his task in silence, whether this consists in action or in suffering. Not to go too far afield, I will take an example which lies nearest to our discussion. If Agamemnon himself and not Calchas had had to draw the knife against Iphigenia, then he would have only demeaned himself by wanting at the last moment to say a few words, for the significance of his act was notorious, the juridical procedure of piety, of compassion, of emotion, of tears was

completed, and moreover his life had no relation to spirit. On the other hand, if the significance of a hero's life is in the direction of spirit, then the lack of a rejoinder would weaken the impression he makes. What he has to say is not a few appropriate words, a little piece of declamation, but the significance of his rejoinder is that in the decisive moment he carries himself through. Such an intellectual tragic hero ought to have what in other circumstances is too often striven for in ludicrous ways, he ought to have and he ought to keep the last word. One requires of him the same exalted bearing which is seemly in every tragic hero, but in addition to this there is required of him one word. So when such an intellectual tragic hero has his culmination in suffering (in death), then by his last word he becomes immortal before he dies, whereas the ordinary tragic hero on the other hand does not become immortal till after his death.

One may take Socrates as an example. He was an intellectual tragic hero. His death sentence was announced to him. That instant he dies — for one who does not understand that the whole power of the spirit is required for dying, and that the hero always dies before he dies, that man will not get so very far with his conception of life. So as a hero it is required of Socrates that he repose tranquilly in himself, but as an intellectual tragic hero it is required of him that he have spiritual strength sufficient to carry himself through. So he cannot like the ordinary tragic hero concentrate upon keeping himself face to face with death, but he must make this movement so quickly that at the same instant he is consciously well over and beyond this strife and asserts himself. So if Socrates in the crisis of death had remained mute, he would have weakened the impression of his life and awakened a suspicion that the elasticity of irony within him was not a cosmic force but a life-belt which by its buoyancy might serve to hold him up pathetically at the decisive moment.

What is briefly suggested here has to be sure no application to Abraham in case one might think it possible to find out by analogy an appropriate word for Abraham to end with, but it does apply to this extent, that one thereby perceives how necessary it is that Abraham at the last moment must carry himself through, must not silently draw the knife, but must have a word to say, since as the father of faith he has absolute significance in a spiritual sense. As to what he must say, I can form no conception beforehand; after he has said it I can maybe understand it, maybe in a certain sense can understand Abraham in what he says, though without getting any closer to him than I have been in the foregoing discussion. In case no last rejoinder of Socrates had existed, I should have been able to think myself into him and formulate such a word; if I were unable to do it, a poet could, but no poet can catch up with Abraham.

Before I go on to consider Abraham's last word more closely I would call attention to the difficulty Abraham had in saying anything at all. The distress and anguish in the paradox consisted (as was set forth above) in silence — Abraham cannot speak. So in view of this fact it is a contradiction to require him to speak, unless one would have him out of the paradox again, in such a sense that at the last moment he suspends it, whereby he ceases to be Abraham and annuls all that went before. So then if Abraham at the last moment were to say to Isaac, "To thee it applies," this would only have been a weakness. For if he could speak at all, he might have spoken long before, and the weakness in this case would consist in the fact that he did not possess the maturity of spirit and the concentration to think in advance the whole pain but had thrust something away from him, so that the actual pain contained a plus over and above the thought pain. Moreover, by such a speech he would fall out of the rôle of the paradox, and if he really wanted to speak to Isaac, he must transform his situation into a

temptation (*Anfechtung*), for otherwise he could say nothing, and if he were to do that, then he is not even so much as a tragic hero.

However, a last word of Abraham has been preserved, and in so far as I can understand the paradox I can also apprehend the total presence of Abraham in this word. Firstly, he does not say anything, and it is in this form he says what he has to say. His reply to Isaac has the form of irony, for it always is irony when I say something and do not say anything. Isaac interrogates Abraham on the supposition that he knows. So then if Abraham were to have replied, "I know nothing," he would have uttered an untruth. He cannot say anything, for what he knows he cannot say. So he replies, "God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Here the double movement in Abraham's soul is evident, as it was described in the foregoing discussion. If Abraham had merely renounced his claim to Isaac and had done no more, he would in this last word be saying an untruth, for he knows that God demands Isaac as a sacrifice, and he knows that he himself at that instant precisely is all ready to sacrifice him. We see then that after making this movement he made every instant the next movement, the movement of faith by virtue of the absurd. Hence he is speaking no untruth, but neither is he saying anything, for he speaks a foreign language. This becomes still more evident when we consider that it was Abraham himself who must perform the sacrifice of Isaac. Had the task been a different one, had the Lord commanded Abraham to bring Isaac out to Mount Moriah and then would Himself have Isaac struck by lightning and in this way receive him as a sacrifice, then, taking his words in a plain sense, Abraham might have been right in speaking enigmatically as he did, for he could not himself know what would occur. But in the way the task was prescribed to Abraham he himself had to act, and at the decisive moment he must know what he himself would do, he must know that Isaac will be sacrificed. In case he did not know this definitely, then he has not

made the infinite movement of resignation, then, though his word is not indeed an untruth, he is very far from being Abraham, he has less significance than the tragic hero, yea, he is an irresolute man who is unable to resolve either on one thing or another, and for this reason will always be uttering riddles. But such a hesitator is a sheer parody of a knight of faith.

Here again it appears that one may have an understanding of Abraham, but can understand him only in the same way as one understands the paradox. For my part I can in a way understand Abraham, but at the same time I apprehend that I have not the courage to speak, and still less to act as he did — but by this I do not by any means intend to say that what he did was insignificant, for on the contrary it is the one only marvel.

And what did the contemporary age think of the tragic hero? They thought that he was great, and they admired him. And that honorable assembly of nobles, the jury which every generation impanels to pass judgment upon the foregoing generation, passed the same judgment upon him. But as for Abraham there was no one who could understand him. And yet think what he attained! He remained true to his love. But he who loves God has no need of tears, no need of admiration, in his love he forgets his suffering, yea, so completely has he forgotten it that afterwards there would not even be the least inkling of his pain if God Himself did not recall it, for God sees in secret and knows the distress and counts the tears and

So either there is a paradox, that the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute / or Abraham is lost.

EPILOGUE

ONE TIME IN Holland when the market was rather dull for spices the merchants had several cargoes dumped into the sea to peg up prices. This was a pardonable, perhaps a necessary device for deluding people. Is it something like that we need now in the world of spirit? Are we so thoroughly convinced that we have attained the highest point that there is nothing left for us but to piously make ourselves believe that we have not got so far — just for the sake of having something left to occupy our time? Is it such a self-deception the present generation has need of, does it need to be trained to virtuosity in self-deception, or is it not rather sufficiently perfected already in the art of deceiving itself? Or rather is not the thing most needed an honest seriousness which dauntlessly and incorruptibly points to the tasks, an honest seriousness which lovingly watches over the tasks, which does not frighten men into being over hasty in getting the highest tasks accomplished, but keeps the tasks young and beautiful and charming to look upon and yet difficult withal and appealing to noble minds. For the enthusiasm of noble natures is aroused only by difficulties. Whatever the one generation may learn from the other, the genuinely humane no generation learns from the foregoing. In this respect every generation begins primitively, has no different task from that of every previous generation, nor does it get further, except in so far as the preceding generation shirked its task and deluded itself. This properly humane factor is passion, in which also the one generation perfectly understands the other and understands itself. Thus no generation has learned from another to love, no generation begins at any other point than at the beginning, no generation has a shorter task assigned to it than had the preceding generation, and if

here one is not willing like the previous generations to stop with love but would go further, this is but idle and foolish talk.

But the highest passion in a man is faith, and here no generation begins at any other point than did the preceding generation, every generation begins all over again, the subsequent generation gets no further than the foregoing — in so far as this remained faithful to its task and did not leave it in the lurch. That this should be wearisome is of course something the generation cannot say, for the generation has in fact the task to perform and has nothing to do with the consideration that the foregoing generation had the same task — unless the particular generation or the particular individual within it were presumptuous enough to assume the place which belongs by right only to the Spirit which governs the world and has patience enough not to grow weary. If the generation begins that sort of thing, it is upside down, and what wonder then that the whole of existence seems to it upside down, for there surely is no one who has found the world so upside down as did the tailor in the fairy tale who went up in his lifetime to heaven and from that standpoint contemplated the world. If the generation would only concern itself about its task, which is the highest thing it can do, it cannot grow weary, for the task is always sufficient for a human life. When the children on a holiday have already got through playing all their games before the clock strikes twelve and say impatiently, “Is there nobody can think of a new game?” does this prove that these children are more developed and more advanced than the children of the same generation or of a previous one who could stretch out the familiar game to last the whole day long? Or does it not prove rather that these children lacked what I would call the lovable seriousness which belongs essentially to play?

Faith is the highest passion in a man. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not even reach it, but no one gets further. Whether there be many in our age who do not discover it, I will not decide, I dare only

appeal to myself as a witness who makes no secret that the prospects for him are not the best, without for all that wanting to delude himself and to betray the great thing which is faith by reducing it to an insignificance, to an ailment of childhood which one must wish to get over as soon as possible. But for the man also who does not so much as reach faith life has tasks enough, and if one loves them sincerely, life will by no means be wasted, even though it never is comparable to the life of those who sensed and grasped the highest. But he who reached faith (it makes no difference whether he be a man of distinguished talents or a simple man) does not remain standing at faith, yea, he would be offended if anyone were to say this of him, just as the lover would be indignant if one said that he remained standing at love, for he would reply, "I do not remain standing by any means, my whole life is in this." Nevertheless he does not get further, does not reach anything different, for if he discovers this, he has a different explanation for it.

"One must go further, one must go further." This impulse to go further is an ancient thing in the world. Heraclitus the obscure, who deposited his thoughts in his writings and his writings in the Temple of Diana (for his thoughts had been his armor during his life, and therefore he hung them up in the temple of the goddess), Heraclitus the obscure said, "One cannot pass twice through the same stream." Heraclitus the obscure had a disciple who did not stop with that, he went further and added, "One cannot do it even once." Poor Heraclitus, to have such a disciple! By this amendment the thesis of Heraclitus was so improved that it became an Eleatic thesis which denies movement, and yet that disciple desired only to be a disciple of Heraclitus…and to go further — not back to the position Heraclitus had abandoned.

Repetition (1843)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1941

This work is novelistic in character, focusing on the boundaries between different spheres of existence, such as the aesthetic and the ethical, and the ethical and the religious. It often examines the subject of marriage and is the result of the author's relationship with a young lady named Regine Olsen (1822-1904), whom Kierkegaard first met on 8 May 1837. They were instantly attracted to each other, but by August 1838 he was having second thoughts. On 8 September 1840, Kierkegaard formally proposed to Olsen. He soon felt disillusioned about his prospects. He broke off the engagement on 11 August 1841, though it is generally believed that the two were deeply in love. In his journals, Kierkegaard mentions his belief that his "melancholy" made him unsuitable for marriage, but his precise motive for ending the engagement remains unclear.

Repetition concerns a Young Man that also experiences anxiety and depression, who feels he has to sacrifice his love for a girl to God. He determines to explore whether the new science of psychology can help him understand himself. Constantin Constantius, who is the pseudonymous author of that book, is the psychologist. At the same time, he published *Three Upbuilding Discourses*, under his own name, which dealt specifically with how love can be used to hide things from yourself or others. These three books, all published on the same day, are an apposite example of Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication.

Regine Olsen, a muse for Kierkegaard's writings, by Emil Bærentzen, c. 1845

CONTENTS

PART FIRST.

PART SECOND.

August 15

September 19

October 11

November 15

December 14

January 13

February 17

May13

Copenhagen, August 1843

REPETITION

An Essay in Experimental Psychology

By CONSTANTINE CONSTANTIUS

Copenhagen 1843 [October 16]

On wild trees the flowers are fragrant; on cultivated trees, the fruits.

FROM “STORIES OF HEROES” BY PHILOSTRATUS THE ELDER.

PART FIRST.

WHEN THE ELEATIC School denied the possibility of motion, Diogenes, as everybody knows, stepped forth as an opponent. He *stepped* forth literally, for he said not a word, but merely walked several times back and forth, thinking that thereby he had sufficiently refuted those philosophers. Inasmuch as for a long time I have been engaged, at least occasionally, with the problem whether a repetition is possible and what significance it has, whether a thing gains or loses by being repeated, it suddenly occurred to me, “Thou canst take a trip to Berlin, where thou hast been before, and convince thyself now whether a repetition is possible and what significance it may have.” At home I had almost been brought to a standstill by the problem. Say what one will, it is sure to play a very important rôle in modern philosophy; for *repetition* is a decisive expression for what “recollection” was for the Greeks. Just as they taught that all knowledge is a recollection, so will modern philosophy teach that the whole of life is a repetition. The only modern philosopher who had an inkling of this was Leibnitz. Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards. Therefore repetition, if it is possible, makes a man happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy — provided he gives himself time to live and does not at once, in the very moment of birth, try to find a pretext for stealing out of life, alleging, for example, that he has forgotten something.

The love of recollection is the only happy love, an author has said. In that he is perfectly right, too — if one will only remember that it first makes a man unhappy. In truth, the love of repetition is the only happy love. Like that of recollection it has not the disquietude of hope, the anxious

adventuresomeness of discoverers, nor the sadness of recollection; it has the blessed certainty of the instant. Hope is a new garment, starched and stiff and glittering, yet one has never had it on, and hence one does not know how it will become one and how it fits. Recollection is a discarded garment, which beautiful as it may be, does not fit, for one has outgrown it. Repetition is an imperishable garment, which fits snugly and comfortably, neither too tight nor too loose. Hope is a charming maiden but slips through the fingers, recollection is a beautiful old woman but of no use at the instant, repetition is a beloved wife of whom one never tires. For it is only of the new one grows tired. Of the old one never tires.

When one possesses that, one is happy, and only he is thoroughly happy who does not delude himself with the vain notion that repetition ought to be something new, for then one becomes tired of it. It requires youth to hope, and youth to recollect, but it requires courage to will repetition. He who would only hope is cowardly, he who would only recollect is a voluptuary, but he who wills repetition is a man, and the more expressly he knows how to make his purpose clear, the deeper he is as a man. But he who does not comprehend that life is a repetition, and that this is the beauty of life, has condemned himself and deserves nothing better than what is sure to befall him, namely, to perish. For hope is an alluring fruit which does not satisfy, recollection is a miserable pittance which does not satisfy, but repetition is the daily bread which satisfies with benediction. When one has circumnavigated existence, it will appear whether one has courage to understand that life is a repetition and is inclined to delight in it. He who has not circumnavigated life before beginning to live will never come to the point of living; he who circumnavigated it but grew tired had a poor constitution; he who chose repetition really lives. He does not run after butterflies like a boy; nor does he stand on tiptoe to peer at the glories of the world, for he knows them. Neither does he sit like an old woman at the

spinning wheel of recollection, but he goes his way confidently, rejoicing in repetition. Indeed, if there were no repetition, what then would life be? Who would wish to be a tablet upon which time writes every instant a new inscription? or to be a mere memorial of the past? Who could wish to let oneself be stirred by everything that is fleeting and new, which ever newly delights the effeminate soul? If God Himself had not willed repetition, the world would never have come into existence. He would either have followed the light plans of hope, or He would have recalled it all and conserved it in recollection. This He did not do, therefore the world endures, and it endures for the fact that it is a repetition. Repetition is reality, and it is the seriousness of life. He who wills repetition is matured in seriousness. This is the vote I cast for my part, and it means also that it is far from being seriousness to sit on the sofa and pick one's teeth...and be somebody (for instance, Councillor of Justice), or to walk in the street with dignity...and be somebody (for instance, His Right Reverence), no more than it is life's seriousness to be a royal equerry. All such things are in my eyes only jest, and as such they are sometimes a poor enough jest.

The love of recollection is the only happy love, says an author who, so far as I am acquainted with him, is sometimes rather deceitful — not, however, in such a way that he might say one thing and mean another, but in such a way that he carries the thought to extremes, so that, if it is not grasped with the same energy, it appears the next moment to be something different. That saying is so expressed that it readily tempts one to admit that it is true, and then to forget that the saying itself is an expression for the profoundest melancholy, so that a melancholy so profound, and condensed in a single line, could not easily express itself better.

It was about a year ago I began to bestow serious attention upon a young man with whom already I had had some contact because his handsome appearance, the soulful expression of his eyes, almost tempted me — a

certain toss of the head, a wantonness in his utterances; convinced me that he had a profound nature which possessed more than one register, whereas a certain insecurity of modulation indicated that he was in that seductive age when maturity of spirit announces itself, as does that of the body at a far earlier age by the change in the voice. By means of those careless advances which a coffee-house liking permits, I had already drawn him to me and taught him to regard me as a confidant whose talk in many ways enticed his melancholy from him in the form of outbursts, while I like a Farinelli alluring the crazy king out of his gloomy retreat, could accomplish this without the use of tongs, because my friend was still young and pliable. Such was our relationship when about a year ago, as I said, he came up to me quite beside himself. His appearance was more vigorous than heretofore, his features more beautiful, his great glowing eyes had widened, in short, he was transfigured. When he informed me that he was in love, I reflected involuntarily that she must be a lucky girl to be loved in this fashion. He told me that he had already been in love for some time but had concealed it from me; Now he had attained the goal of his desire, had declared his love and found it reciprocated. Although generally I am inclined to preserve an attitude of observation toward people, it was impossible for me to do so with him. Say what you will, a young man deeply in love is something so beautiful that for very joy at the sight one forgets to observe. In general, humane emotions in a person disarm the observer. Only where instead of this there is hollowness, or where the coquette dissimulates, has one a desire to make observations. In case one were witness to the fact that a man was praying with his whole soul, who could be such a monster as to make observations? who would not rather feel himself penetrated by an emanation from the man's devotion? When on the contrary one hears a parson declaim a well prepared sermon, wherein by an artfully constructed passage he several times testifies to the congregation

(without any prompting from their part) that what he says is the simple faith, unskilled in elegant phrases, but capable of bringing forth by prayer that which (according to his affirmation, which presumably was well substantiated) he had in vain sought after in poetry, art and erudition — upon that, one calmly applies the microscope to one's eye and does not allow the ear to gulp down what is said, but pulls the blinds, the critical sieve which tests every note and every word. The young man of whom I speak was deeply and sincerely and beautifully and humbly in love. For a long while I have not been so delighted by anything as by looking at him. For it is often a dreary thing to be an observer, it makes one as melancholy as being a detective on the police force; and when an observer performs well the duties of his calling he is to be regarded as a police spy in a higher service, for the art of the observer is to bring hidden things to light. The young man talked about the girl with whom he was in love, but without employing many words. His talk was not an insipid appraisement, as a lover's eulogy often is. There was no self-importance in him, as though he were a shrewd fellow to have captured such a girl; there was no self-confidence; his love was wholesome, pure, unspoiled. He confided to me with charming candor that the reason for his visit was his need of a confidant in whose presence he could talk aloud to himself, the more particular reason being that he was fearful of remaining all day with the girl and being burdensome to her. He had already been to her house several times but had compelled himself to turn away. He now asked me to take a drive with him, for the sake of diverting him; and to make the time pass quicker I was as willing as he; for from the moment he confided to me, he could be sure that I would be unconditionally at his service. I employed the half hour before the carriage came in writing several business letters, bidding him in the meantime fill his pipe and turn the pages of an album which lay on the table. Such occupation, however, he had no need of, he

was sufficiently occupied with himself, was not even calm enough to sit down, but walked quickly back and forth across the floor. His gait, his movements, his gestures, were all eloquent, he himself glowed with love. As a grape when it is at the point of perfection becomes transparent and clear, while the juice bubbles through its fine veins, as the husk of a fruit breaks when the fruit ripens to all its fullness, so did love break forth almost visibly in his figure. I hardly could forbear to snatch a sidewise glance at him now and then, almost as though I were in love with him; for such a youth is as alluring a sight as a young girl.

As it often is the way with lovers that they take refuge in the words of the poets in order to let love's sweet perturbation break out in blissful gladness, so it was in his case. As he paced back and forth across the floor he repeated again and again a verse of Poul Moller's

> To my arm-chair there comes a dream
> From the springtime of youth,
> A longing intense
> For thee, thou sun amongst women.

His eye filled with a tear, he flung himself down on a chair and repeated the verse again and again. Upon me this scene made a harrowing impression. Great God! thought I, such a melancholy has never before presented itself in my practice. That he was melancholy I knew well enough, but that a love affair could have such an effect upon him! And yet how consistent is every abnormal psychic condition, if only it is normally present. People often proclaim that a melancholy man has only to fall in love, and then it all vanishes. If the man is really melancholy, how might it be possible for him not to be occupied with melancholy concern about that which to him is the most important concern of all? He was in love, deeply and sincerely in love; that was evident, and yet at once, on one of the first days of his engagement, he was capable of recollecting his love.

Substantially he was through with the whole relationship. Before he begins he has taken such a terrible stride that he has leapt over the whole of life. Though the girl dies tomorrow, it will produce no essential change, he will again fling himself upon a chair, again his eye will fill with a tear, he will again repeat the words of the poet. What a strange dialectic! He longs for the girl, he has to restrain himself by force from hanging around her the whole day, and yet at the very first instant he has become an old man with respect to the whole relationship. There must be a misunderstanding at the bottom of it. Nothing for a long while has moved me so much as this scene. That he would become unhappy was clear enough, and that the girl too would become unhappy was no less clear, although it is not at once possible to foresee in what way this would occur. This much, however, is certain, that if anybody can take a hand in talking about the love of recollection, he can too. Recollection has the great advantage that it begins with the loss, hence it is secure, for it has nothing to lose.

The carriage had come. We drove out along the highway, with the intent of seeking later the real woodland roads. Since against my will I had begun to behave toward him as an observer, I could not resist trying all sorts of experiments to take the log, as sailors say, of the headway of his melancholy. I struck all possible erotic chords. No. I tried the effect of the changing environment. In vain. Not the bold immensity of the sea, nor the lulling stillness of the forest, nor the enticing solitude of evening, could draw him out of the melancholy longing by which he was not so much drawing near to the beloved as forsaking her. His mistake was incurable, and his mistake was this, that he stood at the end instead of at the beginning. But such a mistake is certainly a man's undoing.

And yet I maintain the correctness of his mood as an erotic mood, and the man who in his experience of love has not experienced it thus precisely at the beginning, has never loved. Only he must have another mood

alongside of this. This potentiated act of recollection is the eternal expression of love at the beginning, it is the token of a real love. But on the other hand an ironic elasticity is requisite in order to be able to make use of it. This he lacked, his soul was too soft for it. It must be true that one's life is over at the first instant, but there must be vitality enough to kill this death and transform it into life. In the earliest dawn of love the present and the future strive one with another in order to acquire an eternal impression, and this act of recollection is precisely the counter-current of eternity flowing back into the present — provided this recollection is healthy.

We returned home, and I took leave of him; but my sympathy was almost too powerfully set in motion, I could not get rid of the thought that in a very short time this must lead to a dreadful explosion.

In the course of a fortnight I saw him off and on in my home. He himself began to be aware of the misunderstanding. The young girl whom he adored had become almost a burden to him; and yet she was his darling, the only woman he had ever loved, the only one he would ever love. On the other hand, nevertheless, he did not love her, he merely longed for her. For all this, a striking change was wrought in him. There was awakened in him a poetical productivity upon a scale which I had never thought possible. Then I easily comprehended the situation. The young girl was not his love, she was the occasion of awakening the primitive poetic talent within him and making him a poet. Therefore he could love only her, could never forget her, never wish to love anyone else; and yet he was forever only longing for her. She was drawn into his very nature as a part of it, the remembrance of her was ever fresh. She had meant much to him, she had made him a poet, and thereby she had signed her own death warrant.

As time went by his situation became more and more agonizing. His melancholy attained more and more the ascendancy, his physical force was consumed in psychic struggles. He perceived that he had made her unhappy,

and yet he was aware of no fault; but precisely the fact of being innocently guilty of her unhappiness was to him a stumbling-block which wrought up his passion to the wildest agitation. To admit to her how the matter stood, would, as it seemed to him, mortify her most deeply. This indeed would be the same as telling her that she was an incomplete being, that he had outgrown her, that he no longer had need of the rung of the ladder on which he had climbed. What then would the consequence be? Knowing that he would not love anyone else, she would become his sorrowing widow, who lived only upon the memory of him and of their relationship. He could not make any confession. For her sake he was too proud to do that. His melancholy ensnared him more and more, and he resolved to keep up the falsification. His entire poetic talent was now employed to entertain and delight her. What might have served bountifully for many was all lavished upon her; she was and remained his darling, the only one whom he adored, although he was near losing his mind with agonizing dread at the monstrous untruth which only served to imprison her more and more. In reality her existence or nonexistence was in a certain sense of no importance to him, only it was his melancholy which found delight in rendering life enchanting to her. That she was blissful goes without saying, for she had no suspicion, and the nutriment offered her was only too savory. He did not desire to be productive in the stricter sense; wherefore he held his productivity under the shears, as he said, and cut the flowers as a bouquet for her. She had no suspicion. Of that I am sure. And indeed it would be revolting if a young girl could be selfish enough to take his melancholy in vain. However, such a case can occur, and once I was very near discovering an instance. Nothing is more seductive to a young girl than to be loved by a poetically melancholy nature. And if she merely has enough egotism to imagine that she proves the fidelity of her love by clinging to him instead of giving him up, she has a very easy task in life, which permits her to enjoy not only the

reputation and consciousness of being faithful, but also the most finely distilled sentiment of love. God preserve a man from such fidelity!

One day he came to my house. His gloomy passions had gained complete ascendancy. In the wildest outburst he cursed existence, his love and the darling girl. From that moment he came to my house no more. Presumably he could not forgive himself for having admitted to another person that the girl had become a torment to him. With that he had spoiled for himself everything, even the joy of sustaining her pride and making her a goddess. When he encountered me he avoided me, and if we met he never talked, though evidently he made an effort to appear joyful and confident. I was considering how I could follow him up more closely, and to that end had begun to get on the track of his subordinate associates. When one has to do with a melancholy person, one often gets to know most by the help of subordinates. Before a serving-man or woman, an old family retainer, one often reveals oneself more freely than to associates who are closer in culture and outward condition. I knew a melancholy man who went through life like a dancer and deceived everybody, myself included, until by means of a barber I got on another trace. This barber was an elderly man who lived in straitened circumstances and served his customers himself. Compassion for the barber's need moved the gay man to let his melancholy manifest itself, and the barber knew what no one else suspected. However, the young man spared me this trouble; for he had recourse to me again, although he was firmly resolved never to set his foot inside my door. He proposed that I should meet him in solitary places at a definite time. I was willing; and to that end I bought two tickets of admission to the fish-ponds in the city moat. There we met early in the morning. At the hour when the day is warring with the night, when even at midsummer a cold shiver runs through nature, there we met in the damp morning mist and on the dewy grass, and the birds flew up affrighted at his outcry. At the hour when the day has conquered,

when every living thing rejoices in existence, at the hour when the darling young girl whom he coddled by his pain lifted her head from the pillow and opened her eyes because the god of sleep who had been sitting by her couch arose, at the hour when the god of dreams laid his finger upon her eyelids so that she dozed off again into a brief slumber, while he related to her what she never had guessed, and related it so softly, in words scarcely breathed, that she had forgotten it all when she awoke — at that hour we separated again. And whatever the god of dreams confided to her, at least she did not dream what passed between us. What wonder the man was pale! What wonder that I am, who was his confidant, and the confidant of many like him!

Again some time passed. I really suffered a great deal on account of the young man, who was fading away daily. And yet I did not in the least regret participating in his sufferings, for in his love at least the idea was stirring. (And after all one does sometimes see such a love in real life, God be praised! though in romances and novels one seeks it in vain.) Only when such is the case has love any significance; and the man who is not enthusiastically convinced that the idea is the vital principle in love, and that for this, if need be, one must sacrifice life, yes, what is more, sacrifice even love itself, however practical reality may favor it — such a man is banned from poetry. On the other hand, where love is supported by the idea, every movement, every fleeting emotion even, is not without significance, because the essential is always present, the poetic collision, which, as I well know, can be far more terrible than in the case I am here describing. But the service of the idea (which does not mean in the case of love to serve two masters) is also an exacting service, for no reigning beauty can be as exigent as the idea, and no girl's displeasure can be so heavy as the disapproval of the idea, which is the more terrible because it can never be forgotten.

If I were to pursue in detail the moods of the young man as I learned to know them, not to speak of including in a poetical manner a multitude of irrelevant matters — salons, wearing apparel, beautiful scenery, relatives and friends — this story might be drawn out to yard lengths. That, however, I have no inclination to do. I eat lettuce, it is true, but I eat only the heart; the leaves, in my opinion, are fit for swine. I prefer with Lessing the rapture of conception to the labor of childbirth. If there is anybody who has anything to say against this, let him say on, it makes no difference to me.

Time passed. When I was able to do so I attended that nocturnal service where he with wild outcries got all the exercise he needed for the whole day, for he employed the daytime by enchanting the girl. As Prometheus, chained to the rock while the vulture pecked at his liver, was able to captivate the gods by his divination, so did he captivate the loved one. Each day the whole thing was carried to the highest pitch, for every day was the last. But it could not continue thus. He bit the chain which bound him, but the more his passion foamed, the more blissful was his song, the more tender his speech, the more galling the chain. To construct a real relationship out of this misunderstanding was impossible for him, it would have meant to make her the victim of an eternal deception. To explain to her the mistake by letting her know that she was only the visible semblance, whereas his thought, his soul, was seeking something else which he transferred figuratively to her — that would mortify her so deeply that his soul revolted against it. That was a method which he despised above all others. And he was right in that. It is despicable to deceive and seduce a girl, but it is still more despicable to desert a girl in such a way that one does not even become a scoundrel but makes a more brilliant retreat by putting her off with the explanation that she is not the ideal, and consoling her with the notion that she was only one's muse. Such a thing can easily be done when a man has some practice in talking a girl around; in the hour of

need she will accept the proposal, and one gets out of it very well, remaining a moral man, even an amiable one, and afterwards she is more essentially dishonored than one who *knew* she had been deceived. Therefore in every love relationship which cannot be realized although it has been begun, delicacy of behavior is the most offensive thing, and he who has an eye for the erotic and is not a coward can readily see that to be indelicate is the only means he has left to keep the girl in a good state of preservation.

In order if possible to put an end to these sufferings, I exhorted him to venture energetically upon the extremest measures. It was merely necessary to find a point of unity. So I made to him the following proposal. "Bring everything to naught, transform yourself into a despicable person who finds pleasure only in duping and deceiving people. If you can do this, then equality is brought about, for then there would be no longer any question of an aesthetic difference which would give you a superior right as against her, something which people are often inclined to concede in the case of so-called extraordinary individualities. She will then be the victorious one and be absolutely in the right. Do not do it, however, too suddenly, for that would merely inflame her love. Try first if possible to be a bit disagreeable to her. Do not tease her. That is an incitement. No, be capricious, with a propensity to twaddle; do one thing one day and another the next, but without passion, with a perfect routine, which does not, however, degenerate into inattention to her, for the outward show of attention must be just as great as ever, though altered to a perfunctory demonstration lacking in all sincerity. Instead of a genuine inclination of love, you are constantly to exhibit a certain nauseous quasi-love which is neither indifference nor desire. Let all your behavior be as disagreeable as it is to see a man slobber. Do not begin, however, unless you have strength to carry the thing through, otherwise it is a stalemate; for there is no one so shrewd as a young girl, when it is a question, that is, of knowing whether she is loved or not; and

there is no operation so difficult as that in which one has to make use of the extirpating knife, an instrument which as a general thing only time knows rightly how to wield. Then when everything is in train, you have only to turn to me, and I shall manage the rest. Let the rumor be spread abroad that you have a new love affair, of a sort rather unpoetic; for otherwise you will only incite her. I know very well that such a thing could not occur to your mind, for it is well understood between us that she is the only one you love, although it is impossible for you to translate the purely poetic relationship into real love. There must be some truth to substantiate the rumor, and that I shall take care of. I am looking up here in town a girl with whom I shall strike an agreement." It was not merely consideration for the young man which prompted me to lay this plan, for I cannot deny that I gradually came to regard his lady-love with a prejudiced eye. That she should notice nothing whatever she had no suspicion whatever of his suffering and of what might well be the reason of it, that if she suspected it she did nothing, made no effort to save him by giving him the one thing he needed and which she alone could give him, namely, his freedom, which would save him if precisely she was the one who gave it; for by that act of magnanimity she would acquire ascendancy over him and would not be mortified. I can forgive a girl everything, but I can never forgive her for mistaking the task of love. When a girl's love is not sacrificial, she is no woman but a masculine figure, and so I shall always take delight in suffering her to fall a victim to revenge or to laughter. And what a theme for a comic poet, to let such a lovelorn maiden, who had first like a vampire sucked the blood of her lover, until in his distress and despair he broke with her — to let such an inamorata come upon the stage as an Elvira who sings with acclaim in this rôle accompanied by the lamentations of relatives and friends, an Elvira who is prima donna in the chorus of deceived maidens, who can talk with emphasis about the faithlessness of men, a faithlessness which evidently

will cost her her life, an Elvira who performs all this with so much aplomb and assurance that it does not occur to her for half a second that her faithfulness was rather calculated to take the life of her lover. Great is the fidelity of women, especially when it is declined; unfathomable and inconceivable it is at all times. The situation would be priceless if her lover, in spite of all his distress, had preserved enough humor not to waste a word of wrath upon her but contented himself with the profounder revenge of duping her and confirming her in the false notion that she was shamefully deceived by him. In case this is the way with her, I warrant her that if the young man is capable of carrying out my plan, it will give her a dreadful shock, and yet not without poetic justice. For she is convinced that she is doing the best she can, and yet this fact, if she is egoistic, will make the chastisement all the harder. He handles her with all possible erotic consideration, and yet his method is precisely calculated to cause her the greatest pain, if she is egoistic.

He was willing to enter into my plan and approved of it without reserve. In a magazin de modes I found what I sought, a right pretty girl whose future I promised to provide for if she would enter into my plan. He was to show himself with her in public places and visit her at hours which would leave no doubt that they were living on an understanding with one another. To that end I engaged a dwelling for her in a house which had an entrance upon two streets, so that he had only to walk through the house late in the evening in order to give certainty to maid-servants etc. and start gossip going. Now that everything was arranged, I had only to see to it that the lady-love did not remain unaware of his new relationship. The little seamstress wasn't so bad, but of such a sort that the lady-love, all jealousy apart, might be astonished that a girl like this was preferred above her. If I had only had the ladylove in view, the seamstress might have been rather different; but as I knew nothing with certainty about the lady, and as I did

not want to play a prank upon the young man, I made my choice in the interest of his method.

The seamstress was engaged for one year. The relationship with her must last as long as that in order to dupe the loved one completely. During that period he was to work himself free from his poetic existence. If he succeeded in this, a *redintegratio in statum pristinum* might be brought about. In the course of that year the young girl also (this was a matter of great importance) would have opportunity to work herself out of the relationship, for he had not honored her with an uncertain intimation of the possible result of such an operation. If it were to come about that she, when the moment of repetition arrived, had grown tired — well, then, he had at least acted magnanimously.

In this way everything was in readiness. I already held the string in my hand, and my soul was extraordinarily intent upon the outcome. He failed to appear, I never saw him again. He did not have strength to carry out the plan. His soul lacked the elasticity of irony. He had not the strength to take irony’s vow of silence, not the power to keep it; and only the man who keeps silent amounts to anything. Only he who really is able to love is a man, and only he who is able to give his love whatsoever expression it may be is an artist. In a certain sense it perhaps was well that he did not begin the thing, for he hardly could have supported the terrors of the adventure, and from the beginning I was a little fearful because he had need of a confidant. He who knows how to keep silent discovers an alphabet which has just as many letters as the one commonly in use, so that he can express everything in this thieves’ Latin, so that there is no sigh so profound that he has not the laughter which corresponds to it in thieves’ Latin, and no prayer so importunate that he has not the witticism which redeems the claim. For him there will come an instant when it is as though he were about to lose his reason. But this is only a moment, though it is a dreadful moment. It is like

the fever which comes on of nights at half past eleven or twelve, and at one o'clock one works as buoyantly as ever. If one endures this madness, one is sure to conquer.

But here I sit and relate in full detail what really was adduced in order to show that the love of recollection does indeed make a man unhappy. My young friend did not understand repetition, he did not believe in it, and did not desire it with energy. What made his fate so hard was the fact that he really loved the girl, but in order to love her really he must first be clarified out of the poetical confusion into which he had fallen. He might have made this confession to the girl. When one wants to dismiss a young girl that is a perfectly reputable method. That, however, he did not wish to do, and I thoroughly agreed with him that it was not the correct thing. He thereby would have cut her off from the possibility of existing under her own auspices, and also exempted himself from becoming perhaps an object of her contempt, and from the breathless dread of never being able to indemnify her for what she had lost.

If the young man had believed in repetition, of what might he not have been capable? What inwardness he might have attained!

However, I have anticipated and got further along than I meant to. My aim was merely to present the first moment, when it became clear that the young man was in a true sense the woeful knight of the only happy love of recollection. The reader will permit me perhaps to reflect once more upon the instant when intoxicated with recollection, he strode into my room, when his heart thoroughly "*ging ihn über*" in that verse of Poul Moller's, when he confided in me that he must deny himself in order not to sit beside his beloved the whole day long. That same verse he repeated the evening we parted. It will ever be impossible for me to forget that verse, indeed the recollection of his disappearance I could more easily erase from my mind than the memory of that instant; and it is true also that the report of that

event alarmed me less than did the earlier situation. That is the way I am built. At the first shudder of presentiment my soul has in an instant followed through the whole chain of consequences, which in reality often require a long lapse of time to come to evidence. The concentration of presentiment one never forgets. So it is, I believe, an observer ought to be built, but when he is built in this fashion he will also suffer much. The first moment may overwhelm him almost to the point of fainting, but in this fit of pallor the idea has impregnated him, and from now on he is in an apt mood for discovery. When a man does not possess this feminine quality which permits the idea to come into the right relation to him, which always is a fructifying relation, he is of no use as an observer, for he who does not discover the totality discovers nothing.

When we parted that evening, and he thanked me for helping him to while away the time which passed all too slowly for his impatience, I then thought to myself, "Was he perhaps candid enough to report all this to the young girl, with the result presumably that she loves him more dearly than ever?" I wonder if he did so. If he had asked my advice, I should have counseled him against it. I had said to him, "Hold firm at the beginning, from a purely erotic point of view that is the wisest course, unless your soul is so serious that you can direct her thought to something far higher." If he told her that, he did not behave wisely.

He who has some opportunity to observe young girls and to give ear to their conversation has likely often heard this formula: "N.N. is a good man, but he is tiresome; on the other hand F.F. is so interesting and piquant." Whenever I hear these words in the mouth of a little maiden I always think, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Is it not pitiful that a young girl should talk in this fashion?" If a man has run wild in the interesting, who might save him, unless it were precisely a young girl? Is she not culpable if she does not do it? Either the person in question is not capable of playing

the rôle of the interesting, and then it would be indelicate to require it of him; or he can do it, and then..., for a young girl ought to be prudent enough never to elicit the interesting; the girl who does that always loses, as seen from the vantage point of the idea, for the interesting does not lend itself to repetition; she who does not do it is always victorious.

A year ago I was on a journey of forty miles out in the country and stopped at an inn to take my midday dinner. I had partaken of an acceptable and savory meal, was in rather gay spirits, and was just standing with a cup of coffee in my hand and inhaling its odor, when at that instant a young and pretty girl passed the window and turned into the court belonging to the inn. From this I drew the conclusion that she wanted to go down into the garden. One is young...so I gulped down the coffee, lit a cigar, and was just on the point of following the beckoning of fate and the footsteps of the girl when there was a knock at my door and in walked...the young girl. She bowed to me pleasantly and asked if it was not my carriage which was waiting in the court, whether I was not going to Copenhagen, and whether I would permit her to ride with me. The modest and yet genuinely feminine dignity with which she made the request was enough to make me instantly lose sight of the interesting and piquant. And yet to ride forty miles with her in one's own carriage, with coachman and valet, having her entirely in my power, is in fact far more interesting than meeting a girl in a garden. Nevertheless it is my conviction that even a more frivolous man than I would not have felt tempted. The confidence with which she entrusted herself to my keeping is a better defense than all a girl's shrewdness and cunning. We rode together. She could not have been safer if she were riding with a father or brother. I remained silent and reserved; only when it appeared that she would make a remark was I responsive. My coachman had orders to make haste. There was a rest of five minutes at each post-station. I alighted with hat in hand and asked if she would order any refreshment, my valet standing behind me

with hat in hand. When we approached Copenhagen I had the coachman turn into a side road, and there I alighted to walk two miles into the city, in order to spare her the possibility of meeting an acquaintance, or any similar incident which might cause her embarrassment. I have never inquired who she was, where she dwelt, or what was the occasion of her sudden journey; but she has always been to me a pleasant recollection, which I have never permitted myself to offend by even the most innocent curiosity. — A girl who craves the interesting becomes the trap in which she herself is caught. A girl who does not crave the interesting believes in repetition. Honor to her who is such by nature, honor to her who became such in time.

I must ever be repeating that it is with reference to repetition I say all this. Repetition is the new category which has to be brought to light. If one knows something of modern philosophy and is not entirely ignorant of the Greek, one will easily perceive that precisely this category explains the relation between the Eleatic School and Heraclitus, and that properly it is repetition which by mistake has been called mediation. It is incredible how much fuss has been made about mediation in the Hegelian philosophy, and how much foolish patter has under this caption enjoyed honor and repute. One would do better to subject mediation to a searching examination and so render a little justice to the Greeks. Their treatment of the doctrine of "being" and "nothingness," their treatment of "the instant," of "non-being" etc., trumps Hegel. Mediation is a foreign word, repetition [i.e. Gentagelsen] is a good Danish word and I congratulate the Danish language upon having a good philosophical term. In our time no explanation is forthcoming as to how mediation comes about, whether it results from the movement of the two factors, and in what sense it already is contained in them, or whether it is something new which supervenes, and if so, how. In this respect the Greek reflection upon the concept of *κίνησις* which corresponds to the modern category of transition, deserves the utmost

attention. The dialectic of repetition is easy; for what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that it has been gives to repetition the character of novelty. When the Greeks said that all knowledge is recollection they affirmed that all that is has been; when one says that life is a repetition one affirms that existence which has been now becomes. When one does not possess the categories of recollection or of repetition the whole of life is resolved into a void and empty noise. Recollection is the pagan life-view, repetition is the modern life-view; repetition is the *interest* of metaphysics, and at the same time the interest upon which metaphysics founders; repetition is the solution contained in every ethical view, repetition is a *conditio sine qua non* of every dogmatic problem.

Let everyone pass what judgment he will upon what I have said with regard to repetition, let him also pass what judgment he will upon the fact that I say it here in this way, expressing myself after Hamann's example "in divers tongues" and speaking the language of Sophists, of quibbles, of Cretans and Arabians and Creoles, babbling indifferently rebus and principles, arguing now κατ ανθωττον, now κατ Ιξοχην. Assuming that what I say is not a sheer lie, I would do better perhaps to send my straw-thought to a systematic appraiser, perhaps something might come of it, a note in the System perhaps — proud thought! Then I should not have lived in vain!

As for the significance which repetition has in a given case, much can be said without incurring the charge of repetition. When in his time Professor Ussing made an address before the 28th of May Association and something in it met with disapprobation, what then did the professor do? Being at that period always resolute and gewaltig, he pounded on the table and said, "I repeat it." So on that occasion his opinion was that what he had said gained by repetition. A few years ago I heard a parson deliver on two successive Sundays exactly the same discourse. If he had been of the opinion of the

professor, as he ascended the pulpit on the second occasion he would have pounded the desk and said, “I repeat what I said last Sunday.” This he did not do, and he gave no hint of it. He was not of Professor Ussing’s opinion — and who knows if the professor himself be still of the opinion that it was an advantage to his discourse to be repeated again? At a court reception when the Queen had told a story, and all the courtiers had laughed, including a deaf minister, who then arose and craved permission to tell his story...and told the same one — the question is what was his view of the significance of repetition? When a schoolteacher says in class, “I repeat that Jaspersen must sit still,” and the same Jaspersen gets a bad mark for repeated disturbance, the significance of repetition is exactly the opposite.

However, I will dwell no longer upon such examples but will proceed to tell a little about the voyage of discovery I undertook in order to investigate the possibility and the significance of repetition. Without letting anybody know about it (lest all the gossip might render me inept for the experiment and create a disgust for repetition), I went by steamer to Stralsund, and there took a seat in a diligence for Berlin. Among the learned there are various opinions as to which seat in a diligence is the most comfortable. My *Ansicht* is that it is misery for the whole crowd. On my previous journey I had the end seat inside the carriage near the front (some consider this a great prize), and then for thirty-six hours was so shaken together with my nearest neighbors, all too near, that upon reaching Hamburg I had not merely lost my mind but lost my legs too. We six persons who sat inside the carriage were kneaded into one body, and I had a lively sense of what had happened to the people of Mol, who after they had been sitting together for a long time could not distinguish their own legs. In order at least to be a member of a smaller body I chose a seat in the coupé. It was a change. Nevertheless everything was repeated. The postillion blew his horn, I closed my eyes, resigned myself to despair, and thought, as I am accustomed to do

on such occasions, “God knows whether thou wilt ever reach Berlin, and in that case whether thou wilt ever become a man, again, capable of emancipating thyself in the individuality of isolation, or whether thou wilt retain the memory that thou art a member of a greater body.” arrived in Berlin after all, and hastened at once to my old lodging in order to convince myself how far a repetition might be possible. I can assure every sympathetic reader that on my first visit I succeeded in getting one of the most agreeable apartments in Berlin, and this I can now affirm with the more confidence because I have seen many. Gendarmes Square is surely the most beautiful in Berlin. The theater and the two churches make a fine appearance, especially as viewed from a window by moonlight. The recollection of it contributed much to hasten my steps. One ascends a flight of stairs in a house illuminated by gas, one opens a small door, one stands in the vestibule. On the left is a glass door leading to a cabinet. One goes straight ahead, one finds oneself in an antechamber. Beyond this are two rooms entirely alike and furnished entirely alike, with the effect of seeing one room doubled in a mirror. The inner room is tastefully lighted. A branch candlestick stands on the writing table, beside which stands a handsome armchair covered with red velvet. The first room is not illuminated. Here the pale light of the room is blended with the stronger illumination from the inner room. One sits down upon a chair by the window, one looks out upon the great square, one sees the shadows of pedestrians hasten along the walls. Everything is transformed into a theatrical decoration. A dreamy reality looms up in the background of the soul. One feels a desire to throw on a cloak and slink quietly along the walls with a searching glance. One does not do it, one merely sees oneself doing it in a renewed youth. On has smoked one’s cigar, one retires to the inner room and begins to work. Midnight is past. One extinguishes the candles, one lights a small night lamp. The moonlight triumphs unalloyed. A single

shadow appears still darker, a single footstep takes a long time to disappear. The cloudless vault of heaven seems sad and meditative, as though the end of the world were past and heaven undisturbed were concerned only with itself. One goes out again into the antechamber, into the vestibule, into that little cabinet, one goes to sleep — if one is of that fortunate number that can sleep.

But, alas, here no repetition was possible. My host, materialist that he was, *hatte sich verandret*, in the pregnant sense in which the Germans use this word, and as it is used in some quarters of Copenhagen, if I am correctly informed, in the sense of getting married. I wanted to wish him good fortune; but as I have not sufficient command of the German language to be able to turn a sharp corner, nor had promptly at my disposition the phrases appropriate to such an occasion, I confined myself to pantomimic motions. I laid my hand upon my heart and looked at him, while tender sympathy was legibly depicted upon my countenance. He pressed my hand. After we had thus come to an understanding with one another he proceeded to prove the aesthetic validity of marriage. In this he was extraordinarily successful — just as he was formerly in proving the perfection of the bachelor life. When I am talking German I am the most compliant person in the world.

My former host was eager to serve me, and I was eager to lodge with him; so I took one chamber and the vestibule. When I came home the first evening and had lit the candles, I thought to myself, "Alas, alack, is this repetition?" I was in a sadly depressed mood, or if you prefer to say so, I was in a mood precisely appropriate to the day; for fate had strangely contrived that I arrived in Berlin on the first day of Lent, a day of universal fasting and penitence. It is true they did not cast dust in one's eyes, with the words *Memento, o homo, quod cines est et in cinerem rivertaris,* but nevertheless the whole city was one cloud of dust. I thought at first that it

was all arranged by the government, but later I was convinced that the wind had made itself responsible for this and without respect of persons was following its whim or its evil habit; for in Berlin at least every other day is Ash Wednesday. But the dust has little relevance to my subject. This discovery had nothing to do with “repetition,” for on my previous visit I had not observed this phenomenon, presumably because it was winter.

When one has got comfortably and snugly settled in one’s dwelling, when one has thus a fixed point from which to dart out, a safe hiding-place where one can retire to devour one’s prey in solitude (something I prize in particular, because like those beasts of prey I cannot eat when anybody is looking on) — then one makes oneself acquainted with the sights of the city. If one is a traveller ex professo, a globetrotter who travels on the scent of everything others have scented out, or in order to write the names of the principal sights in his diary, or his own name in the register of guests, then one engages a Lohndiener and buys Das ganze Berlin for 4 Groschen. By my method one remains an impartial observer whose declaration ought to be taken on faith in every police protocol. On the other hand, if one is travelling without any pressing pretext, one may do as one pleases, see once in a while something which others have not seen, overlook the important things, and get a casual impression which has significance only for oneself. Such a carefree vagabond generally has not much to recount to others, and if he does it he readily runs the risk of impairing the good opinion good people have formed of his virtuousness and morality. If a man had journeyed abroad for a long time and had never been *auf der Eisenbahn*, ought he not to be expelled from all good society? What if a man had been in London and had never taken a ride in the Tunnel! What if a man were to come to Rome, fall in love with a small corner of the town which offered him inexhaustible material for delight, and were to leave Rome without having seen one single sight!

Berlin has three theaters. What is presented at the Opera House in the way of operas and ballets is said to be grossartig; what is presented at the Dramatic Theater is supposed to be for instruction and culture, not merely for pleasure. About that I do not know. But I know that in Berlin there is a theater called Kônigstâter Theater. The official tourists visit it rather rarely, although (and this is also significant) somewhat more frequently than the sociable places of refection on more retired streets where a Dane can refresh his memory of Lars Mathiesen and Kehlet. When I arrived in Stralsund and read in the newspaper that "Der Talisman" was to be performed in that theater I was at once in good humor. The recollection of it awakened in my soul, and the first time I saw it I felt as though this first impression merely evoked in my soul a recollection which pointed far back in time.

Surely there is no young man with any imagination who has not at one time been captivated by the enchantment of the theater, and desired to be himself carried away into the midst of that fictitious reality, in order to see and hear himself as an *alter ego*, to disperse himself among the innumerable possibilities which diverge from himself, and yet in such a way that every diversity is in turn a single self. Of course it is only at a very early age such a desire can express itself. Only the imagination is awake to this dream of personality, all the other faculties are still sound asleep. In such a dream of imagination the individual is not a real figure but a shadow, or rather the real figure is invisibly present and therefore is not content with casting one shadow, but the individual has a multiplicity of shadows, all of which resemble him and for the moment have an equal claim to be accounted himself. The personality is not yet discovered, its energy announces itself only in the passion of possibility; for it is true in the life of the spirit as it is in the case of many plants that the germinal sprout comes last. However, this shadow existence also demands its satisfaction, and it never is good for a man if he does not get time to live out his life, although on the other hand

it is pitiful or comic when an individual lives himself out in this way. The pretension of such a man to be a real man is just as dubious as the demand of immortality on the part of people who are not in a position to make their appearance personally at the Day of Judgment, but delegate in their stead a deputation of good intentions, ephemeral resolutions, half-hour plans etc. The essential thing is that everything happens at the right time. Everything has its time in youth, and what has had its time there gets it again later; and it is just as wholesome for an older man to have in his life a past whereby he is in debt to laughter, as to have a past which exacts tears.

When in a mountainous region one hears the wind day in and day out execute firmly and unchangingly the same theme, one perhaps is tempted for an instant to ignore the imperfection of the analogy and to rejoice in this symbol of the consistency and assurance of human freedom. One perhaps does not reflect that there was a moment when the wind, which now for many years has had its dwelling-place among these mountains, came to this region as a stranger, flung itself wildly, meaninglessly into the fissures, into the caverns, producing now a piercing shriek by which it almost startled itself, now a hollow roar from which it had itself to flee, now a note of lamentation, without knowing itself from whence it came, now a sigh drawn from the anguish of the abyss, so profound that the wind itself was for an instant afraid and doubted if it dared to dwell in these regions, and now a lyrical and frolicsome note of gladness — until, after it had learnt to know its instrument, it brought all this into accord in the melody which from day to day it executes unchangeably. So does the possibility of the individual stray at random amongst its own possibilities, discovering now one and now another. But the possibility of the individual does not want merely to be heard; it is not merely an onrushing force like the wind, it also assumes shape, therefore at the same time it wants to be seen. Every possibility of the individual is therefore a sounding shadow. The cryptic individual no

more believes in the great noisy feelings than he does in the crafty whisper of malice, no more in the blissful exultation of joy than in the infinite sigh of sorrow; the individual only wants to hear and see with pathos, but, be it observed, to hear and see himself. However it is not really himself he wants to hear. That is not practicable. At that instant the cock crows, and the figures of the twilight flee away, the voices of the night fall silent. If they continue, then we are in an entirely different domain, where all this goes on under the alarming observation of moral responsibility, then we are on the border of the demoniacal. In order not to get an impression of his real self, the cryptic individual requires that the environment be as light and ephemeral as the figures, as the frothy effervescence of the words which sound without echo. Such an environment is the theatrical stage, which for this reason precisely is appropriate to the shadow-play of the cryptic individual. Among the shadows in which he discovers himself, whose voice is his voice, there is perhaps a robber chieftain. He must recognize himself in the mirrored image, in the robber's manly figure, his swift but piercing glance, the signature of passion written legibly upon his furrowed countenance, nothing must be lacking. He must lie in ambush in the mountain pass, he must be listening for the movement of travellers, he must blow his whistle, the whole band rushes down; his voice must dominate the turmoil; he must be cruel, order all to be cut down, and turn away from the massacre with indifference, but he must be chivalrous toward the frightened girl, etc., etc.

A robber has in fact his home in the gloomy forest. If one were to deposit in such a place that fantastic hero of the footlights, were to provide him with all the equipment he needed, and beg him merely to keep still long enough for one to get several leagues away, before giving himself over to his passionate rage — I think he would remain completely dumb. It would turn out with him perhaps as it did with a man who several years ago

honored me with his literary confidence. He came to me lamenting that he was to such a degree overwhelmed by fullness of ideas that it was impossible for him to put down anything on paper, because he could not write fast enough. He begged me to be so kind as to be his secretary and write at his dictation. I at once smelled a rat and promptly consoled him with the assurance that I could write as fast as a runaway horse, since I wrote only a letter of each word and yet guaranteed that I could read everything I had written. My willingness to be of service knew no bounds. I had a big table brought out, numbered many sheets of paper, in order that I might not even waste time in turning a page, laid out a dozen steel pens with their holders, dipped my pen — and the man began his address as follows: "Well, yes, you see, my dear Sir, what I really wanted to say was..." When he was through with the address I read it aloud to him, and from that time he has never asked me to be his secretary.

That robber would presumably find the scale too big for him, and yet in another sense too little. No. Measure out for him a *coulisse* with one tree, hang before it a lamp, which makes the illumination even stranger, and with that this forest is even bigger than the real forest, bigger than the primeval forests of North America, and yet he can penetrate it with his voice without becoming hoarse. This is the sophistical pleasure of imagination, to have thus the whole world in a nutshell, which is bigger than the whole world, and yet not bigger than the individual can fill.

Such an inclination for theatrical acting and expectorating by no means evinces a call to be an actor. Where there is such a call the talent shows itself at once as a disposition for this particular art, and even the richest talent of this sort which awakens in a man has not so broad a compass as the inclination we have been considering. This inclination is merely immaturity of imagination; for it is quite another matter when it has its ground in vanity

and an inclination to shine. Then the whole thing has no deeper ground than vanity, a ground unfortunately which may be very deep.

Although in the individual life this inclination vanishes in time, yet it is reproduced in a riper age when the soul has seriously collected itself. Yes, although the art of the theater is perhaps not serious enough for the individual, he may perhaps have pleasure in turning back occasionally to that first state and rehearsing it in sentiment. He wishes now to be affected comically, and to be himself in a comically productive relation to the theatrical performance. Therefore, though neither tragedy nor comedy can please him, precisely because of their perfection, he turns to the farce.

The same phenomenon recurs also in other spheres. One sometimes sees a modern individual, sated with the strong meat of reality, who remains unaffected by a painting executed with artistic skill. On the other hand he may be moved at seeing a Nürnberg print in color, such a picture as not long ago was commonly to be found in the shops. There one sees a landscape which depicts a country scene in general. This abstraction is one which cannot be represented artistically. The effect therefore has to be attained by indirection, that is, by depicting a concrete subject casually selected. And yet I would ask every man whether from such a landscape he does not get the impression of a country scene in general, and whether this category is not left over from the days of childhood. From the days of childhood when one had such prodigious categories that now one is almost made dizzy by them, when from a piece of paper one cut out a man and a woman, which were man and woman in general, and that in a stricter sense than Adam and Eve were. A landscape painter, whether he strives to produce an effect by a faithful rendering of the subject, or by a more ideal reproduction, perhaps leaves the individual cold, but such a picture as I have in mind produces an indescribable effect for the fact that one does not know whether to laugh or cry, and because the whole effect depends upon the mood of the beholder.

There is surely no person who has not passed through a period when no wealth of language, no passion of exclamation was sufficient for him, when no expression, no gesticulation satisfied, when nothing contented him except to break out with the strangest leaps and somersaults. Perhaps the same individual learned to dance, perhaps he often saw ballets and admired the art of the dancer, perhaps there came a time when the ballet no longer affected him, and yet he had moments when he could retire to his room, give himself up entirely to his impulse, and feel an indescribably humoristic relief in standing upon one leg in a picturesque attitude, or in consigning the whole world to death and the devil, and accomplishing it all by a leap head over heels.

At the Kônigstater Theater they give farces, and of course the audience is exceedingly diversified. Anyone who desires to make a pathological study of laughter at different social levels and as it is affected by diversity of temperament ought not to miss the opportunity afforded by the performance of a farce. The jubilation and clangor of the amphitheater and second gallery is something quite different from the applause of a cultivated and critical public; it is a steady accompaniment, without which the farce could not be performed at all. The action generally takes place in the lower spheres of society, therefore the gallery and the second tier promptly recognize themselves, and their shouts and bravos do not express an aesthetic appreciation of the individual actors, but rather a purely lyrical explosion of their sense of contentment; they are not in the least conscious of being an audience, but want to take part in what is going on down in the street, or wherever the scene is laid. However, since this is impossible because of the distance, they behave like children who are merely permitted to see from a window a row in the street. The first tier of boxes and the parterre are also convulsed by laughter, although this is essentially different from the national yells of the Cimbro-Teutonic race, and even within this

select sphere there are infinite nuances in the quality of the laughter, far more than at the performance of the best vaudeville. Whether one is disposed to regard this as a perfection or an imperfection, it is simply the fact. Every attempt at an aesthetic definition which might claim universal validity founders upon the farce, which is by no means capable of producing a uniformity of mood in the more cultured part of the audience. For, since the effect depends in great part upon the spontaneous creative activity of the spectator, the single individual asserts himself to an unusual degree, and in his own enjoyment is emancipated from the aesthetic obligation to admire, laugh, be touched, etc., according to the prescription of tradition. To view a farce is for a person of culture like playing the lottery, except that one is spared the annoyance of winning money. But such uncertainty is not what theater-goers generally want; hence they neglect the farce, or look down upon it loftily, which is all the worse for them. The real theatrical public has in general a certain narrow-minded seriousness; it wants (or at least imagines that it wants) to be ennobled and educated at the theater, it wants to have had (or at least to imagine that it has had) a rare aesthetic enjoyment; it would like to be able, as soon as it has read the posters, to know in advance how the thing is going to turn out this evening. Such an accord between promise and performance is impossible in the case of the farce; for the same farce may make many different impressions, and it may happen strangely enough that it has the least effect when it is best acted. One cannot therefore rely upon one's neighbors or upon the newspapers in order to know whether one has been entertained or not. This matter the individual must determine for himself, and no critic has as yet succeeded in prescribing a ceremonial for the public which deigns to see a farce; in this field no *bon ton* can establish itself. The reciprocal regard of actors and audience, which commonly gives one such a sense of security, is here done away with; one may be thrown into the most unexpected moods

at seeing a farce, and therefore never can know with assurance whether one has behaved in the theater as a worthy member of society, and has laughed or wept at the appropriate place. One cannot admire as a conscientious spectator the fine characterization which is to be expected in a drama, for all the characters in the farce are sketched on the abstract scale of "the general." The situation, the action, the lines, are all on this scale. One can therefore quite as well be moved to sadness as convulsed by laughter. Irony is ineffectual in the farce, everything is naïve, and therefore the spectator as a single individual must be spontaneously active; for the *naïveté* of the farce is so illusory that it is impossible for a cultivated person to be naïve in his attitude toward it. But in his spontaneous reaction to the farce consists in great part the entertainment of the individual, and he must venture to enjoy it without looking to the right or to the left or to the newspapers to find a guarantee that he really has been entertained. On the other hand, for the cultivated person who at the same time is free and easy enough to entertain himself independently, and has enough self-confidence to know by himself, without seeking the testimony of others, whether he has been entertained or not, the farce will have perhaps a very special significance, for the fact that it will affect his spirit in various ways, now by the spaciousness of the abstraction, now by the introduction of a palpable reality. But of course he will not bring with him a ready-made mood and let everything produce its effect in relation to that, but he will have cultivated his spirit to perfection and will keep himself in the state where not one single mood is present but the possibility of all.

At the Kônigstater Theater they present farces, and to my mind excellent ones. My opinion is of course entirely individual, and I urge it upon no one, deprecating as I do every urgency applied to me. To be able to perform a farce with complete success the troupe must be composed in a special way. It must possess two (or at the most three) actors who have decided talent, or

rather, creative genius. They must be the children of caprice, intoxicated with laughter, dancing for sheer humor and merriment. Although at other times, even a moment earlier, they are entirely like other people, yet the very instant they hear the bell of the stage manager they become transformed, and like the noble Arabian steed begin to puff and snort, their distended nostrils witnessing to the chafing spirit within them, wanting to be off, wanting to disport themselves wildly. They are not so much reflective artists who have made a study of laughter as they are lyrical geniuses who plunge into the abyss of laughter and then let its volcanic force cast them up upon the stage. They have therefore hardly calculated what they will do, but let the instant and the natural force of laughter be responsible for everything. They have courage to do what the ordinary man dares to do only when he is alone by himself, what the crazy man does in the presence of all, what the genius knows how to do with the authority of genius. They know that their exuberant mirth has no bounds, that the capital they possess of the comic is inexhaustible and almost every instant a surprise even to them; they know that they are capable of keeping the laughter going the whole evening, without more effort than it costs me to scribble this on paper.

When a theater possesses two geniuses of this sort it has enough for a farce, three is the greatest number admissible, for by more geniuses the effect is weakened, just as a man may die of hypertrophy. The other members of the troupe do not need to be talented, it is not even advantageous that they should be. Nor do the other members need to be engaged with an eye to the canons of beauty, they had better be assembled haphazard. All the rest of the troupe may well be as heterogeneous as that company which founded Rome, according to a drawing by Chodowiecki. No one need be excluded even on the ground of physical deformity. On the contrary, such an anomaly would contribute notably to the success of the

piece. Though one were bow-legged or knock-kneed or too much overgrown or stunted in growth, in short, if in one respect or another he is a defective example of the species, he can very well be used in the farce, and the effect he produces is incalculable. After the ideal comes in the very next place the accidental. A wit has said that one might divide mankind into officers, serving-maids and chimneysweeps. To my mind this remark is not only witty but profound, and it would require a great speculative talent to devise a better classification. When a classification does not ideally exhaust its object, a haphazard classification is altogether preferable, because it sets imagination in motion. A tolerably true classification is not able to satisfy the understanding, it is nothing for the imagination, and hence it is to be totally rejected, even though for everyday use it enjoys much honor and repute for the reason that people are in part very stupid and in part have very little imagination. When at the theater one would have a representation of a man, one must either require a concrete form corresponding absolutely to the ideal, or else be content with the fortuitous. Those theaters which are "not merely for pleasure" ought to provide the former. Nevertheless one is content if in this case the actor is a handsome fellow with an advantageous figure and a good stage-face and a good voice. But this rarely satisfies me, for his acting awakens *eo ipso* the critical spirit, and as soon as that is awakened it becomes neither possible to determine what is required for being a man, nor easy to satisfy one's demands — and in this anyone will agree with me if he reflects that Socrates, in spite of the fact that his strong point was knowledge of men and self-knowledge, said of himself that he did not know definitely whether he was a human being or a beast even more changeable than Typhon. On the other hand, in the case of a farce, the subordinate actors produce their effect by means of that abstract category "in general" and attain this by a fortuitous concretion. With this one has got no further than to reality. Nor should the actor seek to go further; but the

spectator is reconciled comically by seeing this fortuitous concretion claiming to be the ideal, which it does by treading into the fictitious world of the stage. If an exception is to be made with respect to any of the subordinate actors, this must be in favor of the lady-love. Of course she must not by any means be a finished actress, yet in making the choice one ought to see to it that she is attractive, that her whole appearance in the rôle is charming and pleasant, that she is agreeable to look upon, agreeable, let us say, to have around.

The troupe at the Kônigstater Theater is pretty much what I would desire. If I were to make any objection, it would apply to the subordinate actors, for against Beckmann and Grobecker I have not a word of complaint. Beckmann is the perfection of a comic genius, who lyrically runs wild in the comic, does not distinguish himself by characterization but by effervescence of spirit. He is not great in the artistically commensurable but admirable in the individual incommensurable. He has no need of the support of team-play, of scenery and arrangement; precisely because he is in form he brings everything with him, at the same time that he is in an ecstasy of wantonness he paints the scenery for himself as well as any painter could. What Baggesen says of Sara Nickels, that she rushes upon the stage with a country landscape behind her, applies in a good sense to Beckmann, only he is able to come walking. In the artistic theater properly so called one seldom sees an actor who can really walk and stand. I have seen, however, one single instance, but what Beckmann is capable of I have never before beheld. He not only can walk but he can come walking. This ability to “come walking” is a very different thing, and by this stroke of genius Beckmann improvises the scenic environment. He not only can represent a wandering apprentice lad, he can come walking like him, and that in such a way that one sees the whole thing, through the dust of the highway one espies a smiling village, hears its subdued din, sees the footpath which

winds yonder down to the pond where it turns off at the smithy — when one sees Beckmann come walking with his little bundle on his back, his walking-stick in his hand, carefree and indefatigable. He is capable of coming on the stage with the street-urchins following him — which one does not see. Even Dr. Ryge in “King Solomon and George the Hatter” could not produce this effect. Indeed Herr Beckmann is a pure economy for a theater, for when it possesses him it has no need of street-urchins or painted scenery. However this young apprentice is no characterization; for that the figure is too hastily sketched in its truly masterly contours, it is an incognito in which dwells the mad demon of laughter, which soon disengages itself and carries the whole thing off with unbridled mirth. In this respect Beckmann’s dancing is incomparable. He has sung his couplet, now the dance begins. What Beckmann dares to do is perilous; for presumably he does not think himself competent in the strictest sense to produce an effect by his dancing attitudes. He is now beside himself. The madness of laughter within him can no longer be contained either in mimicry or in *réplique*, only to take himself like Munchausen by the nape of the neck and abandon himself to crazy caprioles, is consonant with his mood. The ordinary man, as I have said, may very well recognize what assuagement is to be found in this, but it requires indisputable genius to do it on the stage, it requires the authority of genius, otherwise it is pitiable.

Every burlesque actor must have a voice which is audible from behind the scenes, so that he can thus prepare the way for himself. Beckmann has a capital voice, which of course does not mean the same thing as a good vocal organ. Grobecker’s voice is more strident, but one word from him behind the scenes produces the same effect as three flourishes of the trumpets on the festival of Dyrehavsbakken, it predisposes one to laughter. In this respect I give him the preference, even over Beckmann. Beckmann’s fundamental superiority consists in a certain indomitable common sense in

his wantonness, and it is through this he attains to frenzy. Grosbeck, on the other hand, sometimes rises to frenzy through sentimentality and a languishing mood. So it is I remember seeing him play in a farce the part of a steward who by reason of his devotion to his noble masters and by virtue of his faith in the importance of festal preparations for embellishing their life is engrossed with the thought of celebrating their lordships' arrival by a rustic fête. Everything is in readiness. Grosbeck has chosen to represent Mercury. He has not altered his costume as steward, he has merely attached wings to his feet and put a helmet on his head, he assumes a picturesque attitude upon one leg, and begins his address to their lordships. Grosbeck is not so great a lyrical artist as Beckmann, nevertheless he too is on good lyrical terms with laughter. He has a certain tendency toward correctness, and in this respect his acting is often masterly, especially in dry comedy, but he is not such a fermenting ingredient in the farce as is Beckmann. A genius he is nevertheless, and a genius for farce.

One enters the Kônigstater Theater. One takes one's seat in the first tier of boxes; for here there are relatively few people, and when one is to see a farce one must be seated at one's ease, without feeling in the remotest way embarrassed by the solemn pretense of art which causes many to let themselves be jammed into a theater to see a play as if it were a question of their eternal salvation. The air in this theater is also fairly pure, not contaminated by the sweat of an audience moved by sensibility to art, or by the finer emanations of art connoisseurs. In the first tier of boxes one can be fairly sure of getting a box alone by oneself. If that is not the case, I recommend to the reader (in order that he may at least get some profitable knowledge from what I write) the choice of boxes 5 and 6 on the left. There one finds at the very back a seat in a corner which is calculated for only one person, where one is incomparably well off. One sits there alone in one's box, and from this position the theater appears empty. The orchestra plays

an overture, the music resounds in the hall rather uncannily for the reason that the theater is so empty. One has not gone to the theater as a tourist, or as an aesthetic spirit, or as a critic, but if possible as though it were a matter of no importance, and one is content with being well and comfortably installed, almost as well as in one's own room. The orchestra has finished, the curtain already rises a little, then begins that other orchestra which does not obey the conductor's baton but follows an inner impulse, that other orchestra, the voice of nature in the gallery, which already has sensed Beckmann behind the stage. I generally sat far back in the box and therefore could not see the second row of boxes and the gallery which like a visor projected beyond my head. All the more marvellous was the effect of this din. Wherever I was able to see, there was empty space for the most part, the vastness of the theater was transformed into the belly of the sea-monster in which Jonah sat, the noise in the gallery was like a movement of the monster's viscera. From the moment the gallery has begun its music no other accompaniment is necessary, Beckmann inspires it, and it him.

My nursery maid never to be forgotten, thou fugitive nymph which hadst thy dwelling in the brook which ran past my father's farmstead and didst ever take a helpful part in the child's play, although thou wast only looking after thyself! Thou faithful comforter who throughout the years hast preserved thy innocent purity, hast ever remained young, whereas I have become old; thou quiet nymph to whom again I had recourse when I was weary of men, weary of myself, so that I needed an eternity to repose; when I was sorrowful, so that I needed an eternity to forget. Thou didst not deny to me that which men would deny me by making eternity just as busy and even more terrible than time. There I lay by thy side and vanished from before my own eyes into the prodigious expanse of heaven above my head, and forgot myself in thy lulling murmur. Thou my happier self, thou fugitive life which dwellest in the brook which runs by my father's

farmstead, where I lie outstretched as though my body were a discarded pilgrim's staff, but I am saved and liberated by thy melancholy purling. — Thus it was I lay back in my loge, cast aside like the clothing of a bather, flung beside the stream of laughter and merriment and jubilation which foamed past me incessantly. I could see nothing but the vast expanse of the theater, hear nothing but the din in the midst of which I dwelt. Only now and then did I raise myself, look at Beckmann and laugh so heartily that for very fatigue I sank down again beside the foaming stream. This in itself was blissful, and yet I sensed the lack of something. Then in the desert which I beheld about me I discovered a figure which gladdened me more than the sight of Friday gladdened the heart of Robinson. In a box directly opposite me was a young girl, seated in the third row, half hidden by an older lady who sat in the first row. The young girl evidently was not in the theater in order to be seen — as in fact in this theater one is in a great measure dispensed from the sight of these disgusting feminine exhibitions. She sat in the third row, her dress was simple and plain, almost a house dress. She was not wrapped in sable and marten but was enveloped in a big cloak, and projecting from its folds her head was graciously bowed, as the topmost bell of the lily-of-the-valley is bowed above the great enveloping leaves. When I had looked at Beckmann and let the laughter convulse my whole body, when I had sunk back in fatigue and suffered myself to be carried away by the stream of shouting and merriment, and when I stepped out of this bath and returned to myself, then my eyes sought her, and the sight of her refreshed my whole being by its friendly mildness. And when in the farce itself a more pathetic mood cropped up, then I looked at her, and her nature bestowed upon me resignation to bear the pathos, for through it all she sat with perfect self-repose, with her quiet smile of childlike wonder. Like me she came there every evening. Sometimes I fell to thinking what could have brought her, but these thoughts too remained merely sentiments which were

like feelers after her, so for an instant it seemed to me as if she might be a girl who had suffered much and now wrapped herself closely in her shawl and would have nothing more to do with the world, until the expression of her face convinced me that she was a happy child who hugged herself in her cloak in order to enjoy herself thoroughly. She did not suspect that she was seen, and still less that my eye was watching over her; this would have been a sin too against her, and the worse for me; for there is an innocence, an unconsciousness, which even the purest thought may embarrass. One does not oneself discover such a thing, but when one's good genius confides to one where such a primitive soul of retirement lies hidden, then let him not offend it or grieve its genius. If she had felt merely a presentiment of my mute gladness, half fallen in love with her, all would have been spoilt, not to be made good again even by her whole love.

I know where there dwells several leagues from Copenhagen a young girl; I know the large shady garden with the many trees and shrubs; I know where a little way off there is a bank overgrown with brushwood, from which one can peer into the garden while hidden by the thicket. I have never confided this to anyone, not even my coachman knows it, for I deceived him by alighting some distance away and walking to the left instead of to the right. So when my soul is sleepless and the sight of my couch frightens me more than an instrument of torture, more than the patient fears the operating-table, then I drive the whole night. Early in the morning I take hiding in the thicket. Then when life begins to stir, when the sun opens its eye, when the birds flutter their wings, when the fox sneaks out of its hole, when the peasant stands at his door and looks out over the meadow, when the milkmaid goes pail in hand down into the meadow, when the reaper hammers his scythe resoundingly and rejoices in this prelude which is to be the refrain of the day and of his labor, then the young girl too comes forth. Who could sleep? Who could sleep lightly so that

sleep itself would not be a heavier burden than that of the day? Who could arise from his bed as if no one had been lying upon it, so that the bed itself was cool and delicious and refreshing to behold, as if the sleeper had not rested upon it but only leaned over to put everything to rights? Who could die in such a way that even one's deathbed the very instant one is lifted from it was more inviting to behold than if a careful mother had beaten the bed and puffed it up so that the child might sleep more soundly? Then the young girl comes forth, then she walks about wonderingly (which wonders most, the girl or the trees?), then she stoops down and plucks fruit from the bushes, then she skips about lightly, then she stands still in thought. What marvellous eloquence there is in all this! Then my soul at last finds rest. Happy girl! If ever a man should win thy love, would that thou mightest make him as happy by doing everything for him as thou hast made me by doing nothing for me.

"The Talisman" was to be performed at the Kônigstater Theater. The memory of it awoke in my soul, it all stood as vividly before me as when I left the theater the last time. I hastened to the theater. There was no box to be had for me alone, not even in those numbered 5 and 6 on the left. I had to go to the right. There I encountered a society which didn't know definitely whether it should enjoy itself or be bored. Such a company one can definitely regard as boring. There were hardly any empty boxes. The young girl was not to be seen, or else she was there and I could not recognize her because she was in company. Beckmann was unable to make me laugh. I held out for half an hour and then left the theater. "There is no such thing as repetition," I thought. This made a profound impression upon me. I am not so very young, nor altogether unacquainted with life, and already long before I came to Berlin the last time I had weaned myself from the habit of counting upon uncertainties Nevertheless I still believed that the enjoyment I once had in that theater ought to be of a more durable kind, precisely for

the reason that before one could really get a sense of what life is one must have learnt to put up with being disappointed by existence in many ways, and still be able to get along — but surely with this modest expectation life must be the more secure. Might existence be even more fraudulent than a bankrupt? After all, he pays back 50 percent or 30 percent, at least he pays something. The comical is after all the least one can demand — cannot even that be repeated?

With these thoughts in my mind I went home. My writing-table was in the accustomed place. The velvet armchair still existed. But when I saw it I was so exasperated that I was near breaking it to bits — all the more because everybody in the house had gone to bed, and there was no one to take it away. What is the good of a velvet armchair when the rest of the environment doesn't correspond with it? It is as if a man were to walk naked wearing a cocked hat. When I had gone to bed without having had a single rational thought it was so light in the room that I constantly saw the velvet armchair, whether awake or in my dreams, so when I got up next morning I carried into effect my resolution and had it thrown into a storeroom.

My home had become cheerless, precisely because it was the reverse of a repetition, my mind was unfruitful, my troubled imagination was engaged in transmuting into the delights of Tantalus the memory of how richly the thoughts presented themselves on the former occasion, and this rank weed of memory strangled every thought at birth.

I went out to the coffee-house, where on the previous visit I went every day to enjoy the drink which according to the words of the poet, if it is "pure and warm and strong and not abused," can be placed alongside of that with which the poet compares it, namely, "friendship." I insist at least upon good coffee. Perhaps the coffee was just as good as before, one might almost suppose so, but I didn't like it. The sun blazed hotly upon the

window of the shop, the place was stuffy, pretty much like the air in a casserole, fit to stew in. A draft like a small trade-wind penetrated everywhere and forbad me to think of any repetition, even if an opportunity had presented itself.

That evening I went to the restaurant where I used to go on my former visit, and where, presumably by force of habit, the food agreed with me. When I went there every evening I was acquainted with it most accurately; I knew how the early guests when they were on the point of leaving greeted the fraternity they parted from, whether they put on their hats in the inner room, or in the last room, or only when they opened the door, or not till they were outside. Nothing escaped my observation. Like Proserpine I plucked a hair from every head, even the bald ones. — It was always the same, the same jokes, the same courtesies, the same expressions of comradeship; the locality in all respects the same, in short, “the same in the same.” Solomon says that “the contentions of a wife are like a continual dropping,” which would apply to this still-life. Dreadful thought! Here a repetition was possible!

The next night I was at the Kônigstater Theater. The only thing repeated was the impossibility of repetition. In the Unter den Linden the dust was insupportable, and every attempt to press in among the people and wash off the dust with a human bath was discouraging in the highest degree. However I turned and twisted, it was in vain. The little danseuse who had formerly enchanted me by her grace, which consisted so to say in a leap, had taken the leap. The blind man outside the Brandenburger Thor, my harpist (for I was surely the only one who was concerned about him) was wearing a coat of mixed gray, instead of light green which corresponded with my sad longing, for it made him look like a weeping willow. He was lost for me and won for the universal human. The beadle’s much admired

nose had turned pale. Professor A. A. wore a new pair of trousers which imparted to him an almost military air —

When this experience had been repeated for several days I became so exasperated, so tired of repetition, that I resolved to make my way home again. My discovery was of no importance, and yet it was a strange one, for I discovered that there is no such thing as repetition, and I had convinced myself of this by trying in every possible way to get it repeated.

My hope was set upon my home. Justinus Kerner tells somewhere of a man who was tired of his home, that he had his horse saddled in order to ride forth into the wide world. When he had gone a little distance his horse threw him. This turn of events was decisive for him, for when he turned to mount his horse his eye lit again upon the home he wished to leave, and he looked, and behold! it was so beautiful that he at once turned back. In my home I could reckon with tolerable certainty upon finding everything ready for repetition. I have always had a great distrust of upheavals, indeed I go so far that for this reason I even hate any sort of cleaning, and above all household scrubbing. So I had left the severest instructions to have my conservative principles maintained even in my absence. But what happens! My faithful servant held a different opinion. He reckoned that if he commenced the commotion soon after my departure, it surely would have ceased before my return, and he was surely man enough to put back everything punctually in its place. I arrive, I ring the doorbell, my servant opens. That was a momentous moment. My servant became as white as a corpse, and through the half-opened door I saw the most dreadful sight: everything was turned upside down. I was petrified. My servant in his consternation did not know what to do, his evil conscience smote him, and he slammed the door in my face. That was too much, my distress had reached its climax, I might expect the worst, to be taken for a ghost, like

Commerzienrat Grünmeyer. I perceived that there is no such thing as repetition, and my earlier view of life triumphed.

How ashamed I am of myself that I who had been so cavalier with that young man have now got just as far, indeed it seems to me as though I were that young man, as though my big words, which now I would not repeat for any price, were only a dream from which I awakened to let life take back again insistently and perfidiously all that it gave, without giving a repetition. And is it not true that the older one gets, the more deceptive life proves to be, that the shrewder one becomes and the more ways one learns to help oneself, the worse scrapes one gets into. I remember once seeing on the street a nursemaid pushing a perambulator in which there were two children. One of them was hardly a year old, had fallen asleep and showed no sign of life. The other was a little girl of about two years, stout and chubby and with short arms, quite like a diminutive madame. She had shoved herself forward in the baby-carriage till she occupied by good measure two-thirds of the space, and the smaller child lay by her side as if it were a bag my lady had brought with her. With an egoism worthy of admiration she did not deign to be concerned about anybody but herself or about any human affairs, if only she could procure a good place. Then came a runaway cart, the baby-carriage was in evident danger, people came running up, by a quick movement the nurse steered the carriage into a safe harbor; everybody present was alarmed, including myself. Through all this the little madame sat perfectly tranquil, and without changing her expression continued to pick her nose. She thought, presumably, “What has that to do with me? It’s the nurse’s affair.” Such heroism one seeks in vain among grownup people.

The older one grows and the more understanding of life one acquires, and taste for the agreeable and ability to relish it, in short, the more competent one becomes, the less one is content. Content — entirely and

absolutely and in every way content — one never becomes, and to be tolerably content is not worth the trouble, so it is better to be entirely discontented. Everyone who has thoroughly considered the matter will agree with me that it is never granted to a man in his whole life, even for so much as for half an hour, to be absolutely content in all imaginable ways. That for this more is required than having food and clothing, I surely do not need to say.

Once I was very close to it. I got up in the morning feeling uncommonly well. This sense of well-being increased out of proportion to all analogy during the forenoon. Precisely at one o'clock I was at the highest peak and surmised the dizzy maximum which is not indicated on any scale of well-being, not even on the poetical thermometer. The body had lost all its earthly heaviness, it was as though I had no body, just for the reason that every function enjoyed its completest satisfaction, every nerve tingled with delight on its own account and on account of the whole, while every pulsation, as a disquietude in the organism, only suggested and reported the sensuous delight of the instant. My gait became a glide, not like the flight of a bird that cleaves the air and leaves the earth behind, but like the billows of the wind over a field of grain, like the yearning bliss of the cradling waves of the sea, like the dreamy gliding of the clouds. My very being was transparent, like the depths of the sea, like the self-contented silence of the night, like the quiet monologue of midday. Every feeling of my soul composed itself to rest with melodious resonance. Every thought proffered itself freely, every thought proffered itself with festal gladness and solemnity, the silliest conceit not less than the richest idea. Every impression was surmised before it arrived and was awakened within me. The whole of existence seemed to be as it were in love with me, and everything vibrated in preordained *rapport* with my being.

In me all was ominous, and everything was enigmatically transfigured in my microcosmic bliss, which was able to transform into its own likeness all things, even the observations which were most disagreeable and tiresome, even disgusting sights and the most fatal collisions. When precisely at one o'clock I was at the highest peak, where I surmised the ultimate attainment, something suddenly began to chafe one of my eyes, whether it was an eyelash, a mote, a bit of dust, I do not know; but this I know, that in that selfsame instant I toppled down almost into the abyss of despair — a thing which everyone will understand who has been so high up as I was, and when he was at that point has been engaged with the generic question how nearly absolute contentment can be attained. Since that time I have given up every hope of ever feeling myself content absolutely and in all ways, have given up the hope I once cherished, not indeed of being absolutely content at all times, but at least at particular instants, even if these units of instants were not more numerous than, as Shakespeare says, "a tapster's arithmetic was capable of summing up."

I had got so far as to entertain this modest hope before I learned to know that young man. As soon as I asked myself, or somebody raised a question, about perfect contentment, though it be but for half an hour, I always "renounced" the play. Then it was that time and again I conceived the idea of repetition and grew enthusiastic about it — thereby becoming again a victim of my zeal for principles. For I am thoroughly convinced that, if I had not taken that journey for the express purpose of assuring myself of the possibility of repetition, I should have diverted myself immensely on finding everything the same. What a pity that I cannot keep to the ordinary paths, that I will have principles, that I cannot go clad like other men, that I will walk in stiff boots! Are not all orators, both the religious and the secular, both sea captains and undertakers, both heroes and cowards — are they not all in agreement that life is a stream? How then can one get so

foolish an idea as that of repetition, and, still more foolishly, erect it into a principle? My young friend thought, “Oh, well, let it go,” and therewith he was better off than if he had begun with repetition. For with that he would likely have got his lady again, as did the lover in the ballad who wanted repetition — he would have got her again as a nun, with hair cut short and with blanched lips. He wanted repetition, therefore he got it, and repetition killed him.

> Das Nönnlein kam gegangen In einem schneeweissen Kleid;
> Ihr Här’l war abgeschnitten, Ihr roter Mund war bleich.
>
> Der Knab, er setzt sich nieder, Er sass auf einem Stein; —
> Er weint die hellen Tränen, Brach ihm sein Herz entzwei.
> [Herder, Volkslieder, Leipzig 1825, Vol. I, p. 57.]

Hail to the post-horn! That is my instrument — for many reasons, and principally for this, that one never can be sure of eliciting from this instrument the same note. And he who puts it to his mouth and deposits his wisdom therein can never be guilty of repetition; and he who instead of making answer to his friend holds out to him a post-horn with a polite request to use it, though he says nothing, has explained all. This is my symbol. As the ascetics of old placed a skull upon the table and by the contemplation of it directed their meditations, so shall the post-horn upon my table always remind me of what the significance of life really is. Hail to the post-horn! But travel is not worth the pains; for one need not budge from the spot in order to be convinced that there is no repetition. No, he sits tranquilly in his room; for if all is vanity and passes swiftly away, he travels more rapidly than by railway, notwithstanding that he himself is sitting still. Everything shall remind me of this, my servant shall wear the livery of a postillion, and I myself will not drive to a dinner party except in a diligence. Farewell, farewell, thou rich hope of youth! Why dost thou hasten so

impetuously? What thou art chasing does not exist, and thou thyself just as little. Farewell, thou manly strength! Why dost, thou paw the ground so fiercely? That on which thou treadest is a vain imagination. Farewell, thou victorious purpose! Thou art near enough to the goal, for thou canst not take thy works with thee without turning back, and that thou canst not do. Farewell, farewell delight of the forest! When I desired to see thee thou wast withered. Ride on thou fleeting river! Thou alone dost know what thou wilt, thou who hast only the desire to run and lose thyself in the sea, which never becomes full. Go on thou spectacle upon the stage of life, which no one calls a comedy, no one a tragedy, because no one knows the end! Thou theater of existence where life is not given back to one any more than money is! Why did no one ever return from the dead? Because life does not know how to captivate as death does, because life does not possess the power of persuasion which death possesses. Yea, death possesses marvellous powers of persuasion; if only one will not contradict it but will let it have its say, then it persuades in an instant, so that never has anyone had a word to object or longed for the eloquence of life. O death, strong is thy power of persuasion, and next to thee no one is able to talk so beautifully as the man whose eloquence procured him the name of *πεισιθάνατος,* because with the power of eloquence he talked of thee.

PART SECOND.

SOME TIME PASSED. My servant, like a domestic Eve, had made reparation for his earlier offense. A monotonous and uniform order was restored in my whole household economy. Everything which was not able to move stood in its precise place, and what was able to go went its accustomed way — my parlor clock, my servant, and myself who with measured tread walked back and forth across the floor. For though I had convinced myself that no such thing as repetition exists, yet it is a sure truth that by firmness of purpose and by dulling one's talent for observation one can attain a uniformity which has a far more anesthetizing effect than the most capricious diversion, and which with time becomes stronger and stronger, like a formula of incantation. In excavating Herculaneum and Pompei they found everything in place, just as the respective owners had left it. If I had lived in those days, the antiquarians would perhaps have encountered with amazement a man who walked with measured tread back and forth across the floor. In order to maintain this established and unchangeable order, I employed every means, I even went at certain times like the Emperor Domitian through the apartment with a flyswatter, pursuing every revolutionary fly. On the other hand, I preserved three or more flies which at definite times buzzed in the center of the room. Thus I lived, forgetting the world, as I thought, and by the world forgotten, when one day I received a letter from my young friend. This was followed by more, always with an interval of about a month, though the letters furnished no indication from which I could infer the distance of his place of abode. He himself does not wish to clarify anything, and it might well be a mystification he cautiously calculated by allowing the intervals between letters to vary from about five weeks to barely three. He "did not wish to

put me to the trouble of carrying on a correspondence," and even if I were willing to answer his letter or at least send a reply, he does not wish to receive anything of the sort — he only desires to unburden himself.

I perceive from his letter (what I knew beforehand) that like every melancholy nature he is rather touchy; and in spite of his irritability, or rather because of it, he is in constant contradiction with himself. He wishes me to be his confidant, and yet he does not wish it, indeed it alarms him to reflect that I am; he feels safe with my so-called superiority, and yet it is disagreeable to him; he confides in me, and yet he desires no reply, indeed does not want to see me; he requires of me silence inviolable, "by all that is holy," and yet he is almost furious at the thought that I possess this power of keeping silent. The fact that I am his confidant no one must know, not a soul, hence he himself is unwilling to know' it, and I must not know it. In order to explain this confusion to our mutual satisfaction and gratification he is so kind as to hint in a polite way that he really regards me as mentally deranged. How could I have courage to express any opinion about the audacity of this interpretation of my conduct? That in fact would be furnishing further proof of the correctness of the accusation, so it seems to me; whereas abstention from any reaction might well appear in his eyes a new indication of my ataraxia and weakness of mind, which is incapable of being affected by anything or of taking offense. So this is the thanks one gets for educating oneself daily and through a course of years to have only an ideal interest in people and to have this interest if possible in everyone in whom the idea is in motion! Lately I sought to be helpful to the idea in him, and now I reap the reward, namely, that I am to be and not to be both substantial existence and nothing, just as he pleases, and am not to enjoy the least recognition as being the former and so helping him again out of his self-contradiction. If he were to reflect how great an indirect recognition of me is implied in such a *Zumuthung,* he presumably would again be furious.

To be his confidant is more difficult than the most difficult of tasks, and he entirely forgets that by a single word, for example, by declining to receive his letters, I could mortify him very deeply. Not only was he punished who betrayed the Eleusinian Mysteries, but also the man who insulted this institution by not wanting to be initiated. The latter case, according to the report of a Greek writer, was that of Demonax, who nevertheless got out of the scrape with a whole skin by his clever defense. My position as confidant is even more critical, for he has even more maidenly modesty with respect to his mysteries, he even gets mad when I do what he so insistently requires — when I keep silent.

If he thinks, however, that I have entirely forgotten him, he again does me injustice. Upon his sudden disappearance I really was afraid that he had laid violent hands upon himself. But such an occurrence does not usually remain hid for a long time, and therefore, since I neither heard nor read anything about it, I concluded that he must be alive, wherever he might be concealed. The girl whom he left in the lurch knew nothing whatever. One day he failed to put in an appearance and he let her hear nothing from him. Her transition to pain was not sudden; for it was only gradually the apprehensive presentiment dawned upon her, and only gradually did the pain become aware of itself, with the consequence that she slumbered gently into a dreamy obscurity as to what had occurred and what it might mean. For me the girl was new material for observation. My friend was not one of those who know how to torture everything out of the loved one and then cast her off. On the contrary, at the time of his disappearance she was in the best condition one could wish, in sound health, buxom, enriched by his whole poetical revenue, strongly nourished by the precious heart-stimulant of poetic illusion. It is seldom one finds a deserted maiden in this condition. When I saw her a few days after his disappearance she was still as nimble as a fish just caught. Generally such a girl is as starved as a fish in

a well. I was convinced upon my word that she must be alive, and I was heartily glad to see that she had not grasped at the desperate expedient of giving herself out as dead. It is incredible how much confusion can come about in the domain of the erotic if one of the parties is pleased to want to die of sorrow, or to want to die so as to escape from the whole thing. According to her own solemn declaration a girl would die of sorrow over the fact that her lover was a deceiver. But, behold, he was not a deceiver, and his intentions were perhaps better than she comprehended. What otherwise he might have done in the fullness of time, he could not now resolve to do, simply because she had allowed herself to make this asseveration, because, as he put it, she had employed an oratorical trick upon him, or in any case had said what a girl ought never to say, whether she believed he really was a deceiver (for then she ought to be too proud), or whether she still had faith in him (for then she ought to perceive that she is doing him a monstrous injustice). For a man to want to be dead in order to escape from the whole thing is the most wretched expedient that can be imagined and implies the most injurious offense against a girl. She believes he is dead, she wears mourning, she weeps and laments the deceased in all honesty. She must almost conceive disgust of her own feelings when later she discovers that he is alive and has not had the remotest thought of dying. Or if it is only in another life she first were to conceive a suspicion, not that he was actually dead (for that would then be incontrovertible), but that at the time in question he was dead, when he said he would die and when she sorrowed. Such a situation would be a theme for an apocalyptic writer who had understood his Aristophanes (I mean in Greek, and I do not mean the simple men who are advanced to the doctorate like the *doctores cerei* of the Middle Ages) and knew his Lucian. One might maintain the mistaken identity for a long time, for dead he was and dead he remained. The

sorrowing girl would then awaken to begin where she left off, until she discovered that there was a little qualifying clause.

Upon the reception of his letter, recollections were vividly revived in my soul, and it was by no means with cold indifference I followed the sequel of his story. When in the course of the letter I came to the not altogether inept declaration that I was mentally deranged, it at once occurred to me to exclaim, “Now he knows my most intimate secret, which is guarded by a jealousy with more than a hundred eyes.” When I was personally in touch with him it did not escape my observation that with the utmost caution, before coming out with a word of confidence, he politely insinuated the remark that I was “queer.” Well, that’s what an observer must be prepared for. He must know how to give some sort of guarantee to the person who comes to confess. A girl in making her confession always requires a positive guarantee, a male requires a negative one. The reason for this is to be found in womanly devotion and humility, and in manly pride and self-sufficiency. What a comfort it is when the person from whom one seeks counsel and illumination is...mentally deranged! So one does not need to feel ashamed. To talk to such a person is in fact like talking...to a tree, “a thing one does simply for curiosity,” as one can say if anyone were to inquire about it. An observer must know how to make himself light — otherwise no one will confide in him. Above all he must take care not to be ethically severe or to represent himself as the morally proper man. “He’s a depraved man,” one says, “he’s been in the thick of it and had some mad adventures — *ergo* I can well confide in him, seeing that I am so much better.” Well, that’s all right for me; I demand nothing of men except the content of their conscious minds. That I weigh, and if it is heavy enough, no price is too high for me to pay.

Merely by reading the letter cursorily it became clear to me that his love affair had left a much deeper impression than I had conjectured. He must

therefore have concealed from me some of his sentiments; and that is natural, for at that time I was only “queer,” now I am “mentally deranged,” and that is *etwas anders*. If that’s how it stands, there is nothing left for him but to make a religious movement. So it is that love leads a person further and further on. What I so often have verified, I verify in this instance once again, that existence is after all infinitely profound, and its guiding power knows how to intrigue one better than all the poets rolled into one. In view of the disposition and the natural gifts of the young man I would have wagered that he would not be caught in love’s net. For in this respect there are exceptions which cannot be declined in accordance with the case forms of the regular declensions. He had an unusually fine intelligence, distinguished especially by imagination. So soon as his creative activity was awakened he had enough to occupy him for his whole life, especially if he rightly understood himself and confined himself to the snug domestic delight of intellectual occupations and the enjoyment of imagination as a pastime, which is the most perfect surrogate for love, is far from entailing love’s troubles and fatalities, and yet bears an express likeness to the most beautiful features of love’s bliss. Such a nature has no need of woman-love — a situation which I am inclined to explain by the notion that in a previous existence he was a woman and retains a recollection of this now that he has become a man. Falling in love with a girl merely disturbs such a nature and is always a detriment to his task, for he almost is able to assume her rôle along with his own. This is disagreeable both to him and to her. Then on the other hand he has a very melancholy nature. As the first characteristic would restrain him from approaching any girl too nearly, so too would the second be his security if any cunning beauty should take it into her head to aspire after him. A profound melancholy in the sympathetic style is and will always be a complete humiliation to all feminine art. If a girl were to succeed in drawing him to her — the very instant she was prematurely

exulting over her triumph it would occur to him to say to himself, “Art thou not committing a sin and an injustice against her in abandoning thyself to these sentiments? Wilt thou not be merely a stumbling-block to her?” — and then good night to all feminine intrigues. Now the situation is altered in a strange way; he has gone over to her side; he would be only too willing to perceive all the excellent qualities she possesses, would know how to present them better perhaps than she could, and to admire them more than she perhaps demands — but further than that she will never get him to go.

I had never expected that he might be permanently caught in a love affair. Yet existence is cunning. What makes him a captive is not the loveliness of the girl but regret that he has done her a wrong by upsetting her life. He had approached her ill-advisedly, he convinces himself that love cannot attain its realization in marriage, he can be happy without her (to the extent that he is able to be happy), especially with this new perquisite, a literary talent — so he breaks off; but now he cannot forget that he has done a wrong — just as if it were a wrong to break off when something cannot be carried through. In case he was unbiased, and in case it was said, “Here is the girl. Wilt thou approach her? Wilt thou fall in love?” it is pretty certain that he would say, “Not for the whole world. I once learned what comes of it. Such a thing one never forgets.” And so indeed it is the question ought to be put, if he would not deceive himself. For him it is still a sure thing that the realization of his love is impossible. So he has come to the borders of the marvellous, and if after all this it is to come about, it must come about by virtue of the absurd. Does he not reflect at all upon the difficulties? Or with his clever pate is he perhaps only too prolific in inventions? Does he really love the girl? Or here again is she only the occasion which prompts him? Again it indubitably is not possession in the strictest sense which concerns him, or the content which develops from this situation; what concerns him is return, conceived in a purely formal sense. Though she

were to die the day after, it would not any more disturb him, he would not feel the loss, for his nature would be at rest. The discord into which he has been thrown by contact with her would be resolved by the fact that he had actually returned to her. So again the girl is not a reality but a reflection of the movements within him and their exciting cause. The girl has a prodigious importance, he actually will never be able to forget her, but what gives her importance is not herself but her relation to him. She is as it were the boundary of his being. But such a relation is not erotic. Religiously speaking, one might say that it was as if God Himself employed this girl to capture him; and yet the girl herself is not a reality but is like the artificial flies one sleaves upon hooks. I am entirely convinced that he is not in the least acquainted with the girl, notwithstanding he has been engaged to her and since that time she has never been out of his thoughts. She is the girl — then a period. Whether, speaking more concretely, she is this or that, whether she is charming, lovable, faithful, the sacrificial love for which one ventures everything and sets heaven and earth in commotion — upon this he does not reflect. If one were to vouch for the joy and the bliss he might expect in a truly erotic relationship, he presumably would not have a word to say. What concerns him is attained the very instant it proves possible to redeem his honor and regain his pride. As though it were not a matter of honor to defy such childish apprehensions. He anticipates perhaps that his whole personality would be ruined; but that is nothing if only he can avenge himself as it were upon existence which has mocked him by making him guilty when he was innocent, by making his attachment to life at this point meaningless, so that he must put up with it that every real lover sees in him a deceiver. Would not that be a burden to bear! However, perhaps I do not entirely understand him, perhaps he is concealing something, perhaps he is truly in love after all. So likely the end of the story will be that he puts me to death in order to confide in me his most holy secret. One can see that the

position of an observer is a dangerous one. Nevertheless I could wish, merely for the sake of my interest as a psychologist, I might get the girl out of the way for an instant, get him to believe she was married; I wager I should get a different explanation; for his sympathy is so melancholy that I believe, he imagines for her sake he is in love with her.

The problem which baffles him is neither more nor less than repetition. He is quite justified in not seeking light upon this problem either from modern philosophy or from the Greek; for the Greeks perform the opposite movement, and in this case a Greek would prefer to recollect, unless his conscience were to frighten him, and modern philosophy makes no movement, generally it only makes a fuss, and what movement it makes is always within immanence, whereas repetition is always a transcendence. It is lucky that the young man does not seek any enlightenment from me, for I have abandoned my theory, I am adrift. Repetition is too transcendent for me also. I can circumnavigate myself, but I cannot erect myself above myself, I cannot find the Archimedean point. It is fortunate then that my friend is not seeking enlightenment from any world-renowned philosopher or from any *professor publicus ordinarius;* he has recourse to an unofficial thinker, a private practitioner, who once was in possession of worldly grandeur but now has retired from public life — in other words, he takes refuge in Job, who does not cut a figure in a university chair and with reassuring gestures vouch for the truth of his thesis, but who sits among the ashes and scrapes himself with a potsherd, and without interrupting this manual labor lets fall casual hints and remarks. Here he thinks he has found what he sought, and in this little circle of Job and the wife along with three friends the truth, as he thinks, seems more glorious and joyful and true than in a Greek symposium.

Even if he still were to desire my guidance, he would be seeking in vain. A religious movement I am unable to make, it is contrary to my nature. I am

not inclined for this reason to deny the reality of such a thing, or to deny that one can learn a great deal from a young man. If he succeeds, he will have no admirer more zealous than I. If he succeeds, he will then be freed from all the touchiness he now shows in his relation to me. Only I cannot deny that the more I think about the case the more misgiving I feel about the girl. I suspect that in one way or another she has wished to make a captive of him by his melancholy. In that case I should not like to be in her place. It will come to a bad ending. Existence always avenges such behavior with the greatest severity.

August 15

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

It will perhaps surprise you now to receive suddenly a letter from one who for you had long been dead and as good as forgotten, or forgotten and as good as dead. More than that feeling of surprise I dare not count upon. I picture to myself that the instant you receive this letter you will take out as it were the history of my case and say, “Just so, this was the man with, the unhappy love affair. Where was it we left off? O yes, and these would naturally be the symptoms.” Your calmness is really terrible! When I think of it my blood boils, and yet I am unable to break away; you enthrall me by a strange power. In talking with you I experience an indescribable sense of relief, for it is as if one were talking with oneself or with an idea. But when one has talked oneself out and found solace in the outpouring...and then beholds your changeless expression and reflects that this is really a human being who stands there, a prodigiously shrewd man one has been talking to, then one becomes thoroughly alarmed. Good Lord! an afflicted man is always a bit jealous of his sorrow. It is not just in anybody he is willing to confide, he demands silence. One can be sure enough of that in your case. And yet when one has consoled oneself with this reflection one again becomes alarmed, for this silence of yours is as silent as the grave and presumably has in its keeping many similar depositions. You know all about everything, never get things mixed up, are able the next second to take out another secret and begin where you left off. Then one regrets having confided in you. Good Lord! an afflicted man is always a bit jealous of his sorrow. When he has initiated someone into the secret of his sorrow he wants to have that person feel the whole weight and importance of it. You do not disappoint this expectation, for you

comprehend the finest nuance better than one does oneself. But the next instant I am in despair at the superiority you display in knowing everything and being unacquainted with nothing. If I were an autocratic ruler of all mankind, God help you! I would shut you up with me in a cage, so that you might belong to me alone, and then probably. I would prepare for myself the most painful anguish by seeing you daily. You possess a demoniac power which is capable of tempting a man to be willing to venture everything, to want to have strength which ordinarily he does not possess, which ordinarily he does not desire to have, but only so long as you are looking at him, to want to seem to be what he is not, merely to purchase that approving smile which is an indescribable reward. I should like to see you the whole day and listen to you the whole night, and yet when it comes to acting I would not do it at any price in your presence. By one look you would confound everything. Face to face with you I have not the courage to admit my weakness; if once I had done that I should have been the most cowardly man alive, because it would seem to me then that I had lost everything. So you enthrall me by an indescribable power, and this same power alarms me. So I admire you, and yet at times it seems to me as if you were deranged. Or is it not a sort of mental derangement to have subjected every passion, every emotion of the heart, every feeling, to this cold disciple of reflection? Is it not mental derangement to be so normal, to be a mere idea, not a human being, not like the rest of us, pliant and yielding, capable of being lost and of losing ourselves? Is it not mental derangement to be always awake, always clearly conscious, never obscure and dreamy? At this instant I dare not see you, and yet I cannot do without you. Hence I am writing, and I beg you insistently not to put yourself to the trouble of sending me a reply. As a precaution this letter bears no address. This is my desire, and in this confidence it does me good to write to you, thus I am secure and happy with you.

Your plan was capital, indeed peerless. Even yet at certain moments I grasp like a child at the heroic shape you once held up to my admiring gaze with the declaration that it was my future destiny, the heroic shape which was to have made me a hero if I had had the strength to assume it. At that time it carried me away with all the power of illusion into a complete imaginative intoxication. Merely to think of cutting off the remainder of my life for the sake of one only girl! To make oneself a scoundrel, a deceiver, simply to show at how high a price one held her — for one does not sacrifice one's honor for a trifle! To brand myself, to throw away my life! To assume the rôle of vengeance and carry it out against myself, in a far more serious way than man's empty gossip can do it! Thus to be a hero, not in the eyes of the world, but within oneself, to have no plea to present before a human tribunal, but living immured within one's own personality to be one's own witness, one's own judge, one's own prosecutor, to be in oneself the one and only! To be exposed for the remainder of one's life to the thoughts which might well be the consequence of such a step, whereby, humanly speaking, one would in a way be giving up one's reason! To do all this for the sake of a girl! And if in this way the wrong might be redressed, then to have paid the girl, as you remarked, the most chivalrous and erotic compliment, surpassing every knightly exploit, even the most romantic, precisely for the fact that one did it all by oneself. This utterance of yours made a profound impression upon me. Of course it was not uttered with fanatical enthusiasm — imagine you fanatical! It was said with calm and cold common sense, with official knowledge, as if with a view to this case alone you had read through all the tales of knightly adventure. What it must be for a thinker to discover a new category, that it was for me to make a discovery in the domain of the erotic.

Unfortunately, however, I was not the artist capable of sustaining this role, nor had I the endurance for it. Fortunately I saw you only in remote

places and rarely. If I could have had you by my side, if you could have been sitting in the room, even if it were in a corner, reading or writing, employed about irrelevant things, and yet, as I well knew, alertly attentive to everything — in that case, I believe, I would have made a beginning at it. If I had done so, it would have been dreadful. Or is it not dreadful with cold composure, day after day, to bewitch the woman you love into a falsehood? And suppose she had grasped at expedients which were within her power — feminine adjurations! Suppose she had besought me with tears, adjured me by my honor, by my conscience, by my eternal salvation, my peace in life and in death, my peace here and hereafter! I shudder at the thought of it.

I have not forgotten the particular suggestions you threw out, while I for the most part did not venture to oppose you and was only too much enchanted. You remarked that "in case a girl is justified in employing these expedients, one should let them have their due effect; what is more, one ought to assist her in employing them. One ought to be chivalrous enough toward a girl not only to be oneself but to be at the same time prosecutor on her side. If she is not justified, that is of no account, one is to let it slide off." That is true, absolutely and entirely true, but such good sense as this I do not possess. "What a foolish contradiction," you said, "one often meets with in men's cowardice and courage. A man is afraid of seeing the dreadful, but has courage to do it. You forsook the girl — that is the dreadful thing. You have courage for that, but to see her grow pale, to count her tears, to be witness to her distress, for this you have not courage. And yet in fact this is nothing in comparison with the other. If you know what you will, and why and how far, then you ought to behold it, ought to show respect for every argument, and not steal away from anything in the hope that your imagination is duller than reality. Thereby you deceive yourself, for when the time comes your vivid imagination, being compelled to picture her distress, will erect itself more dreadfully than if you had seen it and had

assisted her to make it as anguishing for you and as horrible as possible." That is true, every word is true, but it is a truth which might be true if the world were dead, so cold it is, so rigidly consistent. It does not convince me, it does not move me. I am weak, I admit; I was weak, I shall never become strong or intrepid. But take everything into consideration, put yourself in my place, and do not forget that you really love her as I loved her. I am convinced you would triumph, you would prevail, you would vanquish all horrors, you would befool her with your imposture. What would be the result? In case the most fortunate end did not come about, that the moment you were through with the exertion your hair became gray, and your soul an hour later had breathed its last — then, as your plan implied, this imposture must be continued. In that you would succeed, I am convinced. But are you not afraid of losing your mind? Are you not afraid of falling into that terrible passion they call contempt of mankind? To be so thoroughly in the right, to be faithful, and yet make oneself out to be a scoundrel, and then in one's deceit to scorn all the paltriness which often, I admit, puts on airs, but then along with that to mock also the better things in the world. What head could stand all this? Do you not believe it would often be necessary to get up at night and drink a glass of cold water or sit on the edge of the bed and think things over? Suppose I had begun it — it would have been impossible to persevere. I chose another expedient: left Copenhagen as quietly as possible and went to Stockholm. According to your plan this would have been incorrect. I ought to have gone openly. Imagine that she was standing on the dock. Imagine that my eye lit upon her only at the second when the machinery was set in motion! I believe I should have lost my mind. I do not doubt that you would have had strength to remain tranquil. If it had been necessary, and if you knew that she would appear on the dock, you would have taken the little seamstress with you and made the journey with her. If it had been necessary, you not only would

have bribed a girl but (merely to be of service to the loved one) you would have seduced a girl, actually seduced her, lock, stock and barrel, if need were. But suppose you were suddenly to wake up in the night and not recognize yourself, were to confound yourself with that figure you used for your pious fraud. For I must admit that you certainly did not mean that one should begin such a thing light-mindedly; indeed you once let fall a word to the effect that this method never could be absolutely necessary unless the girl herself had been to blame, whether it was that she had been so thoughtless as not to take notice of a reminder of sympathy, or selfish enough to make no account of it. But in this case precisely — would there not come an instant when she would understand what she ought to have done, and would be in despair at the consequences of leaving it undone — which consequences, however, were due not so much to her obduracy as to the whole personality of the other party? Would it not have been the case with her as it was with me? She would not have surmised, not have dreamt, what forces she was setting in motion, what passions she let loose, and then she would have been guilty of all and yet innocent. Would not this method be too severe for her? If in these circumstances I were to do anything, I should choose to scold, to become red in the face. But this silent objective condemnation!

No! No! No! I could not, I cannot, I will not — not for anything would I do it. No! No! No! I could fall into despair over these letters, which coldly and like idle loungers stand side by side, and the one “No” says no more than the other. You should hear the passion within me modulate them. Would that I stood beside you, and would that with my last “No” I could tear myself away from you, like Don Juan from the Commandant, whose hand was not colder than this sound common sense with which you irresistibly draw me to you. And yet if I were standing before you, I likely

would hardly utter more than one “No,” for before I got further you likely would burst out with the cold reply, “Yes! yes!”

What I did was something very mediocre and bungling. Well, you can smile at me. When a swimmer who is accustomed to spring from the ship’s mast and to turn a somersault before reaching the water — when he challenges another to follow his example, and the other goes instead to the ship’s ladder, sticks out one foot, then the other, and thereupon lets himself plump into the water — why, then he doesn’t need to know how the first one did it. One day I failed to put in an appearance, and without having said a word to her I went aboard the steamboat for Stockholm. I fled away, concealing myself from everybody. God in heaven help her to find an explanation for herself! Have you seen her? — the girl I never mention by name, whose name I am not man enough to write, for my hand would shake with terror. Have you seen her? Is she pale, or perhaps dead, does she sorrow, has she forged an explanation which comforts her, is her gait still light, or is her head bowed and her figure despondent? Great God! my imagination can furnish me with everything. Are her lips blanched? — those lips which I admired, though I only took the liberty of kissing her hand. Is she moody and pensive who was as blissful as a child? Write me, I beseech you. No, do not write. I want no letter from you, nor to hear anything about her. I believe nothing, not a single soul, not even her. Though she stood before me bodily, though she were more cheerful than ever, I should not be joyful, I should not believe her, I should believe it was a deceit to mock me or to comfort me. Have you seen her? No! I hope you have not taken the liberty of seeing her or of intermeddling in my love affair. If I should get word of that! When a girl becomes unhappy there come at once all those hungry monsters who wish to sate their psychological hunger and thirst or to write novels. If I could only spring out and at least keep these blowflies away from the fruit which was sweeter to

me than all else, the most delicate, smoother to look upon than a peach when in its happiest moment it adorns itself gloriously with silk and velvet.

What am I doing now? I begin all over again from the beginning, and then from the wrong end. I shun every outward reminder of the whole thing, yet my soul, day and night, waking and sleeping, is incessantly employed with it. Her name I never utter, and I give thanks to fate that through a misunderstanding I have acquired a false name. A name, my name — that properly belongs to her. Would that I might be rid of it. My own name is enough to remind me of everything, and the whole of existence, it seems to me, contains only allusions to this past. The day before my departure I read in the *Advertiser*, "Sixteen yards of heavy black silk for sale on account of a change of purpose." What could have been the first purpose? Perhaps a bridal dress! What a pity I cannot offer in a newspaper my name for sale "on account of a change of purpose!" If a mighty spirit were to take away from me my name and were to offer it back glittering with immortal honors, I would cast it away, far away, and would ask like a beggar for the most insignificant name, the most meaningless, to be called No. 14 like the Blue Coat boys. What good to me is a name which is not mine, what good a glorious name, though it were mine?

> For what is the flattering voice of fame
> Compared with love's sigh from a maiden's breast?"

What am I doing now? I go to sleep by day and lie awake at night. I am diligent and industrious, a model of domesticity and household thrift. I wet the finger, I tread the pedal, I stop the wheel, I set the spindle whirling — I spin. But when at night I have to put the spinning-wheel away...there was none — and where the yarn has gone no one knows but my cat. I am restless and nimble, but what comes of it all? He who tramples the peat accomplishes miracles compared with me. In short, if you wish to

understand, if you wish to have a conception of my fruitless labour, then understand the poet's words spiritually, applying them to my thoughts — that is all I have to say:

> Die Wolken treiben hin und her,
> Sie sind so matt, sie sind so schwer;
> Da stürzen rauschend sie herab,
> Der Schoss der Erde wird ihr Grab.

More I need not say to you, or better, I should rather have need of you in order to say more, in order to express what my fumbling thought can only crazily put together.

If I were to tell you everything in detail, my letter would be endlessly long, as long at least as a bad year, and as the times of which it is written, "I have no pleasure in them." I have, however, the advantage that I can break off anywhere, just as any instant I can cut the thread I myself am spinning.

And now, God keep you. The man who believes in existence is well insured, he will attain everything...just as surely as a man who to hide his feelings when he prays holds before his face a hat without a crown.

My dear Sir,

I have the honor, etc.

— yes, whether I will or no,

I nevertheless remain,

YOUR DEVOTED NAMELESS FRIEND.

September 19

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

Job! Job! Job! Job! Didst thou indeed utter nothing but these beautiful words, “The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord”? Didst thou say nothing more? In all thy distress didst thou merely continue to repeat these words? Why wast thou silent for seven days and nights? What went on in thy soul? When the whole world fell to pieces above thy head and lay in potsherds around thee, didst thou at once possess this superhuman composure, didst thou at once have love’s interpretation and the frankheartedness of confidence and faith? Is thy door then closed against the afflicted man, can he expect from thee no other relief than that pitiable consolation which worldly wisdom offers by reciting a paragraph about the perfection of life? Hast thou nothing more to say? Dost thou not dare to say more than what the false comforters laconically mete out to the individual, what the false comforters, rigid as a master of ceremony, prescribe to the individual, that in the hour of distress it is seemly to say, “The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord” — neither more nor less, just as one says “Prosit” when a person sneezes! No, thou who in the ripeness of thy days wast a sword for the oppressed, a cudgel to protect the old, a staff for the decrepit, thou didst not fail men when all was riven assunder — then thou wast a mouth for the afflicted, and a cry for the contrite, and a shriek for the anguished, and an assuagement for all who were rendered dumb by torments, a faithful witness to the distress and grief a heart can harbor, a trustworthy advocate who dared to complain “in anguish of spirit” and to contend with God. Why do people conceal this? Woe to him who devours the widow and the

fatherless and defrauds them of their inheritance, but woe also to him who would slyly defraud the afflicted of the momentary consolation of relieving the oppression of his heart and “contending with God.” Or in our time is godly fear so great that the afflicted man does not need what was customary in those old days? Does one perhaps not dare to complain before God? Is it now godly fear that has become greater, or fear and cowardice? Nowadays people are of the opinion that die natural expression of sorrow, the desperate language of passion, must be left to poets, who as attorneys in a lower court plead the sufferer’s cause before the tribunal of human compassion. Further than this no one ventures to go. Speak therefore, O Job of imperishable memory! Rehearse everything thou didst say, thou mighty advocate who dost confront the highest tribunal no more daunted than a roaring lion! There is pith in thy speech, in thy heart there is godly fear, even when thou dost complain, when thou wouldst justify thy despair against thy friends who rise up like robbers to assault thee with their speeches, and even when incited by thy friends thou dost tread their wisdom under foot and despise their defense of the Lord, accounting it the finite shrewdness of a veteran courtier or a worldly-wise minister of state. Thee I have need of, a man who knows how to complain aloud, so that his complaint echoes in heaven where God confers with Satan in devising schemes against a man.

Complain! The Lord is not afraid, He is well able to defend Himself, but how might He be able to speak in His defense if no one ventures to complain as it is seemly for a man to do? Speak, lift up thy voice, speak aloud, God surely can speak louder, he possesses the thunder — but that too is an answer, an explanation, reliable? trustworthy, genuine, an answer from God Himself, an answer which even if it crush a man is more glorious than gossip and rumor about the righteousness of providence which are invented by human wisdom and circulated by effeminate creatures and eunuchs.

My benefactor of imperishable memory, tormented Job, dare I join myself to thy company, may I listen to thee? Do not repell me, I am not standing here as an impostor beside thy ash heap, my tears are not false, although all I am able to do is to weep with thee. The joyful man seeks the company of gladness, although what gladdens him most intimately is the joy which dwells within him; and so the afflicted man seeks the company of sorrow. I have not been in possession of the world, have not had seven sons and three daughters, but he too may have lost all who possessed but little, he too may as it were have lost sons and daughters who lost his loved one, and he too was so to speak "smitten with sore boils" who has lost honor and pride, and along with that the will to live and the meaning of life.

YOUR

NAMELESS FRIEND.

October 11

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

My life has been brought to an *impasse,* I loathe existence, it is without savor, lacking salt and sense. If I were hungrier than Pierrot, I should not be inclined to eat the explanation people offer. One sticks one's finger into the soil to tell by the smell in what land one is: I stick my finger into existence — it smells of nothing. Where am I? Who am I? How came I here? What is this thing called the world? What does this word mean? Who is it that has lured me into the thing, and now leaves me there? Who am I? How did I come into the world? Why was I not consulted, why not made acquainted with its manners and customs but was thrust into the ranks as though I had been bought of a "soul-seller"? How did I obtain an interest in this big enterprise they call reality? Why should I have an interest in it? Is it not a voluntary concern? And if I am to be compelled to take part in it, where is the director? I should like to make a remark to him. Is there no director? Whither shall I turn with my complaint? Existence is surely a debate — may I beg that my view be taken into consideration? If one is to take the world as it is, would it not be better never to learn what it is? What is a deceiver? Does not Cicero say that a deceiver can be found out by asking the question *cui bono?* I allow everyone to ask, and I ask everyone, whether I have had any profit by making myself and a girl unhappy. Guilt — what does that mean? Is it witchcraft? Is it not definitely known how a person becomes guilty? Will anybody respond? Is it not then of the utmost importance to the gentlemen involved in the thing?

My mind is at a standstill, or rather I am going out of it. One moment I am tired and weary, yes, dead for sheer indifference; at another moment I am frantic and travel bewildered from one end of the world to the other, to

find one person upon whom I could expend my wrath. The whole content of my being shrieks in contradiction against itself. How did it come about that I became guilty? Or am I not guilty? Why am I then so called in all human tongues? What a wretched invention human language is: it says one thing and means another!

Is it not something that has simply happened to me, is not the whole thing an accident? Could I know beforehand that my whole nature would undergo a change, that I should become another man? Did that perhaps break out which lay obscurely hidden in my soul? But if it lay there obscurely, how could I foresee it? But if I could not foresee it, then I am not guilty. If I had had an attack of apoplexy, would I then too have been guilty? What is the human speech they call language, what is it but a miserable jargon understood only by a clique? Are not the dumb beasts wiser for the fact that they never talk about such things? — Am I unfaithful? In case she were to continue to love me and would never love anyone else, she would be faithful to me. If I continue to wish to love her only, am I unfaithful? We both do in fact the same thing; how then do I become a deceiver if I show my faithfulness by deceiving? Why must she be in the right, and I in the wrong? If we both are true, why then is this expressed in human language by saying that she is faithful, and I a deceiver?

Though the whole world were to rise up against me, though all the scholastics were to dispute with me, though my life were at stake, I nevertheless maintain that I am in the right. No one shall wrest this conviction from me, though there is no language in which I can give utterance to it. I have acted correctly. My love cannot express itself in a marriage. If I were to marry her, she would be crushed. Perhaps the possibility of marriage appeared alluring to her. I cannot help that — so it was to me. The very instant reality comes into question, all is lost, it is then too late. The reality in which she is to find her significance is for me only a

shadow which runs alongside of my proper spiritual reality, a shadow which at one moment would make me laugh, at another would intrude disturbingly in my existence. It would end in my wanting to touch her, fumblingly, as if I were grasping a shadow, or stretching out my hand after a shadow. Would not her life be ruined? Indeed she is as if dead to me, yea, she might awaken in my soul the temptation to wish her dead. In case I were to crush her, she would be volatilized precisely at the instant I would make her a reality — whereas in the other case I retain her as a genuine reality, though in a sense it is a reality full of dread. What then? Why, then language says that I am guilty, for I ought to have foreseen this. — What sort of power is this which would take from me my honor and my pride, and would do it in such a senseless way? Am I then a victim of fate? Must I then be guilty and be a deceiver, whatever I do, even if I do nothing? — Or am I crazy? Then the best thing would be to shut me up; for human cowardice is especially afraid of the pronouncements of crazy people and of the dying. Crazy — what does it mean? What am I to do in order to enjoy public esteem and to be regarded as wise? Why no answer? I offer a reasonable douceur to anybody who invents a new word. I have stated the alternatives. Is anybody so wise that he knows more than two? But if he knows more, then it is nonsense that I am crazy, unfaithful, and a deceiver, whereas the girl is faithful, sane, and esteemed by everybody. Or is it to be laid to my charge that I made the first period of our relationship so beautiful? Thanks for the compliment! When I saw her joy in being loved, I put myself and everything she pointed to under the magic power of love's enchantment. Is it a fault that I could do this or that I did it? Who is at fault in this, unless it be the girl herself and the third party whom no one knows, from whence it came that I was touched with the stroke of a wand and transformed? What I have done they praise in others. — Or is it my compensation that I became a poet? I decline any compensation, I demand my rights, i.e.. my honor. I have not prayed to

become a poet, and I would not buy the gift at that price. — Or, if I am guilty, then surely I must be able to repent of my guilt and make amends. Tell me how. Should I perhaps repent furthermore of the fact that the world takes the liberty of playing with me like a child with a June-bug? — Or is it best to forget the whole thing? Forget! I have ceased to be if I forget this. Or what a life it would be if along with the loved one I have lost honor and pride — and lost them in such a way that no one knows how this thing came about for which I can make no reparation! Shall I let myself then be pushed out? But why was I then pushed in? I didn't demand it.

He who is put on bread and water is better off than I. My reflections are, humanly speaking, the scantiest diet imaginable; and yet, in spite of my microcosmic proportions, I experience a satisfaction in comporting myself as macrocosmically as possible.

I do not talk to anybody; and yet, not to break off all communication with men, or to give them fudge for their money, I have made a considerable collection of poems, pithy sayings, proverbs, and brief extracts from the immortal Greek and Latin writers who in all ages have been admired. To this anthology I have added several capital quotations from Balle's Lesson Book, published under the auspices of the Orphan Asylum. So if anybody puts a question to me, I have the answer ready. I can quote the Classics just as well as Peer Deacon could, and in addition to that I can quote Balle's Lesson Book. "Even though we have attained all the honor one could desire, we ought not to let ourselves be carried away into pride and arrogance." I do not deceive anyone. How many people are thereafter all who speak a truth or make a good remark? "Under the word 'world' is comprehensively included heaven and earth and all' that in them is."

What good would it do if I were to say something? There is no one who would understand me. My pain and my suffering are nameless, as I myself

am — I who, though I have no name, nevertheless remain perhaps something to you, and in any case remain

Devotedly yours.

November 15

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

If I had not Job! It is impossible to describe and to *nuancer* what significance he has for me, and how manifold his significance is. I do not read him as one reads another book with the eye, but I read this book as it were with my heart, with the eye of the heart I read it, understanding as in a state of *clairvoyance* every particular passage in the most various ways. As the child puts his school-book under the pillow to make sure that he shall not have forgotten his lesson when he wakes up in the morning, so do I take the book with me to bed at night. Every word of his is food and gladness and medicine for my ailing soul. Now one word rouses me from my lethargy, so that I awaken to new disquietude; now it quiets the fruitless fury within me and puts an end to the horrible feeling of mute nausea produced by passion. You surely have read Job? Read him, read him over and over again. I cannot bring myself to quote a single outburst of his in a letter to you, although it is my joy to make transcripts again and again of all that he said, now in Danish characters, now in Latin script, now on a sheet of one size, now on that of another size. Every one of these transcripts is laid like a so-called "God's-hand-poultice" upon my sick heart. And upon whom indeed was God's hand laid as it was upon Job! But quote him — that I cannot do. That would be to wish to give his words my flavoring, to want to make his word mine in the presence of another man. When I am alone I do that, I appropriate every word; but so soon as anyone is present I know well what a young man has to do when old folks talk.

In the whole Old Testament there is no figure one approaches with so much confidence and frank-heartedness and trustfulness as Job, just because everything about him is so human, because he lies upon the confines of

poetry. Nowhere in the world has the passion of pain found such an expression. What is Philoctetus with his complaints, which constantly remain on the earth and do not terrify the gods! What is his situation compared with that of Job, where the idea is always in movement!

Forgive me for telling you everything. You are my confidant, and you are not able to reply. If anyone were to get to know this, it would distress me indescribably. At night I leave all the candles in my room lit, illuminating the whole apartment. Then I arise and read in a loud voice, almost shouting, one passage or another from Job. Or I open my window and shout out his words into the world. If Job is merely a poetical figure, if there never was any man who talked like this, then I make his words mine and assume the responsibility. More I cannot do, for who has such eloquence as Job, or is capable of improving anything that he said?

Although I have read the book again and again, every word is new to me. When I come across a word it is at that instant born, primitively, or makes a primitive impression upon my soul. Like a drunkard I imbibe little by little all the intoxication of passion, until with these slow sippings I become almost dead-drunk. On the other hand, I hasten toward the book with indescribable impatience. A half word, and with that my soul plunges into his thought and into his outbursts. More swiftly than the plummet seeks the bottom of the sea, more swiftly than the lightning seeks the conductor, my soul slips into his thought and there remains.

At other times I am quieter. Then I do not read, I sit shrunken together like an ancient ruin and gaze at everything. Then it seems to be as though I were a little child who goes pottering about the room or sits in a corner with his toys. I have a strange sensation. I cannot understand what it is that makes the grown folks so passionate, I cannot understand what they are quarrelling about, and yet I cannot help listening. Then it seems to me that it was bad people gave Job all that affliction, that it was his friends who now

sit and bark at him. Then I weep loudly, a nameless dread of the world and of life and of men and of everything wrings my heart.

Then I awake and begin again to read him aloud with all my might and with all my heart. Then suddenly I am struck dumb, I hear nothing more, see nothing, only in obscure outlines have I a presentiment of Job sitting upon his ash heap, and of his friends; but no one says a word, but this silence conceals within itself all that is horrible, as a secret which no one dare mention.

Then the silence is broken, and Job's tormented soul bursts out in a mighty shout. Him I understand, these words I make my own. The same instant I sense the contradiction in this, and then I smile at myself as one smiles at a little child who has put on his father's clothes. Or is it not something to smile at if anyone else but Job were to say, "O that a man might go to law with God, like a son of man with his fellow!" And yet dread comes over me as if I did not yet understand it, but as though I should some day come to understand, as though the terror about which I read was already lurking for me as I read about it, just as one becomes ill of the disease one reads about.

December 14

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

Everything has its time, the frenzy of the fever is past, I a*m* like a convalescent. The secret in Job, the vital power, the nerve, the idea, is that in spite of everything Job is in the right. By this claim he constituted himself an exception to all human juridical interpretations, while by his tenacity of purpose and by his power he demonstrated his authority, his well warranted authority. For him every human explanation is only a misunderstanding, and in relation to God all his affliction is only a sophism, which he indeed cannot resolve, but which he trusts God can resolve. Every *argumentum ad hominem* is used against him, but he buoyantly maintains his conviction. He claims to be on good terms with God, he knows that he is innocent and pure in his inmost heart, where he is conscious that God knows it too, and yet the whole of existence contradicts him. The greatness of Job consists in the fact that the passion of freedom within him is not stifled or tranquilized by a false expression. Under similar circumstances this passion is often stifled in a man for the fact that pusillanimity and paltry dread had made him believe that he suffered for the sake of his sins, when such was not the case at all. The soul of such a man lacked persistence in carrying a thought through when the world persisted in thinking the contrary. When a man thinks that a misfortune overtook him because of his sins, that may be pretty and genuine and humble, but it may also be because he obscurely conceives of God as a tyrant, a notion to which a man at the same instant gives a meaningless expression by subsuming God under ethical categories. — Nor did Job become demoniac. Thus, for example, a man may acknowledge that God is in the right, notwithstanding he believes that he himself is. He desires to show in a way that he loves God, even

when God would tempt the man that loves Him. Or he says that God cannot alter the world for his sake, and so he will be magnanimous enough to continue to love God. This is a thoroughly demoniac passion which deserves a separate psychological treatment. It sometimes puts an end to what we may call the quarrel in a humorous spirit, rather than make too much, fuss; or it culminates in an egoistic and defiant reliance upon the strength of its own feeling.

Job continues to uphold the claim that he is in the right. He does this in such a way that he testifies thereby to the noble human dauntlessness which knows what a man is, that he is frail as the life of a flower and soon fades, but that nevertheless in the possession of freedom he is great, and has a consciousness of his freedom which God Himself cannot take away from him, though it was He that gave it. Job also maintains his claim in such a way that one can see in him the love and trustfulness which is assured that God can explain everything, if only one can get Him to speak.

The friends provide Job with plenty to do; the dispute with them is a purgatory in which the thought that he is nevertheless right becomes purified. If he himself had lacked power and inventiveness to alarm his conscience and ‘dismay his soul, had lacked imagination to make him fearful for himself on account of the fault or guilt which secretly he might harbor in his inmost heart, then the friends would have helped him by their broad hints and by their impudent accusations, which like envious dousing-rods might be expected to summon forth what lay most deeply concealed. His misfortune is their principal argument, and thus everything is established to their satisfaction. One might suppose that Job would either lose his mind or collapse out of sheer weariness with his misery, capitulating at his enemies discretion. Elephaz, Bildad, Zophar, and above all Elihu who rises to his feet *integer* when the others are weary, play

variations upon the theme that his misfortune is a chastisement; he is to repent, pray for forgiveness, then all will be well again.

Job, however, maintains his contention. His claim is like a passport with which he takes leave of the world and mankind, it is a demand which men protest, but do not by that annihilate Job. He employs every expedient to move the hearts of his friends. He tries to move them to compassion ("Have pity upon me"), he terrifies them by his voice ("Ye are forgers of lies"). In vain. The cry of his pain becomes more and more vehement; with the increasing opposition of the friends his reflection becomes absorbed in his sufferings. Yet this does not move the friends, this is not the question at issue. They would willingly agree with him that he suffers and that he has reason to cry aloud, that "the wild ass does not bray when it has grass," but they require him to perceive chastisement in his sufferings.

How then does one explain Job's claim? The explanation is this, that the whole thing is a *trial of probation*. This explanation, however, suggests new and unresolved difficulties, which I have endeavored to make clear to myself in the following way. Science does indeed deal with and explain existence, including man's relation to God. But what science is there of such a sort that it has place for a relationship defined as probation, which when conceived in the light of the infinite does not exist, but exists only for the individual? Such a science there is not, and there cannot possibly be. Moreover: how does the individual get to know that it is a trial of probation? The individual who has any conception whatever of an existence in thought and a being of consciousness readily perceives that this is not so quickly done as said, nor so quickly over as it is said, nor so quickly grasped as it is said. First the occurrence in question must be clarified by abstracting it from the cosmic connection and receive a religious baptism and a religious name; then one has to present oneself for inspection before the tribunal of ethics, and then comes the expression, "trial." Before this

moment the individual did not exist by virtue of thought. Every explanation was still possible, and the whirlpool of passion was let loose. Only the men who have no conception or an unworthy conception of living by virtue of spirit are in this respect quickly done with it; they have a half hour's reading with which to console men, just as not a few philosophical apprentices have a hasty result to offer.

The greatness of Job does not therefore consist solely in the fact that he said, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" — which he uttered, moreover, at the beginning and did not repeat later. But Job's significance is that the border conflicts incident to faith are fought out in him, and that the prodigious insurrection of the wild and bellicose powers of passion are here set forth.

Therefore Job does not tranquillize like a hero of faith, but he provided temporary relief. Job represents as it were the whole weighty plea, presented on man's behalf in the great suit between God and man, the prolix and dreadful process of justice which had its ground in the fact that Satan raised a suspicion against Job, and which ends with the explanation that the whole thing is a trial of probation.

This category, "trial of probation," is neither aesthetic, nor ethical, nor dogmatic, it is entirely transcendent. Not until it is known to be a trial could a place be found for it in a dogmatic work. But so soon as this knowledge is at hand the elasticity of trial is weakened, and the category is really a different one. This category is absolutely transcendent and places man in a purely personal relationship of contradiction to God, in such a relationship that he cannot rest content with any explanation at second hand.

The fact that a great many people have this category ready at once on every occasion, the gruel needing only to be heated, merely proves that they have not comprehended it. The man who has a well developed consciousness of the world has a very long detour to make before he

reaches this category. Such was the case with Job, who proves the, breadth of his conception of the world by the firmness with which he is able to eschew all crafty ethical evasions and cunning wiles. Job is not a hero of faith, he gives birth with prodigious pains to the category of “trial” — precisely because he is so developed that he does not possess this category in childish immediacy.

I can see well that this category might have a tendency to erase and suspend reality as a whole by defining it as a trial with relation to eternity. Yet this objection has no force for me; for since a trial is *temporary* it is e*o ipso* qualified by relation to time and must be done away with in time.

So much I am able to perceive now, and as I have taken the liberty of initiating you into it all, I write these last lines personally to you. From you, as you know, I require nothing — except that I may take the liberty of remaining

Devotedly yours.

January 13

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

The tempests have raged themselves put — the thunderstorm is past — Job has been reproved before the eyes of men — the Lord and Job understand one another, they are reconciled, “the intimacy of the Lord dwells again in the tents of Job as in the former days” — men have learnt to understand Job, they come now to eat bread with him, to bemoan and comfort him, his brothers and sisters make each of them a present to him of a piece of money and a gold ring — Job is blessed and has received everything *double.* This is what is called a *repetition.* How much good’ a thunderstorm does after all! How blessed it must be after all to be reproved of God! Ordinarily a man is so likely to harden himself against reproof; when God passes judgment a man loses himself and forgets the pain in the love which is intent upon educating.

Who could have conceived this conclusion? And yet no other conclusion is conceivable — and neither is this. When everything has come to a standstill, when thought is brought to a halt, when speech becomes mute, when the explanation in bewilderment seeks the way home — then there must be a thunderstorm. Who can understand this? And yet who can find out any other conclusion?

Did Job lose his case? Yes, eternally; for he can appeal to no higher court than that which judged him. Did Job gain his case? Yes, eternally...for the fact that he lost his case *before God.*

So then there is such a thing as a repetition. When does it come about? Well, that’s not so easy to say in any human language. When did it come about for Job? When all *conceivable* human certitude and probability pronounced it impossible. Little by little he loses everything; therewith

hope vanishes gradually in proportion as reality, far from being mollified, makes heavier and heavier claims upon him. In the sense of immediacy all is lost. His friends, especially Bildad, know of only one way out, that by submitting to his chastisement he might hope to have a repetition in superabundance. For that Job is not willing. Thereupon the plot thickens, so that only by a thunderstorm can it be resolved.

For me this narrative contains an indescribable consolation. Was it not lucky I did not follow your much admired plan so shrewdly thought out? Perhaps, humanly speaking, it was cowardice on my part, but perhaps now divine governance can the more readily come to my aid.

There is only one thing I regret, namely, that I did not beg the girl to give me my liberty. I am convinced she would have done it. For who indeed can conceive of a girl's magnanimity? And yet I cannot altogether regret it, for I know that I abstained from doing it because I was too proud for her sake to do it.

In case I had not Job! I say no more for fear of burdening you with my perpetual refrain.

Devotedly yours.

February 17

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

Here I sit. On the plea of "innocent" (as they say in thieves' Latin), or "by the King's grace"? I don't know. I know only this, that I am sitting and that I have not budged from the spot. Here I stay — whether on my head or on my heels I do not know; I know only this, that here I stay and that for a whole month I have remained *suspenso gradu* without drawing my foot toward me or making the least movement.

I am expecting a thunderstorm...and repetition. Yet — if only the thunderstorm were to come! At the very thought I am joyful, indescribably blissful — even if my sentence were to be that no repetition is possible.

What is this thunderstorm to accomplish? It is to make me capable of being a husband. That will crush my whole personality — I am ready for it. It will make me unrecognizable in my own eyes — I do not waver, although I am standing upon one leg. My honor is saved, my pride is redeemed; and, however it may transform me, I hope nevertheless that the recollection will remain with me as an inexhaustible comfort, will remain when that has come to pass which in a certain sense I fear more than self-slaughter, because it will disturb me on an entirely different scale. If the thunderstorm does not come, than I shall resort to cunning; then I shall not die by any means, but make out that I am dead, so that kindred and friends might bury me. When they lay me in the coffin I shall very quietly pocket my expectation. Nobody will get to know it, for otherwise they would beware of burying a man who still had life in him.

For the rest, I am doing everything in my power to make a husband out of myself. I sit and trim myself, removing everything incommensurable, in order to become commensurable. Every morning I lay aside all the

impatience and infinite striving of my soul — to no avail, the next instant it is there again. Every morning I shave off the beard in which I laugh — to no avail, next morning my beard is as long as ever. I revoke myself, as a bank recalls its notes in order to put new ones in circulation — that will not succeed. I dispose of all my idea-wealth, my stocks and bonds, to buy matrimonial pocket-money — alas, in that coinage my riches come to very little.

However, I will be brief; my attitude and my situation do not allow me to employ many words.

Devotedly yours.

NOTWITHSTANDING I retired from the world long ago and renounced all theorizing, I cannot deny that the young man, because of my interest in him, put me a bit out of my pendulum-regularity. This much is easily clear to me from his last letter, that he is laboring under a complete misapprehension. What he is suffering from is a misapplied melancholy magnanimity for which there is properly no place but in a poet's brain. He expects a thunderstorm which is to make him over into a husband — perhaps he means a nervous apoplexy! The reality is exactly the opposite. He is the sort of man that says, "Whole battalion rightabout face," instead of facing right-about himself which can be expressed in another way: the girl must be got out of the way. If I were not so old, I might ask to have the pleasure of taking her myself, just to help the man.

He rejoices that he has not followed my "shrewd" plan. That's exactly like him. To think that even at this moment he cannot perceive that it would have been the only correct plan! One can't have any dealings with him and it is lucky he doesn't want a reply, for it would be ridiculous to carry on a correspondence with a man who holds in his hand such a trump as a thunderstorm. If only he possessed my shrewdness! Whether, when that

event he is counting upon has come about, he would want to give it a religious expression — that's his affair, I have no objection. But it is always well to have done everything human shrewdness can prescribe. I ought to have been in his place, I should have been of more help to the girl. Now she will perhaps find it more difficult to forget him. She did not get to the point of screaming, and that is a misfortune. There must be some crying, that is a good thing, just as it is a good thing when blood comes with a bruise. One must let a girl cry, and then afterwards she has nothing to cry for, but quickly forgets.

He did not follow my advice, and now she presumably sits and grieves. I can well perceive that this must be exceedingly disastrous for him. In case there was a girl who was inclined to sit and grieve for me in this fashion, I should fear her more than anything in the world, more than a democrat fears a tyrant. She would disturb me profoundly, I should be conscious of her every instant, as one is of a sore tooth. She would disturb me because she was ideal, and I, when it comes to that, am too proud of my sensibility to tolerate the notion that anybody in the world has a stronger or more lasting sentiment than I. If she were to remain upon that ideal pinnacle, I might have to put up with it that my life, instead of progressing, remained stationary, *in pause*. Perhaps there might be some man who was unable to bear the painful admiration she compelled him to feel for her, and would become so envious that he would resort to every expedient to destroy her — poison, for example.

For though she were to say, as so often has been said and written and printed and read and forgotten and repeated, "I have *loved* thee — now I admit it" (saying "now" in spite of the fact that she presumably had said it hundreds of times before); "I have loved thee more dearly than God" (which is not saying little...and yet not saying much in our godfearing times when godly fear is so rare a phenomenon) — that would not disturb the

man. The ideal is not to die of sorrow, but to keep well and cheerful if possible, and yet rescue one's sentiment. To take another man is no great exploit. That is a weakness, a very simple and plebeian virtuosity in honor of which only the town militia would present arms. Everyone who has an artistic eye for life can readily see that this is a blunder, which cannot be repaired even by marrying seven times.

Moreover, when he regrets that he had not begged her to give him his freedom, he needn't put himself out, that wouldn't have helped much, in all human probability he would have furnished her arms against himself, for to beg for one's freedom is really something quite different from supplying a girl with the explanation that she is one's muse. Here one perceives again that he is a poet. A poet is as it were born to be a dupe of the girls. Though the girl had made a fool of him right before his open eyes, he would have thought it magnanimity on her part. He may rather congratulate himself that he did not commit this imprudence. She then presumably would have gone to work in dead earnest. She would have tried her hand not merely on the little multiplication table of the erotic (which is lawful, and which she has a right to do), but also at the big table of marriage which deals with greater magnitudes. She would have taken God as her sponsor, invoked everything that is holy, laid under embargo every precious memory which might dwell in his soul. In this field, when opportunity offers, many young girls employ without any embarrassment a falsehood which not even a seducer would permit himself to employ. One who in the erotic field operates "by God's help," and wants to be loved "for God's sake," ceases to be oneself and becomes stronger than heaven and more important than a man's eternal blessedness. Suppose the girl had schooled him in that fashion, he perhaps would never have forgotten it, never got over it, since presumably he would have been too chivalric to listen to a sensible word from me, but would have let every outburst of hers count as genuine coin to be preserved as

eternal truth. Suppose that afterwards this was shown to be an exaggeration, a little lyrical impromptu, a sentimental diversion. — O well, his magnanimity idea would perhaps have helped him in this case also.

My friend is a poet, and to a poet belongs essentially this fanatical faith in woman. I, if I may say it with all due respect, am a prosaist. So far as the other sex is concerned, I have my own opinion, or rather I have none at all, since I have very seldom seen a girl whose life could be construed in terms of a category. Generally a woman lacks the logical consistency which is necessary if one is to hold a human being in admiration or in contempt. She deceives herself before she deceives another, and therefore one has no scale to judge her by.

My young friend had better look out. I have not much confidence in his thunderstorm. I believe he would have done well to follow my advice. The idea was in movement in the young man's love, and for that reason I was interested in him. The plan I proposed applied the idea as a measuring rod. That is the surest scale in the world. When a man watches that attentively, everybody who would deceive him is fooled. The idea was applied — that I thought he owed to the loved one and to himself. If she had been capable of living in that fashion (which requires no extraordinary talents but only sincerity), then the moment he left her she would have said to herself, "I now have nothing more to do with him, whether he was a deceiver or not, whether he returns or not; what I retain is the ideality of my own love, and that I shall know how to hold in honor." If she had done this, then my friend's situation would have been painful enough, for then he would have remained in sympathetic grief and distress. However, who would not put up with that when in the midst of all his sorrow he had the joy of admiring the loved one? His life would have been arrested like hers, but it would have been arrested as a river is arrested in its course when it is enchanted by the spell of music. — If she were not capable of using the idea as the regulative

principle of her life, then he might properly reflect that he had not troubled her life by showing his pain.

May13

MY SILENT CONFIDANT:

She is married — to whom I do not know, for when I read it in the paper it was as though I had a touch of apoplexy, and I lost the notice and have not had patience to make a closer inspection. I am again myself, here I have the repetition, I understand everything, and existence seems to me more beautiful than ever. It came as a thunderstorm after all, though I owe its occurrence to her magnanimity. Whoever she has chosen (I will not even say “preferred,” for as a husband every man is preferable to me), she has at any rate showed magnanimity toward me. Though he were the most beautiful man in the world, a paragon of amiability, capable of enchanting every girl, and though she may have brought the whole sex to despair by giving him her “Yes,” she nevertheless has acted magnanimously toward me — if in no other respect, at least by forgetting me completely. What is so beautiful as feminine magnanimity! Let the earthly queen of beauty fade, let the luster of her eyes be dimmed, let her erect figure be bent by the weight of years, let her curls lose their fascinating power when they are hidden by the humble coif, let her royal glance which swayed the world now embrace and watch over with motherly love the family circle she protects — a girl who has been so magnanimous never grows old. Let existence reward her as it has, let it give her what she loved more — it gave me also what I loved more...myself, and gave it through her magnanimity.

I am again myself. This self which another would not pick up from the road I possess again. The discord in my nature is resolved, I am again unified. The terrors which found support and nourishment in my pride no longer enter in to distract and separate. Is there not then a repetition? Did I not get everything doubly restored? Did I not get myself again, precisely in

such a way that I must doubly feel its significance? And what is a repetition of earthly goods which are of no consequence to the spirit — what are they in comparison with such a repetition? Only his children Job did not receive again double, because a human life is not a thing that can be duplicated. In that case only spiritual repetition is possible, although in the temporal life it is never so perfect as in eternity, which is the true repetition.

I am again myself, the machinery has been set in motion. The snares in which I was entangled have been hewn asunder, the magic spell which bewitched me so that I could not return to myself has now been broken. There is no one any more who lifts up her hands against me, my liberation is assured, I am born to myself, for so long as Ilithia folds her hands one who is in travail cannot bring to birth.

It is over, my yawl is afloat, the next minute I am where my soul's yearning was, where the ideas foam with elemental rage, where thoughts arise boisterously like the nations in migration, where at another season there is a stillness like the profound silence of the South Sea, so that one can hear oneself speak even though the movement goes on in one's own interior — there where one every instant stakes one's life, every instant loses it, and wins it again.

I belong to the idea. When that beckons me I follow, when it appoints a tryst I await it day and night, no one calls me at midday, no one awaits me at supper. When the idea calls I forsake everything, or rather I have nothing to forsake, I deceive nobody, I grieve nobody by being faithful to the idea, my spirit is not grieved by having to grieve another. When I return home no one reads in my looks, no one deciphers in my countenance, no one extorts from my being an explanation which not even I can give to another, as to whether I am blissful in gladness or despondent in distress, as to whether I have gained life or have lost it.

The chalice of inebriation is again held out to me, already I inhale its fragrance, already I am sensible of its foaming music — but first a libation to her who saved a soul which sat in the solitude of despair. Hail to feminine magnanimity! Long life to the high flight of thought, to moral danger in the service of the idea! Hail to the danger of battle! Hail to the solemn exultation of victory! Hail to the dance in the vortex of the infinite! Hail to the breaking wave which covers me in the abyss! Hail to the breaking wave which hurls me up above the stars!

To

N________ N________, Esq.

this book's real reader.

Copenhagen, August 1843

MY DEAR READER:

Forgive me for talking to thee so intimately — but are we not *unter uns?* For though thou be a fictitious figure, thou art surely not a plurality but only one, so that after all we are just thou and I.

If it is taken for granted that everyone is a reader in an unreal sense who reads a book for this or that casual reason having nothing to do with the book, then there would not be many real readers left, even for the authors whose clientele is very numerous. For who in our time would waste an instant upon the whimsical thought that there is an art in being a good reader? — to say nothing of expending time to become such. This lamentable situation has naturally an effect upon the author, who, in my opinion, does well to write like Clemens Alexandrinus in such a way that the heretics cannot understand what he writes.

An inquisitive woman reader who looks at the conclusion of every book she finds on her bed-table, in order to see whether the lovers get one another in the end, will here be disappointed; for ordinarily the lovers do get one another, but my friend, though he too is a male, gets no one. Now since it is evident that this is not due to a transient and accidental circumstance, the matter becomes pretty serious for the marriageable girls anxious to be married, who merely by being compelled to strike off the list one single male see the likelihood of fulfilling their expectation somewhat diminished. — An anxious paterfamilias will perhaps be fearful that his son might go the same way as my friend, and will therefore express the opinion that the book does not leave a harmonious impression, forasmuch as it does not furnish a ready-made uniform for a musketeer. — An ephemeral genius will perhaps find that "the exception" creates too many difficulties for himself

and takes the thing too seriously. — A genial housewife will seek in vain for a glorification of the trivialities of the sitting-room or of the gossip of the tea-table. — A staunch champion of reality will perhaps be of the opinion that the whole thing turns upon nothing. — An experienced match-maker will regard the book as a failure, since the real interest would be to find out how a girl ought to be constituted “to make such a man happy”; for that there must be such a girl, or at least must have been, she convinces herself in a way which is thoroughly satisfactory to her. — His Reverence affirms roundly that there is too much philosophy in the book, whereas the thoughtful eye of His Right Reverence seeks in vain for the genuine speculative interest which the flock, especially in our days, needs so sorely. — My dear reader, we can just as well say this among ourselves as it were, for thou canst understand that I do not mean to say that all these verdicts might in reality be expressed, seeing that the book will not have many readers.

The ordinary reviewer will find in this book the opportunity he desires to elucidate the fact that it is not a tragedy, a comedy, a romance, an epic, an epigram, or a novel; and will also count it unpardonable that one tries in vain to count 1, 2, 3. He will hardly be able to follow the development of thought, for it is an inverted development. The tendency of the book will certainly not commend itself to him either, for in general reviewers explain existence in such a way that both the universal and the particular are annulled. Above all, it is expecting too much of an ordinary reviewer to suppose that he might have an interest in the dialectical struggle by which the exception breaks away from the universal, in the prolix and very complicated procedure by which the exception fights his way through and asserts himself as a justified exception — for the unjustified exception is recognizable precisely by the fact that he wants to get around the universal. This strife is exceedingly dialectical, having infinite nuances; it postulates

absolute readiness in handling the dialectic of the universal, it requires swiftness in the imitation of movements, in short, it is as difficult as putting a man to death and leaving him alive. On the one side stands the exception, on the other the universal, and the strife itself is a strange conflict between the wrath and impatience of the universal at the hubbub the exception causes, and its amatory predilection for the exception. For fundamentally the universal rejoices just as much over the exception as heaven rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, more than over the ninety and nine just persons. On the other side the insubordination and defiance of the exception is in conflict with its weakness and morbidity. The whole thing is a wrestling match in which the universal breaks with the exception, breaks with it in strife, and strengthens it by this conflict. If the exception is unable to endure the distress, the universal does not help it, any more than heaven helps a sinner who cannot endure the pain of repentance. The earnest and resolute exception (which though in conflict with the universal is nevertheless a scion from its root) maintains itself. The situation is as follows. The exception thinks also the universal when it thinks itself, it labors also for the universal when it elaborates itself, it explains the universal when it explains itself, and if one would study the universal thoroughly, one has only to look for the justified exception, which manifests everything more clearly than does the universal itself. The justified exception is reconciled with the universal; the universal is fundamentally polemical against the exception, for it will not evince its predilection before the exception, so to speak, compels it to admit it. If the exception does not possess this power, it is not justified, and therefore it is very shrewd of the universal not to evince its predilection too early. If heaven loves one sinner more than ninety and nine just persons, the sinner doubtless does not know this from the beginning; on the contrary, he is sensible only of heaven’s wrath, until at last he, as it were, compels heaven to speak out.

In the course of time one grows weary of the perpetual patter about the universal, always the universal, repeated to the most tedious extreme of insipidity. There are exceptions. If one cannot explain them, neither can one explain the universal. Commonly one does not notice the difficulty because one does not think even the universal with passion but with an easygoing superficiality. On the other hand, the exception thinks the universal with serious passion.

When one thinks of the universal in this way, a new order of rank and precedence emerges, and the exception, poor fellow, in case he is fit for anything, comes again to honors and dignity.

Such an exception is a poet. He represents the transition to the more properly aristocratic exceptions, namely, the religious exceptions. The poet is generally an exception. People commonly rejoice over such a man and over his productions. I think therefore it might be worth while for once to bring such a figure into being. The young man whom I have brought into being is a poet. More than this I am unable to do; for at the utmost I can get as far as to imagine a poet, I cannot become a poet myself, and moreover my interests lie elsewhere. I have had a purely aesthetic and psychological interest in this task. I have brought my own person into the theme; but if thou, my dear reader, wilt look more closely, thou wilt easily see that I am only a serviceable spirit and am far from being indifferent to the young man, as he fears. This was a misunderstanding to which I gave occasion in order by this means to bring him out. Every movement I have made is made only in order to throw light upon him; I have constantly had him *in mente*, every word of mine is either ventriloquism or is uttered with reference to him. Even where jest and frolicsomeness seem to rollick regardlessly, they always have regard to him; even where all ends in melancholy, there is a hint about him, about his condition. For this reason all movements take place lyrically, and what I say about myself one is to understand obscurely

of him, or by what I say one is to understand him better. Thus I have done for him what I could — just as now in what I am about to say I try to be of service to thee, dear reader, by being again a different person.

A poet's life begins in conflict with the whole, of existence. The gist of it is to find an appeasement or a justification; for in the first conflict he must always be defeated, and if he is bent upon triumphing at once, he is an unjustified exception. Now my poet finds a justification precisely in the fact that existence absolves him at the instant when he would as it were annihilate himself. His soul now gains religious tone. This is what really supports him, although it never gets to the point of breaking through. The dithyrambic joy in his last letter is an example of this, for the joy is indubitably grounded in a religious sentiment, which remains however an inward experience. He keeps the religious sentiment as a secret he is unable to explain, although this secret helps him poetically to explain reality. He explains the universal as repetition, and yet he himself understands repetition in a different sense; for while reality becomes repetition, yet for him his own consciousness raised to the second power is repetition. He has had what essentially belongs to a poet, a love experience; but it is entirely ambiguous: happy/unhappy, comic/tragic. With reference to the girl it can all be interpreted comically; for since it was principally sympathy which moved him, his suffering was due in great part to the fact that the loved one suffered. If in this respect he was under a misapprehension, the comic aspect dominates. If he has regard to himself, the tragic aspect becomes prominent, as it does also in another sense when he pictures the loved one ideally. He has retained an ideal conception of the whole love affair, to which he is able to give any expression whatever, but as sentimentally defined, because he possesses no factual evidence? He has therefore a fact of consciousness, or rather he has no fact of consciousness but a dialectical elasticity which will make him productive in the realm of sentiment. While

this productivity remains his utmost attainment, he is sustained by something unutterably religious. Thus in the earlier letters, in some of them especially, the movement came much closer to a really religious conclusion; but the instant the temporary suspension is lifted he gets himself again, now however as a poet, and the religious sinks down to the bottom, that is, it remains as an unutterable substratum.

If he had had a deeper religious background, he would not have become a poet. Then everything would have acquired for him religious significance. The event in which he was ensnared would still have had significance for him, but then the shock would have come from higher spheres, and then also he would have been in possession of a very different sort of authority, even though it were bought by sufferings still more painful; he then would have acted with an iron consistency and firmness such as he did not show, he then would have gained a fact of consciousness to which he could constantly hold and which would never become ambiguous to him but would be profound earnestness because he himself had posited it by virtue of a God-relationship. The same instant the whole question about the temporal would have become indifferent to him; what is called reality would in a deeper sense be of no importance to him. He would have drained off religiously all the dreadful consequences contained in that occurrence. Though reality were to turn out differently, it would not change him essentially; even if the worst were to come to pass, it would not dismay him more than he already was dismayed. He would then have understood with religious fear and trembling, but also with trust and confidence, what he had done from the very first, and what as a consequence of this he was morally bound to do later, even though this obligation were to prompt the strangest behavior. On the other hand it is characteristic of the young man as a poet that he never could make thoroughly clear to himself what he had done, precisely because in the outward and visible aspect he wants to see it and

does not want to see it, or in the outward and visible aspect he does not want to see it, and therefore wants to see it and does not want to see it. A religious individual, on the contrary, reposes in himself and disdains all the childish pranks of reality.

My dear reader, thou wilt understand that the young man is the focus of interest, whereas I am a transitory figure, like a midwife in relation to the child she has brought to birth. And such in fact is my position, for I have as it were brought him to birth, and therefore as the older person I do the talking. My personality is a presupposition psychologically necessary to force him out, while my personality will never be able to get to the point he has reached, for the primitive power by which he advances is a new and different factor. Therefore from the beginning he has been in good hands, although I have often had to tease him in order that he might make himself visible. At the first glance I saw that he was a poet — for this reason, if for no other, that an occurrence which, if it had happened to a commonplace man would quietly have come to nothing, assumed in his case the proportions of a cosmic event.

Although I often do the talking, thou, my dear reader, wilt everywhere recognize that thou art reading about him; for thou hast understanding of the heartfelt emotions and conditions of the soul, and it is for this reason I call thee "dear." So thou wilt understand why the transitions are so various, and even though thou art taken aback when now and then a douche of sentiments suddenly descends upon thee, thou wilt afterwards see how everything is variously modified to fit together, and wilt see also that the particular moods are fairly correct, which is a capital consideration where the lyrical element is so important. Thou wilt perhaps from time to time be disturbed by an apparently idle witticism or by an indolent expression of defiance, but afterwards perhaps thou wilt be reconciled to this.

Devotedly thine,

CONSTANTINE CONSTANTIUS.

Upbuilding Discourses (1844)

EDIFYING DISCOURSES: A SELECTION

Translated by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, 1941

CONTENTS

PREFACE
I. THE EXPECTATION OF FAITH
II. EVERY GOOD AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE
III. LOVE SHALL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS
IV. THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY, BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD
V. REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH
VI. THE EXPECTATION OF AN ETERNAL HAPPINESS
VII. MAN'S NEED OF GOD CONSTITUTES HIS HIGHEST PERFECTION
VIII. LOVE CONQUERS ALL (ON THE OCCASION OF A WEDDING)
IX. THE JOY IN THE THOUGHT THAT IT IS NOT THE WAY WHICH IS NARROW, BUT THE NARROWNESS WHICH IS THE WAY
X. THE GLORY OF OUR COMMON HUMANITY
XI. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH THIS LITTLE book (which is called "discourses," not sermons, because its author has no authority to *preach;* "edifying discourses," not discourses for edification, because the speaker does not claim to be a *teacher)* only wishes to be what it is, something of a superfluity, and only desires to remain in secret, as it came into existence in secret, I still have not said farewell to it without an almost fantastic hope. Insofar as it, by being published, is, figuratively speaking, starting out on a kind of journey, I let my eye follow it a little while. I saw, then, how it set out on its solitary way, or solitary set out along the highway. After one and another little misapprehension, when it was deceived by a fleeting resemblance, it finally met that individual whom with joy and gratitude I call *my* reader, that individual whom it seeks, toward whom, as it were, it stretches out its arms; that individual who is benevolent enough to let himself be found, benevolent enough to receive it, whether in the moment of meeting it found him happy and confident, or "melancholy and thoughtful." On the other hand, insofar as, by being published, it in a stricter sense remains quiet without leaving the place, I let my eye rest on it for a little while. It stood there, then, like an insignificant little blossom in its hiding place in the great forest, sought for neither for its showiness nor its fragrance nor its food value. But I saw also, or believed that I saw, how the bird whom I call *my* reader, suddenly fixed his eye upon it, flew down to it, plucked it off, and took it to himself. And when I had seen this, I saw nothing more.

S. K.

Copenhagen, May 5, 1843

[His thirtieth birthday]

I. THE EXPECTATION OF FAITH

NEW YEAR'S DAY

BUT BEFORE FAITH came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:23-29

IT is on the first day of the year that we are gathered here, devout listeners to this address! The festival we celebrate today is one to which the Church has given no name; and yet is its celebration no less welcome, its challenge to quiet meditation no less solemn. It is in the house of God that we are gathered, where the subject of discourse is always the same, though varied in fashion according to times and circumstances. A year has passed, a new year has begun, though as yet there has nothing happened in it. The past is completed; the present is not; only the future is, which yet is not. In our daily life we are accustomed to wish each other one or another good. According to what we believe ourselves to know about a man's special circumstances, his thoughts and achievements, to that degree we deem ourselves capable of wishing for him some definite good, particularly suitable for him and for his life. On this day, too, we do not neglect to show

other men our good will and sympathy by wishing them this or that good thing.

But since on this particular day the thought about the future and the inscrutable possibility involved in the future, rises vividly before us, our wish tends to take on a more general character, because we hope that the greater compass of the wish may better succeed in laying hold of the future's manifold variety; because we feel the difficulty, over against the indeterminate and the indeterminable, of wishing anything determinate. Nevertheless we do not permit this difficulty to repress our wish; we do not give the thought time to disturb the heart's mysterious and indeterminate impulses; we express a good will, which, even if it does not deserve to be honored by the name of love, still ought not to be disparaged as thoughtlessness. Only with respect to an individual person do we make an exception. To him our heart clings more steadfastly, for his welfare we are more concerned. The more this is the case, the more conscious we become of the difficulty. When the thought now becomes absorbed in the future, it strays hither and thither in its restless efforts to force or coax from the mystery its explanation; like a spy it hastens from one possibility to another, but in vain; and under all this the wishing soul becomes sorrowful, sits there and waits for the thought to return and enlighten it as to what it might venture to wish with all its heart. What others do easily and without trouble seems to this man heavy and difficult; what he himself does easily in relation to others, he finds hard in relation to the one he loves most, and the more he loves the greater the difficulty becomes. At last he becomes irresolute; he does not wish to release the beloved from his own influence, to surrender him to the future's power, and yet he must; he will accompany him with all good wishes, but he has not one single, exclusive wish.

If a man's troubled mind felt itself ensnared like a prisoner in this difficulty, he would doubtless recollect the testimonies he had heard in these

sacred places; he would perhaps go to one of them again in order to inquire as to whether there might not be a wish which was so safe that he dared pour the whole of his soul's fervency into it, without holding back any part of it for another wish, also of importance to the beloved; so certain and so sure that he almost feared that he did not have enough inwardness to wish it as it ought to be wished; a wish that needed not to be accompanied by new wishes relative to its permanence; a wish which did not guilefully continue after he had ceased to wish it; a wish that did not concern some one particular thing, lest he might have forgotten some other particular thing, which later might disturb his peace; a wish that did not confine itself to the present, but was suited to the future, as this was the occasion for his wishing. If such a wish could be found, then he would be free and glad, glad in his wish, and still more glad that he could wish it for the other.

And in these sacred places many good things are mentioned. There is mention of worldly goods, of health, good times, wealth, power, fortune, a glorious fame; and the listener is warned against them; for he who has them is warned not to trust in them; he who does not have them is warned not to set his heart upon them. About *Faith* a different kind of speech is heard. It is said to be the highest good, the most beautiful, the most precious, the richest of all blessings, not to be compared with anything else, not replaceable by anything else. Is it then so different from the other goods because it is the highest good, but, for the rest, of the same kind as those, transient, unstable, conferred only upon the chosen few, seldom for the whole life? If this were so, then it would be inexplicable that in these sacred places there is always one thing, and only one, said about faith, that it is again and again eulogized and commended. He who would speak about it must either be in possession of this good, or feel the lack of it. If he possessed it, then he would probably say: "I readily admit that it is the highest good of all, but praise it to others — no, I cannot do that, for that

would make it harder for those who do not have it; besides, there is a secret pain connected with its possession which makes me more lonely than do the greatest sufferings." And this would be a very noble and benevolent thought on his part. But he who did not have faith could hardly admit it. So then the opposite of what happens would happen; faith would be the only good which was never mentioned in the holy places; for it would be too great for a man to dare warn against it, too glorious for one to dare to praise it, for fear there might be someone present who did not have it and could not get it. Consequently faith has a different quality; it is not only the highest good, but it is a good in which all can share; and he who rejoices in his possession of it, rejoices also on behalf of countless generations of men; "for what I possess," he says, "that every man possesses or may possess." He who wishes it for another man, wishes it for himself; he who wishes it for himself, wishes it for every man; for that quality by virtue of which a man has faith is not one in which he is different from another man, but that wherein he is identical with him; that whereby he possesses it is not something in which he differs from others, but something in which he is absolutely identical with everyone else.

There was then such a wish as that bewildered man sought; he could wish it for another man with all his heart and with all his might and with all his soul, could dare to continue to wish it more and more heartily, as his love became more fervent. So, then, he would wish it.

If there was a man who went to another man and said to him: "I have often heard faith extolled as the highest good; I certainly feel that I do not have it; the complexity of my life, my troubles, my numerous affairs and many other things interfere; but this I know, that I have one wish and only one, that I may have a share in this faith." If it was a benevolently inclined man he went to, he would answer: "That is a beautiful and a devout wish which you ought not to relinquish, and it will surely be fulfilled." — Is it

not true that it would seem to him an acceptable speech, to which he would gladly listen, for we are all willing to hear one who speaks about the fulfillment of our wish. Still time went on, and he got no farther.

Then he went to another man, confided to him, too, his concern and his wish. The man looked earnestly at him and said: “How can you be so in error? Your wish is not only pious and beautiful, but for no price should you relinquish it; you are much nearer to its fulfillment than you yourself believe; it is your duty to have faith, and if you do not have it, then it is your fault and a sin.”

He would perhaps be startled by this speech, he would perhaps think: “So this faith is not as glorious as it was described, since it is acquired so easily; that would be absurd. For other good things one travels out into the wide world; they are concealed in distant places which are only accessible to men through great perils; or if this is not the case, then it is with their distribution as with the water at the pool of Bethesda, about which we read in the sacred Scriptures: At times an angel went down and troubled the water, and whoever came first, aye, he who came first, he was fortunate. With faith, on the contrary, with the highest good, should not this also be the case; should there be no difficulty connected with its acquisition?” However, he would still certainly think earnestly upon this matter, and when he had rightly considered it, he might perhaps say: “He was right, it is so; it was a bold speech in which there was sense and meaning; that is the way a man should speak; for the wish profits nothing.” Then would he quietly review his inner emotions; and every time his soul allowed itself to rest on a wish, he called it to him and said: “You know you must not wish”; and in so doing he made progress. When his soul became fearful he called it to him and said: “If you are anxious, it is because you are wishing; for fear is a form of wishing, and you know you must not wish” — and so he went on. When he was near despair, when he said: “I cannot, all other men can

except myself. Oh, that I never had heard that speech, that I had gone my way through life undisturbed, with my sorrow — and with my wish." Then he called upon his soul and said: "Now you are being crafty; for you say that you wish, and pretend that the speech was about something external, which one can wish, while you know that it is something internal, which one can only will; you delude yourself, for you say: 'All other men can, only not I,' and yet you know that that whereby other men can do it, is that in which they are absolutely identical with you, so that if it really is the truth that you can not do it, then neither can the others do it. So you betray not only your own case, but, insofar as it depends on you, the case of all men; and when you humbly exclude yourself from their number, then you slyly destroy their power!"

Then he went on. When he was then being slowly educated over a longer time under a schoolmaster, he was perhaps nearer to the faith. "Was being educated," as if it were another man who was doing it. Still this is not the case; it is only a misunderstanding, only an appearance. One man can do much for another man, but he cannot give him faith. We hear various stories in the world. One says: "My being what I am is my own work; I owe no man anything"; and he thinks it something to be proud of. Another says: "That distinguished man was my teacher, and I count it an honor to dare call myself his disciple"; and he believes it something to take pride in. We shall not decide how far such a speech is legitimate; but for it really to mean anything, it can only be applied to the specially gifted: those who either were inherently talented, or else so favored that they could become disciples of the distinguished man. We, on the other hand, my hearers, we who were too insignificant to become disciples, what shall we say? If a man were to say: "When men rejected me, then I went to God; He became my schoolmaster, and this is my happiness, my joy, my pride," would this be less beautiful? And yet every man can say it, dares to say it, can say it in

truth, and if he does not say it in truth, then it is not because the thought is not true, but because he distorts it. Every man dares say it. Whether his forehead was flattened almost like a beast's or arched more proudly than the heavens; whether his arm was outstretched to rule over kingdoms and countries, or to gather up the necessary gifts which fell from the rich man's table; whether his gesture was obeyed by thousands, or there was not a soul who paid attention to him; whether eloquence blossomed on his lips or only unintelligible sounds passed over them; whether he was the powerful man who defied the storm, or the defenseless woman who only sought shelter against the storm — it has nothing to do with the matter, my hearer, absolutely nothing. Every man dares say it when he has faith; for this is precisely the glory of faith. And you know it, my hearer, you do not become afraid when it is mentioned, as if it thereby took something from you, as if you first savored its bliss in the moment of its departure. Or do you not know it? Alas! then were you very unfortunate. You could not grieve and say: "The giver of good gifts passed by my door"; you could not grieve and say: "The tempest and the storms took it from me"; for the giver of good gifts did not pass by your door; the tempest and the storm did not take it from you, for they could not do it.

So there was, then, a wish quite as that bewildered man had hoped for; he was no longer in distress. Yet there now appeared a new difficulty; for as he was wishing it, it became clear to him that that good could not be obtained through a wish; he could not even get it himself by wishing it, although this concerned him less, but neither could he give it to another by wishing it to him; only by himself willing it, could the other get it. So then it was again necessary to set him free, necessary to leave him to himself, his wish for him was as impotent as before. And yet this was not his intention. He wished to do everything for him; for when I wish a man something, I do not require his co-operation. The bewildered man had also considered it in

this way. He would, as it were, say to the beloved: “Just be quiet and unconcerned, you have nothing at all to do except to be glad, satisfied, and happy with all the good things I shall wish you. I shall wish, I shall not grow weary of wishing; I shall move the allbountiful God who bestows the good gifts, I shall move Him by my prayers; and so you shall have everything.” And lo, as he mentioned the individual good things, they seemed to him so questionable that he dared not wish them for the other; when he finally found what he sought, what he might confidently wish for, lo, it was something that could not be wished.

He was again bewildered, again concerned, again ensnared in a difficulty. Is then the whole of life only a contradiction; can love not explain it, but only make it more difficult? That thought he could not endure; he must seek a way out. There must be something wrong in his love. Then he perceived that however much he had loved the other man, he still had loved him in the wrong way; for if it had been possible to procure for him all the good things, and also the highest good, faith, then he would by this very fact have made him into a more imperfect being. Then he found that life was beautiful, that it was a new glory in faith that no man can give it to another; but that what is highest, noblest, most sacred in man, that every man has; it is inherent in him, every man has it if he wills to have it; and this is the glory of faith, that it can only be had on this condition; therefore it is the only unfailing good, because it can only be had through being constantly acquired, and can only be acquired through being constantly developed.

The bewildered man was then reassured; but perhaps a change had taken place in him as well as in the one for whose welfare he was so concerned — in their relation to each other. They had become separated, in that one, so to speak, was established in his right, the other certain within his own limits. Their lives had become more significant than before, and yet they had

become almost strangers to one another. His heart, which before was so rich in wishes, had now become poor; his hand, which formerly was so willing to help, had now learned to be quiet; for he knew he could not help. It was truth he had recognized, but this truth had not made him happy. So life is then a contradiction, the truth can not explain it, but can only make it more painful; for the more profoundly he recognized the truth, the more he felt himself separated, the more powerless in his relation to the other. And yet he could not wish that it was untrue, could not wish that he lad remained unconscious of it, although it had separated them for all eternity, as death itself could not have separated them. This thought he was not able to endure; he must seek an explanation; and then he perceived that his relation to his friend had now acquired its true significance. "If I," said he, "with my wish or with my gift could present him with the highest good, then could I also take it from him, even if he need not fear this; lye, what is worse, if I could do this, then I should in the same moment that I gave it to him, take it from him; for the fact that I gave him the highest good, I took the highest good from him; for the highest would be that he should give it to himself. Therefore I will thank God that his did not happen; my love has only lost its anxiety and gained gladness; for I know that with all my efforts I still should not have been able to preserve this good for him as certainly as he himself can keep it. He will not have to thank me for it, not because I set him free, but because he owes me nothing at all. Should I then be less glad with him, less glad that he now owns the most precious of all goods? Nay, I will only be the more happy; for if he owed it to me, it would disturb our relation. And if he is not in possession of it, then I can be very helpful to him; for I will accompany his thought, and urge him to perceive that it is the highest good, and I will prevent it from escaping into some hiding place where it might become obscure to him, whether he can understand it or not; with him I will penetrate every irregularity, until, if he does not have it,

there is but a single expression which explains his failure — that he did not will it; this he cannot endure, then he will acquire it. On the other hand, I will praise the glory of faith to him, and as I assume that he possesses it, I bring him to will to own it. So today on the first day of the year, when the thought of the future tempts us with its manifold possibilities, I will show him that in faith he possesses the only power which can triumph over the future, I will speak to him about the expectation of faith."

My hearers, shall we not do the same, and according to the opportunities of this festal occasion, speak with one another about

THE EXPECTATION OF FAITH.

When we speak about the expectation of faith, we also speak about expectation in general; when we speak about expectation, then we naturally think of ourselves as talking to those who expect something. But those who have expectations are the happy and the successful. Are they then the proper persons to be addressed in these sacred places, and not rather the unsuccessful, those who have already made up their account with life and who expect nothing? Aye, the speech could well be addressed to them if our voice were capable of it. It could be said to them that it was a very wretched wisdom they had found, that it was easy enough to harden the heart; the pillow of sloth on which they would drowse away their lives in idleness could be taken away from them; it could be said that it was a proud distinction they had acquired in life, that while all other men — however successful or however troubled they had been in the world — were still always ready to recognize that God could indeed make up the reckoning, that while all other men confessed that on the day of judgment they would not be able to answer one to a thousand, they made it a condition that they should be in possession of a just demand on life which could not be redeemed, a demand which in its time would make the reckoning difficult

enough — but not for them. They might be addressed thus; still we prefer to speak to those who still expect something.

As the number of those who expect something always constitutes the majority of the world, so too their expectations can be so various that it is very difficult to mention all of them. Yet all of them have one expectation in common, that they all expect some future; for expectation and the future are inseparable thoughts. He who expects something is preoccupied with the future. But to occupy himself with it, is perhaps not right. The complaint which is often heard, that men forget the present in their preoccupation with the future, is perhaps well founded. We shall not deny that this has happened in the world, even if more seldom in our time, but neither shall we fail to recall that it is precisely man's greatness, the proof of his divine heritage, that he can occupy himself with the future; for if there were no future, neither would there have been a past, and if there were neither past nor future, then would man be enslaved like the beasts, his head bent toward the earth, his soul ensnared in the service of the moment.

In that sense one might not, indeed, wish to live for the present; nor in that sense might one have meant it when he recommended the present as the great thing. But where shall we set our limits, how much do we dare to occupy ourselves with the future? The answer is not difficult: until we have conquered it, until we are able to return to the present, until our life finds significance therein. Still it is indeed an impossibility; the future is everything, the present is a part of it; how could we have conquered the whole before we have even reached the first part of it; how return from this victory to that which went before? Is it not so; is it an ill-timed difficulty the thought raises? By no means. It is precisely as here stated; for we dare not commend every occupation with the future. He who absolutely relinquishes it, becomes only in an unworthy sense strong in the present; he who does not conquer it, has one enemy more who will make him weak in the fight

against the present. Consequently, not until he has conquered the future does his present life become sound and strong.

The fact of being able to occupy himself with the future is then an indication of man's nobility; the conflict with it is most ennobling. He who strives with the present strives with a single thing against which he can use his entire strength. If therefore a man had nothing else to strive against, it would be possible for him to go victoriously through life without learning to know himself or his own strength. He who fights with the future has a more dangerous enemy, he can never remain ignorant about himself; for he fights with himself. The future is not; it borrows its strength from the man himself, and when it has tricked him out of this, then it appears outside of him as the enemy he must meet. Let a man then be as strong as he will, no man is stronger than himself.

Therefore we frequently see those who in life conquered in every battle; when it was a future enemy they had to deal with, they became powerless, their arms paralyzed. While they were perhaps accustomed to challenge the whole world to battle, they had now met an enemy, a vague figure, who was able to terrify them. Therefore, perhaps frequently the men whom God called to be tested in battle went from a worse fight into that battle which to men seemed so terrible; perhaps they sometimes smiled in the heat of conflict when they considered the invisible fight which had taken place before. They were admired in the world, because people thought they had conquered in the most dangerous fight, and yet that fight seemed to them like a childish game in comparison with the fight which had gone before, which no man saw. It would naturally be true that he who is stronger than others conquers in the conflict with these; but it is also natural that no man is stronger than himself. When a man strives with the future, then he learns that however strong he is compared with the rest, there is one enemy who is

stronger, that is himself; one enemy he cannot conquer by himself, that is himself.

Yet why describe this conflict with the future as so dangerous? “Whether old or young, we have all of us had some experience, the future is not entirely new; for there is nothing new under the sun; the future is the past. Old or young, we have all had experience, we will put it on, we will follow the trail of conjecture and the guidance of the supposition; by the power of the conclusion will we overcome it, and thus armed go confidently forth to meet the future.” And it is indeed well that a man be armed when he goes into a conflict; still better that he be armed according to the nature of the conflict. If a man who would compete on the running-track were to put on heavy armor, he would indeed be armed, but his armor would scarcely be advantageous to him. Is not the case the same in the matter of equipment for one who would strive with the future? For experience as a friend has a double tongue which says now one thing, now another; and guessing is a deceitful guide who deserts one when one needs him most, and the supposition is a vague glance which does not look very far, and the conclusion is a sling wherein a man more often catches himself than the other. In addition, those weapons are difficult to use; for with guessing goes fear, with conjecture apprehension, with the conclusion disquiet, since the questing soul does not remain unmoved by the experience. So we might be well-armed when we had put on experience, but not for the kind of conflict we go to meet, the conflict with the future; we sought to transform this into something present, something individual; but the future is not an individual part but the whole.

How should we then go to meet the future? When the sailor is out upon the sea, when everything is changing about him, when the waves are constantly born and die, then he does not stare down into the depths of these, for they change. He looks up at the stars: and why? Because they are

faithful; as they stand now, they stood for the patriarchs, and will stand for the coming generations. By what means does he then conquer the changing conditions? Through the eternal. Through the eternal can one conquer the future, because the eternal is the foundation of the future; therefore through this one can understand that. What then is the eternal power in man? It is faith. What is the expectation of faith? Victory, or as the Scriptures have so earnestly and so movingly taught us, it is that all things must work together for good to those that love God. But an expectation of the future which expects victory has indeed conquered the future. The believer is therefore done with the future before he begins on the present; for what one has conquered no longer has power to disturb one, and this victory can only make one more powerful for the present.

Then the expectation of faith is victory! The glad heart which had not yet tasted of life's adversities, which was not educated in the school of sorrow, which was not shaped by the dubious wisdom of experience, assists this expectation with all its might; for it expects victory in everything, in every conflict and exertion, or rather, it expects to conquer without conflict. We would not choose to be the austere figure which would halt the young on his way; we would rather be considered as a consolation to him when he has learned that this expectation, however beautiful it was, was still not the expectation of faith; we would rather be the one who should call him to the conflict when he feels himself powerless; rather be the one who will let victory beckon to him when he believes everything lost. On the other hand, the troubled one, who has scarcely dried his tears over the present loss, pictures the future differently, and that future is indeed light and ephemeral, more flexible than any sickle; so everyone fashions it according to the way he himself is fashioned. The troubled one does not expect victory, he has felt his loss too keenly; and even if it happened in the past, he still keeps it

with him; he expects that the future will at least grant him peace for the quiet occupation with his pain.

The experienced man disapproves of both modes of conduct. When one has almost every good one could desire, then one ought to be prepared to have the troubles of life also visit the home of the fortunate; when one has lost everything, then one ought to consider that time conceals much precious healing power for the sick soul; that the future, like a loving mother, also conceals good gifts. In success a man ought, to a certain degree, to be prepared for failure; in failure, to a certain degree, for success. And the counsel of the man of experience is not in vain; for both the one who was happy, if he was not thoughtless, and the troubled man, if he was not in despair, will readily heed his words; both will willingly arrange their lives according to his advice. The successful man inspects the goods he possesses. Some of them he thinks he could lose without pain; others are such that he could easily recover from the pain of their loss. Only one single good he can not lose without losing his gladness, he cannot lose it to a certain degree without losing it absolutely, and with it his joy. He will then be prepared to lose his goods, and in this way he is, according to the advice of the man of experience, prepared for a certain degree of misfortune. Still the experienced man said: to a certain degree. This word might also apply to that one good he could not lose without losing his happiness; not lose to a certain degree without losing it entirely. The man of experience will not interpret his words, he repeats them unchanged, unshakable; he leaves the explanation and the application to the one whom they would guide. So then the successful man, no less than the troubled one, becomes bewildered. This expression: to a certain degree, which should set them free, becomes the binding power which ensnares them, and the word continues to sound, shows no sympathy, is not concerned about their strenuous efforts to understand it, pays no attention to their prayers for an explanation. The

experience which should guide them, gives birth to doubt; the experienced man's advice was questionable advice.

On the contrary, the believer says: "I expect victory." Nor is this a vain speech. For both the fortunate man who was not thoughtless and the troubled man who was not in despair will readily listen to his words. Gladness returns again to the glad heart, victory is its expectation, victory in every conflict, in every temptation; for experience taught that there might be talk about a conflict. Still by the help of faith it expects victory in everything; only for a moment does it pause: "It is too much," it says, "it is impossible, life cannot be so glorious; however rich youth was in its extreme happiness, this is even more than the most joyous hope of youth." Aye, it is certainly more than the gladdest hope of youth, and yet it is so, even if not quite as you think. You speak about many victories, but faith expects only one, or rather, it expects victory. If there was a man who had heard of a belief which was able to give everyone the thing he needed, and he were to say: "That is impossible — all the necessities for a man, as now for me, all the much which I need"; then would the one who referred him to the Holy Scriptures, rightly dare to testify about them, that he would find in them the thing needed, but the seeker would find that it did not turn out quite as he had expected. The Scriptures say: "One thing is needful." So too with faith; when you speak about many victories you are like one who talks about many things being needed. Only one thing is needful, and faith expects victory.

But it expects victory, and therefore it is glad and confident, and why should it not be since it expects victory! Still I am sensible of a voice which you also know well, my hearer. It says: "This is good to listen to, these are great words and agreeable modes of speech, but truly the earnestness of life teaches something different." What then did life's earnestness teach you, you who speak in this way? Is it not true that it taught you that your wishes

would not be fulfilled, your yearnings not sated, your cravings not heeded, your desires not satisfied? It taught you this, all this, of which we do not speak at all; and in addition it taught you with deceitful lips to come to men's assistance, to suck faith and confidence out of their hearts, to do this in the sacred name of earnestness. Why did it teach you this? Could it not have taught you something else?

When two men learn different things from life, it may be because they experienced it differently; but it can also arise from the fact that they themselves were different. If two children were brought up together and shared everything in common, so that if one was singled out for commendation, the other was also; if one was rebuked, the other was likewise; if one was punished, the other was also; still it would be true that they might learn absolutely different things. For the one might learn, whenever it was commended, not to become proud; every time it was rebuked to humble itself under the admonition; every time it was punished to profit by the suffering. The other might learn, when it was commended, to become arrogant; when it was rebuked, to harbor resentment; whenever it was punished to store up secret anger. So also with you. If you had loved men, then perhaps life's earnestness had taught you not to be vociferous, but to be silent, and when you were in distress like one at sea, and saw no land, then at least not to drag others into your distress. Perhaps it taught you to smile, at least as long as you believed that someone sought an explanation, a testimony in your appearance. Life might then perhaps have afforded you the melancholy gladness of seeing others succeed where you had not succeeded; the consolation that you had gained through stifling the shriek of anguish in your heart, so that it might not be disturbing to others. Why did you not learn this?

Since you did not learn it, we cannot pay attention to what you say. We are not judging you because you doubt; for doubt is a cunning passion, and

it may well be very difficult to free one's self from its snares. What we do demand of the doubter is that he shall be silent. He certainly realized that doubt did not make him happy; why then confide to others what will make them equally unhappy? And what does he gain by telling them? He loses himself, and makes others unhappy. He loses himself, whereas by keeping silent he might perhaps have found peace, had he preferred quietly to bear his pain in solitude rather than to become noisily important in the sight of men by coveting the honor and distinction so many desire — of doubting, or at least of having doubted. Doubt is a profound and cunning passion, but he whose soul it did not grip so intensely that he became speechless, only falsely imputes this passion to himself; what he says, therefore, is not only untrue in itself, but especially so on his lips. Consequently, we pay no attention to him.

The expectation of faith, then, is victory. The doubt which comes from without does not disturb it; for it dishonors itself by speaking. Still doubt is crafty. In its secret way it sneaks about a man, and when faith expects victory, then it whispers that this expectation is a delusion. "An expectation whose time and place are not determined, is only an illusion; thus one can always continue to expect; such an expectation is an enchanted circle from which the soul cannot escape." Certainly the soul, in the expectation of faith, is prevented from falling out of itself into the manifold; it remains in itself; but it would be the greatest evil which could befall a man if he escaped from this circle. From this it by no means follows that the expectation of faith is a delusion. It is true that he who expects something in particular, may be disappointed; but this does not happen to the believer. When the world begins its sharp testing, when the storms of life snap the vigorous expectation of youth, when existence, which seems so loving and so gentle, transforms itself into a merciless proprietor who demands everything back, everything which he gave so that he could take it back,

then the believer looks with sadness and pain at himself and at life, but he still says: “There is an expectation which all the world can not take from me; it is the expectation of faith, and this is victory. I am not deceived; for what the world seemed to promise me, that promise I still did not believe that it would keep; my expectation was not in the world, but in God. This expectation is not deceived; even in this moment I feel its victory more gloriously and more joyfully than all the pain of loss. If I lost this expectation, then would everything be lost. Now I have still conquered, conquered through my expectation, and my expectation is victory.”

Was it not so in life? If there was a man to whom you felt yourself so strongly attracted that you dared say: I trust him, is it not true that when everything went in accordance with your wish, or if not entirely so, yet so that you could easily bring it into agreement with your ideas, then you trusted him, as others also trusted him; but when the inexplicable happened, the incomprehensible, then the others fell away, or rather (not to confuse the language) they showed that they never had trusted him? Not so with you. You felt that it was not on the fact that you could explain what happened, that you had based your faith; for then it would have been based on your insight, and far from being resignation, it would rather have been self-confidence. It seemed to you that it would be a disgrace to give it up; for as you had believed that these words from your mouth: I trust him, had signified something different from their meaning when others said them, so you felt it impossible that the change could bring you to act as did the others, unless your faith originally had not signified more than theirs. You continued to trust. Perhaps you did wrong in doing so; not in trusting, not in trusting in this way, but in trusting a man in this way. Perhaps the inexplicable was easily explained; perhaps there was a distressing certainty that witnessed so strongly that your belief became only a beautiful conceit that you ought rather to give up. We do not know. Still we do know this,

that if in this faith you forgot that there was a higher faith, then it was, in spite of its beauty, only a means of perdition to you. If, on the other hand, you put your faith in God, how could your faith then ever be changed into a beautiful conceit which you ought rather to relinquish? Could He be changed with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning? Should He not be faithful, through whom every man who is so is faithful? Should not He be without deceit in whom you yourself had faith? Could there ever be an explanation which could explain anything other than that He is truthful and keeps His promises? And yet we see that men forget this.

When everything succeeds for them, when they see good days, when in a wonderful manner they feel them selves in harmony with everything about them, then they believe; in their gladness they do not always forget to thank God; for every man will readily be thankful for the good he receives, but every man's heart is also weak enough to wish to determine for itself what the good is. When everything changes, when sorrow replaces gladness, then they fall away, they lose their faith, or rather, for let us not confuse the language, they show that they never had it. Do not behave in this way, my hearer. When you caught yourself being changed by everything changing about you, then you said: "I confess that now I see that what I called my faith was only a delusion. That the highest one man can do in his relation to another is to believe him; that what is even higher, more beautiful and more blessed than language can describe — to believe God — that I have presumptuously imagined myself to have done; to all the rest of my gladness I have also added this; and yet my faith, as I now see, was only a fleeting emotion, a reflection of my earthly happiness. But I will not edify myself by presumptuous, meaningless speech; I will not say that I have lost faith, will not lay the blame upon the world, nor upon men, nor even accuse God." In this way, my hearer, you sought to halt yourself when you would go astray in sorrow; you did not harden your heart; you were not foolish

enough to wish to imagine that if particular things had not happened, then you would have preserved your faith, nor wretched enough to wish to seek fellowship with this wisdom. Lo, therefore you won, even if slowly, again to the expectation of faith. Then when you failed in everything, when what you had slowly built up was blown away in a moment, and you must toilsomely begin again from the beginning; when your arm was weak, your step wavering, then you still held fast to your expectation of faith, which is victory. You did not even reveal it to others lest they mock you, because in all your wretchedness you still expected victory, in your inmost heart you still hid your expectation. "The joyful days are indeed able to embellish my faith," you said. "I adorn it with the garlands of gladness, but prove it I cannot; the gloomy times can indeed bring tears to the eyes and sorrow to the heart, but they still cannot deprive me of my faith." And even if the adversity continued, your soul became gentle. "It is still beautiful," you said, "that God will not thus appear to me in the visible things; we were separated in order to meet again; I still could not wish always to be a child, who every day requires proofs, signs, and wonderful deeds. If I continued to be a child, then I could not love with all my might and with all my soul. Now we are separated, we do not meet daily, only secretly we meet in the triumphant moment of believing expectation."

The expectation of faith is then victory, and this expectation cannot be disappointed unless a man disappoints himself by depriving himself of expectation; like the one who foolishly supposed that he had lost faith, or foolishly supposed that some individual had taken it from him; or like the one who sought to delude himself with the idea that there was some special power which could deprive a man of his faith; who found satisfaction in the vain thought that this was precisely what had happened to him, found joy in frightening others with the assurance that some such power did exist that

made sport of the noblest in a man, and empowered the one who was thus tested to ridicule others.

Yet perhaps one or another says: “This speech is indeed coherent and consistent; but through it one gets no farther, and insofar it is a foolish and meaningless speech.” One gets no farther. Could a man then wish to get farther than to conquer? Then he must also lose the victory. Would it be so foolish and insignificant a thing for a man really to become conscious of whether he had faith or not? But when I say: I believe, then it can only too often be very obscure to me what I really mean by that. Perhaps I am mistaken, perhaps I am only creating a conception about the future; perhaps I am wishing, hoping, perhaps longing for something, desiring, coveting; perhaps I am certain about the future, and when I am, it seems to me that I believe, although I really do not. On the other hand if I confront myself with the question: Do you expect victory? then every obscurity becomes more difficult. Then I perceive that not only does he not believe who expects absolutely nothing, but also he who expects some special thing, or he who bases his expectation on something special. And should this not be of importance, since not until a man is finished with the future can he be entirely and undividedly in the present? But only by conquering it, is one finished with the future, and faith does exactly this, for its expectation is victory. Every time then that I catch my soul not expecting victory, I know that I do not believe; when I know that, then I know too what I have to do; for it is by no means an easy matter to believe. The first condition for my coming to believe, is that I become conscious of whether I do believe or not. For that reason we so often fall into error because we look for an assurance of our expectation, instead of an assurance of faith that we believe. The believer demands no proof for his expectation; “for,” he says, “if I could assume something to be a proof, then, when it proved my expectation, it would also disprove it. My soul is not insensible to the joy or

pain of the individual, but, God be praised, it is not thus that the individual can prove or disprove the expectation of faith. God be praised! Nor can time prove or disprove it; for faith expects an eternity. And today on the first day of the year, when the thought about the future thrusts itself upon me, I will not satiate my soul with various expectations, nor dissipate it in manifold ideas; I will rally it, and, sound and happy, if possible, go forth to meet the future. It brings what it will and must bring; many expectations disappointed, many fulfilled, so it will happen, as experience has taught me; but there is an expectation which will not be disappointed; experience has not taught me this, nor has it authority to deny it; it is the expectation of faith, and this is victory."

There is a little word sufficiently familiar to the congregations even if not always heeded by them; little and insignificant it seems, and yet so rich in content; quiet and yet so moving, calm and yet so filled with longing. It is the word: at last; for many of the sacred collects which are read in our churches end in this way: "and at last be saved." The older man among us, who stands almost at the end, looks back in his thought over the way he has traveled; he remembers the course of events; the shadowy figures from the past again become living before him; he is overwhelmed by the varied content of what he has lived to see; he is weary and he says: "and so at last be saved." The younger, who even now stands at the beginning of the way, looks ahead in thought over the long road. In thought he experiences what is to come: the painful bereavements, the quiet concerns, the sad longings, the fearful anxieties; he is wearied at the thought and says: "and so at last be saved." It would indeed be a great gift if a man could rightly use this word; but no man learns this from another, but severally only from and through God. Therefore will we commit to Thee, Father in heaven, our heart and our thought, so that our soul may never be so ensnared by the joys of life or by its sorrows, that it forgets this liberating word; but so that it may not too

often be impatience and inner disquiet which bring this word to our lips; so that when, like a faithful friend, it has accompanied us through all the many relations of life, has accommodated itself to us, yet without being false to itself, has been our consolation, our hope, our gladness, our cause of rejoicing; has sounded to us solemnly and inspiringly, softly and soothingly; has spoken to us warningly and admonishingly, cheerfully and invitingly; that then our soul in its last hour may be carried away from the world on this word, as it were, to that place where we shall understand its full significance. So we may understand that the same God who by His hand led us through the world, now withdraws it and opens His embrace to receive the longing soul. Amen.

II. EVERY GOOD AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE

EVERY GOOD GIFT and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:17-22

EVERY *good and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* These words are so beautiful, so eloquent, so moving, that it was certainly not the fault of the words if they found no entrance to the listener's ear, no echo in his heart. They are by an apostle of the Lord, and insofar as we ourselves have not felt their significance more deeply, we still dare have confidence that they are not loose and idle words, not a graceful expression for an airy thought, but that they are faithful and unfailing, tested and proved, as was the life of the apostle who wrote them. They are said not incidentally but with special emphasis, not in passing but accompanied by an earnest admonition: Do not err, my beloved brethren. We dare then set our confidence in their having not only power to lift up the soul, but also strength to sustain it, these words which sustained an apostle through a stormy life. They are spoken in connection with other words; it is in order to warn against the fearful error of believing that God would tempt a man, in order to warn against the foolishness of a heart that would tempt God,

that the apostle says: Do not err, my beloved brethren. We dare then assure ourselves that the word is also mighty in explaining the folly, mighty in halting the erring thought.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. These words are again and again repeated in the world, and yet many go on as if they had never heard them, and it would perhaps have affected them disturbingly if they had heard them. Carelessly they go on their way, a friendly fate makes everything so easy for them, every wish is fulfilled, all their undertakings are successful. Without knowing how it comes about, they are in the midst of the life movement, a link in the chain which connects a future with a past. Unconcerned about how it happened they are borne along on the wave of the present. Resting in the natural law that lets a human life develop in the world in the same way that it spreads a carpet of flowers over the earth, they live happy and satisfied amid the changes of life, wishing at no moment to extricate themselves from it, giving everyone his honest due: thanksgiving to the one to whom they ascribe the good gifts; help to the needy in the way they believe is useful to him. That there are good and perfect gifts they know well; they also know whence these come; for the earth gives its increase, and heaven sends the early and the late rain, and family and friends consider it best for them; and their plans, wise and intelligent, succeed as is natural since they are wise and intelligent. For them life holds no riddle, and yet their life is a riddle, a dream, and the apostle's earnest admonition: Do not err, does not make them pause; they have no time to pay attention to it nor to the words, anymore than the wave gives heed as to whence it comes or whither it goes. Or if some individuals among them, considering higher things, gave heed to the apostle's words, they would soon be through with them. They let their thought for a moment occupy itself with the words, and then they said:

"Now we have understood them, bring us some new thoughts which we have not understood." Nor would they have been wrong; for the apostle's words are not difficult, and yet they proved thereby, in that after having understood them they wished to abandon them, that they had not understood them.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. These words are so soothing, so comforting, and yet how many were there who really understood how to suck the rich nourishment from them, how to appropriate them! Those concerned, those whom life did not permit to grow up and who died as babes, those whom it did not suckle on the milk of prosperity, but who were early weaned from it; the sorrowing, whose thought attempted to penetrate through the changing to the permanent — those were conscious of the apostle's words and gave attention to them. The more completely they could sink their souls in them, could forget everything in them, the more they felt themselves strengthened and made confident. Still it soon appeared that this strength was a delusion; no matter how much confidence they gained, they still did not gain the strength to comprehend life; sometimes the troubled mind and the bewildered thought resorted again to that rich consolation, sometimes they felt again the contradiction. At last perhaps it seemed to them that these words were almost dangerous to their peace of mind. They awakened a confidence in them which was constantly being disappointed. They gave them wings which could indeed lift them up to God, but which could not help them in their walk through life. They did not deny the inexhaustible comfort of the words, but they almost feared this comfort even when they praised it. If a man owned a magnificent jewel, a jewel which he never denied was magnificent, he might take it out from time to time, and rejoice over it; but soon he would say: I cannot adorn myself with this for daily use,

and the festal occasions on which it would really be appropriate, I wait for in vain. So then he would put the jewel away, and would sadly consider the fact that he owned such a jewel, but that life gave him no opportunity to find happiness in displaying it.

So they sat in their quiet sorrow; they did not harden themselves against the consolation of the word; they were humble enough to acknowledge that life is a dark saying, and as in their thought they were swift to listen to see if there might be an explanatory word, so were they also slow to speak and slow to wrath. They did not presume to give up the word; they longed only for the opportune hour to come. If that came, then they would be saved. Such was their belief. And it might happen, you said, my hearer. Or is there only a spirit who bears witness in heaven, but no spirit who bears witness on earth! Heaven only knows, and the spirit which flees from earth, that God is good; the earthly life knows nothing about it! Is there then no mutual harmony between what happens in heaven and what happens on the earth! Is there joy in heaven, only sorrow on earth, or is it only said that there is joy in heaven! Does God in heaven take the good gifts and hide them for us in heaven so that we may some time receive them in the next world! Perhaps you spoke in this way in your heart's bewilderment. You did not demand that for your sake there should be given signs and wonderful manifestations, you did not childishly demand that every one of your wishes should be fulfilled; only you begged for a testimony early and late; for your troubled soul treasured a wish. If this were fulfilled, then everything would be well; then would your thanks and your praise be unceasing, then would the festal occasion come, then would you with all your heart bear testimony to the word, that every good and every perfect gift comes from above. But lo, that was denied you; and your soul became restive, tossed about by the passionate wish. It became defiant and angry. You did not impatiently cast off the leading-strings of humility, you had not forgotten that you are on

earth and God in heaven. With humble prayers and burning desires you sought, as it were, to tempt God: This wish is so important to me; my joy, my peace, my future, all depend on this; for me it is so very important, for God it is so easy; for He is all-powerful. But the wish was not fulfilled. Vainly you sought rest; you left nothing untried in your unfruitful restlessness; you ascended the dizzy heights of anticipation to see if a possibility might not appear. If you believed that you saw such a possibility, then you were immediately ready with prayers, that by the help of these you might create the actual from the apparent. Still it was an illusion. You descended again, and gave yourself up to the stupefying exhaustion of sorrow, while time went on as it always does. And the morning came, and the evening, but the day you desired did not dawn. And still you made every effort, you prayed early and late, more and more fervently, more and more temptingly. Alas, it still did not come to pass! And you gave up, you would dispose your soul to patience, you would wait in quiet longing, if only your soul might be assured that eternity would bring you your wish, bring you that which was the delight of your eyes and your heart's desire. Alas, this certainty too was denied you. But when the busy thoughts had worked themselves weary, when the fruitless wishes had exhausted your soul, then perhaps your being became more quiet, then perhaps your heart, secretly and unnoticed, had developed in itself the meekness which received the word which was implanted in you, and which was able to save your soul, that every good and perfect gift cometh from above.

Then you acknowledged in all humility that God had certainly not deceived you, since He accepted your earthly wishes and foolish desires, exchanged them for you, and gave you instead heavenly consolation and holy thoughts; that He did not treat you unfairly when He denied you your wish, but for compensation created this faith in your heart; when instead of the wish, which even if it could do everything, was at most able to give you

the whole world; He gave you a faith through which you gained God and overcame the whole world. Then you recognized with humble gladness that God was still the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, who had not only created the world out of nothing, but had done the even more miraculous — out of your impatient and unstable heart He had created the incorruptible essence of a quiet spirit. Then ashamed you confessed that it was good, so very good for you, that God had not permitted Himself to be tempted; then you understood the apostle's admonition, and its relation to the error that wishes to tempt God. Then you perceived how foolish your conduct had been. You wished that God's ideas about what was profitable to you might be your ideas, but you also wished that He might be the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, so that He might rightly fulfill your wish. And yet if He were to share your ideas, then must He cease to be the almighty Father. You would in your childish impatience, as it were, corrupt God's eternal Being, and you were blind enough to delude yourself, as if it helped you if God in heaven did not know better what was profitable to you than you yourself; as if you would not sometime discover with terror that you had wished what no man would be able to bear if it came to pass. For let us for a moment speak foolishly and with human wisdom. If there was a man in whom you rightly had confidence, because you believed he wished for your welfare; but you had one conception about what would be advantageous to you, he another — is it not true, you would then seek to persuade him, you would perhaps beg and adjure him, to fulfill your wish; but if he continued to deny you, you would cease to beg him, you would say: If now I influenced him by my prayers to do what he does not regard as right, then it would be even more terrible that I had been weak enough to make him equally weak, since then I should have lost him and my confidence in him, even if, in a moment of intoxication, I had called his weakness affection.

Or perhaps this was not the case with you; you were perhaps too old to cherish childish conceptions about God, too mature to think humanly about Him; you would perhaps influence Him by your defiance. That life was a dark saying you readily confessed, but you were not, in accordance with the apostle's warning, swift to hear whether there might be an explanatory word; you were, contrary to his admonition, swift to wrath. If life is a dark saying, then let it be so, you would not concern yourself about the explanation — and your heart was hardened. Your appearance was perhaps calm, perhaps friendly, your speech even benevolent, but in your heart, in the secret workshop of your thoughts, you said — no, you did not say it, but you heard a voice which said: God does tempt a man. And the coldness of despair chilled your spirit, and its death brooded over your heart. If sometimes life again stirred within you, then there raged wild voices, voices which did not belong to you, but which still sounded from within you. For why was your complaint so violent, why was your shriek so penetrating, why were even your prayers so challenging? Or was it not because you believed that your sufferings were so great, your sorrows so crushing, and because of this your complaint so just, your voice so mighty, that it must resound through heaven, and call God forth from His hidden depths, where, as it seemed to you, He sat calm and indifferent, paying no attention to the world and its fate? But heaven is closed to such presumptuous speech, and it is written that God is tempted of no man. Impotent was your speech, impotent as your thought, as your arm was impotent; and heaven did not hear your prayer. But, then, when you humbled yourself under God's powerful hand and, crushed in spirit, groaned: "My God, my God, great is my sin, greater than can be forgiven," then heaven again opened, then did God, as a prophet writes, look down upon you from the window of heaven and say: Yet a little while; yet a little while, and I will renew the forms of

earth — and lo, your form was renewed, and God's merciful grace had produced in your barren heart the meekness which receives the word.

Then you humbly acknowledged before God that God tempts no man, but that everyone is tempted when he is seduced and drawn away by his own desires, just as you were tempted by proud and arrogant and defiant thoughts. Then you were terrified at your error in thinking that the idea that God tempts a man could make life explicable; for then life would become to you a dark saying, as you listened to this explanation, which, as you must confess, simply made everything inexplicable. Then you acknowledged, humbled and ashamed, that it was well that God did not allow Himself to be tempted, that He was the almighty God, able to crush every presumptuous thought; well that you, in your despair, should not have found an explanation of life's dark saying which any man would be able to insist upon.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. These words are so comprehensible, so simple, and yet how many were there who rightly understood them, rightly understood that they were a badge of honor, more glorious than all the treasures of the earth, but that they were also small change, useful in the daily relationships of life.

"Every good and every perfect gift is from God." The apostle uses two expressions. "Every good gift," he says, and indicates thereby the inmost nature of the gift, that it is a sound and blessed fruit which hides no unsound and injurious decay within itself. "Every perfect gift," says the apostle, and indicates thereby the closer relation in which the good gift, through God's assistance, stands to the particular man who accepts it, so that what is good in itself does not become a detriment and a loss to him.

These two expressions are analogous to two others. "The gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights."

“It is from above,” says the apostle, and in this way he directs the believer’s thought up toward heaven where everything good has its home, the blessing that satisfies the mouth, and the one which satisfies the heart; up to heaven from which the good spirits issue forth for the deliverance of men; up to heaven from which the good intentions return as heavenly gifts. “From the Father of lights,” says the apostle, and means thereby that God with His eternal clarity penetrates everything, so that He understands the thoughts of men from afar, and knows clearly all their ways; that His eternal love hastens forward and prepares everything, and thus makes the “good gift” into a “perfect gift.” For God in heaven is not like a man who, if he had a good gift to give, still gave it in darkness and in uncertainty, glad indeed because it was a good gift and he a glad giver, but also sorrowful because he did not know whether it actually became a good gift for the other or not. “Every good and perfect gift,” says the apostle; “every,” what does this mean? Does the apostle mean by this that the firmament of heaven is a great store-room, and that all the things which heaven contains are good gifts? Does he mean that God brings things out from this rich store, and sends them, according to time and opportunity now and then, sometimes to one, sometimes to another, to the one many, to another fewer, to a particular individual nothing at all, but that what He sends is good and perfect? Let us notice the words which follow: “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” If the apostle had wished to express this, then in place of this word he would have added: from the God of love, the God of mercy and consolation, the Giver of good gifts, or however else he would have expressed it, better and more emphatically than we are able to do; he would next have admonished the believers to thanksgiving according to time and opportunity, in proportion to the good gifts bestowed upon them. He did not do this. He did warn against the error of thinking that God would tempt a man, the error of believing that God would allow Himself to be tempted.

That which he emphasizes is that God is constant, that He remains the same while everything else changes; that which he admonishes us to do is to love God, so that our being may come into likeness with His own, in order that we may win God in constancy, and save our souls in patience. He says nothing in this word about the quality of the particular gifts, but he speaks about God's eternal relation to the believer. When gladness explains life, and everything is delightful and clear, then he warns against this explanation, and admonishes us to refer it to the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. When sorrow casts its shadow over our lives, when despondency veils our sight, when the clouds of anxiety take God away from before our eyes, then sounds the apostolic warning, that with God there is no shadow of turning. That which the apostle warns against is the disturbing of God's blessed Being through the unrest of temptation, as if His heart had either become cold or weak. That which he emphasizes is that as God's all-powerful hand made everything good, so He, the Father of lights, still constant, makes everything good in every moment, everything into a good and perfect gift for everyone who has the heart to humble himself, heart enough to be confident.

Still doubt is cunning and wily, by no means vociferous and defiant, as it is sometimes claimed to be; it is unobtrusive and crafty, not impudent and arrogant, and the more unassuming it is, the more dangerous it is. It does not deny that those words are beautiful, nor that they are comforting. If it did this, then would the heart rebel against it; it merely says that the words are difficult, almost mysterious. It wishes to help the troubled mind to understand the apostolic saying, that every good and every perfect gift is from God. "What does this mean? What else than that everything which comes from God is a good and a perfect gift, and that everything which is a good and perfect gift is from God." This explanation is so simple and so natural, and yet doubt has cunningly hidden itself within it. It continues

therefore: “Consequently, for a man in his lifetime to be able to find peace in these words, he must either be able to determine what it is which comes from God, or what may rightly and in truth be called a good and perfect gift. But how is this possible? Is then every human life a continuous chain of miracles? Or is it possible for a man’s understanding to make its way through the interminable ranks of derived causes and effects, to penetrate all the intervening events, and thus find God? Is it possible for a man’s understanding to determine with certainty what constitutes for him a good and perfect gift? Is it not stranded again and again on this? How often has mankind, how often has every individual man, learned by painful experience that to wish to venture on what had been denied to man is a folly that will not go unpunished?” Thus doubt was ready with an explanation of the meaning of the words, and also ready with words. It had changed the apostolic exhortation into mere words that passed from mouth to mouth, without sense or meaning. It was modest enough not to demand that the words should be erased or consigned to eternal oblivion; it tore them out of the heart, and left them on the lips.

Could it be this way, my hearer? Was an apostle of the Lord perhaps not responsible for these words? Were perhaps those spiritual hosts beneath heaven responsible for them? Was there a curse which rested upon them, so that they should be homeless in the world, and find no dwelling place in the heart of man? Was it their intention to confuse men? Is it not possible to check these anxious meditations in which the thought exhausts itself, and yet never makes any progress? Was it still perhaps true that God does tempt a man, if in no other way, then by preaching a word whose only effect is to confuse his thought?

The apostle Paul says: “All of God’s creation is good, if it is received with thankfulness.” It is principally in order to warn against an earthly prudence which would enslave the believer in the service of ceremonial,

that the apostle says these words. Meantime, what is the apostle doing? He is raising the believer's mind above earthly and finite concerns, above worldly prudence and doubt, by a godly reflection that one ought always to thank God. For the thanksgiving the apostle speaks about is not the gratitude which is offered by one man to another; and those teachers of false doctrines believed, too, that the believers, by transgressing ceremony, sinned against God. Would not the same hold true of every man's relation to God, that every gift is a good and perfect gift when it is received with thanksgiving?

Is it not true, my hearer, that you interpreted those apostolic words in this manner, and you were not perplexed as to what was a good and perfect gift, or whether it came from God? For, you said, every gift is good when it is received with thanksgiving from the hand of God, and from God comes every good and every perfect gift. You did not anxiously ask what it is which comes from God. You said gladly and confidently: this, for which I thank God. You did not concern your mind with reflections on what constitutes a good and a perfect gift; for you said confidently, I know it is that for which I thank God, and therefore I thank Him for it. You interpreted the apostolic word; as your heart developed, you did not ask to learn much from life; you wished to learn only one thing: always to thank God, and thereby learn to understand one thing: that all things serve for good to those that love God.

Is then the apostolic word, that every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, a dark and difficult saying? And if you believe that you cannot understand it, dare you assert that you have wished to understand it? If you doubted whether it came from God, or whether it was a good and perfect gift, have you dared to make the test? And when the easy play of happiness beckoned you, have you thanked God? And when you were so strong that it seemed as if you needed no

assistance, have you thanked God? And when your allotted share was small, have you thanked God? And when your allotted share was suffering, have you thanked God? And when your wish was denied you, have you thanked God? And when you must deny yourself your wish, have you thanked God? And when men did you wrong and offended you, have you thanked God? We do not say that the wrong done you by men thereby ceased to be a wrong, for that would be an untrue and foolish speech! Whether it was wrong, you must yourself decide; but have you referred the wrong and the offense to God, and by your thanksgiving received it from Him as a good and perfect gift? Have you done this? Then surely you have worthily interpreted the apostolic word to the honor of God, to your own salvation; for it is beautiful for a man to pray, and many promises are held out to the one who prays without ceasing; but it is even more blessed to return thanks. Then have you worthily interpreted that apostolic word, more gloriously than if all the angels spoke in glowing tongues.

Still, who had such courage and such faith, who loved God in this way? Who was the joyful and resolute and devout warrior who stood so persistently at his post in life that he never slumbered? And if you did it, my hearer, have you not secretly done it for yourself? Have you said to yourself: “I certainly understand the apostolic word, but I also understand that I am too cowardly, or too proud, or too sluggish rightly to wish to understand it”? Have you admonished yourself? Have you considered that timidity, even if it seems like a hard saying, that timidity also has a deceitful heart, and is not a sincere lover? Have you considered that there is a judgment upon the despondent, but the humble heart comes not to judgment? Have you considered that the sorrowful does not love God with his whole heart, but that he who is glad in God, has overcome the world? Have you at least watched over yourself? Have you held the apostolic word sacred? Have you hidden it in a pure and clean heart, and for no price, for

no crafty bribery of prudence, would ransom yourself from the deep pain of having repeatedly to confess that you have never loved as you were loved? That you were faithless when God was faithful; that you were lukewarm when He was ardent; that He sent good gifts which you yourself perverted; that He questioned you, but you would not answer; that He called to you, but you would not hear; that He spoke kindly to you, but you did not listen; that He spoke earnestly to you, but you misunderstood it; that He fulfilled your wish, and you for thanks brought new wishes; that He fulfilled your wish, but you had not wished rightly, and you were swift to wrath? Have you really deeply felt the sadness since, in order to describe your relation to God, you need so many words? Have you at least in this way been sincere toward yourself and toward God in your relation to Him? Have you not deferred the reckoning, not wishing to shame yourself in your solitude? Have you been swift to endure the pain of the reckoning, have you considered that He first loved you? Have you been swift to judge yourself, so that He should not continue to love you, while you were slow to love in return? If you have done this, then you will now and then gain courage to be thankful, also then, when what happens is wonderful in your eyes, you will gain courage to understand that every good and every perfect gift is from above, courage to explain it in love, faith to accept this courage; for it, too, is a good and a perfect gift.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, *and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* These words are so refreshing, so healing, and yet how often did the penitent soul understand how to let himself be healed by them, how often did he understand their condemning earnestness but also their merciful grace?

Or, my hearer, was there perhaps no occasion in your life when you found these words difficult? Were you always satisfied with yourself, so

satisfied that you perhaps thanked God that you were not like other men? Had you perhaps become so clever that you understood the profound meaning in the meaningless saying that it was glorious not to be like other men?.... What was it, then, that made them difficult for you? If a man himself were a good and a perfect gift, if he only were receptive and accepted everything from God's hand, how then, indeed, could he receive other than good and perfect gifts? But when you submitted to the common lot of man, then you confessed that you were neither good nor perfect, that you not only withheld yourself, but that everything you received underwent a change. Can then the like be understood by other than the like; can the good remain good in other than the good; can wholesome food preserve its wholesomeness in the sick soul? A man does not merely refrain from receiving, he is also communicative, and it became difficult for you to understand how the unsoundness which came from you could be anything but injurious to others. You certainly understood that it was only through your thanksgiving to God that everything became for you a good and perfect gift; you are convinced that in the same way the other man must appropriate everything himself. But was, then, even the love which gave rise to thanksgiving pure; did it not change the recipient?

Can then a man do more than love? Have thought and language any higher expression for the fact that loving is always thanking? By no means. It has a lower, humbler one; for even the one who is always willing to return thanks, still loves according to his perfection, and a man can truly only love God when he loves Him according to his own imperfection. What is this love? It is the love born of repentance, which is more beautiful than all other love; for in it you love God! It is more faithful and more inward than all other love; for in repentance it is God who loves you. In repentance you receive everything from God, even the gratitude which you bring Him, so that even this is what the child's gift is in the eyes of the parent, a jest, a

receiving something one has himself given. Was it not this way, my hearer? You always wished to thank God, but even this thanks was so imperfect. Then you understood that God is the one who does everything for you, and then grants you the childish joy of having Him regard your thanksgiving as a gift from you. This joy He grants you, if you did not fear the pain of remorse, nor the deep sorrow in which a man becomes joyful as a child in God; if you did not fear to understand that this is love, not that we love God, but that God loves us.

And you, my hearer, you who in a more simple and humble manner understood the profound meaning of the thought that you were not like other men, was it as easy not to misunderstand the apostolic word? You certainly fully understood that every good and every perfect gift comes from God. Alas! but you could not understand that the gift good for you might be injurious to another. Dew and rain are good gifts from above, but if the harmful weed understood itself and could speak, then it would perhaps say: “Oh, stop, return to heaven again, that I may perish of drouth; do not revive my root so that I may thrive and grow, and become even more harmful!” And you did not understand yourself, nor the apostolic word; for if that were true, then it would not be true that every good and every perfect gift comes from God, then would God not be greater than a man’s troubled heart, and how, then, could all good and perfect gifts come from Him?

Perhaps there was something in your life you wished undone; if this were possible, then would you with glad thanksgiving take every perfect gift from God’s hand. Your joy even at the thought of it, was so great that it was as if it would tempt God, so that He would make the thing done undone. But God is tempted of no man. You endeavored to forget it, so that your thanksgiving might not be weak, and like smoking flax. Alas! and if you could forget it, how would it then be possible for you to understand the apostolic word? If it were possible for you to forget it, then every good and

every perfect gift would not come from God; you had excluded yourself from the blessing, not by what you had done, but by your poor, selfish, and arbitrary understanding of the word, so that, if your wish was denied, it would exclude you from the blessing, through your being willing to believe that the denied wish was not also a good and a perfect gift, even if it seemed to you far harder than to him who dared to understand it.

You perhaps understood the apostolic word differently, that punishment from God is also a good and perfect gift. The wrath in your heart joined, as it were, the divine wrath in helping that the punishment might consume you, and yet the punishment you suffered was different from what you had thought it to be. It perhaps included more than yourself, and yet you were the only one guilty; it was perhaps more comprehensive, and yet you were the only one who should have been its object. Even if in your quiet thought you recognized that the divine guidance knows how to overtake a man, knows how to make itself intelligible to him, even if no one else understood it, the apostolic word remained obscure to you; it was as if the punishment itself became a new temptation. You became doubtful as to what was punishment, and what was incident; if it was only incident, then your soul demanded punishment; if it was entirely punishment, then you could not put it on. You would renounce everything, every wish, every desire; you would give up the idea that the best you had done in the extreme exertion of your soul, was an assurance that it was good, that it was anything else than folly and sin; you would suffer every punishment, but the *more* which was connected with this, you could not bear. Was it also a good and a perfect gift? Then your soul became darkened; you could not understand the word. But what did you do? Did you give up the word? Oh, no, you held fast to it in all your need. And when all the devils stood ready to save your soul from the insanity of despair by explaining that God is not love, is it not true that you clung fast to the word, even if you did not understand it, because you

still cherished a vague hope, and felt that to let it go was more terrible than anything else?

Did you do this, my hearer? Then, although the outward man perished, the inward man was renewed. Then you understood that every good and every perfect gift is from above if it is received with thankfulness; you understood that repentance is a returning of thanks not only for punishment but also for the dispensation of Providence, and that he who in his repentance will only suffer punishment, will still not, in the deepest sense, love according to his imperfection. As the Lord Himself says: Yet today, so the apostle of the Lord says: Yet today is every good and every perfect gift from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; yet today, and that although He is the same today as He was yesterday.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. These words are so beautiful, so eloquent, so moving; they are so soothing and so comforting, so simple and comprehensible, so refreshing and so healing. Therefore we will beseech Thee, O God, that Thou wilt make the ears of those who hitherto have not regarded them, willing to accept them; that Thou wilt heal the misunderstanding heart by the understanding of the word, to understand the word; that Thou wilt incline the erring thought under the saving obedience of the word; that Thou wilt give the penitent soul confidence to dare to understand the word; and that Thou wilt make those who have understood it more and more blessed therein, so that they may repeatedly understand it. Amen.

III. LOVE SHALL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS

BUT THE END of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:7-12

WHAT is it that makes a man great, admired by his fellows, acceptable in the sight of God? What is it that makes a man strong, stronger than the whole world, what is it that makes him weak, weaker than a child? What is it that makes a man immovable, more immovable than the rock, what is it that makes him soft, softer than wax? It is love! What is it that is older than everything else? It is love. What is it that outlives everything else? It is love. What is it that cannot be taken, but itself takes everything? It is love. What is it that cannot be given, but itself gives everything? It is love. What is it that endures when all else disappoints? It is love. What is it that comforts when all comfort fails? It is love. What is it that persists when all else changes? It is love. What is it that remains when the imperfect is abolished? It is love. What is it that bears witness when prophecy is silent? It is love. What is it that does not end when the vision ceases? It is love. What is it that explains when the dark saying is ended? It is love. What is it that bestows a blessing on the abundance of the gift? It is love. What is it that gives emphasis to the speech of angels? It is love. What is it that transforms the widow’s mite into an abundance? It is love. What is it that

turns the words of the simple man into wisdom? It is love. What is it that never changes when all else changes? It is love; and only that is love which never becomes anything else.

For the pagans also praised love, its beauty and its power; but that love could become something else, which they praised even more highly. Love was beautiful, more beautiful than anything else; but revenge was sweet, sweeter than all else. And so foolish was the pagan thought about love and about the heavenly, so selfish was everything both in heaven and on earth, that the power which benevolently bestowed the joy of love on mankind, enviously reserved revenge for itself, because it was the sweeter.

What wonder then that the idea of revenge was concealed in all pagan love, that fear was not cast out, even if it was forgotten; what wonder that the enemy worked in stillness, even when love slept soundest; what wonder that resentment secretly lay in wait and watched for an opportunity; what wonder that it suddenly burst forth in all its fierceness; what wonder that it completely filled the pagan soul which imbibed its forbidden sweetness, and thereby assured itself of its kinship with the heavenly! What wonder that no love was happy, as no man was in paganism, until his last hour was come, which again could only bitterly mock a man with the idea that he had been happy! What wonder that sorrow was mingled in every joy, that even in the moment of gladness the next moment constantly loomed as alarmingly as the shadow of death! How then could a pagan be able to overcome the world? But if he could not do this, how could he be able to gain the world?

What is it that is never changed when all else changes? It is love, and only this is love which never becomes something else. For the pious Jew also bore witness to love, but his love was the child of mutability and change, and he knew how to hate his enemy. He even ascribed vengeance to the Lord, because he himself had it; his own soul was not unacquainted with

its sweetness. Then, too, was this consciousness sweet, that the Lord's vengeance is more terrible than human vengeance, that a man curses his enemy, but the Lord curses the ungodly and the family of the ungodly through many generations. What wonder then that fear always kept one eye open even when love was least concerned; what wonder that resentment quietly sat and reckoned up the things given and the things received, the thine and mine, even when love least dreamed of it! What wonder that no love was happy until the last hour came, because not till then was love's uncertain demand perfectly redeemed.

What is it that is never changed, even if all else changes? It is love. And only this is love which never becomes something else, this which gives *everything* and *because of this* demands nothing, this which demands nothing, and therefore has nothing to lose, this which blesses, and blesses when it is cursed, this which loves its neighbor, but whose enemy is also his neighbor, this which leaves vengeance to the Lord, because it comforts him to believe that the Lord is even more merciful than he himself is.

It is this love the apostle Peter speaks about in the text we read, and as this love many times and in many ways received the testimony of the apostle, so here again he bears witness to its power when he says: Love shall cover a multitude of sins.

It is this word, this testimony, we shall examine a little more carefully, as we reflect on

HOW LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

Still, how ought we to speak about these words? Shall we speak hastily, not giving ourselves time to dwell on the meaning of them, because the mere sound of them contains a quiet reproach which awakens grief, which calls forth a striving toward that goal which is set for every man to strive after? Shall we speak in such a way that, if possible, the individual, even at this

hour, may resolve to buy the opportune moment; so that, if possible, the word may influence one whom it met standing idle to begin the race; him whom it came across on the way to accelerate his speed; him whom it met in the race to hasten to finish it? Shall we speak thus as to the imperfect! Shall we recall how rarely even one is found who either has never known or has absolutely forgotten those rudiments of worldly wisdom, that revenge is sweet? Shall we recall that every man, if he is honest, only too often catches himself tediously, earnestly learning to interpret this sorry truth, that revenge is sweet? Shall we recall how rarely there is even one who left vengeance to the Lord, confident that He had an even milder explanation of the guilt, an even more merciful judgment upon it; that He is greater than the heart of man? On the contrary, how often must every honest man confess that he really did not relinquish the idea of revenge because he left it to the Lord? Shall I recall how rarely there was even one who forgave in such a way that the repentant enemy really became his neighbor; one who in his forgiveness actually broke down the wall between them, and was conscious of no difference because he himself was called in the early morning, his enemy at the eleventh hour, nor that he was owed only fifty pennies, his enemy five hundred? Shall I recall how seldom there was even one who loved so much that his ear, when his enemy was prosperous, was sensible of no whisper of envy, because his heart was free from envy; who loved so much that "his eye did not begrudge forgiveness" when fortune favored his enemy; one who loved so much that when it went hard with his enemy, he had forgotten that it was his enemy? Shall we warn against that which in the eyes of men is a lesser fault, against a certain shrewd common-sense which cunningly knows how to discover a man's fault, and which does not indeed misuse its knowledge in judging, yet through its curiosity does not so much harm the neighbor as retard itself. Shall we admonish everyone to aim at that Christian love, because every man so often needs

forgiveness himself? Shall we admonish every man to judge himself, and in so doing forget to judge others; admonish against judging and condemning, because no man can entirely understand another, because it still sometimes happens that the wrath of heaven did not consume the one upon whom one called it down, but that the Lord, gracious and gentle, secretly delighted in him? Shall we admonish everyone not to be too zealous in invoking the wrath of heaven upon another, lest through his unforgivingness he call down a more terrible wrath upon himself on the day of judgment?

Shall we speak in this way? Certainly, to speak in this way would indeed very frequently be profitable to us, but to do it is so very difficult that not even the speaker himself is able to act in accordance with the speech in judging others. Certainly, even in speaking it is very difficult to judge oneself, so that the speaker does not become entangled in a new misunderstanding, and thereby confuse others. Therefore we choose the easier task; we shall lay the emphasis on the words themselves, and, as all other kinds of love have been praised in the world, we shall explain and praise the love which has power to perform the miraculous, to cover a multitude of sins. We shall speak as to the perfect. If there should then be one who did not regard himself as perfect, the speech would make no difference. We shall let our soul rest in the apostolic word, which is not a deceitful, poetic mode of expression, not a bold outburst, but a trustworthy thought, a perfectly valid testimony, which to be understood must be taken at its face value.

Love shall cover a multitude of sins. Love is blind, says an old proverb, but it does not thereby mean that this is an imperfection in the lover, or that he was born blind; for not until love won a place in his soul did he become blind, and then, as love triumphed more and more within him, he became more and more blind. Or did love become more imperfect when, after having first deceived itself by not wishing to see what it actually saw, at last

it did not even see it any more? Or who concealed it best, he who knew that he had forgotten something, or he who had even forgotten this? To the pure all things are pure, is an old saying which does not indicate an imperfection in the pure that might gradually disappear; on the contrary, the more perfect he becomes, the purer everything seems to him. Or was it an imperfection in the pure, that after having saved himself unspotted by the impurity through not wishing to know what he really did know, he at last finished by not knowing it any longer?

It depends, then, not only on what a man sees, but what a man sees depends on how he sees it; for all observation is not only a receiving, a discovery, but also a creation, and in so far as it is that, the crucial thing is what the observer himself is. Thus, when one person sees one thing and another another in the same object, then the one discovers what the other conceals. Insofar as the object of contemplation belongs to the external world, the nature of the observer is a matter of relative importance, or rather, it is then, as a necessary object of reflection, something the observer's deeper nature is unconscious of; on the contrary, the more the object of contemplation belongs to the spiritual world, the more important becomes the question of what the observer is in his inmost being; for all things spiritual are appropriated only in freedom; but what is appropriated in freedom must also be produced in freedom. The difference then does not depend on externals but on the inward condition, and from within goeth forth everything which makes a man unclean, and his thoughts unclean. What the eye sees externally is of no importance, but from within "proceedeth the evil eye." But an evil eye discovers much that love does not see; for an evil eye even regards the Lord as unrighteous when He is good. When evil dwells in the heart then the eye sees evil, but when purity abides in the heart, then the eye sees the finger of God; for the pure always see God, "but he who does evil, does not see God."

What is in a man, then, decides what he discovers and what he conceals. When the lust of sin dwells in the heart, then the eye discovers the multitude of sins, and makes them even more numerous; for the eye is the light of the body, but if the light that is in a man be darkness, then how great is that darkness! When the apprehension of sin dwells in the heart, then the ear discovers the variety of sin, and makes it even more manifold, and how is such a man helped by being blind? For a rascal casts his eyes down, and listens with his rascally ears. When love dwells in the heart, then the eye closes, and does not discover the manifest acts of sin, even less those that are concealed; for "he who winketh with the eye," has an evil mind; but he who understands the invitation of the eye is not pure. When love abides in the heart, then the ear is closed and does not hear the worldly speech, the bitterness of its blasphemy; for he who says Raca to his brother, is guilty before the council, but he who hears it, when it is said to him, is not perfect in love. When there is precipitancy in the heart, then is a man quick to discover the multitude of sin, then he is excellently able to understand a half-uttered word, hastily understand it from a distance, almost before it is spoken. When love dwells in the heart, then a man comprehends slowly, and does not hear at all the hasty word and does not understand its repetition, because he ascribes to it a good intention and a good meaning; does not understand the long, angry or derisive speech, because he still expects one word which will give meaning to the speech. When fear dwells in the heart, then a man easily discovers the multiplicity of sin — weakness and deceit and faithlessness and scheming, so that

> Every heart is like a trap,
> Every rogue like a child,
> Every promise but a shadow.

But the love which covers a multitude of sins is never deceived. When the heart is niggardly, when one gives with one eye and with seven eyes

looks to see what one will get in return, then one easily discovers a multitude of sins. But when the heart is filled with love, then the eye is never deceived; for love when it gives, does not scrutinize the gift, but its eyes are fixed on the Lord. When the heart is filled with envy, then the eye has power to call forth uncleanness even in the pure; but when love dwells in the heart, then the eye has power to foster the good in the unclean; but this eye does not see the evil but the pure, which it loves and encourages by loving it. Certainly there is a power in this world which by its words turns good into evil, but there is a power above which turns the evil into good; that power is the love which covers a multitude of sins. When hate dwells in the heart, then sin lies at a man's door, and its manifold desires exist in him; but when love dwells in the heart, then sin flees far away, and he sees it no more. When disputes, malice, wrath, quarrels, dissensions, factions fill the heart, does one then need to go far in order to discover the multitudinousness of sin, or does a man need to live very long to produce these outside of himself! But when joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance dwell in the heart, what wonder, then, that a man, even if he were surrounded by a multitude of sins, remains an alien, a stranger, who understands only a very little about the customs of the country, even if these were explained to him? Would not this, then, be a covering of the multitude of sins?

Or is it not this way? Should we shrewdly say: The variety of sin in the world is and remains equally great whether love discovers it or not? Should we permit the apostolic word, and with it the love which is described, to remain ambiguous, a graceful turn of expression which is not able to endure the test of an investigation? But then did the intelligence really understand love as well as it understood the manifold of sin! Or would it admit the opposite, that the manifold of sin remained equally great whether the intelligence discovered it or not, and not rather commend its own ingenuity

in discovering and tracing the hiding place of sin? But then it became equally true that the intelligence discovered the manifold of sin, and that love concealed it; but the one was no truer than the other. Or was there not still a third way in which one without being sensibly conscious of it, nor lovingly unconscious of it, was still conscious of the manifold of sin; was not such a knowledge a superhuman knowledge? It is not, then, merely a rhetorical expression that love covers a multitude of sins, but it is the very truth, and this is the power of the Christian love, which is not great through unusual achievements, as other love is, but greater in its quiet miraculousness.

Happy that man who saw the world in all its perfection when everything was very good; happy that man who with God was a witness to the glory of creation; more blessed the soul who was God's collaborator in love; blessed the love which covers a multitude of sins.

Love shall cover a multitude of sins. A *multitude* of sins, that is an appalling word, and readily recalls another connection in which the word is frequently used: the multitude of created beings wherein we contemplate the countless hosts of generations, the innumerable multitude of living beings, which cannot be reckoned in numbers, because no number is vast enough, and because there is no moment when one can begin to count; for every moment an innumerable number is born. But this is not the case with the multitude of sins. As it is said that to him who hath shall be given, and he shall have in abundance, so, too, is sin very fruitful, and one sin breeds many, and becomes more and more multitudinous. But love covers a multitude of sins. If the eye of love had not closed, if it had not even hidden the multitude of sins from its view, how could it then venture to check the power of sin! So then love really covers a multitude of sins through the fact that it has covered them before.

An ancient sage has said: Prevent boredom and you will diminish sin. But one who reduces the number of sins, covers a multitude of sins, and conceals them doubly by not sinning himself, and by preventing another from sinning. And yet he who prevents boredom, keeps a man from sinning only for a moment; perhaps the same man will seek boredom in another direction; but he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, as the apostle James says, he covers a multitude of sins.

Still is it possible to explain correctly how love covers a multitude of sins, or is not love even more manifold than sin is? When love sees the bruised reed, then it knows how to cover the multitude of sins, so that the reed is not crushed under the burden. When love sees the smoking flax, then it knows how to cover the multitude of sins, so that the flame is not quenched. When love has triumphed over the multitude of sins, then it knows how to hide again the multitude of sins, then it prepares everything festally for the reception, as the father of the prodigal son did; then it stands with open arms and awaits the erring, then has it forgotten everything and causes him to forget everything, as it again hides the multitude of sins. For love does not even weep over the multitude of sins; if it did this, then it would have seen the sins, but it covers their multitude. And when sin offers resistance, then love becomes even more manifold, never weary of faithfully pulling in an unequal yoke with it, never weary of believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things. When sin hardens itself against love, and wishes to be rid of it, when it rewards kindness with abuse and scorn and ridicule, then love does not requite abuse with abuse, then it blesses and curses not. When sin enviously hates love, when it would maliciously cause love itself to sin, then it finds no deceitfulness on its lips, but only prayer and admonition. But when prayers and warnings only inflame the sin, and become a new occasion for multiplying the sins, then is love silent, but not the less faithful; steadfast as a woman, it saves, as a woman does—

"without words." Sin thought that it would soon bring about the parting of their ways, but lo, love remained with it. And sin would thrust love away from it; it forces love to go a mile with it, but lo, love goes two; it struck love on the right cheek, but lo, love turned the other to it; it took away love's coat, but lo, love gave its cloak also. Already sin feels its impotence, it cannot hold out against love, it will then tear itself away from it. Then it injures love as deeply as possible; for even love itself, sin believes, cannot forgive more than seven times. But lo, love could forgive seventy times seven, and sin sooner became tired of needing forgiveness than love did of forgiving. Yes, as there is a power of sin which has the power to consume every better feeling in a man, so, too, is there a heavenly power which starves out the manifold of sin in a man. This power is the love which covers a multitude of sins.

Or is it not this way? Should we rather praise a cleverness which knows how to describe the multitude of sins even more terribly? Or ought we not rather to ask this cleverness where it gets such knowledge? Certainly, if it could convince love that such is the case, then love would never begin, and would accomplish nothing. But because of this, love begins by hiding a multitude of sins, and therefore it ends where it began, by hiding a multitude of sins.

Blessed the man whose sins are hidden; more blessed the love which hides a multitude of sins.

Love shall cover a multitude of sins. If love had triumphed in the world, then would all the multitude of sins be hidden, and everything would be perfect in love. If the hosts of love were numerous in the world, if their number were equal to that of the enemy, so they could fight man to man — then, how could love do other than conquer since it is the stronger! If, on the contrary, the servants of love are but a small host, if each one is only a

solitary man, then will love actually be able to cover a multitude of sins? Or is the apostolic word, insofar as we wish thereby to consider its zeal within its own limits, anything more than the pious ignorance of love; is not the apostolic utterance in such a case a beautiful but still a meaningless expression? Ought we not to regard the apostolic expression as an enthusiastic bit of foolishness, and rather commend the cleverness which says: The way of life follows an appointed course; let love live next door to ungodliness, the ungodliness gains no advantage from it? Would the reason be equally prompt to assert the opposite, that it makes no difference if ungodliness does dwell with love? Will the reason deny that in life the innocent must often suffer with the guilty?

Let us interrogate the reason. An ancient pagan, who in pagandom was renowned and praised for his wisdom, sailed on the same ship with a wicked man. When the ship was in distress the wicked man lifted up his voice in prayer, but the wise man said to him: “Keep quiet, my friend; if heaven discovers that you are on board, the ship will go under.” Thus is it not true that the guilty may be the occasion for the destruction of the innocent? But is not the opposite equally true? Perhaps then the understanding lacked only the courage to believe this, and while it had sufficient distressing cleverness to discover the wretchedness of life, it did not have the courage to apprehend the power of love. Is this not true? For the reason still merely makes a man despondent and faint-hearted, but love gives courage freely, and because of this every apostolic word is always confident.

If, instead of there having been a wicked man on board that ship, there had been a righteous man, if there had been an apostle! And did this not happen? A pagan ship sailed from Crete bound for Rome, and the ship was in distress, and for many days they saw neither sun nor stars. On board that ship there was an apostle; and Paul came forward and said to them who

were with him in the ship: “Men, I admonish you to be of good courage; for not one soul among you shall perish.” Or should unrighteousness really have greater power than love; should the fact that a wicked man was on board have power to alter the circumstances for the others on the ship, but an apostle not have power to do this? Or does not the Lord Himself say that for the sake of the elect the days of distress shall be shortened?

Is this an unworthy conception of God to believe that love thus hides a multitude of sins? Do we perhaps forget in our speech and in our reflection that God in heaven is not hindered by any illusions, that His thought is vivid and present, that He penetrates everything and judges the designs of the heart? Would one be right in reminding us, when we wished to extol love, rather to restrict ourselves to telling the truth, that it is beautiful and lovely that love should wish to cover the multitude of sins and avert wrath, than to exaggerate by saying that love does cover a multitude of sins? Has he who speaks thus not forgotten, what we do not forget, that love prays for the sins of others; has he not forgotten that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much?

When Abraham spoke earnestly to the Lord and begged for Sodom and Gomorrah, did he not then conceal a multitude of sins? Or is it perhaps a commendable sophistry for someone to say that by his prayer he recalled the multitude of sins and proclaimed the judgment, just as his own life was already a judgment, which, if it had power to impose a condition, made the judgment, if anything, even more terrible? How did Abraham pray? Let us speak about it from the human point of view! Did he not, as it were, carry the Lord along with him in his course of reasoning, did he not cause the Lord to forget the multitude of sinners in order to count the number of the righteous, whether there might be fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, aye, whether there might be even ten innocent men? Did not Abraham then conceal a multitude of sins? Does the destruction of the cities prove the

converse, or prove anything except that there were not ten righteous men in Sodom? And yet what was Abraham in comparison with an apostle, what was his confidence in comparison with an apostle's?

Great is a man, in that his life, if he is upright, shall even judge angels; more blessed the love which covers a multitude of sins.

We have praised the power of love to cover a multitude of sins. We have spoken as to perfection. If there was someone who did not feel himself perfect, the speech made no difference. Let us once more dwell upon this love in order to observe the image of it which clearly presents itself to the soul. Should there be one who by observing himself in this mirror ascertained his own unlikeness, should this be the case with everyone, the speech makes no difference.

When the scribes and the Pharisees had taken a woman in open sin, they brought her into the midst of the temple before the face of the Savior; but Jesus bowed down and wrote with His finger on the ground. He who knew everything, knew also what the scribes and the Pharisees knew, before they told Him. The scribes and the Pharisees soon discovered her guilt, which was indeed easy since her sin was open. They also discovered a new sin, one of which they made themselves guilty, when they artfully laid snares for the Lord. But Jesus bowed down and wrote with His finger upon the ground. Why, I wonder, did He bow down; why, I wonder, did He write with His finger upon the ground? Did He sit there like a judge who listens attentively to the story of the accusers, who, listening, bows down and jots down the principal points so that he may not forget them, and may judge strictly; was the woman's guilt the only thing which was noted by the Lord? Or did not He who wrote with His finger on the ground rather write it down in order to erase it and forget it? There stood the sinner, surrounded perhaps

by those even more guilty, who loudly accused her, but love bowed down and did not hear the accusation, which passed over His head into the air; He wrote with His finger in order to blot out what He himself knew; for sin discovers a multitude of sins, but love covers the multitude of sins. Yes, even in the sight of the sinner, love covers a multitude of sins. For by one word from the Master the Pharisees and the scribes were struck dumb, and there was no longer an accuser, no one who condemned her. But Jesus said to her: “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more,” for the punishment of sin breeds new sin, but love covers a multitude of sins.

IV. THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY, BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD

THEN JOB AROSE, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground and worshipped, and said: Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Job 1:20-21

NOT only do we call that man a teacher of men who through some particularly happy talent discovered, or by unremitting toil and continued perseverance brought to light one or another truth; left what he had acquired as a principle of knowledge, which the following generations strove to understand, and through this understanding to appropriate to themselves. Perhaps, in an even stricter sense, we also call that one a teacher of men who had no doctrine to pass on to others, but who merely left himself as a pattern to succeeding generations, his life as a principle of guidance to every man, his name as an assurance to the many, his own deeds as an encouragement to the striving. Such a teacher and guide of men was Job, whose significance is by no means due to what he said but to what he did. He has indeed left a saying which because of its brevity and its beauty has become a proverb, preserved from generation to generation, and no one has been presumptuous enough to add anything to it or to take anything away from it. But the expression itself is not the guidance, and Job's significance does not lie in the fact that he said it, but in the fact that he acted in accordance with it. The expression itself is truly beautiful and worthy of consideration, but if another had used it, or if Job had been different, or if he had uttered it under different circumstances, then the word itself would have become something different — significant, if, as uttered, it would

otherwise have been so, but not significant from the fact that he acted in asserting it, so that the expression itself was the action. If Job had devoted his whole life to emphasizing this word, if he had regarded it as the sum and fulfillment of what a man ought to let life teach him, if he had constantly only *taught* it, but had never himself practiced it, had never himself acted in accordance with what he taught, then Job would have been a different kind of man, his significance different. Then would Job's name have been forgotten, or it would have been unimportant whether anyone remembered it or not, the principal thing being the content of the word, the richness of the thought it embodied.

If the race had accepted the saying, then it would have been this which one generation transmitted to the next; while now, on the contrary, it is Job himself who guides the generations. When one generation has served its time, fulfilled its duty, fought its battle, then Job has guided it; when the new generation, with its innumerable ranks and every individual among them in his place, stands ready to begin the journey, then Job is again present, takes his place, which is the outpost of humanity. If the generation sees only happy days and prosperous times, then Job faithfully goes with them, and if, nevertheless, an individual in his thought experiences the terrible, is apprehensive because of his conception of what life may conceal of horror and distress, of the fact that no one knows when the hour of despair may strike for him, then his troubled thought resorts to Job, dwells upon him, is reassured by him. For Job keeps faithfully by his side and comforts him, not as if he had thus suffered once for all what he would never again have to endure, but he comforts him as one who witnesses that the terror is endured, the horror experienced, the battle of despair waged, to the honor of God, to his own salvation, to the profit and happiness of others. In joyful days, in fortunate times, Job walks by the side of the race and guarantees it its happiness, combats the apprehensive dream that some

horror may suddenly befall a man and have power to destroy his soul as its certain prey.

Only the thoughtless man could wish that Job should not accompany him, that his venerable name should not remind him of what he seeks to forget, that terror and anxiety exist in life. Only the selfish man could wish that Job had not existed, so that the idea of his suffering might not disturb with its austere earnestness his own unsubstantial joy, and frighten him out of his intoxicated security in obduracy and perdition. In stormy times, when the foundation of existence is shaken, when the moment trembles in fearful expectation of what may happen, when every explanation is silent at the sight of the wild uproar, when a man's heart groans in despair, and "in bitterness of soul" he cries to heaven, then Job still walks at the side of the race and guarantees that there is a victory, guarantees that even if the individual loses in the strife, there is still a God, who, as with every human temptation, even if a man fails to endure it, will still make its outcome such that we may be able to bear it; yea, more glorious than any human expectation. Only the defiant could wish that Job had not existed, so that he might absolutely free his soul from the last vestiges of love which still remained in the plaintive shriek of despair; so that he might complain, aye, even curse life; so that there might be no consonance of faith and confidence and humility in his speech; so that in his defiance he might stifle the shriek so that it might not even seem as if there were anyone whom it defied. Only the effeminate could wish that Job had not existed, so that he might relinquish every thought, the sooner the better; might renounce every emotion in the most abhorrent impotence and completely efface himself in the most wretched and miserable oblivion.

The expression which, when it is mentioned, at once reminds us of Job, immediately becomes vividly present in everyone's thought, is a plain and simple one; it conceals no secret wisdom that must be unearthed from the

depths. If a child learns this word, if it is entrusted to him as an endowment, he does not understand for what purpose he will use it; when he understands the word, he understands essentially the same thing by it as does the wisest. Still, the child does not understand it, or rather he does not understand Job; for what he does not comprehend is all the distress and wretchedness with which Job was tested. About that the child can have only a dark premonition; and yet, happy the child who understood the word and got an impression of what he did not comprehend, that it was the most terrible thing imaginable; who possessed, before sorrow and adversity made its thought cunning; the convincing and childishly vivid conviction that it was in truth the most terrible. When the youth turns his attention to this word, then he understands it, and understands it essentially the same as do the child and the wisest. Still he perhaps does not understand it, or rather, he does not understand Job, does not understand why all the distress and wretchedness should come in which Job was tried; and yet, happy the youth who understood the word and humbly bowed before what he did not understand, before his own distress made his thought wayward, as if he had discovered what no one had known before. When the adult reflects on this word, then he understands essentially the same by it as did the child and the wisest. He understands, too, the wretchedness and distress in which Job was tried; and yet perhaps he does not understand Job, for he cannot understand how Job was able to say it; and yet, happy the man who understood the word, and steadfastly admired what he did not understand, before his own distress and wretchedness made him also distrustful of Job. When the man who has been tried, who fought the good fight through remembering this saying, mentions it, then he understands it, and understands it essentially the same as the child and as the wisest understood it; he understands Job's misery, he understands how Job could say it. He understands the word, he

interprets it, even though he never speaks about it, more gloriously than the one who spent a whole life-time in explaining this one word.

Only the one who has been tried, who tested the word through himself being tested, only he interprets the word correctly, and only such a disciple, only such an interpreter, does Job desire. Only such a one learns from Job what there is to learn, the most beautiful and blessed truth, compared with which all other art and all other wisdom is very unessential. Therefore we rightly call Job a teacher of mankind, not of certain individual men, for he offers himself to every man as his pattern, beckons to everyone by his glorious example, summons everyone in his beautiful words. While the more simple-minded man, the one less gifted, or the one less favored by time and circumstances, if not enviously yet in troubled despondency, may sometimes have wished for the talent and the opportunity to be able to understand and absorb himself in those things which scholars from time to time have discovered, may also have felt a desire in his soul to be able to teach others, and not always be the one to receive instruction, Job does not tempt him in this way. How, too, could human wisdom help here? Would it perhaps seek to make that more intelligible which the simplest and the child easily understood, and understood as well as the wisest! How would the art of eloquence and fluency help here? Would it be able to produce in the speaker or in some other man what the simplest is able to do as well as the wisest — action! Would not human wisdom rather tend to make everything more difficult? Would not eloquence, which, despite its pretentiousness, is nevertheless unable to express the differences which always dwell in the heart of man, rather benumb the power of action, and allow it to slumber in extensive reflection! But even if this is true, and even if, as a result of this, the speaker endeavors to avoid intruding disturbingly between the striving individual and the beautiful pattern which is equally near to every man, so that he may not increase sorrow by increasing wisdom; even if he takes care

not to ensnare himself in the splendid words of human persuasiveness, which are very unfruitful, still it by no means follows that the reflection and the development might not have their own significance. If the one reflecting had not hitherto known this word, then it would always be an advantage to him that he had learned to know it; if he had known it, but had had no occasion to test it, then it would always be an advantage to him, that he had learned to understand what he perhaps might some time have to use.

If he had tested it, but it had deceived him, if he even believed that it was the word which had deceived him, then it would be advantageous to him that he had previously reflected upon it, before he fled from it in the unrest of the strife and the haste of battle! Perhaps the reflection would sometime become significant to him; it might perhaps happen that the reflection would become vividly present in his soul just when he needed it in order to penetrate the confused thoughts of his restless heart; it might perhaps happen that what the reflection had understood only in part, would sometime gather itself regenerated in the moment of decision; that what reflection had sowed in corruption would spring up in the day of need in the incorruptible life of action.

So let us endeavor to understand Job better in his beautiful words: *The Lord gave*, *the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!*

In the land toward the east there lived a man whose name was Job. He was blessed with lands, innumerable herds, and rich pastures; "his words had lifted up the fallen, and had strengthened the feeble knees"; his tent was blessed as if it rested in the lap of heaven, and in this tent he lived with his seven sons and three daughters; and "the secret of the Lord" abode there with him. And Job was an old man; his joy in life was his pleasure in his children, over whom he watched that no evil might come upon them. There he sat one day alone by his fireside, while his children were gathered at a

festival at the oldest brother's house. There he offered burnt offerings for each one individually, there he also disposed his heart to joy in the thought of his children. As he sat there in the quiet confidence of happiness, there came a messenger, and before he could speak there came another, and while this one was still speaking, there came a third, but the fourth messenger brought news concerning his sons and daughters, that the house had been overthrown and had buried them all. "Then Job stood up and rent his mantle and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped." His sorrow did not express itself in many words, or rather he did not utter a single one; only his appearance bore witness that his heart was broken. Gould you wish it otherwise! Is not that one who prides himself on not being able to sorrow in the day of sorrow put to shame by not being able to rejoice in the Day of gladness? Is not the sight of such imperturbability unpleasant and distressing, almost revolting, while it is affecting to see an honorable old man, who but now sat in the gladness of the Lord, sitting with his fatherly countenance downcast, his mantle rent and his head shaven! Since he had thus surrendered himself to sorrow, not in despair but stirred by human emotion, he was swift to judge between God and himself, and the words of his judgment are these: "Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." With these words the struggle was decided, and every claim which would demand something from the Lord, which He did not wish to give, or would desire to retain something, as if it had not been a gift, was brought to silence in his soul. Then follows the confession from the man whom not sorrow alone but worship as well had prostrated on the ground: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

The Lord gave, *the Lord took.* What first arrests the attention is that Job said, "The Lord gave." Is not this word irrelevant to the occasion; does it not contain something different from what lay in the event itself? If a man

in a single moment is deprived of everything dear to him, and deprived of the most precious of all, the loss will perhaps at first so overwhelm him that he will not even trust himself to express it, even if in his heart he is conscious before God that he has lost everything. Or he will not permit the loss to rest with its crushing weight upon his soul, but he will put it away from him, and in his heart's agitation he will say, "The Lord took." And thus to humble one's self before the Lord in silence and humility is indeed worthy of praise and emulation, and in the struggle such a man saves his soul though he loses all his gladness. But Job! At the moment when the Lord took everything, he did not say first, "The Lord took," but he said first, "The Lord gave." The word is short, but in its brevity it perfectly expresses what it wishes to indicate, that Job's soul is not crushed down in silent submission to sorrow, but that his heart first expanded in gratitude; that the loss of everything first made him thankful to the Lord that He had given him all the blessings that He now took from him. It did not happen with him, as Joseph predicted, that the abundance of the seven fruitful years would be entirely forgotten in the seven lean years. The nature of his gratitude was not the same as in that long vanished time when he accepted every good and perfect gift from the hand of God with thanksgiving; but still his gratitude was sincere, as was his conception about the goodness of God which now became living in his soul. Now he is reminded of everything which the Lord had given, some individual thing perhaps with even greater thankfulness than when he had received it.

It was not become less beautiful to him because it was taken away, nor more beautiful, but still beautiful as before, beautiful because the Lord gave it, and what now might seem more beautiful to him, was not the gift but the goodness of God. He is reminded again of his abundant prosperity, his eyes rest once more upon the rich pastures, and follow the numerous herds; he remembers what joy there was in having seven sons and three daughters,

who now needed no offering except that of thankfulness for having had them. He is reminded of those who perhaps still remembered him with gratitude, the many he had instructed, “whose weak hands he had strengthened, whose feeble knees he had upheld.” He is reminded of the glorious days when he was powerful and esteemed by the people, “when the young men hid themselves out of reverence for him, and the old men arose and remained standing.” He remembers with thankfulness that his step had not turned away from the way of righteousness, that he had rescued the poor who complained, and the fatherless who had no helper; and therefore, even in this moment, the “blessing of the forsaken” was upon him as before.

The Lord gave. It is a short word, but to Job it signified so very much; for Job’s memory was not so short, nor was his thankfulness so forgetful. While thankfulness rested in his soul with its quiet sadness, he bade a gentle and friendly farewell to everything at once, and in this farewell everything disappeared like a beautiful memory; moreover, it seemed as if it were not the Lord who took it, but Job who gave it back to Him. When therefore Job had said, “The Lord gave,” then was his mind well prepared to please God also with the next word, “The Lord took.”

Perhaps there might be someone who on the day of sorrow was also reminded that he had seen happy days, and his soul would become even more impatient. “Had he never known happiness, then the pain would not have overcome him, for what is pain, after all, other than an idea which he does not have who knows nothing else, but now happiness had so educated and developed him as to make him conscious of the pain.” Thus his happiness became pernicious to him; it was never lost but only lacking, and it tempted him more in the lack than ever before. What had been the delight of his eyes, he desired to see again, and his ingratitude punished him by conjuring it up as more beautiful than it had formerly been. What his soul had rejoiced in, it now thirsted for again, and his ingratitude punished him

by painting it as more desirable than it had previously been. What he had once been capable of doing, that he now wished to be able to do again, and his ingratitude punished him with visions that had never had reality. Thus he condemned his soul to living famished in the never satisfied craving of want.

Or there awakened a consuming passion in his soul, because he had not even enjoyed the happy days in the right way, had not imbibed all the sweetness from their voluptuous abundance. If there might only be vouchsafed to him one little hour, if he might only regain the glory for a short time so that he might satiate himself with happiness, and thereby learn to disregard the pain! Then he abandoned his soul to a burning unrest; he would not acknowledge to himself whether the enjoyment he desired was worthy of a man; whether he ought not rather to thank God that his soul had not been so extravagant in the time of joy as it had now become in his unhappiness; he was not appalled by the thought that his desires were the cause of his perdition; he refused to be concerned by the fact that more wretched than all his wretchedness was the worm of desire in his soul, which would not die.

Perhaps there might be another man who at the moment of loss also remembered what he had possessed, but who had the audacity to try to prevent the loss from becoming intelligible to him. Even if it were lost, his defiant will would still be able to retain it as if it were not lost. He would not endeavor to bear the loss, but he chose to waste his strength in an impotent defiance, to lose himself in an insane preoccupation with the loss. Or in cowardice he immediately avoided humbly attempting to understand it. Then oblivion opened its abyss, not so much to the loss as to him, and he did not so much escape the loss in forgetfulness as he threw himself away. Or he lyingly sought to belittle the good which he had once enjoyed, as if it never had been beautiful, had never gladdened his heart; he thought to

strengthen his soul by a wretched self-deception, as if strength lay in falsehood. Or he irrationally assured himself that life was not so hard as one imagined, that its terror was not as described, was not so hard to bear, if one, as you will remember that he did, began by not finding it terrifying to become such a person.

In fact, who would ever finish, if he wished to speak about what so frequently has happened, and will so frequently be repeated in the world? Would he not tire far sooner than would passion of that ever new ingenuity for transforming the explained and the understood into a new disappointment, wherein it deceives itself!

Let us rather, therefore, turn back to Job. On the day of sorrow when everything was lost, then he first thanked God who gave it, defrauded neither God nor himself, and while everything was being shaken and overthrown, he still remained what he had been from the beginning—“honest and upright before God.” He confessed that the blessing of the Lord had been merciful to him, he returned thanks for it; therefore it did not remain in his mind as a torturing memory. He confessed that the Lord had blessed richly and beyond all measure his undertakings; he had been thankful for this, and therefore the memory did not become to him a consuming unrest. He did not conceal from himself that everything had been taken from him; therefore the Lord, who took it, remained in his upright soul. He did not avoid the thought that it was lost; therefore his soul rested quietly until the explanation of the Lord again came to him, and found his heart like the good earth well cultivated in patience.

The Lord took. Did Job say anything except the truth, did he use an indirect expression to indicate what was direct? The word is short, and it signifies the loss of everything; it naturally occurs to us to repeat it after him, since the expression itself has become a sacred proverb; but do we just as naturally link it to Job’s thought? For was it not the Sabeans who fell upon

his peaceful herds and killed his servants? Did the messenger who brought the news say anything else? Was it not the lightning which destroyed the sheep and their shepherds? Did the messenger who brought the news mean something else, even though he called the lightning the fire from heaven? Was it not a wind-storm from out of the desert which overturned the house and buried his children in the ruins? Did the messenger mention some other perpetrator, or did he name someone who sent the wind?

Yet Job said, “The Lord took”; in the very moment of receiving the message, he realized that it was the Lord who had taken everything. Who told Job this? Or was it not a sign of his fear of God that he thus shifted everything over to the Lord, and justified Him in doing it; and are we more devout, we who sometimes hesitate a long time to speak thus?

Perhaps there was a man who had lost everything in the world. Then he set out to consider how it had happened. But everything was inexplicable and obscure to him. His happiness had vanished like a dream, and its memory haunted him like a nightmare, but how he had been cast off from the glory of the one into the wretchedness of the other, he was unable to understand. It was not the Lord who had taken it — it was an accident. Or he assured himself that it was the deceit and cunning of men, or their manifest violence, which had wrested it from him, as the Sabeans had destroyed Job’s herds and their keepers. Then his soul became rebellious against men; he believed he did God justice by not reproaching Him. He fully understood how it had happened, and the more immediate explanation was that those men had done it, and furthermore it was because the men were evil and their hearts perverted. He understood that men are his neighbors to his injury; would he perhaps have understood it in the same way if they had benefited him? But that the Lord who dwells far away in heaven might be nearer to him than the man who lived next to him, whether that man did him good or evil, such an idea was remote from his thought.

Or he fully understood how it had happened, and knew how to describe it with all the eloquence of horror. For why should he not understand that when the sea rages in its fury, when it flings itself against the heavens, then men and their frail accomplishments are tossed about as in a game; that when the storm rushes forth in its violence, human enterprises are mere child's play; that when the earth trembles in terror of the elements and the mountains groan, then men and their glorious achievements sink as nothing into the abyss. And this explanation was adequate for him, and, above all, sufficient to make his soul indifferent to everything. For it is true that what is built on sand does not even need a storm to overthrow it; but would it not also be true that a man cannot build and dwell elsewhere and be sure his soul is safe! Or he understood that he himself had merited what had befallen him, that he had not been prudent. For had he rightly calculated in time, it would not have happened. And this explanation explained everything by first explaining that he had corrupted himself and made it impossible for him to learn anything from life, and especially impossible for him to learn anything from God.

Still who would ever finish if he tried to explain what has happened and what will frequently be repeated in life? Would he not become tired of talking before the sensual man would weary of deluding himself with plausible and disappointing and deceptive explanations? Let us therefore turn away from that which has nothing to teach us, except in so far as we knew it before, so that we may shun worldly wisdom and turn our attention to him from whom there is a truth to be learned — to Job and to his devout words, "The Lord took." Job referred everything to the Lord; he did not retard his soul and extinguish his spirit in reflections or explanations which only engender and nourish doubt, even if the one who dwells on them does not realize it. In the same instant that everything was taken from him he knew that it was the Lord who had taken it, and therefore in his loss he

remained in understanding with the Lord; in his loss, he preserved his confidence in the Lord; he looked upon the Lord and therefore he did not see despair. Or does only that man see God's hand who sees that He gives; does not that one also see God who sees that He takes? Does only that one see God who sees His countenance turned toward him? Does not that one also see God who sees Him turn His back upon him, as Moses always saw only the Lord's back? But he who sees God has overcome the world, and therefore Job in his devout word had overcome the world; was through his devout word greater and stronger and more powerful than the whole world, which here would not so much carry him into temptation but would overcome him with its power, cause him to sink down before its boundless might. And yet how weak, indeed almost childishly so, is not the wild fury of the storm, when it thinks to cause a man to tremble for himself by wresting everything away from him, and he answers, "It is not you who do this, it is the Lord who takes!" How impotent is the arm of every man of violence, how wretched his shrewd cleverness, how all human power becomes almost an object of compassion, when it wishes to plunge the weak into the destruction of despair by wresting everything from him, and he then confidently says, "It is not you, you can do nothing — it is the Lord who takes."

Blessed be the name of the Lord! Hence Job not only overcame the world, but he did what Paul had desired his striving congregation to do: after having overcome everything, he stood. Alas, perhaps there has been someone in the world who overcame everything, but who failed in the moment of victory. The Lord's name be praised! Hence the Lord remained the same, and ought He not to be praised as always? Or had the Lord really changed? Or did not the Lord in truth remain the same, as did Job? The Lord's name be praised! Hence the Lord did not take everything, for He did not take away Job's praise, and his peace of heart, and the sincerity of faith

from which it issued; but his confidence in the Lord remained with him as before, perhaps more fervently than before; for now there was nothing at all which could in any way divert his thought from Him. The Lord took it all. Then Job gathered together all his sorrows and "cast them upon the Lord," and then He also took those from him, and only praise remained in the incorruptible joy of his heart. For Job's house was a house of sorrow if ever a house was such, but where this word is spoken, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," there gladness also has its home. And Job indeed stands before us the image of sorrow, expressed in his countenance and in his form; but he who utters this word as Job did still bears witness to the joy, even if his testimony does not direct itself to the joyous but to the concerned, and yet speaks intelligibly to the many who have ears to hear. For the ear of the concerned is fashioned in a special manner, and as the ear of the lover indeed hears many voices but really only one — the voice of the beloved, so the ear of the concerned also hears many voices, but they pass by and do not enter his heart. As faith and hope without love are only sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, so all the gladness in the world in which no sorrow is mingled is only sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, which flatter the ear but are abhorrent to the soul. But this voice of consolation, this voice which trembles in pain and yet proclaims the gladness, this the ear of the concerned hears, his heart treasures it, it strengthens and guides him even to finding joy in the depths of sorrow.

My hearer, is it not true? You have understood Job's eulogy; it has at least seemed beautiful to you in the quiet moment of reflection, so that in thinking of it you had forgotten what you did not wish to be reminded of, that which indeed is sometimes heard in the world in the day of need, instead of praise and blessing. So let it then be forgotten, you will deserve, as little as I, that the memory of it should again be revived.

We have spoken about Job, and have sought to understand him in his devout expression, without the speech wishing to force itself upon anyone. But should it therefore be entirely without significance or application, and concern no one? If you yourself, my hearer, have been tried as Job was, and have stood the testing as he did, then it truly applies to you, if we have spoken rightly about Job. If hitherto you have not been tested in life, then it indeed applies to you. Do you think perhaps that these words apply only under such extraordinary circumstances as those in which Job was placed? Is it perhaps your belief that if such a thing struck you, then the terror itself would give you strength, develop within you that humble courage? Did not Job have a wife, what do we read about her? Perhaps you think that terror cannot get as much power over a man as can the daily thralldom in much smaller adversities. Then look you to it that you, as little as any man, do not become enslaved by some tribulation, and above all learn from Job to be sincere with yourself, so that you may not delude yourself by an imagined strength, through which you experience imaginary victories in an imaginary conflict.

Perhaps you say, if the Lord had taken it from me, but nothing was given to me; perhaps you believe that this is by no means as terrible as was Job's suffering, but that it is far more wearing, and consequently a more difficult struggle. We shall not quarrel with you. For even if this were true, the quarrel would still be unprofitable, and increase the difficulty. But in one thing we are in agreement, that you can learn from Job, and, if you are honest with yourself and love humanity, then you cannot wish to evade Job, in order to venture out into a hitherto unknown difficulty, and keep the rest of us in suspense, until we learn from your testimony that a victory is also possible in this difficulty. So if you then learn from Job to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," this applies to you, even if the preceding is less applicable.

Or perhaps you believe that such a thing cannot happen to you? Who taught you this wisdom, or on what do you base your assurance? Are you wise and understanding, and is this your confidence? Job was the teacher of many. Are you young, and your youth your assurance? Job had also been young. Are you old, on the verge of the grave? Job was an old man when sorrow overtook him. Are you powerful, is this your assurance of immunity? Job was reverenced by the people. Are riches your security? Job possessed the blessing of lands. Are your friends your guarantors? Job was loved by everyone. Do you put your confidence in God? Job was the Lord's confidant. Have you reflected on these thoughts, or have you not rather avoided them, so that they might not extort from you a confession, which you now perhaps call a melancholy mood? And yet there is no hiding place in the wide world where troubles may not find you, and there has never lived a man who was able to say more than you can say, that you do not know when sorrow will visit your house. So be sincere with yourself, fix your eyes upon Job; even though he terrifies you, it is not this he wishes, if you yourself do not wish it. You still could not wish, when you survey your life and think of its end, that you should have to confess, "I was fortunate, not like other men; I have never suffered anything in the world, and I have let each day have its own sorrows, or rather bring me new joys." Such a confession, even if it were true, you could still never wish to make, aye, it would involve your own humiliation; for if you had been preserved from sorrow, as no other had, you would still say, "I have indeed not been tested in it, but still my mind has frequently occupied itself seriously with the thought of Job, and with the idea that no man knows the time and the hour when the messengers will come to him, each one more terrifying than the last."

V. REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH

REMEMBER NOW THY Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Ecclesiastes 12:1

THERE is a truth whose greatness, whose sublimity, we are accustomed to extol by saying that it is an *objective* truth, that it is equally valid whether anyone accepts it or not; indifferent to the special circumstances of the individual, whether he is young or old, happy or depressed; indifferent to its own relation to him, whether it benefits him or injures him, whether it restrains him from something or helps him attain it; equally valid whether he subscribes to it with his whole heart, or professes it coldly and unemotionally, whether he lays down his life for it, or uses it merely as a means of gain; whether he himself discovered it, or he merely repeats it by rote. And only that man would have the true understanding of it, the legitimate admiration, who understood that this objectivity is the main thing, and who allowed himself to be shaped in conformity with this into an objectivity toward that which concerns himself or some man as man, or particularly as man.

There is another kind of truth, or if this is more unassuming, another kind of truths, which we might call the *concerned* truths. Their life is not so exalted, perhaps because abashed, as it were, they are themselves conscious that they are not quite appropriate for all general occasions, but only specially for individual occasions. They are not indifferent to the particular condition of the individual, whether he is young or old, happy or depressed; for this decides for them whether they may be truths for him. Nor do they at

once release the individual and abandon him, but they continue to be concerned about him until he completely frees himself, and not even this is a matter of indifference to them, although he is still not able to make them doubtful about themselves.

Such a truth is not indifferent as to how the individual accepts it, whether he appropriates it with his whole heart, or whether it merely becomes idle words to him, for this difference proves exactly whether he is jealous for himself. Such a truth is not indifferent as to whether it becomes a blessing or a curse to the individual, for the converse decision precisely testifies against the equal validity. It is not indifferent as to whether he sincerely has confidence in it, or self-deceived wishes to deceive others, for its avenging wrath proves conclusively that it is not indifferent. Such a concerned truth is not indifferent as to who has proclaimed it; on the contrary he continues to be constantly present with it, in order that it may again concern itself about the individual.

One such concerned truth is that tested admonition, repeated for hundreds of years, which we have read. And if you could have heard the voice of him who uttered it, then you would certainly realize how moved he was personally. And if you could see his face, and you yourself were a young man, then you would be gripped by the solicitude with which he concerned himself about you, while, at most, he could still only arouse you to concern about yourself. Who, then, was the man who uttered these words? We do not know. But if you are young, even if you stood next in succession to the throne and your thoughts were such as would be inspired by the expectation of dominion, then we are told that this man, too, wore the kingly purple, although, notwithstanding all this, he believed that the thought about the Creator was the best thought of youth. And if you are young, even if your life is impoverished, untempted by any glittering prospects, you still have his royal word, that, notwithstanding all this, the

thought about the Creator is still the most beautiful excellence of youth. Therefore, even if the story about a king having spoken these words is only a pious wish which wishes to reconcile the greatest inequalities in the simple understanding of the same word, the word itself in different ways is troubled about the inequalities.

For when one who is royal born and will sometime rule over kingdoms and countries, sees upon the wall of a humble cottage a picture such as might be expected in such humble circumstances, a picture whose crudities almost provoke a smile, and he comes closer to it and reads those words in the inscription on the picture, then the Preacher speaks to him, but the Preacher was also a king. And when the son of the poor man stands astonished in the palace, when unclarified thoughts awaken in his soul, as awe-struck he beholds the kingly majesty, then the Preacher speaks to him, and the Preacher was also a king. Then reconciled he returns home to his humble dwelling and to his poor picture on the wall.

Is there then no compromise? Or will you assume the appearance of contentment in order to seek untimely quarrels to prove that you do not covet the splendor of a king — but that neither are you satisfied with thinking about your Creator! As if that self-created satisfaction were not an arbitrary merit for which you dare not praise yourself, aye, what is worse, a sign of your paltriness, which only testifies against you! Is there anything indeed in the wide world which is able, any more than the world itself is able, to compensate a man for the injury he would inflict upon his soul if he gave up the thought of God? But the one who, blinded as he was, demanded the highest, he still let it be understood that in a certain imperfect sense he grasped the significance of that which he relinquished.

Or was it perhaps otherwise with you? You were perhaps unwilling to consent to a compromise, just because it was a king who had spoken these words, and “a king always gets everything he points at; after he has

followed the ways of pleasure to the uttermost limit of enjoyment, what wonder that his view of life suddenly undergoes a change?" The words would certainly have significance, but the admonition could not be accepted; because the words are certainly concerned, but not concerned about any individual; they were indeed words of concern, they were indeed reconciled with life, insofar as it had been softened by sorrow, but nevertheless only a sigh from the recesses of sadness, a sigh at the moment when the wearied soul bids the world farewell, but still only a bubble that bursts, no matter from what depth it rises. For there is a wisdom which almost prefers the concealment of madness, and in the sight of men affords satisfaction to everyone by its strange actions. But the sigh itself and the outburst and the emotion concern no one, no one in the whole world, not even the one from whose heart the sigh issues. Such a brief word, in which the heart would break, such a language of the heart, not emphatic like the language of thought, but trembling in earnestness, is sometimes heard in the world. It will not illuminate anyone's way; for the sun lights a man's way by day, and the moon will shine for him at night, but the will-o'-the-wisp in the fogs of night does not furnish light, not even for itself.

When a man's life draws toward evening, when, weary and thoughtful, he holds intercourse with death as his only confidant; when his spirit has lost the power to make up the reckoning in earnest, and death has become the comforter; when the will and the purpose desire nothing more, but the thought hazily centers about past experiences; while oblivion like a busy journeyman works early and late in the service of consolation — and youth slips past the soul like a dream, then such a man says to himself, as his mind dwells on the most beautiful significance of life, as this once appeared to him: "Happy the man who is done with it!"

But if a young man stood by his side upon whom life still had all its claims, then he would not speak in this way. Only when he sits alone,

sunken like a ruin, lost in sadness, only then he says it, not to some man, not to his own soul, but he says it as to the air: “Happy the man who is done with it.” And as the physician recognizes the sign of death in the face, so the psychologist knows that this outbreak indicates that the spirit wishes to be extinguished. The outburst may well have its own significance, but one will seek vainly in it for the strength of the admonition because there is no faith in it, faith in oneself’s having perfected the good, or in another’s having succeeded in doing so. And he who eagerly listens to such words, is, as often as not, himself in a similar condition, or at least in a sadly suspicious realization that something similar may befall him, and therefore they both find relief and alleviation in swooning in that weakness where neither the admonition disturbs them, nor the blessing of the admonition rests upon them.

“All is vanity and vexation of spirit,” says the Preacher, and the light-minded regard such an expression as an ingenious triviality, the thoughtless as an unsolved riddle, and the melancholy as a stupefying drink, which makes the last condition worse than the first. The Preacher has spoken many such words, all of which would be profitable if they could help anyone to save himself from going through the same experience, or, at least, could help him to renounce the vain desires which constantly become more and more ingenious. But are the words we read of such a nature? I wonder if the Preacher has not said all that precedes for the sake of this and similar words; and I wonder if he would not readily have refrained from saying all the rest, if only someone would accept this word!

For the Preacher actually says that “childhood and youth are also vanity,” and insofar, even to have done what he encourages one to do, “to let the heart cheer him in the days of youth, and to walk in the ways of the heart, and in the sight of the eyes,” would be vanity; but has the Preacher ever said that to consider the Creator in youth is vanity and vexation of spirit; or that

to have considered Him in youth would also sometime appear to have been vanity? Has he mingled the word about this in with the rest? Or is not the manner in which he says this as far removed from the manner in which he says the rest as heaven is from earth? Has he not precisely resolved everything into vanity in order that the blessed and eternal significance of this thought may rightly appear, so that it may bind the wandering soul in obedience under the admonition?

He does not say, as ordinarily: "So rejoice in your youth, *so* put sorrow from you," where the expression itself, by casually disposing of the matter, indicates that what he speaks about is of no concern to anyone. He has omitted this little casual word, and as the discourse about vanity goes on, and will, as it were, carry everything away in vanity, the Preacher stands up to resolve the confusion, so that it does not go beyond its limits; to check the vanity by a definite expression of admonition: "*Therefore,* consider thy Creator."

He does not speak as if this thought were merely a youth's thought, which still would sometime be outgrown; he does not speak about it as about something past which had once had significance; not as about something past, of which it was desirable that it should once have had significance; no, the youth's significance is exactly this thought's significance, and it is precisely by means of this thought that youth must be assured against being vanity, assured against sometime seeming to be vanity. He does not speak like a man who wishes, or like one who longs, or like one who swoons; but with the power of conviction, with the authority of experience, with the reliability of complete knowledge, with the glad confidence of liberty, with the emphasis of earnestness, with the concern of admonition, he speaks to the young.

He does not speak vaguely about youth in general, but, as the individual does not understand in general that he is young, for such an understanding

really belongs to a later age, he understands it as a matter for his own personal concern, and it is just in this way that the Preacher wishes to have the admonition understood. For this is the solicitude in the admonition, that although it can be repeated again and again and concern an innumerable multitude, yet each time it speaks to the individual, since it is as if it spoke to him alone, as if it were only for his sake, as if it were unconcerned about all the rest of the world, but the more concerned about him; moreover, as concerned as if the youth were conferring a favor by accepting it. This is the way the word is spoken, and if you thoughtlessly or sadly were to attempt to deceive the Preacher, or to trick him out of the admonition, which would certainly be a distressing thing to do, you would not be able to do it; for the Preacher has been guilty of no ambiguity.

Thus the Preacher speaks admonishingly, and if you are young, even if you have earlier dedicated yourself to the pursuit of wisdom, he still speaks to you. And if you are young, even if you are among the more simple, you still need not stand begging at the door of that wisdom, for the Preacher's concern is for you also and he not only says you may consider your Creator, but he exhorts you to do so. And if you are young, if you are happy, if you are distressed, if you are unconcerned, if you are despondent at being what you are, it is still you, just you to whom he speaks, you to whom the admonition applies, as does also the reason for the admonition— "before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you shall say: 'I have no pleasure in them.'" Therefore, in what he said earlier he sought to drive your soul up from its security to see the vanity of life; he prevented it from "believing in vain," for otherwise his admonition, however well-meant it was, would always remain a vanity, or rather, a serious matter which was always taken in vain. Youth does not think of the evil days, and does not understand what it means to say that the "sound of the grinding is low, and all of the daughters of music are brought low," and prevents itself from

doing what it emphatically understands for some other age. And when the evil days come, and the "sound of the grinding is low, and the daughters of music are brought low," then if one has not remembered his Creator in his youth, he has not only lost his youth, but the understanding of youth's thought about the Creator.

Thus the Preacher addresses his admonition to the young. But he who wishes to speak about the passage we read, should endeavor not only to make the thoughts contained in the passage explicit, but to make the speech itself explicit; for "if the trumpet give forth an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle?" But to make the speech explicit — what else does this mean than that it should concern some particular individual, that it should speak to some man for his edification? Now it is certainly true that the concerned truth of the admonition addresses itself to the individual according to the special circumstances of his life; but the speech about this truth must still guard itself against conditioning the edification through the accidental; must certainly guard against the accidental enviously coming into conflict and contradiction with what is otherwise edifying; for then the edification is untrue, and naught but an unwholesome diversion, brought about by a preference or a mistaken wish which foolishly desires this.

Thus if someone wished to be edified by the thought about old age, but in so special a manner that youth could not be edified by the same thought, then the edification itself would be irrational. If one were to say, for the edification of an old man, that everything would soon be over, might he not by this speech disturb the young? For why would he not become despondent and tired of life long before his time, if the best one could say of it at its end was that everything would soon be over? But such an edification is a deception, a deceitful compromise, for being old is no advantage, and there is just as little advantage in being young. If a man wishes to believe that youth is an advantage, then he rejects the edification, and will only

listen to the worldly speech of the like-minded, his fellow-conspirators, about how pleasant it is to be young. If one wishes to believe that youth itself with respect to this thought about the Creator, has a decided opportunity which can never later be repurchased: who would dare to say this to himself, who would dare say it to another, for fear lest it might be too late, for fear lest the edifying thought might transform itself into a terrifying one. But it is not so. When, therefore, the Holy Scriptures make this a condition for entering into the kingdom of heaven, that a man should become a child again, then this speech is really edifying, because it addresses itself to every man, while otherwise understood it would be the most foolish and disheartening speech the world has ever heard; for the child itself does not know what it means to be a child.

What is true about childhood is also true about youth, but with this difference, that insofar as youth is past, it can also be lost or greatly neglected. So the speech about youth can indeed occasion the individual concern, but if it makes it impossible for this concern to become profitable for his reassurance, to become a regret for the past which effects his improvement, then the speech is not edifying, but worldly-minded, contentious, and confused.

On the other hand, if the speech may also influence a single youth to anticipate the painful aftercost of this neglect, it will indeed imbue him with the significance of youth, even if the speech concerning authority, only vouches for it.

REMEMBER THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth; for in youth one does it best and most naturally, and if a man throughout all the rest of his life preserved the thoughts of youth, then he would accomplish a good work. Let this be our eulogy of youth, even if it is more rarely heard, although

youth is praised often enough. Moreover, as it might be injurious for the tiny babe to be handled too much, so it seems that too much praise might be detrimental to the wholesomeness of youth. For when the false or injudicious friendship of dejection is the spokesman, will it not besmirch with its fiery unwholesomeness, will it not bring a darting unrest and craving into the careless confidence of youth? Because despondency is envious of youth, must we therefore make youth envious of itself and perplexed about itself? As one does not pay too much attention to the tiny babe, so let us not pay too much attention to youth, but neither let us, therefore, do the opposite: let us not make it old before its time, lest it drain the bitterness; nor keep it from being young when it is, so that it may not a second time drain the bitterness of not having been young when it was young.

Nor does the Preacher counsel thus. When a youth is joyful and happy at a banquet, then the Preacher is not a disconsolate figure who wishes to tear him away from the wild passion and enjoyment of the moment; not an alarming spectre who wishes to forget himself in the circle of youth; not a fool who imagines that, although advanced in age, he is still young; but neither is he a carping and irritable critic who cannot rejoice with the happy. He accompanies the happy, and when the youth has enjoyed himself with all his heart, when he has danced himself weary, not exactly of life, for youth ought not to do that, but for the evening, then the Preacher sits down in a room off the ball-room, and speaks more seriously. But he makes the transition as naturally as does the youth; for youth can do this with a smile upon his lips and exultation in his bearing, worthy to listen to the talk about high and holy things. So, then, let youth "wear the garlands of rosebuds before they be withered"; but let no one teach youth this — teach youth to "use creation as youth's possession," and in this or some other way cause it to "reason wrongly" as if this were the only thing it had to do. For the

thought about the Creator is still the most beautiful glory of youth, a rosebud that does not wither.

And in youth one does it *most naturally;* for a man thinks most naturally who can think this thought in conjunction with all the other things he thinks; and he thinks it most naturally who does not himself have to be changed in order to think it, and who does not need to have the thought changed in order to think it, because in the thought he finds the childlike simplicity which makes the game the best. So that word of the Preacher is from the beginning a proof that this thought must be most natural for youth. If he had not been speaking to youth, he might perhaps have made lengthy preparations. He might perhaps have proved that God exists; and after he had kept the learner busier than the Jews in Goshen in slaving for the truth under his supervision, he would perhaps give him to understand that he might finally get to the point where God became the Creator.

And so it goes. When one grows older, then everything becomes so wretched. God in heaven must sit and wait for the fates to decide whether He exists, and finally He comes into being by means of some proofs; men must put up with waiting until the matter is decided. Suppose one dies before that time; suppose that by the time the matter is decided, someone had grown unaccustomed to thinking of God as the Creator, and the joy in the thought was past! The Preacher does not speak in this way, but as a friendly man predicts a happy future for the child in its cradle, so the Preacher uses the word, and the youth understands it at once. He understands immediately that a God exists, for to the young God's house lies next door to his father's yard, and it seems quite natural to him to be there. But when one becomes older, then the way to church is often very long; when the wind is severe in winter, then it is so cold in the church; when the birds sing in the woods in the summer time, the church does not lie in the direction he is going. To youth God dwells close at hand; in the

midst of sorrow and joy he hears God's voice calling; if he does not hear it, then he misses it at once, if he has not learned evasion, if he does not know how to hide himself — until he hears it again. When one becomes older, then it is far to heaven; and the earthly noises make it difficult to hear the voice; and if one does not hear it, then the earthly noises make it easy for one not to feel the want of it.

Youth understands it at once. Is not this wonderful! But is the fact that it is wonderful not also a clarification! There was a thinker, whose memory is revered, who believed that wonder was a characteristic of the Jewish people, that this wonder, in a peculiar manner, overleaped the intervening causes to arrive at God. But, if we wish to select a youth who was not brought up among that people, I wonder if the miraculousness of wonder might not again appear. And then I wonder what essentially belongs to youth, and what, not as the accidental, belongs to an individual nation; I wonder if manhood dares to forget this completely. But when we become older, then come the intervening causes; and if someone reaches God by the long way of these intervening causes, then he can say that he comes from afar — if he reaches God, for many doubtless perish on the way. Is this the fault of the intervening causes or of the pilgrims?

Youth understands at once that God is the Creator, that He has created "the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is."

"All that in them is" — is not this a great word, is it not becoming to youth? What has youth really seen? It has merely glanced at the world. What does it understand about the world in comparison with one who has circumnavigated the globe? But youth understands about God, and since He is never far away, if one is to find Him he should not look for Him far away.

There was a thinker who became a hero by his death. He had said that from a single straw he would prove the existence of God. Let the thinker keep his proof; give youth the straw, he can — not prove it. But why, too, is

proof needed, when one has the straw and — God! When one becomes older, then the proof comes, and the proof is a distinguished traveler whom all regard with admiration. Youth understands that God has created the world, and yet that was six thousand years ago. But he understands it at once — what wonder, indeed; for how does six thousand years to youth differ from yesterday when it is past. When one becomes older, then six thousand years are many years; then one realizes that it is six thousand years since the world was created — and also six thousand years since everything was very good.

But as the youth quite naturally thinks that God is the Creator, so he just as naturally thinks what follows from that; and since he does not need to waste his time in understanding the first, he can at once begin on the last. But what does follow from this? Moreover, when one becomes older and very intelligent, then extremely strange things result from it. Then one repudiates an earlier thinker, becomes a disciple of a later one, or gives others the name of that one, and does other similar things which concern neither God nor one's self, but only the judgment of the world. On the contrary, youth has with the first already begun on the last; for what indeed follows farther from that except that which lies so near that it does not seem to result from it, even less to follow farther from it. And what is this other except thanksgiving in quiet humility, confidence resting in a childlike intimacy, the pain over the interruption of the harmony so deep that peace cannot long remain away, the concern so childlike that youth does not need to go far in order again to live and move and have his being in God.

And in youth one does it *best;* for he really thinks a thought best who has it always near at hand, and yet hides it the deepest; he, who does not have to seek among many things to find it, does not seek in out of the way places in order to find it.

Youth does not have many thoughts, but from that it merely follows that he can better cherish the one he has, even if he is constantly using it. When one gets older, then one has many thoughts; and if one of them is lost, then, like that woman, one lights a candle and goes and searches for it, and in the meantime allows the other ninety-nine to shift for themselves. Or it sometimes seems to someone that one of his thoughts was lost, and time is wasted in looking for it, for it was a delusion. Such things cannot happen to youth; for when one has but one thought, how could he lose it? When one has many thoughts, he is like one who has many suits of clothes. Sometimes he wears one suit, sometimes another. But youth has just one thought, which always clothes him equally well, and he does not waste time in choosing. On the other hand, youth has always the same place to hide his thoughts as does the older man, and scarcely less room. But when one has only one thought, then one can always get a good and ample place.

Youth does not see many men, but from that it does not follow that he cannot cling with his whole heart to man and to the human.

There was a pagan sage. Ridiculed by many, he thought he would ridicule the others. He went about with his lantern by day, seeking a *man.* One ought not to ridicule him; for whoever while young has not found a *man,* may indeed need a lantern. When one becomes older, then one sees many men, individually and collectively, but if from his youth up, one has not found a *man,* then what does one find? And he who does find one, whom does he find except the preacher and the schoolmaster, his equals, and all the rest he has known so well at home? And whatever he finds which replaces the best, that he gradually loses. So, too, with the thought about God. When the older man finds this thought again, what does he find different from that which he had found in his youth! He thought it in his youth, and the first time he thought it, it was as if he had already thought it an eternity. Compared with such an imperishable memory, the years think it

with more difficulty. When one is older, then this thought has frequently only its own season, and this is as it must be. Other thoughts have their times and seasons, and everything is parcelled out. And if in other respects one has an abundance, with respect to this thought one often lives meagrely enough. But youth is the time of abundance. When one grows older, then one ceases to grow, but youth is the season of growth, and he grows together with his one thought, like the lovers who grew together. When one becomes older, then one often reflects on one's thoughts, and becomes absorbed in them. For one grows best in concealment, and, physically speaking, one never grows as much as during the nine months when he lies in his mother's womb; and, spiritually speaking, never so much as in the secret life of youth, when he grows to a divine stature. The older one becomes, the more complicated the reckoning becomes, and yet that thought of the Creator is the one which the schoolmaster of childhood talked so much about; it is the number to carry, and if one ever forgets the number to be carried, then is one's whole calculation wrong.

So let childhood then keep the angels who always behold the face of God; but grant to youth, O God, a friendly care, which will prevent it from losing the best. Woe to the one who defrauds the widow and the fatherless, but woe also to the one who defrauds youth of this thought, even if he gave it everything else! Woe to the one who removes the landmarks of the poor, but woe also to the one who removes the landmarks of youth!

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth; for this thought comes repeatedly, and it may sometime later help you to think best and most naturally about the Creator; how it may help you in a more intimate way, must be determined individually.

It is hard, men say, to separate those who were formerly united; but how much harder is it not, when these are thus separated: the thought of youth about the Creator and the Creator? Human language says little about this

concern, for not only men's speech but practically their language is selfish; it speaks only about their own affairs, little about God's, whose concern the separation is.

But what is it, then, which separates them? My hearer, ought you not yourself to know what it was which separated you, and ought not the individual to know what it was which separated him from God, even if the cause of the separation differed for different individuals! Perhaps it was age which separated them, in that he grew old while God always remained the same. He was not to blame for growing older; on the contrary it is worthy of commendation, if a man in this respect recognizes the time and the hour; and nothing is more disgusting than to see the unhappy beggar whose eyes and expression beg everyone for the flattering untruth that he still seems young. Or that wretched one who, although advanced in years, still fortifies himself by means of the lie that he still retains his youth. Or that helpless one who has no other defense against the years except the impotent wish that he might still be young. On the contrary, he who recognizes the time and the hour and the opportunity, to him the separation is least noticeable, and he is farthest from having forgotten his youth, which that man has indeed done who spends his days and nights in wishing it back. Whether a man will succeed in becoming older in such a way that he never notices the separation, which would provide another kind of understanding, we do not know; but it happens with most men, that, as they are separated from what belonged to their youth, as they leave their father's house and their mother's solicitude, the more they are separated from these, the more, too, are they separated from God.

Hence, perhaps a man became older, and with the years came understanding, and with understanding knowledge, and with knowledge sorrow, and with increased knowledge increased sorrow. But as he was thus developed and educated, the simple became to him more difficult, and since

without this guidance he must act for himself, everything became more and more complicated. Perhaps he chose the guidance of thought, and in order not to owe anyone anything, he let this propagate itself, and the one thought develop out of another, until at last the infinite appeared before him and made him giddy. The more he stared at it, the more his eye lost the power of vision to find its way back in the finite. Perhaps pleasure blinded him, life became a jest, and he let God sorrow in heaven while he chose gladness, and let enthusiasm talk in vain about battle and conflict, about courage in danger, patience in affliction, love in life, victory in death, rewards in heaven, while he permitted every day to have its own pleasure.

Perhaps worldly concern about food and clothing diverted his mind, so that he did neither one thing nor the other. Perhaps he subjected himself to a sorrowful earnestness which transformed life down here into slavery, God in heaven to a strict task-master, His will into a terrifying law, and so he wandered about in a wilderness without finding any refreshment.

Perhaps it was sin and perdition which lay divisively between him and his youthful thought about God, and his resentment at the separation seemed to make an undemanding impossible. We might, indeed, carry this course of reasoning farther, but to what end? When the separation exists, then it is not so important to scrutinize the reason for it as to sorrow over the separation which may appear in so many different ways, when the evil days come, about which the Preacher speaks, or when the *retreat* must begin. For as the first book in the Old Testament is called the Birth, the second the Departure, so we might certainly say that there is a third book in human life which is called the Retreat. Hence there appears to be a necessity to return to what was once so beautiful, but which later came to be despised, forgotten, overlooked, polluted, and yet to which everyone, with a certain degree of shamefacedness, resorts for refuge. And the shame is certainly a cheap price for him to pay, in that he, whatever the error of his

way had been, experimented with everything before he resolved to return. But then was it not a blessing that he had something to which he could return? Was it not fortunate that the blind man had a child who could lead him? And so one goes his little hour like a blind man who is led by a child.

We do not deny that the return of one person can be very different from that of another; that of the one may be a more peaceful return, that of the other an escape from a pursuing terror; but it is the Preacher who says: "Remember therefore thy Creator in the days of thy youth, remember Him for the sake of the return." Even if the moment when the retreat must begin is sufficiently terrifying, even if a man, at enmity with himself, has destroyed much of what lay behind him: merely a memory of this thought must always help him somewhat. Perhaps there was someone who, reduced to the last extremity, only endeavored to concentrate his bitterness, his wrath, in a single passionate outburst, and sought vainly in the shrewdness which ordinarily understands life's emptiness and nothingness, until at last he burst forth: "Oh, the world and the lust thereof perish!" but lo, this word then awakened like a memory in his soul; and with it awakened a saving recollection, which still called to him with the faithfulness of youth: "but God's word endureth forever." Thus the youthful memory helped him where there was no other help, thus it does help him. It dissolves the spell of brooding earnestness, so there is again joy in heaven and on earth; it disperses the mists of the busy concern in a resigned freedom from care; it dissolves the troublesome evil in quiet wonder over the dark saying of hoping against hope; it saves the despairing soul from seeing the despair through the frankness which understands nothing, which does not understand the specious assertion of self-accusation, but understands only God's mercy.

Perhaps there was someone who had pondered deep and long about the divine, while he still sometimes even understood what he had found out far

more simply than he had discerned it, until at last, as he sat thoughtful and brooding, he could smile at his long meditation by giving heed to the memory of youth, which whispered the simple truth to him, and thus through its intervention transformed for him the beautiful earnestness into a still more beautiful jest.

Perhaps there was one whose plans always gained the victory for him and the adulation of men, while he himself, when he compared the results with his calculations, always discovered a little irregularity, until at last, as he stood there austere and dominating, he was softened by listening to the memory of youth which softly hummed the simple truth to him and, by entwining itself within it, transfigured his beautiful earnestness into an even more beautiful jest.

We do not praise the retreat, as if this were the sole significance of life, as if memory were everything in life. We do not speak presumptuously and slightingly about the truth which the more mature human wisdom discovers; or about the beauty which human art produces; even less do we disparage the honest work of manhood; we speak only about the beautiful significance of the retreat for human life, and we speak about how to have remembered the Creator in the days of youth is the angel of salvation of the retreat.

So let a man's work exact from him what belongs to it, his time and his industry; but in the advancing years, O God, preserve Thou a memory of his youth which preserves for him the youthful thought about the Creator. Woe to him who separates what God has joined together; woe to him who separates manhood from its youth.

If there be someone whom this meditation merely painfully reminds of his own lack, then it would in truth be unseemly and unworthy to be an edifying discourse; especially unfortunate for itself, if it were without sympathy; for then it would not be edifying, and would not have found the

universal truth, but would have been deceived by the accidental. It is indeed seldom that a man can truly feel this lack, and perhaps he sometimes deceives himself, repels the sense of guilt, maintains his soul in cowardice, deceives it with good intentions, and chooses the pain of want instead of the sorrow of repentance.

If this is the case, then the discourse is reassured. Even if such a man will not understand himself, the discourse has certainly understood him.

If, on the contrary, there was a man whose youth had preserved for him no affectionate solicitude; if he had gone out into life poorer than the son of the poor to whom his parents had bequeathed only poverty, poorer than the one to whom his father still bequeathed a blessing, his mother an admonition; helpless, forsaken, depressed because he had had no youth; oh, there is still no youth so God-forsaken that the crumbs when they are carefully gathered together so that nothing shall be wasted, may not become through the blessing of God an abundant compensation. And there is no youth, however brief it is, so God-forgotten that the memory of or the deep inward sorrow for it, would not be able to rejuvenate the one who never was young. For, spiritually speaking, the fulfillment is always in the wish, the soothing of the concern in the concern, just as God is already in the sorrow which is near Him. And spiritually he understood his need, and, spiritually speaking, he yearned for his youth. In another sense youth is only vanity, and the longing for it an even greater vanity: for "beauty is deceitful and favor is vain," and the flighty mind goes forth with short-lived hope, and the dance ends, and the jest is forgotten, and strength wanes, and youth is past, so that its place knows it no more. But the thought of youth about the Creator is a rosebud that does not wither, because it knows neither times nor seasons, and it is the child's most beautiful ornament, the bride's most glorious adornment, and the best raiment for the dying.

VI. THE EXPECTATION OF AN ETERNAL HAPPINESS

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. II Cor. 4:17, 18

TELL a man who your friends are, and he knows you; confide to him your wishes, and he understands you; for not only is your soul revealed in your wish, but he will also see through you in another way, since the wish cunningly betrays to him what you are in yourself. That is, while you are voicing your wish, he examines it to see if it can legitimately be wished. If this is not the case, then he knows not only your wish, but he draws an inference as to the confusion of your mind. In this connection someone has said that wishing is a foolish art, and we are tempted to compare one who has the habit of wishing with one who resorted to the beggar's staff through laziness: they both live on charity; they both are irresponsible; they both have nothing but importunities; they both are suspect in the eyes of justice.

However, wishing may also display a more attractive side. Who has forgotten that priceless diversion of childhood: wishing, which is enjoyed by all children, rich and poor alike! Who has forgotten those beautiful stories from a vanished age, in which things were as they are in childhood, where a wish is the meaning of life, and a blessed pastime. When in those stories a man or woman was granted the satisfaction of having three wishes, it was the custom, a sacred custom, that a man should first wish for himself eternal happiness. When he had assured that, then he might rightfully give himself up to the fun of wishing. Now of course the whole thing was only a

jest; but let us never forget that in the midst of life's seriousness there is and ought truly to be time for jesting, and that this thought, too, is an edifying reflection. For whoever is rightly thankful and humbly understands the profundity of the thought that all his activity, divinely speaking, only proves the disparity between that activity and that which he must accept as a gift from life, he will also nave time for the innocent jesting which is acceptable to God — he will also know how to wish. He will not spoil the beauty of the gift, or the certainty of the bestowing grace, by taking his own merit into account; he will not even become confused about it; he will simply learn from the excessiveness of the gift the quiet gladness that is not importunate in its unremitting activity, but is humble even in its gratitude. As the heathen offer long and superfluous prayers about what God already knows beforehand, so it is also a heathen fault always to be busy, always enslaved in earnest activity.

It is a merit of our age that in many ways we have known how to work the wish weary, and thus to divorce the soul from its habit of wishing. It is to its advantage, if it has thereby developed an honest seriousness, which for the sake of the good renounces the deceitfulness of wishing. We do not reproach the age because it has made the idea about the power of the wish into an epigram, if it thereby stimulates someone to work with his own hands instead of borrowing strength from the wish. But the wish for the happiness of heaven, is this also merely an epigram, as the wish for the assistance of heaven has become to the frivolous, who believe that one should rely upon God in the same way that one relies upon men, so that if one helps himself, then God does the rest? And if the wish about the happiness of heaven has become a proverbial expression, has one thereby tried to incite men to work the harder in order to acquire it? This seems by no means to be the case. Rather the eternal happiness seems to have become what the thought about it has become, a loose and idle word, sometimes

almost forgotten, or impudently dropped from the language, or indifferently pushed to one side as an outmoded form of expression one no longer uses, but only retains because of its oddity. And whereas in the old days one acquired eternal happiness by the grace of God, now too often the eternal happiness seems to have become like an aged and infirm pensioner who sustains his life in the house of the rich on the wretched crust of poverty.

To whom then shall that man go who wishes to consider what consequences the expectation of an eternal happiness has for the earthly, anxious life; with whom shall he take counsel? Everyone in our time is very familiar with civic affairs, so let us for a moment speak about them; let us use them to illustrate the answer to that question. If someone in the state wishes to have one or another matter considered and acted upon, he does not summon strangers and aliens, who have no connection with the fortunes of the country whose welfare they must consider. Nor does he call together idle and irresponsible vagabonds, “who learned to be idle and to wander about from house to house, not only idlers but tattlers also and busybodies”; for decisions by such people will only raise more questions, instead of producing a decision. Finally, one does not call together robbers and evildoers, in order to give them opportunity to consider at leisure how they may best devour the land. Therefore one chooses quite a different course; one assumes that a certain kind of interest is desirable, that one whose own welfare is as closely linked with that of the country as possible, is the best assurance that the opinion rendered will not come to be as homeless as the inventor of the opinion.

So, too, the consideration of the matter about which we are speaking calls for similar precautions. If anyone believes that this present life is not merely a life of labor but also of reward, not only a sowing but also a harvesting, then we must leave him to follow the precepts of a prudence which accords with his view of life. On the other hand, we should not care

to ask advice from him, for he is an alien and a stranger, who has no acquaintance with and maintains no connection with that remote country about which we ask. If someone merely thoughtlessly and to pass the time allows his thoughts to wander about, curiously and unstably occupied with the future, then we must leave him to seek fellowship and cooperation among the like-minded, “whose idle speech eats as does a canker.”

Finally, if someone, no matter for what reason, is in conflict with that future, so that he is not only as ignorant as the alien and the foreigner, not only as irresponsible as that romantic knight of thought, but who wishes with all his might to destroy it, then he would certainly be least fitted to take part in a deliberative council. So one chooses otherwise. One assumes that personal concern not only does not make a man biased, but that it is precisely this which makes him capable of reflection. One assumes that the fact that his welfare is intimately connected with that future, is just what makes him qualified to consider it. Therefore, the man who owns treasure in heaven and whose soul is bound up in this treasure; the man who here on earth acquired friends who are able to welcome him in the next world; the man whose thought has preceded him and precedes him to prepare a place for him; the man whose concern anticipates an explanation which life denies; the man whose longing holds the beloved fast, and does not release him in death; the man whose sorrow continues to follow the dead to the grave; the man whose feeling would revolt at the terrible thought of cancelling out the happiness of heaven, would rebel more than a citizen on earth if someone should wish to destroy his native land: every such man is a good citizen, a well-intentioned man, from whom the questioner may dare to expect guidance and assistance, an answer to his question.

But perhaps we have gone about the whole matter in the wrong way; perhaps eternal happiness is something which, to a certain degree, is a matter of course, so that it is foolishness to speak about something which

follows of itself. Eternal happiness is a matter of course, nothing follows from it; let us therefore not waste time first by raising a doubt about that which goes without saying, and then by setting at rest the doubt through which we never attain the certainty we do when we accept it as a matter of course, and finally waste time on the consequences of the concern of doubt.

But whether it is a matter of course or not, this view still does not deny that the happiness of heaven is a good, and can only disapprove of the wish for it insofar as the wish expresses a kind of concern which is not needed, since eternal happiness comes of itself, whether one wishes it or not. And at bottom every man wishes, except that the individual does not call attention to the fact that he is wishing; for in the same way every man breathes, but just on that account it would be foolish if the individual wished to set himself apart and rejoice in the fact that he can breathe.

My hearer, let us for a moment speak foolishly, or rather let us for a moment continue to speak foolishly; for you have certainly already noticed that this speech is foolishness, almost through its very cleverness. Let us then foolishly assume that God in heaven is like a weak man who could never find it in his heart to deny anyone eternal happiness, whether he wanted it or not; so weak, in fact, that he, as it were, forced it upon everyone, whether he wished it or not. Such a weak character is sometimes seen in life. He owns one or another good, and in the smaller circle which constitutes the sphere of his activity, it is notorious that he distributes it to everyone. They all get this good — this they have in common; but the difference, in what does this consist? In this. Some of them harden their hearts in indifference, almost make fun of the weak man; unconcerned about him, they pursue their own affairs, excuse themselves from every antecedent concern as to whether they were worthy and had not accepted his goodness in vain; they absolve themselves from every subsequent concern as to whether their gratitude truly appreciates the giver and the gift.

Others, on the other hand, accept the good doubtfully in the form of a wish; and even if they think they do not deserve the gift, their heart and good will are yet favorably disposed toward that man through whose goodness they received it; and even if they regard that goodness as weakness, they conceal the thought from him and from themselves, believe themselves justified and under obligations to behave in this way, because gratitude is the only expression which indicates their relation to him; for a gift it is, and a gift it remains.

If this held true about the reception of eternal happiness, my hearer, how would you wish to accept it? Would you wish to accept it as that first man accepted the earthly gift? Even if you believed your eternal happiness was absolutely assured, you would still feel a deep sense of shame whenever you compared your life with theirs for whom concern about this matter filled many a moment, many an hour, whether it was the wish which engaged their attention, or the heart which was moved in gratitude, or the mind which they disciplined according to their best insight and with all their strength, to be wellpleasing to the Giver, and by means of which they prepared for the transition. For a sudden transition is a terrible hazard. We have sometimes imagined how terrible it must be for the intoxicated suddenly to awaken with all his thoughts in confusion; we have sometimes pictured the horror which must have seized upon the rich man when he awakened in hell; but if it were the case with eternal happiness, that the instant a man breathed out his last sigh he awakened to this bliss, a man whose thought had been as distant from it as the abyss is from heaven: it seems to me that this man must die again from shame, must wish himself away, because the bliss of heaven and his own unworthiness could not tolerate each other. It seems to me that this man must feel as unhappy as one who in a foreign land wishes only to leave it.

We have spoken foolishly, but even so it has certainly shown that a man would not dare to become indifferent to the thought about an eternal happiness. How then could eternal happiness become a matter of indifference to one for whom the speech did not need to venture out to the extreme limits of thoughtlessness, but whose soul was well disposed to listen to the earnest word of earnestness, that “God is not mocked”; whose soul is well-prepared to consider what would entirely overcome that confusion, that “no man can serve two masters, since he will hate the one and love the other”; whose soul is fully awakened from its sleep to understand what would certainly plunge the sleep-walker into the abyss, that “love for the world is enmity toward God”? Such a one has the spiritual sense to be disgusted with the idea that eternal happiness, in spite of its glory, might be nonsense; maturity of understanding enough to realize that eternal happiness is as little to be taken by violence as it is to be redeemed like a forfeit in a game. Such a one truly has time to consider the one thing needful, courage to desire eternal happiness; earnestness to reject the flattery of light-minded thinkers; fear and trembling in his soul to be terrified at the thought of breaking with heaven, or taking it in vain.

But then his thought about this eternal happiness will not be wasted, or his wish be in vain; his anxiety will not be an unfruitful trouble; his prayer not without blessing, like the inactivity of the lilies which do not spin, or the improvidence of the birds who do not gather into barns; his labor not without its reward, even if he does not deserve the happiness of heaven, but only becomes fitted to inherit it through the vigilance of expectation. And this occupation will also become a reward to him in this life, and the result of this expectation a blessing to him in time. For the expectation of an eternal happiness is able to do what ordinarily seems impossible, to be in two places at once: it works in heaven and on earth, it “seeks the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and these other things are added to it.” If the

expectation does not do this, then it is deceitful, a sick soul's craftiness that would sneak out of life, not a sound soul's frank presence in the temporal. Then it is not an expectation of the eternal, but a superstition about the future; then man does not rest in the trustworthiness of the eternal, but jests with the possibility of the future, which is merely intriguing, like the solving of a riddle. Then is the expectation an insidious craving which has not taken counsel with earnestness about the various decisions of fulfillment; for the more profoundly earnestness understands the fear of the separation — if this does not destroy the responsibility and force the soul, as it were, to surrender — the truer is the expectation.

The result of the expectation is, then, two-fold; but let us this time continue to reflect on the result as it concerns the present life; let us in our reflection always keep the words of the apostle, which we read at the beginning, before our eyes, while our thought lingers with that concerned and powerful witness of the future, the Apostle Paul, and so let us speak about:

THE EXPECTATION OF AN ETERNAL HAPPINESS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE THIS EXPECTATION HAS FOR THE PRESENT LIFE

The expectation of an eternal happiness will help a man to understand himself in the temporal existence. We often and with reason praise the tested look of experience because it is far better able to help one to the right way of life than is that of youth, which is at the service of the imagination, deluded by mental illusions, clear-sighted at a distance, while still its deceptive second sight cannot endure the inspection of an observer. In contrast to the precipitancy of youth, experience has the advantage of being strong in detailed reflection. Precisely because of this, therefore, it is important as a guide in life; for life in the temporal existence is seen only in part and as a dark saying, which is best understood when it is understood

gradually. The advantage of experience is that it always has a standard by which it measures, a goal toward which it strives; and when it estimates the extent of the finite, it always knows how to gauge the individual; and when it progresses from the certain, it estimates the uncertain. It knows how to strike a trial balance, to determine the length of the way and the time. It has a standard for strength and endurance, for opposition, for dangers and difficulties, and, in proportion as life appears favorable or disturbing, it knows how to get along. It is not easily taken by surprise, and even if this happens, it soon collects itself and measures again. Perhaps many a human life is passed in this way, active in the service of the temporal existence, but also belonging absolutely to such existence.

If, on the contrary, a man's soul is expectant of an eternal happiness, then will this expectation certainly disturb him for a moment; it will cause him to despise experience, since its goal is too insignificant for him, its standard too low. But neither the impetuosity of youth nor the giant strides of the imagination will help him, and yet he cannot get along without a goal and a standard, for without these life is desolate and confused.

Still, he who has only the standard of the temporal existence goes down with the temporal, and perhaps does not even last as long. Even if one's life passes quietly and peacefully, events may still take place which his experience has not exhausted. If this happens to a man, he becomes the prey of despair. And, on the other hand, if he succeeds in slipping through life without any such dispensation of Providence upsetting his calculations, then, if he has learned nothing higher in life, he is still a child of the temporal existence, for whom the eternal does not exist. If, on the contrary, a man preserves that expectation in his soul, then he has a goal that is always valid, a standard which is always valid, and valid in itself; by means of this goal and this standard he may always understand himself in the temporal existence. As success and prosperity, the favor of men, victory and

gain, will not trick him out of his goal, and give him the false goal of vanity in its place, teaching him wrongly to rejoice as one who has no hope, so neither shall sorrow nor the false goal of suffering teach him to sorrow in despair as one who has no hope.

"For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." These are the apostle's words, which we read in the beginning. My hearer, if you had never heard Paul's name mentioned, if this name, so far from being what it has been to you from earliest childhood, a name revered and sacred, were unknown to you, imagine this, and then consider that these words are submitted to you with the request that from them you infer what the lot of the man must have been who could give life on earth and eternal happiness hereafter, such a testimony. Then you would doubtless scrutinize the words, you would compare them with the testimony of others about life's distress and eternity's glory; and then you would certainly conclude that this man must have lived a fairly quiet and undisturbed life in honorable obscurity, remote from the great decisions of life; not, indeed, absolutely unacquainted with the secret wisdom of suffering which exists for those initiated into its secret, but still not put to the extreme test in earthly distress, in peril of the soul's temptation. If you were asked to substitute a similar expression for this one, you might perhaps use a not unfamiliar verse, which we are not able to quote here because it is in a foreign language, but the beautiful meaning of the happily chosen words is about like this: that the earth is beautiful enough as a halting place for one who expects an eternity, but not beautiful enough to make a man forget that he is still only on the way. And this expression would no doubt satisfy you and others.

Imagine now that at the same moment a man entered who said: "These words are by the apostle Paul," and that he told you, what certainly no one needs to tell you, that Paul was halted on the way of offense, and hence was

certainly tested in the perils of the soul; that he was carried up to the third heaven, and hence was indeed tempted to acquire a distaste for the earthly life; that he had borne witness with such passion that to his listeners he seemed mad; that for forty years he was tossed about in the world, with no certain dwelling-place; outlawed and abandoned, a stumbling block to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness; rejected by the world; in peril of life, in hunger, in nakedness, in prison, and finally executed as a felon. Would not this amaze you? Would it not make you giddy, because your standard was not equal to such a scale!

Let youth try its hand at this! Aye, youth is swiftly stimulated to admiration, and its ideas are no less swift. When it gets a round number, then it quickly reaches the goal, and quickly adds it up. Even if it is inspired by the thought of Paul, oh, its enthusiasm does not understand him, and merely deludes itself.

Let experience spell its way forward; it would doubtless say: “Such a life is a perpetual affliction, not to be endured.” A perpetual affliction — is this the clarifying interpretation of the words of our text: “our light afflictions, which are but for a moment”? And yet Paul was certainly not without a goal and not without a standard, for eternity was his goal, and its eternal happiness his measuring-stick.

When the thunder clouds of affliction began to gather and to threaten with their terror, when the soul would fail from fear and anxious expectation, then I think, if we dare to speak thus, that Paul took out his measuring-stick, measured with it, and lo, the affliction was brief and light. When the community went astray, when false doctrines and human instability drifted about it so that the way of truth became impassable, and there was no goal, then was heaven his goal. When he is sitting in prison, when error grows and flourishes while he can do nothing; when the goal of his activity is foolishness to experience, because it goes backward, then is

heaven his goal. When the intensity of the suffering deprives his soul of its composure, then, I think, he takes out his measuring-stick, and lo, the suffering becomes brief and light, while it would have been unendurable if he had sought for guidance on the basis of human consolation. When the burdens of life rest heavily upon him, when thought adds the burden of past days to these, and he almost sinks beneath the weight; when experience has long lost courage and is willing to declare him "the most wretched of men"; when even the one ordinarily resigned to the will of God, has no other consolation than to wish "that all his calamity were laid in the balance," no other alleviation than the satisfaction of knowing how heavy the burden was: then Paul weighs it, and lo, it becomes light. For the bliss of heaven is above and beyond all measure a great and eternal weight of happiness, and only he was the most wretched who "had hope for this life only."

Experience indeed understands about weights and measures, but what can it do? It is scarcely able even to lift the apostolic sufferings and place them on the balance, but Paul understands that the blessedness of heaven has an eternal overweight. Experience indeed knows how to comfort in many ways, but only the blessedness of heaven knows how to comfort beyond all measure. Experience has long known how to bring gladness to the anxious, but a joy beyond all understanding it naturally does not know. Experience knows all the many inventions of the human heart, but a joy which does not originate in any human heart, it does not know. And yet the life which is without a goal and a standard is comfortless and confused; and yet the life whose experience did not end with verifying that experience is not enough, is only a race of the uncertain, which gets lost on the wrong way; a battle in the clouds, which the wind blows away; a writing in the sand, which is blotted out by the waves. He who has experienced this, will certainly search for a goal which is always valid, a standard which is always valid. And the expectation of an eternal happiness is a refuge in time of

need, a fortress life cannot take by storm, an order that need and sufferings cannot cancel. And constant association with this idea nourishes a man better than the mother's milk the nursing babe, and from this concept he returns strengthened, and especially strengthened when the purpose of his striving is not to wean him self from this nourishment, but to accustom himself to it.

When the demands of life exceed the judgment of experience, then life becomes confused and comfortless, unless the expectation of an eternal happiness regulates and calms it. When it is demanded of the rich young man that he shall go away and sell all of his goods and give the money to the poor, then experience does not know how to help; for the demand was not for just a part of his wealth. And if there was someone of whom it was not required that he must sell everything in order to become perfect, since his possession was of such a quality that hardly any one would buy it from him, then what does experience know about it? And he who does not need first to go and bury the dead because they were buried long ago, but whose sorrow has only increased with the years, what support does experience have for him, if the thought does not comfort him that there are always more born than die? And if there is a solitary pain, which indeed gnaws deepest, the experience of another will not comfort the sufferer, for he does not hear the shriek of anguish, and even if he heard it, he could not judge the intensity of the pain by the shriek; his own experience will not help him, for that is why the shriek was stifled, because the pain could not be understood. And he whose mouth was bound as not even the mouths of the oxen were bound that threshed out the grain for others; and he whose soul was anxious, even when he made others glad; and the one, the door of whose lips was locked, even if he knew that his words would attract the attention of the curious, but scarcely gain him sympathy in the pain-how

will experience be able to comfort him? But the expectation of an eternal happiness consoles beyond all measure.

There is a covenant of tears with God, and this covenant is not seen, is not heard except by the One who sees in secret and understands from afar; but he is in a covenant of eternal happiness with the God who will dry all tears. And there is a fellowship of suffering with God, whose secret is the assurance of an eternal happiness in confidence with God. — An eternal happiness hereafter? Do you ask, my hearer, what this is and what it will bring? Is it not enough for you that it is even here able to make the affliction brief and light, that it is able to join your anxious soul to the inward joy, inseparably, like everything which God has joined together, fruitfully, like the covenant God Himself has blessed?

The expectation of an eternal happiness will reconcile every man with his neighbor, *with his friend*, *and with his enemy in understanding of the essential.* The child wants everything it sees, and the youth is not much better; he wants everything to accommodate itself to him, and the whole world to humor his wishes. But experience knows how to shift and divide; it makes a difference between mine and thine; it gives to the king what belongs to the king, to his neighbor what belongs to him, to his enemy his due, and retains its own. For this reason we praise experience, that it has thus arranged life which in he realm of temporal existence passes in sheer reciprocity. Perhaps many a human life is thus tirelessly engaged until it is finished with temporal existence. But if it is passed in this way, then is such a life merely wretched, however much it is bedizened; petty, whether it occupies itself with millions or with pennies; pitiful as a childish game, if it ought to be earnest. It indicates that if human life wishes to pass in this way, then it is fortunate if distress and danger interrupt this monotonous security, in which the nobler and better qualities of a man sink down in lethargy, as if under a spell.

When the common danger stands at every man's door alike, when a common misfortune teaches men to cooperate, and impresses upon them the need of compromise, then it is indeed seen how they are reconciled by an understanding of the common danger, and how this reconciliation benefits them collectively and individually. But when the danger is past and the misfortune blows over, then they return only too soon to the old mode of living, and the compromise forced upon them through necessity sometimes bears within itself the germ of a more profound disunity than that which had been thrust aside. And even if that reconciliation casts a beautifying radiance over a period of the individual's life, it still does not really belong to him but to the one who reflects upon it, and to the observer who succeeds to the reflection, until the story about it is also forgotten.

Even if it is attractive to look at, such a life still belongs to the temporal existence, is the fruit of the temporal existence, but is also the prey of the temporal existence, and the most one can say of it is that it was a beautiful moment. But this beautiful moment of the temporal existence is still, in comparison with the eternal, only like the brief, silvery gleam of counterfeit metal. On the contrary, he whose soul expects an eternal happiness, has always present in himself that which is valid in itself, and against which all the petty appears as the petty. He is constantly influenced by an aspiration which does not bring him into conflict with anyone, or with anything earthly, whose possession does not exclude anyone else. That is, he can lose the earthly, and if he loses it in the right way, then its loss will make the difficult easier, so that a camel can go through the eye of a needle; and he will not wish to exclude anyone, if he himself is anxious in the right way.

"While we look not at the things seen, but at the things not seen, for the things seen are temporal, but the things not seen are eternal." These are the apostle's words we read at the beginning of this discourse, and so we may well go on. While ordinarily one leaves the happiness of heaven for a later

consideration as to what it may some time be, it would doubtless be better to do this in the case of the earthly and temporal things, to let them pass or what they are, and not consider them. For he who regards the temporal will gradually become incapable of considering the eternal, and he in whose sight the earthly becomes too important, will gradually lose the ability to prize the heavenly. But the things seen are temporal; and he temporal is not only perishable, but it is at variance with itself, and therefore it must be dissolved and cannot endure. This is why his treasure causes pain to the miser even while he is gathering it; pain while he possesses it; pain when he must abandon it. This is why the prodigal scatters without pleasure what the stingy hoards without joy; this is why the new wine bursts the old containers; this is why forgetfulness wipes out the vain achievements, as well as the great toil and sorrow through which a man believes that he attains importance; this is why time consumes the earthly affection and even the hate, which, powerless as it is, would brave its way into eternity. But he who turns away from the temporal to the eternal, and is concerned for his own eternal happiness, he is reconciled with himself, and reconciled with everyone. For the eternal is always in harmony with itself, and its harmony excludes only that which excludes itself.

Still “concerned for his own eternal happiness” — is this expectation not a new burden one assumes, instead of being the eternal medicine which heals all sickness, even when it is unto death? Sometimes men have chosen another kind of certainty than that of concern. They employed a particular criterion, drew up conditions, and through the help of these they were assured of eternal happiness, in the same way that one is assured that what he holds in his hand exists. They did not notice that this temporal assurance was only an illusion; they did not notice that they “hung eternity in a cobweb”; they did not notice that it was a bird in the hand they had caught, a bird which wanted to fly. But while, because of this great certainty, they

forfeited more and more the eternal happiness, they won — the right to let the determinations be decisive for others, the right to exclude others. Let them retain this right; it would still be, in truth, the most distressing misunderstanding, if a man in his zeal to exclude others is so soothed by the idea that he does not even dream that he is himself excluded. What wonder, then, that the temporal existence again delighted in its rights, that hate and wrath and earthly partiality and worldly considerations again intruded on the eternal to set it at odds with itself and make it contentious! Who is not terrified by such perversity? For my part, I have always tried in vain to understand it.

But, still, let us earnestly consider this matter; for the bliss of heaven is and continues to be the decision which decides everything. Moreover, even if the concern did not procure for a man the humble entrance into heaven, it would still be worth while to strive after it, so that there may still be an inwardness, a holy of holies in the soul, where consciousness draws back, abandons the world, shuts itself into itself, becomes reconciled with itself and thereby with the inequalities of life; an enclosure where finite thoughts, insofar as they presumptuously wish to push themselves in, are found overthrown (like the statue if Dagon before the ark of the covenant) before the sublimity of the concern which is solely concerned about it in its validity, as the expectation is not, which would triumphantly enter heaven, and wishes that its festal entrance shall be decisive for others.

Insofar as that distressing misunderstanding, "which became a prey to worldly wisdom," was due to the fact that it joined the bliss of heaven to finite conditions, it might perhaps again seem, through a misunderstanding, that the thoughtlessness, the careless foolhardiness which is not troubled by any condition, might be preferable. However, this is very far from being the case, and we are agreed that everyone who is without concern, is once and for all excluded from considering a matter for whose consideration concern

affords the only approach. That misunderstanding, then, did not lie in the fact that one accepted the conditions, but in the fact that the concern for discovering these conditions was so quickly satisfied that the individual even gained time and opportunity and purpose to decide the question for others concerned. And yet, as soon as the concern ceases, the individual to whom this happens is excluded from the reflection. On the other hand, the one who is truly concerned understands very well that there must be a condition, but finitely he will never be able to fathom this; for the concern prevents a finite understanding. Even when he has considered it most intensively, he must still confess that from a finite standpoint he cannot decide what the conditions are; for it is precisely the finite which the anxiety takes from him. In everything he finds out there will always be a residuum of uncertainty, and this uncertainty nourishes the concern, and the concern nourishes the uncertainty. This uncertainty may be expressed in this way — that he expects eternal happiness by the grace of God. But, again, he expects God's grace, not by virtue of some finite condition; for then it is not grace, and then, too, the concern will soon transform itself into earthly confidence. If he is now constantly concerned in this way, but also constantly saved through grace; if he constantly perceives that it would be a distressing sign if the concern should cease, how could he ever get enough vain assurance to decide this question for another?

Still, suppose, too, that there were certain conditions which one could accurately state in words, and by means of which the observant thought might test what the condition of the individual was, how could he, if he was again concerned (and if he were not, then everything would be vanity), how could he ever with finite certainty decide whether these conditions were present within him? These conditions being then acts, definite conceptions, moods, who knows himself so intimately that on his own responsibility he would dare to vouch that these conditions were present in himself just as

they ought to be, not bastard children of doubtful parentage! Who could do this if he were truly concerned, and who must not be truly concerned if he would consider the question seriously! But if an uncertainty constantly remains behind in his soul, on account of which he must take refuge in grace, how could it then occur to him to wish to decide this question for others? For before one begins on others, one must first be absolutely certain himself. But whoever through grace is absolutely certain, something we indeed wish for the individual, he is, humanly speaking, absolutely uncertain.

Let us for a moment speak metaphorically, and through the imperfection of the metaphor direct attention to that eternal validity of which we speak. There is sometimes found in an army a little selected group which is called the band of the immortals, and in time of war it is regarded as a great honor to be selected to belong to it. Suppose now there were a man (we know very well that this is an unhappy aberration which never happened, and I hope nothing similar ever will happen) whom the thought of being chosen for this group occupied as much as the thought of inheriting the eternal happiness of heaven ought to concern everyone. The conditions for eligibility were familiar to everyone: there was required prowess in battle, but in addition there were certain external conditions — a stipulated height, physique, and so on. He must then prove whether he satisfies all these requirements, not in general, not in a slip-shod manner, for he was too concerned for that, and he knew that if he lacked the slightest of these requirements, he would be rejected. And the question as to whether something was lacking, or whether everything was present in the right proportion, would be decided by the commander of the army on his own judgment. On his own judgment; for all the conditions might be separately present, but not united in that vital harmony which determined the choice. I think this judgment might well become to him the unrest of concern. Suppose, however, that he felt

perfectly confident, but we still do not forget that he was as much concerned about this selection as a man ought to be about the eternal happiness of heaven. One difficulty would still remain. The choice was not to be made immediately; he must wait several days. What might not happen during these days! And even if these passed without any bad luck, yet suppose at the moment he entered the palace of the commander he should happen to stumble! I wonder if such a man would have the time or the opportunity or the disposition to go around and observe the other candidates in order to see whether they might fitly be chosen for this band. I wonder if in his deep concern he would understand that to have been almost selected was still a rejection. Would he not with deep concern realize this, if he was as much concerned about being selected for this group as every man ought to be about inheriting the eternal happiness of heaven?

Still, even if a man knew the conditions to the last letter, and understood that he fulfilled them unequivocally (let us assume this) — still would he have time and opportunity and serenity of mind enough to wish to decide the question for others? How? Is not the happiness of heaven so great a good that it needs no augmentation through any external circumstance? He who possesses eternal happiness can neither wish to become happier through some irrelevant thought, nor to be disturbed in his happiness by any irrelevant thought. So if a man who believes that his own eternal happiness is assured, nevertheless considers some such thing, it indubitably proves that he is not considering eternal happiness. And, just as the consciousness of having done a good deed may cause one to lose the reward, so this irrelevant thought may well cause a man to lose his eternal happiness. One who was himself concerned would scarcely wish to exclude anyone; but would he, perhaps, as is sometimes suggested, be sympathetic enough to wish another chosen? Oh, spare your sympathy for a better cause, and if you can do anything for a man, then do it, modestly as is becoming to you,

for we are all unprofitable servants, and even our benefactions are only human inventions, frail and very ambiguous.

However every man acquires the eternal happiness of heaven only through God's mercy and grace, and this is equally near every man, so near, that it is a matter between God and himself. And let no third party who has himself received grace mar this by unwarranted meddling.

Even if there were a man (something I truly have not experienced) who embittered my life for me early and late, and made me think evil of everything, should it disturb my eternal happiness if he, too, were saved? Or should I be vain enough to wish to assist him by my sympathy! Oh, the concern about an eternal happiness! It turns the thoughts away from all unseasonable considerations! Even if there was someone who had borne the heat and toil of the day, and if I were not called until the eleventh hour, and our wage proved to be the same, I wonder if it would disturb him, when he considered that the compensation was eternal salvation! He indeed had richly and in abundance, nor would he get more by my being excluded. And if there was a righteous man who from his youth up had kept the commandments, and throughout a long life had expected the eternal happiness of heaven (which truly is a rarely honorable distinction), and I were a robber who "yet today," hence at that very instant, had come as far as he: I wonder if that would be able to disturb him. Certainly, if I were to believe that it was because of my worthiness, then it might indeed offend him, and offend heaven itself, so that I should again be thrust out. But if I am now willing, with the observance of all the forms and without any mental reservations, to confess that it was through grace, I wonder if that righteous man would continue to be so unfair, not to me, for I had certainly been admitted — but to himself through retaining his anger. And if there were, not what one in the more exact sense calls so, but what in the plain daily speech one rightly calls a simple man, and you, on the contrary, my

hearer, were a wise man who profoundly asked, “What is truth,” and restlessly meditated upon the question with ability and success — I wonder if it could disturb you that he became equally as happy as you, and that the infinite happiness of heaven made you both equal.

Certainly, when you come to die, then there will be a difference; then it will be said, and said with reason, that learning sorrows, and its votaries deplore the loss. And your funeral will be different, for it is a beautiful custom that men clothe the dead in his best apparel; but still the question is whether death will not reclothe him. And if it should be what we call a husband, a man who had lived happily with his wife and had begotten children by her in contentment, who had let his heart rejoice with other men, but had seldom been stirred by thoughts which have made you oblivious to everything by day, and which have kept sleep from your eyes at night: I wonder if it would disturb you if he became as happy as you. “Oh, if God held all truth in His right hand, and in His left the eternal striving” — no, if God held in His right hand eternal happiness, and in His left also the concern which had become your life’s content, would not you yourself choose the left, even if you still became like one who chose the right? There must still be an equality, and what is indeed more disheartening than the equality to which men sometimes flee, the equality of death, which makes all equally poor; and what is more blessed than the equality which makes all equally happy?

Is this not so, my hearer? And because of this you said to God in your heart: “Father in heaven, when I consider the matter of my eternal happiness, then I do not bring out the reckoning; for I know, indeed, that I cannot answer one to a thousand, and I also know that Peter stood more securely upon the waves of the sea, than does the one who stands on his own righteousness against Thee. And I will not build my eternal happiness on any deed I may have done, not even the best, for only Thou dost know

whether it was a good deed; and not upon the best that I might do, for only Thou dost know whether it might become a good deed. Preserve, then, my soul from the pettiness that would disparage Thee and Thy gift, disparage myself by making myself greater than others. Preserve my soul from the reflection which would penetrate what is not given me to understand. Tear out from my soul the sophistry which cunningly takes the best and leaves me the poorer. What as a child I did easily and naturally, in that I believed without understanding; what I have done later, have done, I know, have believed a man against reason; what I shall continue to do, even if being clever is commended more highly than believing; what I shall strive to do with all my might, so that the glory of the intellect shall not deceive me and injure my soul: should I not be willing to do it for Thee; should I not, since I can still do nothing of myself, wish for concern and confidence and sincerity in believing Thee, and in this faith expect Thy eternal happiness!"

VII. MAN'S NEED OF GOD CONSTITUTES HIS HIGHEST PERFECTION

MAN WANTS BUT little here below, nor wants that little long" is a high-minded saying, well worthy of acceptance, and worthy also of being accepted as it desires to be accepted. For it is too earnest in its intent to wish to be admired merely as a beautiful sentiment or a neat bit of phrasing. As such it is indeed sometimes present in our speech. We quote it for the benefit of some needy person, perhaps for the sake of offering him some degree of consolation in passing, perhaps merely for the sake of saying something. We say it to ourselves in the heyday of our prosperity; for the human heart is deceitful and only too prone to take even high-mindedness in vain, proud of needing little — while using much. We say it to ourselves in the day of our need; and we immediately hasten ahead in order to receive ourselves at the goal — when we shall have realized the lofty task. But in this we serve ourselves as little as we honor the saying.

Indeed, our need is not for long. But as it sometimes happens that "when the day begins to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen," so it is always the case that the winter of our deprivation and discontent can make the day seem long, even though life and time be short.

How much then is the little that a man needs? It is quite impossible to answer this question in general terms. Even one who has had the experience, if not of needing little then at least of having to make a little suffice, cannot in general terms determine how much that little is. Just as time often brings new consolation to the sorrowing, new restoration of vigor to the abject, new gains to those who had experienced great losses, so even when it persists in taking away it nevertheless deals solicitously with the sufferer. It rarely takes everything all at once, but only little by little, thus

gradually accustoming him to do without; until at length the sufferer perceives with astonishment that he needs even less than what he once regarded as the absolute minimum. He sees that his wants are now so small that he can remember how he once shrank back in terror from the thought of needing so little; though in this he did not think very clearly, since it is certainly not the smallness of the want that is the truly terrifying thing. He remembers how he once excited and heated his spirit by reflecting upon the contradiction involved in needing so little merely in order to go on needing so little; though in this he did not fully understand himself, since the contradiction could surely not be removed merely by needing more.

How much then is the little that a man needs? Let life itself answer the question; and let this discourse do what the sorrows and tribulations of life sometimes effect, namely the stripping a man of his possessions in order to discover how little he needs. And do you also lend your aid, my hearer, in the degree to which your special circumstances make you able and willing to participate. For the discourse does not wish to overwhelm you with sudden fear, seeing that it is engaged in trying to find consolation. Nor does it wish to deceive you, as “when the ice and snow of despair create the delusive mountain stream that lures the caravan from the way, and leads it into the desert to its destruction.” Indeed, it cannot terrify you if you have made trial of the process it is about to describe, and if you have thus found the consolation.

And if you have not made the trial, the discourse which confronts you with it, can terrify you only if your strength lies in the view that such things happen but seldom. But who then is the more unfortunate? Is it the man who has made trial of the experience? Or is it not the soft and cowardly fool who can not perceive that his consolation is an illusion, since when misfortune really comes it helps him little that the occurrence was a rare one.

Let us then take it away from him: wealth and power and influence, and the deceitful service of false friendship, and the obedient subjection of his pleasures to the whim of his desires, and the triumphs of his vanity over the admiration of his worshipers, and the flattering attention of the throngs, and the envied magnificence of his entire presence. Now he has lost it, and is content with less. Just as the world cannot recognize him on account of the great alteration in his circumstances, so he finds it hard to recognize himself — so changed is he: that he who once needed so much now needs so little. In truth, it is far easier to understand and much more cheerful to contemplate how this latter change can make him unrecognizable to himself, than how that other change, the change in his circumstances, can make him unrecognizable to other men. For what folly there is in the notion that a human being should be known solely by his clothes, so that men do not recognize him when he is unclothed; and is it not a melancholy thing that our admiration is reserved for the clothes and not centered upon the man! A more godly view of life, however, readily perceives that the man is about to be clothed upon, and to be clad in festal garments; for the earthly wedding-garment and the heavenly are very different.

But a little with contentment is great gain. Let us then take that too away from him — not the contentment, but the little he has left. He does not suffer want, he is not compelled to go hungry to bed. But he does not know from whence his needs are to be supplied, either in the evening when he falls asleep from his anxiety, or in the morning when he wakes to live with it. Nevertheless, his wants are somehow supplied, the little that he needs in order to live. He is a poor man; and this phrase which it is so hard to hear, he must hear applied to himself. He feels the burden of his poverty doubly, since it is not selfchosen. He is not like a man who renounced his wealth in order to try an experiment, and who perhaps therefore finds himself more easily in his self-chosen poverty, though not necessarily more excellently, if

perchance he merely renounced one form of vanity in order to acquire another and a greater. “Man wants but little,” says the proverb. But to know that one’s wants are few, without in any moment knowing with certainty that these few wants will be supplied — whoever is able to carry this burden needs but little. He does not even need that which nevertheless is something, namely to have the satisfaction of his few wants assured to him. A man needs no more if it is true that he needs only a little — in order to live; for when the time comes he will doubtless find for himself a grave, and in the grave all men need equally little. Whether he owns the grave in which he lies, or has a leasehold for a hundred years (strange contradiction this!) or has had to force his way in among others, has had to struggle even in death to find for himself a little place: all have the same amount, all need equally little, and all need it only for a little while.

But the short time before, of which the saying speaks, may perhaps seem long. For even if the way that leads to the grave is short, even if you never had occasion to see him wearily walk the path to the grave in order to make conquest with his eye of the little country he intends after death to make his own, might not the way in another sense be very long indeed? And if he sometimes lost his courage, and failed to understand at times that man wants but little here below, had you nothing else to say to him than merely to repeat in his ear this one saying? Or did you perhaps have something else to say, something that came so naturally and so easily to your lips that you found yourself perhaps not fully trusting the consolation you offered him, namely the familiar phrase, “Then you will have to be content with the grace of God.”

Let us pause here a moment, lest everything be thrown into confusion: the thought, our discourse, and the human language itself. Confused, namely, in that the roles are reversed though the relationship remains the same, so that it is the other who has the consolation while you lack it, the

other who is rich while you are needy; though the very opposite seemed to be the case until you heard the little magic word that changed all. Perhaps the word did not even win your attention; for we often use many a word in this manner, as the child uses the significant word without becoming aware of the spear-point of the thought, which wounds unto death in order to save the life. To let the grace of God suffice us! The grace of God is surely the greatest of all good gifts, on this point we do not propose to raise a controversy; this belief is at bottom the most earnest and blessed conviction of every human being. But we so rarely evoke the thought; and if we wish to be honest with ourselves we must admit that in the last analysis, although without fully becoming aware of what we do, we quietly apply to this conception the old adage that "too much and too little spoils everything." For if a man were really to think this thought in its eternal validity it would at once nullify all his worldly thinking, imagining and desiring, and turn everything upside down. And this is something that a man cannot long endure. Hence he falls back to the lower level of earthly things, to his customary speech and habits of thought. And the older he is in years the harder it is for him to learn a new language, especially one so markedly different. Now and then this comes to his attention, and he senses that there is something wrong about the use which he makes of the word, intermingled as it is with all sorts of worldly speech. He thus acquires a bad conscience with respect to it, and is not happy in its employment. And yet, it really is the truth that the grace of God is the most precious of all good gifts.

If a man had what is less precious indeed than the grace of God, namely, the entire sum of all the treasures in the world, and you were to be so bold as to admonish him to rest content with this, he would doubtless smile at you. If, on the other hand, he were himself to say: "Now I shall try to be content with what I have," such speech would doubtless seem repugnant;

for what more could he ask to possess? And how great the insolence of "trying to be content" when one has everything. Whatever we are engaged in trying to make suffice, must surely be something that is little; and to strive to be content with the most precious of all possessions seems indulgence in a strange mode of speech.

And further, this consolation is offered to the other by a man who does not himself appear to understand it. This is as strange as if someone were to offer a needy person the gift of a coin, admonishing him to be content with the gift, although the fact was that this coin was one which made its possessor the owner of the entire world.

How strange that the giver could appraise his gift so modestly as to match it with the advice to be content! Is it not as if a man were going to a banquet, invited by some great personage, and met on his way a humble person who was not invited; and for the sake of consoling him after a fashion, said to him: "You will have to rest content with the privilege of sitting at table in the kingdom of heaven." Or if the humble man himself said: "Alas, I am not invited by the great man, nor could I accept the invitation even if I were; for I have a previous engagement, and must content myself with sitting at meat in the kingdom of heaven" — would it not be a strange form of speech?

The more one thinks about it, the stranger does the earthly life and the human language become. Intermingled with all of life's earthly and worldly differences, which are already quite sufficiently insistent upon being taken at their own evaluation, we thoughtlessly permit the distinction of the divine also to make its appearance, and in such a manner as to show that it is at bottom really excluded. When a man comes to us in the name of the king, this authorization opens every door. But it is a last desperate recourse for a man to come to us in God's name, and whoever is compelled to be content with such an authorization must be content with little. If someone came to a

great man’s door, and the servant failed to make out on what errand he came, and the great man himself came to the door in impatience, and saw standing there a humble man who presented himself as coming in God’s name — would not the door in all probability be shut in his face?

But the discourse does not wish to startle you, my hearer, nor to shock you out of your continuity with yourself. When we speak of being content with the grace of God, the reason doubtless is that the grace of God does not express itself in our experience as a human being would like, or finds it easy to understand, but speaks instead a more difficult language. When the grace of God grants to a man what he likes and desires, he is not merely content, but happy and grateful; under such circumstances he deems himself fully capable of understanding that God is good and gracious. That this is a misunderstanding, to the refutation of which, however, no one need leap too promptly and eagerly, is certain enough. One need not on that account omit to train oneself in the truer and more difficult interpretation while there is still time and opportunity. If it is possible for a human being to persuade himself of the grace of God without the intermediation of any temporal testimony, or without leaning upon that interpretation of God’s providence which makes it profitable for him according to his own ideas of what is profitable, then indeed it is quite certain that for him the grace of God is the highest good. And he will then strive to rejoice in God’s grace so as not merely to rest content with it; and he will give thanks for it so as not merely to find it barely sufficient. He will not grieve over what God has denied to him; he will not be overmuch concerned with the difference in mode of expression which formerly existed between God’s everlasting faithfulness and his own childish littleness of faith. For now this difference in language no longer exists, in that “his heart is strengthened by grace and not by meat.”

If someone suffering from some deprivation, enjoyed the friendship of a great man, but this powerful friend could do nothing to alleviate his suffering (which is comparable to the grace of God being without external confirmation), the mere fact of his friendship with the great man would nevertheless mean much to him. But here perhaps we touch the difficulty. The sufferer might readily persuade himself that the great man really was unable to do anything for him; but how could any man in any finite sense be persuaded that Almighty God could do nothing for him! Hence it results that our thoughts in their impatience steadily insist that God can surely do for us what we wish Him to do; and it is because of man's impatience that the language speaks of trying to rest content with the grace of God. In the beginning, when this impatience was at its height, and cried out most loudly to be satisfied, it could scarcely be made to understand that the contentment of which we speak could be praiseworthy. But as the impatience subsided, and the sufferer found rest and peace in the serene incorruptibility of the inner man, he began to understand this more and more, until at last his heart was moved, and he came to behold a vision, even if only intermittently, of the divine glory — the divine glory which had taken upon itself so humble a form. And if this glorious vision vanishes, so that he again becomes a sufferer, as in truth he was even while he beheld the vision; if it again seems to him that it requires a contented spirit to find the grace of God sufficient for his needs; he nevertheless sometimes admits to himself with shame that the grace of God is something that one may well find worthy of one's contentment; aye, that it is of all things most worthy to be desired; aye, that it is of all things most blessed to possess.

So then it happens, little by little, for the grace of God can never be seized by force, that the human heart becomes in a very beautiful sense more and more discontented, more and more burning with desire, more and more filled with longing, for the assurance of the grace of God. And behold,

now all things have become new, everything is changed. In the case of the earthly goods of life the principle obtains that man needs but little, and in proportion as he needs less and less he becomes more and more perfect. A pagan who knew only how to speak of earthly things, has said that God was happy because He needed nothing at all, and next to Him in happiness was the wise man, because he needed little. But in the relation between a human being and God this principle is reversed: the more a man needs God the more perfect he is.

The word which speaks of letting the grace of God suffice us is by no means intent merely upon offering us consolation, and upon re-affirming this consolation whenever earthly want and deprivation makes it seem necessary. For when a human being has fully awakened to its import it calls him aside, to a place where he no longer hears the earthly mother-tongue of the worldly mind, nor the customary speech of men, nor the alarums of the actors on the stage of life. But he stands now where the word is glorified, and confides to him the secret of perfection, namely, that to be in need of God is no shameful embarrassment, but precisely the perfection of human life, and that it would be the saddest of all tragedies if a man passed through life without discovering that he needed God.

Let us then strive to interpret to ourselves more clearly this edifying thought:

MAN’S NEED OF GOD CONSTITUTES HIS HIGHEST PERFECTION

The truth of this principle, that standing in need of God constitutes a perfection, would seem to be attested by a familiar circumstance, one which may serve at least as a passing reminder. In the churches of the various countries it is customary, after the sermon, to pray for the ruler and the members of the ruling house. That prayers are also offered for the sick and the sorrowing cannot prove that being in need of God constitutes a

perfection, since these are sufferers. But the ruler is a great man, the most powerful in the land; and yet intercession is made especially for him, while it is only in general terms that the sick and the sorrowing are mentioned, though the church hopes and trusts that God in His heaven will understand the petition in a quite particular manner, so that though the church does not specify any particular person, God nevertheless thinks of each individual separately. And if God's understanding is of a different sort, if His cares and responsibilities for the government of the world permit him too to concern Himself with individuals only in a general way — aye, then may God help us! Ah, this is still the last resort of every human being in his misery. Even when he cannot endure this last thought, that God's providence for individuals should be merely general in its character, even then he says: God help me endure this thought; and thus gets God, in spite of all, to concern Himself particularly with him.

But why is prayer offered especially for the ruler? Is it because he has earthly power, and holds the fate of many in his hands? Is it because his well-being determines that of countless others? Is it because every shadow of misfortune that passes over the ruler's house also darkens the homes of all the people? Is it because his illness interferes with the functions of the state, and his death disturbs its life? Wholly worldly as such a concern is, it may nevertheless not unbecomingly enlist the thoughts of many. But such a concern will scarcely prompt anyone to pray or at any rate not prompt anyone to pray, except with the reservation necessary whenever we pray for earthly goods; for from this point of view a ruler constitutes just such an earthly good. When understood in this manner the prayer would become more and more earnest and personally pressing, the more closely the petitioner's own life was tied to the life of the ruler, until at last the prayer ceased to be intercession, just as the wife's prayer for her husband can scarcely be called intercessory. But the church cannot pray in this manner,

precisely because it makes intercession; and it makes intercession for the ruler, doubtless, because it is convinced that the higher a man stands the more he needs God.

Nevertheless, even if such intercessory prayer is offered in all churches, it does not follow that the ruler on whose behalf it is offered has himself an understanding of the truth that his need of God constitutes man's highest perfection. And even if the individual church-goer tacitly consents to the intercession, and if, alas, the many who do not go to church have no objection to this prayer being offered, it does not follow that all these understand it in a godly manner; in the sense, namely, that the higher one rises in the scale of earthly power and greatness the nearer one merely comes to the need of intercession. It is only too easy for the great to take such prayer in vain; and it lies only too near at hand for those who pray, to utter such prayer in vain. On the other hand, if a man rightly and earnestly understands this thought, his life inevitably tends to become more difficult: this we do not deny. And one who tries to produce this consciousness experimentally, on his own responsibility and initiative, not leaving it to God to teach him, does not yet understand it earnestly enough. It is God Himself who best knows how to utilize a man's own anxieties for the purpose of extirpating all his self-confidence; and when he is about to sink down into his own nothingness, it is again God Himself who can best keep him from continuing to maintain a diver's under-water connection with his earthly self. Let us then admit that this thought renders life more difficult, without on that account becoming dispirited or cowardly, wishing to receive in our sleep what others have had to earn by labor and exertion. When the believer says enthusiastically that his suffering is light and brief and the yoke of self-denial easy, let us not take this profession in vain. On the other hand let us not doubt that the yoke of self-denial really is profitable, or that the cross of suffering is pre-eminently ennobling. And let us hope to God

that the time may come when we too may venture to speak enthusiastically. But let us not too soon demand this degree of advancement for ourselves, lest the enthusiastic words of the believer should make us downcast, when we discover that we do not at once succeed. It frequently happens that a man imprints upon his memory one or another strong word or phrase. Then when suffering comes to him he remembers the word, and thinks to conquer at once in the joy of the word. But even an apostle does not always use strong expressions; he too is sometimes weak, he too is filled with anxiety. Thus he gives us to understand that the strong expression is dearly bought, and that it can never be possessed except so as to give one occasion again and again to be reminded of how dearly it was bought.

But though this understanding makes life more difficult, not only for the thoughtlessness of the fortunate man and for the many who yearn to be like him, but also for the unfortunate, since the understanding in question does not by any means exercise a magic potency, or affect life in any outwardly decisive manner — should we on this account recommend it doubtingly, or desire it double-mindedly? Nevertheless it must give us pause to note that what is offered to us as a consolation, begins by making life more difficult, in order finally, aye, finally in truth, to make it easier. Each miracle of truth is like the wonder at the wedding-feast in Cana: Truth pours out the poor wine first and keeps the best to the last, while the deceitful world pours out its best wine first. Because a man became unhappy, even "infinitely unhappy," as he perhaps says of himself, it by no means follows that the understanding of life which constitutes a condition for the acceptance of the consolation, the understanding that he can do nothing of himself, has come to full growth and maturity within him. If he believes that it is only the means that are lacking to him, then he still believes in himself. If he believes that he could help himself if given power, or the admiration of men, or the attainment of his wish; if he thinks that his complaining

constitutes a just claim upon anything temporal, a claim that becomes increasingly valid in proportion as his complaint becomes increasingly loud, then he still has a bitter cup to drink, humanly speaking, before the consolation can come to him.

Hence it is always a matter of considerable difficulty for any one to offer another a consolation of this nature.

For if a troubled soul were to make an appeal to a man for help, and he were to reply: "Indeed, I know where consolation may be had, an indescribable comfort; and what is more, this consolation gradually transforms itself within your soul into the highest of human joys," the anxious individual would no doubt be willing to listen attentively. But when the speaker goes on to say: "Before this consolation can be yours, you must learn to understand that you are absolutely nothing in yourself. You must cut down the bridge of probabilities which seeks to connect the wish, the impatience, the desire, the expectation, with that which is wished, desired and expected; you must renounce the intercourse which the worldly mind has with the future; you must retire into your self, not as into a fastness that still bids defiance to the world, while the individual keeps his most dangerous enemy with him in the fortress, aye, while it was perhaps precisely on the advice of this enemy that he shut himself in — but a man must retire into himself so as to sink down into his own nothingness, making an absolute and unconditional surrender," there would doubtless be one or another who would go home sorrowful, like the rich young man of the many possessions, though himself having few possessions, and yet resembling the rich youth of the many possessions so much that it would have been quite impossible to tell them apart. Or if some anxious soul had run riot in overmuch deliberation, and had become the prisoner of his many thoughts, so that he could not act because it seemed to him that the considerations on either side balanced each other exactly; and another were

to counsel him in these terms: “I know a way out of your difficulty which will give you full assurance of victory. Yield your wish and act; act in the conviction that even if the opposite of what you wish results from your action, you will nevertheless have conquered,” there would doubtless be one or another who would turn his face away in impatience, because it seemed to him that such a victory was not to be distinguished from a defeat, and because such a way out seemed harder to endure than the doubting soul’s multifarious unrest.

What then is man? Is he but another jewel in the great chain of being? Or has he no power, can he himself do nothing? And what is this power? What is the highest he can will? What will be the answer to this question, when the daring of youth and the power of manhood combine to ask, when this glorious union of courage and strength holds itself ready to sacrifice everything in order to realize the great ambition, and speaks of its purpose in terms of burning zeal: “If no one else in all the world has achieved it, I am nevertheless resolved to achieve it. If millions of men fell by the wayside and forgot the task, I will nevertheless persist in striving — but what is the highest of human tasks?” For our part we do not propose to cheat the highest aim of its true cost, nor do we intend to conceal the fact that it is seldom attained. For the highest of human tasks is for a man to allow himself to be completely persuaded that he can of himself do nothing, absolutely nothing.

This is indeed a rare kind of greatness. It is not rare in the sense that only an exceptional individual is born to the purple, for everyone is born to it. It is indeed a rare kind of wisdom; but it is not rare in the sense that it is offered only to a few, since it is offered to all. Wonderful rarity, which is not debased through being offered to all, or in being shared by all! When a man turns his mind to outward things it may seem to him as if he could accomplish what exceeds the measure of human astonishment, could

achieve what would satisfy him as nothing else would, could realize what would concentrate upon itself the jubilant admiration of men. But the rare and lofty greatness of which we here speak is not well suited to be admired. It cannot tempt the sensuous man. On the contrary, it condemns as a fool every would-be admirer, who does not understand what it is that he admires. It bids him go home; or it judges him to be a deceitful soul, and bids him retire into himself.

To a merely external contemplation man is indeed the jewel of creation. But all his glory is, as such, but external, existing in and for and by outward things. Does not the eye aim its arrows outward every time passion or desire stretches the bowstring? Does not the hand seek to grasp some external thing, is not his arm outstretched? Is not his mind attuned to a hymn of conquest? But if he is unwilling to be a weapon in the service of unclarified cravings, aye, in the world's service, because the world upon which he fixes his desire itself awakens this desire; if he is unwilling to be a stringed instrument played upon by unclarified moods, or rather, played upon by the world, because the movements of his soul are determined by the manner in which the world plucks the strings; if he does not wish to be a mirror that reflects the world or in which the world reflects itself; if he is unwilling to play this passive role, but desires first to control the eye before it marks out something that it desires to conquer, in order that the eye may belong to him and not he to the eye; if he wills to lay hold of the hand before it is outstretched to seize some outward thing, in order that the hand may belong to him and not he to the hand; and if he wills this with such earnestness that he does not hesitate if necessary to pluck out the eye, to cut off the hand, to close the windows of sense — then all is changed; the power is taken away from him and the glory. He no longer strives with the world, but with himself.

Behold him now. His powerful figure is held in a close embrace by another equally powerful figure. They enfold one another so fast, they press upon one another with such equal suppleness and strength, that the wrestling cannot even begin; for it is as if the other figure would instantly overwhelm him. But this other figure is himself. Thus he can do absolutely nothing, and even the weakest of men, untried in this struggle, can do far more than he. This struggle is not only exceedingly strenuous, but it is at the same time fearful; unless indeed he has plunged himself into the struggle of his own accord, following the dictates of his fancy, in which case it is not the struggle of which we here speak. When life under the providence of God forces a man out of the shelter and security of its routine and elects him to be strengthened in this annihilation, the experience is one which knows no illusion and permits no evasion. It is impossible to say that the individual might have more power under other circumstances; for when the individual strives with himself, circumstances cannot decide the outcome.

This is man's annihilation, and this annihilation is his truth. This knowledge he will find it impossible to evade; for he is his own witness, his own accuser, his own judge. He is himself the only one who could bring consolation to bear, since he understands the need of the annihilation, and he is also the only one who cannot bring consolation to bear, for he is himself the sole instrument of his annihilation. To achieve an understanding of this annihilation is the highest task for every human being. To brood over this understanding, as over a treasure intrusted to his keeping, intrusted to him by God Himself as the secret of the truth, is man's highest and most difficult achievement. For the deceptive and falsifying interpretation of life is easy enough, so that a man becomes something at the expense of the truth. This is the highest and most difficult task that a human being can perform — but what do I say, not even this is in his power. Man can at the

most will to understand that this fire only burns until the fire of the divine love lights the flames in that which the first fire could not consume.

In this way man becomes a helpless creature. For every other understanding of life, in terms of which he understands that he can help himself, is a misunderstanding; though the acceptance of such an interpretation may make him seem bold in the eyes of the world, bold through having the courage to remain in a misunderstanding, that is, by not having the courage to understand the truth.

But in the heavens above, my hearer, dwells the God who can do all things; or rather, He dwells everywhere, though men fail to perceive His presence. "O Lord, if Thou wert an impotent and lifeless body, like a fading flower; if Thou wert like a brook that runneth past; if Thou wert like a building that suffers decay with the passing of time — then would men take note of Thee, then wouldst Thou be a suitable object to engage our low and brutish thoughts!" But now it is not so; and it is precisely Thy greatness which makes Thee invisible. For Thou art too far removed from the thoughts of men in Thy wisdom that they should see Thee; and Thou art too near men in Thy omnipresence to permit them to see Thee. Thou dost conceal Thyself from man in Thy goodness, and Thy omnipotence causes him not to see Thee, for then he would himself become as nothing! But God in heaven can do all things, and man can do absolutely nothing.

Does it not seem to you, my hearer, that these two, God and man, are well suited to one another? But if they are so suited to one another, the only remaining question is whether you will consent to be glad over this wonderful piece of good fortune, namely that you two are so well suited to one another. Or would you rather be as one who is not at all suited to God, or as one who can himself do something, and hence is not altogether suited to God? For you can neither change God nor could you wish to change Him, so that He should not be able to do all things. It may perhaps seem

hard to become as nothing; but even in human affairs we nevertheless speak otherwise. For if misfortune came and taught two human beings that they were suited to one another either in friendship or in love, how slight does not the distress that misfortune brought them seem to be in comparison with the joy that the same misfortune also brought them, namely, the discovery that they were suited to one another! And if two human beings in the very hour of death made the discovery that they were suited to one another for all eternity, what importance could they possibly attach to the brief if bitter moment of separation which is called death, in comparison with an eternal understanding!

It is in this sense that man is great; and he arrives at the highest pitch of perfection when he becomes suited to God through becoming absolutely nothing in himself.

But let us beware lest we admire this greatness frivolously, or take our admiration of it in vain. Did not Moses as the Lord's messenger address himself to a degenerate people for the sake of emancipating them from themselves, from their slavish minds, and from their slavery under a tyrant's yoke? What are even the greatest of heroic achievements over against what we call the works of Moses; for what is it to level mountains and to fill up rivers in comparison with letting a darkness fall upon the whole face of Egypt! But these were only so-called the works of Moses; he could do absolutely nothing of himself, and the deeds were the Lord's. The difference is worth noting. Moses does not form resolutions or outline plans, while the wise men in council listen to him attentively, because they recognize this leader as the wisest among them; Moses can do nothing. If the people were to say to him: "Go to Pharaoh, for your word is strong, your voice is triumphant in persuasion, your eloquence irresistible," would not Moses have to answer: "Ye fools! I can do nothing at all, I cannot even sacrifice my life for your sakes, unless the Lord so wills it. I can only refer

everything to God." He makes his appearance before Pharaoh, but what is his weapon? It is the weapon of the impotent: prayer; and he does not know what will happen even at the moment when his last words have already reached heaven. He merely believes that whatever happens will be for the best. He returns to his people; but if they make as if to praise him and offer him their gratitude, he will doubtless reply: "I can do nothing at all." Or when the people are overcome by thirst in the desert, and appeal to Moses for help, saying, "Take your staff and bid the rock give forth water to drink," Moses will doubtless answer: "What is my staff other than a stick?"

And if the people continue to press, saying: "But in your hand this staff is a mighty instrument," then Moses will doubtless say: "I really cannot do anything; but since the people so desire it, and since I cannot myself endure the sight of their misery when they languish from thirst, I will smite the rock, though I have no faith that the water will gush forth" — and the rock gave no water. So Moses does not know beforehand whether the staff he holds in his hand is to be the finger of the Almighty, or merely a stick of wood; of this he is ignorant even in the very moment that he brings it down upon the rock. He knows it only afterwards, just as he always sees merely the back of the Lord. Humanly speaking, the weakest individual in all Israel has more power than Moses; for the weakest person in the land still thinks that there is something that he can do, while Moses knows that he can do absolutely nothing. In one moment to be as if stronger than the strongest, stronger than all others, stronger than the whole world, inasmuch as the wonder is performed through him; in the next, or rather the same moment, to be weaker than the weakest, insofar as even the weakest person still clings to the belief that there is at least something that he can do — such greatness will not tempt the ambition of the vain soul, provided it takes the time to understand wherein the greatness consists; for in the absence of such

an understanding it would doubtless be prompt, in nauseous cowardice, to wish itself in Moses' place.

But if this view of life, namely, that being in need of God constitutes man's highest perfection, makes it more difficult to live, it does so only in so far as it considers man from the point of view of his perfection, and seeks to stimulate men to view themselves in this light; for through this view of life *a man learns to know himself*. And the life of each human being who does not know himself, is in a deeper sense mere delusion. The failure to discover whatever talents have been entrusted to him, the consequent mission to seek their development to the greatest possible extent in accord with the circumstances of his life, so that the roots of his life may penetrate ever deeper into the fibres of existence — such self-delusion is doubtless seldom encountered. Men rarely fail in this. They avoid dealing frivolously with themselves and their powers; they are not like a happily gifted child who does not know how much is entrusted to it, or a thoughtless youth of great wealth who does not understand the significance of riches. What we call a man's self has a value like the value of money. Whoever knows himself knows how much he is worth to the last penny, and understands how to invest himself so as to yield the maximum return. If he does not know how to do this, then he does not know himself and is deceived, as the worldly wise will doubtless tell him, and persist in telling him step by step as his life unfolds itself. They will tell him that he does not extract the joy of life from the spring-time of youth; that he does not value himself truly, in accordance with what riches are really his; that he fails to see that men will take him at his own valuation; that he has not known how to make himself significant, and thus to make life significant for himself. Ah, but even if a man knew himself ever so well after this fashion, if he thoroughly understood how to put himself out at interest — could he on this account be said really to know himself? But if he does not know himself his life is in a

deeper sense delusion. And in this worldly-wise age of ours, is it really so very rare a thing for a man to involve himself in such delusion?

The prudential self-knowledge we have just described — what is its nature? Is it not a knowledge of a man's self in its relation to something else? But is it a knowledge of a man's self in its relation to himself? This means that in spite of its seeming trustworthiness such self-knowledge is ultimately a very dubious thing, lacking in any solid foundation, since it concerns only a relation between a doubtful self and a doubtful other. This other could suffer alteration, so that someone else became stronger, richer, more beautiful; and his own self could suffer alteration, so that he became poor, ugly, impotent; and such a change might take place at any instant. If this other, in relation to which he calculates his wealth, is taken away he is deceived. And if it is something that can be taken from him, he is deceived even if it is not actually taken from him, because the entire meaning of his life was based upon a something of this precarious nature. There is no deception when that which can disappoint us does disappoint us, but rather must we say that there is a deception when it does not.

Such self-knowledge is thus very imperfect, and is far from regarding man from the point of view of his perfection. For it would surely be a strange sort of perfection of which one must finally, after having praised it in perhaps the strongest possible terms, say that it is at the same time a delusion. Along this road one cannot reach a point of view which has regard to man's perfection; and in order even to begin to consider man from the point of view of his perfection one must emancipate oneself from all such considerations. This is difficult enough, just as it is difficult to rouse oneself from a dream without continuing the dream, dreaming that one is now awake. In a certain sense it is also a complicated task, because a man's real self seems so distant from him that the entire world appears to him to be nearer than his self. And it is also a terrifying occupation, because the

deeper selfknowledge begins with that which one who refuses to understand it must call an anxiety-breeding deception. For instead of the entire world he gets merely himself; instead of being master of his fate he becomes a needy petitioner; instead of being able to do everything he can do nothing at all. Ah, how difficult here again not to fall into dreams, dreaming that one does all this of himself.

When man turns about, so as to confront himself in order to acquire an understanding of himself, it is as if he blocked the way for that first self of which we have been speaking. He interferes with its movement outwards, with its yearning for the surrounding world which is its object, and with its pursuit of it; he calls the first self away from external things. For the purpose of inducing the first self to acquiesce in this recall, the deeper self makes the surrounding world reveal itself as it really is, namely as uncertain and precarious. It is indeed the truth that the world about us is unstable, every moment admitting of a change to its very opposite. The man has never lived who by the exercise of his power or by the magic of his wish could hold this variableness within the bonds of restraint. The deeper self thus proceeds to picture the outer world, with its elusiveness and its mutability, in such terms that it no longer seems desirable to the first self. Either the first self must contrive to slay the deeper self, to plunge it into oblivion, when all is lost; or it must admit that the deeper self is right. For to assert stability of that which constantly changes is a contradiction. As soon as it is admitted that it is of the nature of the outer world to change, it follows that it may change at any moment. However much the first self may shrink from this acknowledgment, there has never lived so clever a phrase-maker or so subtle a sophist that he can refute the eternal insistence on this point of the deeper self. There is only one way out, and that is to silence the deeper self by letting its voice be drowned in the roar of the world's changes.

What has now happened? The first self has been brought to a standstill; it cannot move. The environment may actually be quite favorable, ah, so favorable; it may seem so palpably reliable, so evidently steadfast, that almost anyone would be willing to forecast a favorable outcome, provided only a beginning be made: it boots nothing. Whoever witnesses this struggle in his own soul, must acknowledge that the deeper self is in the right; this very minute everything may be changed, and whoever does not discover this truth is always engaged in basing his life upon what is uncertain. Never in all the world has there been so nimble a tongue that it could beguile the deeper self, provided the deeper self is permitted to give itself expression. This is indeed a painful state: the first self sits there and gazes at the alluring fruits displayed all about it, and it is so clear that it needs only to grasp the means at hand to achieve a complete success, as everyone must admit. But the deeper self sits there thoughtful and serious, like a physician at the bedside of the sick. But it also wears an air of translucent gentleness, because it knows that this sickness is not unto death but unto life.

The first self has, let us say, a specific wish. It knows that it is in possession of the conditions necessary for the realization of its ambition; the surrounding world, as it understands it, is as favorable as possible. It is as if these two, the fortunate self and the favors of fortune, were merely waiting for one another — oh, what a merry life! But the deeper self refuses to retreat; it does not bargain, it makes no compact, it withholds its assent. It merely says that even in this moment everything may be changed. Other men come to the assistance of the first self with suggested explanations. They call upon him to seize the means. They explain to him that such is the law of life, that some men are the favorites of fortune, that they ought to enjoy life, and that he is one of them. Then his heart beats fast within him, and he longs to make a start.

That a child whose father is strict must remain at home, is something that cannot be helped, since the father is the stronger. But he is no child, and the deeper self is merely his own self, and yet it seems stricter than the strictest father. It is quite impossible to ingratiate oneself with the deeper self; it either speaks quite unreservedly or not at all. Then there is danger in the offing; they are both aware of it, both the first self and the deeper one. The latter sits there anxiously concerned, like the experienced pilot, while a secret council is being held to determine whether it were not better to throw the pilot overboard, since he brings contrary winds. But this does not yet happen; what follows? It follows that the first self cannot move a single step forward. And yet, yet it is clear that the moment of happiness hastens to depart, that fortune is already in flight. For so men say, namely, that if one does not seize the moment while it is there it will soon be too late. And whose fault will that be, if not the fault of the deeper self? But this cry again is of no avail.

What sort of unnatural state is this, what does it all mean? When something of this kind takes place in a man's soul, does it not mean that this mind is beginning to give way? Ah no, it means something quite different, it means that the child is about to be weaned. For it is quite possible for a man to be thirty years old and more, fully forty years, and still be only a child; aye, it is even possible to die as a child of advanced years. But it is so enchanting, so beautiful, to be a child! And so the child lies at the breast of time in the cradle of the finite, and a figure called probability sits at the side of the cradle and sings a lullaby to the child. If the wish fails of fulfillment, and the child becomes restless, probability hushes it and says: Now just lie still and sleep, while I go out to buy something for you; next time you may be sure that it will be your turn. So the child falls asleep, and the pain is forgotten, and its cheeks redden again with the glow of new wishes, though it once seemed as if it would be impossible ever to forget the pain. To be

sure, had he not been a child the man could not have forgotten the pain so easily; and it would have appeared that it was not probability that sat at the side of the cradle, but the deeper self sitting at his deathbed, in the death hour of self-denial, when this self arose to an eternal life.

When the first self thus yields to the deeper self they are reconciled, and become companions on the way. Then perhaps the deeper self will say: “Let me see, I had almost forgotten it over our long struggle, what it was namely that you wished so intensely. At the present moment I believe that there is nothing to prevent the fulfillment of your desire, provided you do not forget the little secret that we two share with one another. So now you can be well content.” Perhaps the first self will then reply: “But now I do not care so much about it; I feel that I shall never be as happy as I was before, oh, as I was when my soul was filled with yearning. To tell the truth, I do not believe that you understand me.”

“Neither do I believe so: do you really think it would be desirable if I understood you in such fashion that I desired this thing as much as you? But have you lost anything by no longer caring so much about it? Consider on the other hand what might have happened if the world had deceived you, and you know it might have done so. This was what I impressed upon you; I said only that it was possible, and thereby implied indeed that what you regarded as a certainty was really only a possibility — what then? In that case would you not have been the prey of despair? And then you would not have had me to rely upon, for you will recollect that the ship’s council was almost on the point of deciding to throw me overboard. Are you not better off through having lost something of your burning desire, and through having gained instead the assurance that life cannot deceive you? To lose in that manner, is it not to gain?”

“The little secret that we two share with one another.” Thus spoke the deeper self. What is this secret, my hearer? What else than the truth, that in

relation to external things a man can do absolutely nothing? If he moves immediately to grasp the external it may change in that very instant, leaving him deceived. He may on the other hand accept it, with the consciousness that it is subject to alteration, and he will not be deceived even if it changes, for he has the consent of the deeper self. If he proposes to act immediately in relation to outer things, and in this fashion to accomplish something, everything may in an instant come to naught. But if he acts, not immediately but in the light of this consciousness, he will not be deceived even if it all comes to naught, for he has the consent of the deeper self.

Nevertheless, when the first self and the deeper self thus become reconciled, and their common mind is turned away from outer things, there has as yet been realized only the first condition necessary for self-knowledge. In order that a man may really know himself, new dangers must be met and new conflicts must be won. Only let not the aspiring soul be deterred or terrified, as if it were an imperfection to be in need, when the need in question is a need of God. Let it not entertain the thought that its need is a shameful secret it were better to hide, when the need is a need of God; nor let it consider it a sad necessity which one seeks to put a better face upon by avowal, when the need is a need of God. A more profound selfknowledge teaches one precisely that one needs God. But the first and superficial sense of depression evoked by this thought would deter a man from beginning, unless his attention was directed in time to the thought that this need constitutes his perfection, and unless his enthusiasm was stirred by meditation upon it. For it is a far more imperfect thing not to need God; and when it seems to a man that he does not need God, he is in truth merely mistaken.

Even if a man had realized the greatest and most glorious of feats, if he still thought it had all been done in his own strength; if by curbing his spirit he had become greater than one that conquers a city, and yet believed that

he had done this in his own strength, then his perfection would virtually be merely a misunderstanding. But such a perfection would be little praiseworthy. On the other hand, whoever perceives that he cannot do even the least thing without God, that he cannot even rejoice in the happiest eventuality without God, is nearer to perfection. And whoever understands himself thus, and finds nothing at all painful in the awareness, but only a superabundance of happiness; whose heart hides no secret wish or preference for a happiness which should be a happiness on its own responsibility; whose mind feels no shame in letting other people see that he can do nothing of himself; who seeks no special compact with God, not even stipulating that his impotence should be concealed from the eyes of men; but in whose heart joy always conquers because he jubilantly, as it were, throws himself into the arms of God in unspeakable wonder over God who can do all things — aye, such a man is indeed the perfect man, whom the apostle Paul describes better and more briefly as one who "glories in his weakness," and who has not even had so many and so dubious experiences that he has learned to express himself more voluminously.

Men say indeed that not to know oneself is to be deluded and imperfect; but they often refuse to understand that he who truly knows himself, knows precisely that he can do nothing of himself.

Thus in relation to outward things, man can do nothing. But inwardly, can he do nothing here? In order that a power should really be a power it must have opposition; if it has no opposition it is either omnipotence or an illusion. But if a man is to have opposition, from whence is it to come? Inwardly, the opposition can come only from himself. So then a man strives with himself in inward conflict, but not now as before, when the deeper self strove with the first self to prevent it from concerning itself overmuch with outward things. The man who fails to discover the existence of this inward struggle is involved in a misunderstanding, and his life is consequently

imperfect. But if he does discover this struggle, he will here again be made to understand that he can do nothing of himself.

It may seem strange that this is what a man must learn from a study of himself; why then praise self-knowledge? And yet it is so; and if the entire outer world conspired to teach him, he cannot learn from the world that he can do absolutely nothing. Even if the entire world united to crush and annihilate the weakest of human beings, he could still preserve in his mind a feeble notion that he might have been able to do something under other circumstances, when the power opposed to him was not so overwhelmingly superior. That he can do nothing at all is something he can discover only by himself. Whether he conquers the world, or stumbles over a wisp of straw, he can in either case know in himself that he can do absolutely nothing. If someone wishes to propose a different explanation, let him remember that he has to do solely with himself and not with others; then every evasion will at once be detected. Men think it a difficult thing to learn to know oneself, especially when one has many talents and is equipped with a multitude of capacities and dispositions, and must acquire an adequate understanding of all this. The self-knowledge of which we speak is not so complicated; every time a man grasps this brief and pithy truth, that he can of himself do nothing, he understands himself.

But can a man not overcome himself in his own strength? This is indeed sometimes asserted. But has one who says this proved himself or understood himself in what he asserts? For how can I be stronger than myself? I may be stronger than the weakest; and perhaps there lives or has lived a man of whom one might say that he surpasses all others in strength; but no man was ever stronger than himself. When we speak of a man's overcoming himself by himself we usually think of something different, of something merely external, where the combatants are not equal. Thus when it happens that a man who was once tempted by the lure of the world's

honors overcomes himself, so that he no longer stretches out his hand to seize them; when a man who feared the dangers of life, so far drives out his fears that he no longer flees the dangers; when a man who had lost his courage and confidence overcomes himself to the extent of standing fast, not absenting himself from the arena of decision: then we do not speak in depreciation of such a man, but rather praise him. But if he wishes to save his soul from a new form of vanity, and to safeguard himself against driving out devils with the help of the devil, he will promptly confess than he cannot overcome himself inwardly. By this he does not mean that evil has once for all achieved a power over him. No, but inwardly he can only reach the point, and that by his utmost endeavor, of withstanding himself; and this is not the same thing as overcoming himself. Inwardly he creates in his mind the temptations of glory and fear and despondency, and those of pride and pleasure and defiance, greater than the temptations that meet him outwardly. It is because he thus creates his temptations for himself, that he is engaged in a struggle with himself. If he does not strive in this manner, then he merely strives with an accidental degree of temptation, and his victory proves nothing with respect to what he could do in a greater temptation. If he conquers the temptation which his environment presents to him, this does not prove that he would conquer if the temptation came in the most terrible form that his mind can conceive. But only when it presents itself to him in this magnitude does he really learn to know himself. In this manner it is present to his inner self; and hence he knows in himself, what he has perhaps failed to learn from the world, that he can do absolutely nothing.

My hearer, surely you are not one of those who think that these are merely the dark and somber thoughts of a melancholy temperament, and you surely do not wish to thank God because you have never been visited by such melancholy? If it really were the case that such thoughts are a

symptom of melancholy, is this the fashion in which we ought love God and men? To offer God thanks for an imagined preferential love is to deceive Him, and to give Him to understand that if the heavier burden had been laid upon your shoulders, you might not have been able to believe in His love; for when this is admitted it becomes a very different matter to thank God that one has escaped being tried in the more difficult struggle. To flee from the sight and consciousness of the individual you are pleased to call melancholy, is to wish to ignore the fact that he too is a human being. And since you dare not call him an evil-doer you must admit that he is an unfortunate being, as such precisely needing your sympathy, which you show him by asking him to take up his habitation among the tombs like a leper, while you dare not acknowledge him as a fellow human being — is this to love God and man? But if it is regarded as an evidence of melancholy to speak as we have done about understanding oneself, then it must also be regarded as a folly inseparable from such melancholy to consider this view of life as one that conceives man from the standpoint of his perfection; and it must be deemed a still greater folly to rejoice in this perfection. And yet, why should not such a man be glad? The perfect is always a source of joy. And this joy of which we here speak is not based upon God's imaginary preference for some particular person, nor does it flee from the sight of the sorrowing. On the contrary, in this joy a human being loves everyone who is beset by sorrow. And so it is in very truth. You will not wish to stamp such a person as melancholy, my hearer, when the truth is that he is the only one who is really glad. For whoever is happy in God, and over God, rejoices, and again I say, he rejoices. Why does the apostle Paul, when he gives us this beautiful admonition: "Rejoice, and again I say unto you, rejoice," why does he pause a moment and cease to speak, before again for the second time he bids the believer rejoice? Because he has in the intervening moment, as it were, taken time to listen to

all the terrible things that may be said in contradiction. That is to say, he summons the terrifying thought that a man can do absolutely nothing, in order to allow his joy to gain a perfect victory: “and again I say unto you, rejoice!”

The view of life which holds that man’s need of God constitutes his highest perfection, does indeed make life more difficult. But at the same time it views human life according to its perfection; and in this understanding, through that gradual joining of experience to experience which constitutes a good understanding with God, man learns to *know God.*

In so far as a man does not know himself, nor understand that he can of himself do nothing, he does not really become aware, in any deeper sense, that God exists. Though he may at times use the name of God, and occasionally invoke Him, in the great crises of his life perhaps thinking to see Him, and be moved by the vision, as it is impossible to catch even a glimpse of God without being moved — nevertheless, he is in a manner piously deceived if he deems himself on this account clearly conscious of God’s existence, or thinks that God’s existence ought not to make itself manifest in this earthly life with a very different emphasis — in this life whose meaning is always confused unless God’s presence is continually implied. We call such self-deception well-meaning, we use as beautiful a name for it as possible, we do not intend to break out into heated condemnation. But nevertheless we wish for every man that God’s existence may become clear to him with a certainty of a very different order, and with a decisiveness that leaves no room for vagueness.

Whoever can do nothing of himself, cannot undertake the least enterprise without God’s help, or without coming to notice that there is a God. We sometimes speak of learning to know God from history; we bring out the chronicles, and read and read. This method may perhaps succeed; but how much time is not required, and how precarious often is not the result, how

near to the misunderstanding which is the sensuous man's wonder over what is ingenious! But whoever knows in himself that he can do nothing, has each day and each moment the desired and indubitable occasion to experience the living God. And if he does not have this experience often enough, he knows very well the reason. The reason is that he has become involved in a misunderstanding, and thinks that he can do something of himself.

When he goes to the house of the Lord, he knows that God is not there. But he also knows that he can of himself do nothing, that he cannot even put himself in a spirit of devotion; so that God must be there if he is really moved to devotion. Alas, there are many who live in all other respects without a concern for God, but who nevertheless do not omit to go to church. What a strange contradiction! They gather in the house of prayer, they say to one another: "God is not here, He does not live in a house built with hands." Then they go home; but at home God does not exist for them at all. But whoever knows himself in the manner described above, knows indeed that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. But he also knows that God is with him in the night, when he is refreshed by sleep, and when he wakes in anxious dreams; in the day of need, when he vainly looks about him for comfort; in the tumultuous chaos of his thoughts, when he listens in vain for a word that might save him; when in danger of his life, and without help from the world; in anxiety when he fears himself; in the crisis of his despair, when he works out his salvation with fear and trembling. He knows that God is with him when anxiety seeks to overwhelm him, its suddenness like a flash of lightning, when it is as if it were already too late, and there is no time to go to the house of the Lord. Then God is with him, coming more quickly than the light that penetrates the darkness, swifter than the thought that dispels the fog; present as promptly as only He can be, who was already there. And if it were not so,

where could be found the messenger who could move quickly enough to fetch the Lord for the troubled mind! And before He could come, some time must still elapse! But this is not the case; only he believes it who thinks that he can do something of himself.

It is possible indeed to come to know God in precisely the same way on the day of gladness, provided we also undemand that we can do absolutely nothing. But it is just as difficult to hold fast to this thought on the day of gladness as it is to hold fast to it in the hour of sorrow. When a man is at the height of his happiness the thought suddenly tempts him: would it not be still more glorious if he could do it all himself? Then his joy acquires a false bias; it does not swing upward to God but swerves away from Him; and this is a sign that new exercises are needed. When everything again becomes uncertain, when the thoughts seethe in a welter of confusion, when memory threatens to give notice and refuses any longer to serve, when the past comes before the mind only in the form of fearful anguish, when even the most sincere purpose is through the treason of anxiety transformed into insincerity toward oneself — then one understands again that a man can do absolutely nothing of himself. But in and with this understanding God is immediately present, commands the confusion, and remembers everything that has been confided to Him. For the tried individual has doubtless confided in God. In the chaos of his anguish and temptation, when the outcome threatened to be more terrible than death, he hastily entrusted to God what lay upon his mind, things which, if he himself forgot them, and God in His heaven also forgot them, would annihilate him forever, and transform the entire content of his life into a terrible delusion. These things he has entrusted to God, until with God's help he again fights his way through the terrors in his breast, achieving patience and winning peace of mind through trust in God.

If a man whose life had been involved in some critical difficulty has a friend, and if in some later moment he finds that he cannot hold fast the meaning of his past, when anxiety creates confusion, and the accusing thoughts rise up in all their strength against him — then, as he strives to win back to his former understanding of himself, he will doubtless go to this friend and say: “My soul is sick, and nothing is clear to me; but I confided everything to you. You remember it; explain the past to me.” But if a man has no such friend he will doubtless have recourse to God — if he has ever confided anything to Him, if God has been his witness in the critical hour of decision, when no one else understood him. He who had recourse to a friend was perhaps not understood; and what is still harder to bear, perhaps he became an object of disgust to himself when he learned that his confidant had not understood his need though he listened to him, had not suspected the reason of his anguish, but had merely listened out of curiosity to the story of his remarkable collision with life. But such a thing could never happen with God. Who would dare to think of God in such manner; although because he does not dare to think such things of God, he may be cowardly enough to forget God altogether — until he stands before the judge who condemns him. But this could never happen to one who has taken God as his witness; for where God is the judge, there is no judge when God is the witness.

But it does not by any means follow that life becomes easy for a man who thus learns to know God. On the contrary, it may become very hard; and it will certainly become more difficult than the sensuous man’s contemptible life of ease. But in and through this difficulty his life constantly gains deeper and deeper significance. Or shall we perhaps say that it has no significance for him that God is always present in his thoughts, that while of himself he can do nothing he can with God’s help do more and more — that he can gain a victory over himself; for with God’s

help he can indeed do this! Shall we say that it has no significance for him that he learns more and more to die away from the world, learns to cling less and less to external things, to that which life brings and takes away, to that which it is given him outwardly to accomplish — but learns also to care more and more for the things of the inner man, for the understanding with God, for the privilege of remaining in this understanding, and for the learning to know God as the power that makes all things work together for good when he loves God? Shall we say even that it is without significance for him that it makes the adversities of life easier, since it is always true that a man who has something else to think of and is thereby prevented from dwelling on his sorrows, finds these easier? Shall we finally say that it is without significance for him, his blessed reward, that he comes to understand that God is love, and that His goodness passeth all understanding; and that he does not need to depend on the testimony of others in this respect, or on a contemplation of history or of the order of nature? To understand these things is certainly far greater; but the problem is to understand them in such a way as in truth to profit from the understanding.

We do not wish to be understood as saying that a knowledge of God which consists of an absorption in dreamy wonder and enthusiastic contemplation of Him is alone of the highest worth; for God cannot thus be taken in vain. Just as the self-knowledge which reveals one’s own nothingness is the necessary condition for knowing God, so the knowledge of God is the condition for the sanctification of each human being in accordance with his specific end. Wherever God exists in truth there He is always creative. It is not His will that men should bask in the contemplation of His glory in spiritual sloth; but He wishes, through coming to be known of man, to create in him a new man.

If it were so, let us assume it to be so, that a man without knowing God, could by himself be ennobled and developed to the same degree, I nevertheless ask you, my hearer, whether knowing God does not have in itself the highest significance? And if a choice were conceivable, so that a man could progress equally far either by himself or by knowing God, which would you choose? Even in the minor human relationships you would choose the latter. For if it were possible that you could be developed in solitude as much as by learning to know some other human being, to whom you were drawn with your whole soul, the fact that you learned to know him would have in itself the most beautiful significance for you. The most beautiful significance — ah, no, you are well aware that at least when we speak of God, it is quite otherwise. For the knowledge of God is the most decisive factor in every human life, and without this knowledge, a man would become absolutely nothing. Without God he would perhaps scarcely be able to grasp the most elementary secret of the truth, that he is of himself absolutely nothing; even less would he be able to understand that it is his need of God that constitutes his highest perfection.

VIII. LOVE CONQUERS ALL (ON THE OCCASION OF A WEDDING)

UNCLARIFIED MOODS REST in the depths of the soul, secure in love's beautiful assurance; the organ tones have ceased to sound, and only their echoes again move the soul, desiring to translate the beautiful assurance into sacred feelings: now is the time for speech! The voice of an individual will be heard. How poor the words from his lips must seem in comparison with the wealth of feeling in the beautiful and sacred emotion! May not the spoken word be disturbing, the well-meant word inopportune, and the word of guidance portentous! And yet it must be spoken, and it must be spoken with decisiveness. The indeterminate wealth of feeling must be expressed, the word must be named; clarity without in the least wishing to disturb, must extract from the word its utmost significance.

What a change, what commensurability in this incommensurability! For what is so clear and precise and definite as a man's duty is and ought to be, and what is so mysterious as the impulse of love! And yet, love must here become duty. And what is more transparent and intent upon the future than a sacred promise, and what is less concerned with the future than the presence of love in the lovers! And yet love here demands a promise. And what is so terrible to mention as a curse, and what is so remote from this as the pure joy of the lovers! And yet this word must be mentioned in connection with love!

But it is a free matter, and just as the lovers become free by being bound to one another, so is this step a resolve of the free will. We are glad with those who today rejoice, whom love has made free in their union, but it must not be spoken with veiled words or disparagingly about the marriage pledge, as if it were something less significant because it is a free act, since,

on the contrary, it is the one thing needful in connection with the most beautiful form of human happiness.

And so now these two, whom life has joined together in the happiness of love, are at this moment resolved, and a pact is to be instituted between them. A pact forever. Forever — is not this word by its very strength almost portentous, since it is as if death came between, and it is upon the grave one lays the garland of everlastings? Oh, far from it, for this ominous word is a beautiful announcement. The marriage pledge is indeed like a garland of everlastings, but love weaves it, and duty says it must be woven, and it is love's happiness to weave it, and duty says it must be woven — each day from the blossoms of the moment. Eternity is not here through with time, but the pact of love is eternity's beginning in time. The eternal resolution and the duty must forever remain with the wedded pair throughout time in the union of their love; and each anniversary shall be a solemn holiday, with power in its remembrance and hope in its promise.

The spoken word must be definite, and it must also be uttered with authority. And the speech shall be addressed to you, respected bridegroom; it does not offer congratulations, but the speaker asks you an earnest question, and he has authority to demand an earnest answer. He does not ask you about your happiness, but whether you have consulted God and your conscience. The question is not intended to dissipate your happiness, nor is it indifferent to it. The question desires only to make your happiness secure, if you answer deliberately, and it is asked in earnestness for your own sake, lest you answer frivolously. And though it seems to you so wholly natural, so completely in harmony with the order of things, that you should be bound to one whom the early wishes of parents and relatives had selected, to one with whom you felt yourself united in an anticipation that finally passed over into certainty, to one to whom you felt yourself drawn in so many ways, until love revealed itself as the ultimate ground, and took

over the preparation into its glorious possession: nevertheless though our earnest question need by no means give pause to a hectic and surprised resolution, which often enough gives rise to late regrets, it would make you pause with a sense of the responsibility of duty, to lay the emphasis of choice upon the quiet experience.

And next the speech shall be directed to you, respected bride; it will not disturb you with its question or trouble you by arousing difficult thoughts, but it will ask you with the same earnestness as the equality of the pact requires, whether you have consulted with God and your conscience. Oh, the question will not make your happiness precarious, it will not make you weak, it will make you, in the freedom of earnestness, equally strong with the husband to whom as a wife you are to be submissive. And though you feel with a joyous confidence and perfect trust that happiness could not have come for you in any other way, that it could not be otherwise than that you should be united with him whom long association and the close relationship, and participation in so many things, and mutual sympathy bound to you until love came and explained all that went before as a beautiful preface, a dowry of security, a wealth of happiness: nevertheless, though the earnest question is far from wishing to interrupt the many thoughts, it would still imbue you with the sense of the responsibility of duty to lay the emphasis of choice upon the almost imperceptible transition of this quiet experience.

And then there is required a promise, and the speaker has the authority to require it. But the requirement is in all its earnestness a challenge to the lovers. It will give the worthy a solemn opportunity to announce freely and in the sight of God that which it is hard for the lovers to keep silent about, that which it is sweet to communicate to a confidant, that which, when here expressed, receives its consecration.

When this has been done, the officiating authority will unite the happy pair and make earnestness of what is already earnest. For the act itself has its own earnestness, and when this is not found in the wedded, the act is desecrated, for marriage is not merely a temporal event. But when the earnestness exists, the officiating authority gives to the act the stamp of earnestness, and the pact is concluded.

On the other hand, the unauthorized discourse has no lovers to unite. But still, my hearer, you can give it your attention. For as was said above, the act has its own seriousness, and this does not consist in external happenings, that some curious people have come as witnesses, that two persons have effected an outward change in the circumstances of their lives. And that earnestness the authorized speaker presupposes in the wedded pair, and that it is thus mature. If it came into being only in that moment of the ceremony, who would dare to answer the question which asks about something past, though this past is also the present? Or, if the speaker in that moment must develop this earnestness in the lovers, then must he speak quite otherwise; he must say much which it is risky to say now at the last moment, difficult to say to just these two, though it would have been profitable for them to have considered it. Hence there is given a reflection which in earnestness of thought already stands before the altar. To such a thoughtful consideration, then, my hearer, I invite you, and with the marriage ceremony in mind, I shall consider the theme:

LOVE CONQUERS ALL,

viewed as the resolution that constitutes marriage.

And you, my hearer, will you also hold that solemn moment fast before your thought, and not concern yourself with the deliberation in any other manner than as if it concerned yourself; it may be that for you the marriage

pact is something in the future or something past; for it is something irrelevant only to a fool. And surely here we are in agreement, that a discourse about godly matters should never be contentious or discordant with anything except that which is ungodly. When therefore the poor man, or one who in a humble situation works for his bread, without on that account being excluded from the happiness of love, when he must gather in toilsome care and take many a weary step in order to get the necessities together, while the master or overseer only too well understands, perhaps, that the duties of the service must first and foremost be attended to, when there is left only the scanty opportunity, the sparingly measured time, for the godly consideration of the heart's concerns, upon which the privileged, perhaps wisely, perhaps foolishly, spend so much time — when these two lovers finally also stand before the altar and in all brevity are declared wedded: Oh, my hearer, we are surely agreed that God, who is present when the pact is made, not only as a witness but to grant His blessing upon it, does not in His blessing make a distinction like that in the speech of men. Because He alone is rich, He has but one blessing, and at one and the same price for all; be the believer great or humble, wise or simple, clothed in gold or in linsey, rich in thoughts or poor in spirit. But if anyone, man or woman, attacked by an aristocratic distemper, be inhuman enough to find the sacred observances too simple, if anyone wished to invent new rites, then are we agreed, my hearer, that this is the miracle of the godly ordinance, that the simple finds everything therein, and the wise more than he can fathom, when he earnestly thinks himself in relation thereto, and thinks earnestly about himself.

An old adage says that love is older than everything else; and many a beautiful and profound thought has been linked with this word, in order by the aid of the adage to explain existence. But just as the adage is valid in relation to great things, so it is also valid wherever love is present: it is older

than all other things. So in the life of an individual; when love awakens it is older than everything, for when it is, it is as if it had been there a long time, it presupposes itself far back in the distant past, until all search for its origin ends in the inexplicable. While one generally says about all beginning that it is difficult, this does not hold true of love. Its happy awakening knows no labor, and no preparation precedes. If love does indeed sometimes generate pain, it is not itself born with pain: lightly and jubilantly it breaks forth in its mysterious becoming. Miraculous beginning! — But the life of freedom requires a beginning, and a beginning is here a resolution, and the resolution has its own labor and pain, the beginning its difficulty. The individual conceiving a resolution cannot be finished, for then would he already have experienced that of which the resolution is the beginning; but if no resolution is taken, then such a man will doubtless share the experience that sometimes comes to a speaker, that only after he is finished and has already spoken, does he know how he ought to have spoken: only after he has lived, does he know how he ought to have lived (sorry profit from life's experiences!), and how he ought to have made the beginning with the good resolution, bitter wisdom, now that there lies an entire life between the beginning and the dying man!

So the word says that love conquers all, and therefore the marriage ceremony, which is not a festive congratulation but a godly challenge, does not greet the lovers as victors, but invites them to a struggle, encloses them in the arena of a state well-pleasing unto God, encourages them to fight the good fight, strengthens their striving by means of the marriage pact, promises them victory as it also takes a promise from them, gives them a blessing for the long journey — but also informs them that the struggle is there: a struggle to be fought through, trouble to be endured, danger to be experienced, a curse if it is not borne in harmony as a blessing. And yet, is it the right place here to evoke such sorry considerations, that come soon

enough with the dark thoughts and the sad experiences: in the moment of joy to call to mind the days that have no pleasure in them? But is it then sad that this high-minded word actually means something, that it is not sounding brass, not a jubilation over an imaginary victory which is badly won, or still bad if it is supposed already won, but the announcement of an actual victory which shall be gloriously won! And is the place so unsuitable — the holy place? Is it so inopportune for joy to think about the danger; is there perhaps no time for this — in the urge of danger there is surely less time! Alas, time comes and time goes, it takes little by little; it takes from a man one good whose loss he feels, and his pain is great; alas, he does not discover that it has already long since taken away from him the thing of greatest importance: the ability to form a resolution, and that he has become so familiar with this condition that there is no dismay over its loss, the last thing which might help him to gain new strength for a renewed resolution.

No, in earnest the saying means very much, indeed it means everything to the truly wedded pair. But it desires to be understood in earnest; it does not wish to visit the wedded couple as an unexpected guest, gracing the wedding day with his high presence; but it desires to make its home with them, to meet the test of the years, to answer for everything. It is thus it would be understood, and only thus can it be said: it must be said by a beginner, but only by one who begins with the good resolution. For he who became old in the faithful service of love, tested as gold is tested and found true — for the noble poet says of the maiden, a little in love, that her young soul was tested gold, but the years and the dangers are the test — hence the venerable figure who in the course of years won the rich and incorruptible beauty of faithfulness, loyal to his pledge as his own conscience required, faithful with a man’s courage and with a woman’s tenderness, with a man’s intrepidity and with a woman’s sympathy, with the sober reflection of the understanding in the inwardness of the heart, he will doubtless say with the

mild, friendly, unassuming admonition of age: “My little children, love conquers all.” And he moves youth, and almost deceives it, for when he says it, then it seems so easy, and it is so pleasant to hear him say it again. But if youth accepts the saying vain-mindedly, and would frivolously weave a bridal-wreath from it, then the experience that comes in life’s struggle, intervenes between youth and venerable age, saying: “Step aside, learn respect for the venerable, but learn first what the difficulties are,” and then he points to him with this word, “See, here, that love has conquered all!” Oh, how beautiful to be old, how illusory is not all eloquence beside such a witness! Has conquered all! This is the last word, and is indeed somewhat different from the first. Stay your course, O wanderer, pause to consider this difference; when you grasp it, you will doubtless be a man of resolve! *Has* conquered; so says experience engaged in the struggle of life, respectfully, about the veteran in the service, whom the marriage pact called to the good fight, whose life leaves no irregularity behind, since he became no man’s debtor, because he loved much. In civil life, it is often the case that if anyone would travel to a foreign country, and he owes someone a debt, the creditor will refer the matter to the civil authority, and the journey will be prohibited. Oh, if the obligation of a sacred pledge is left unfulfilled, or but poorly fulfilled, is it not like an objection that makes the last journey the flight of a defaulter — but, no, how does it help to flee? The justice which watches over existence cannot be evaded.

So much for *has* conquered all. But our theme says: Love conquers all. And so it ought to sound in the beginning, and so it is rightly said by the resolving individual. But no one can be said to be resolved who is ignorant of the danger, who excludes the danger from his thoughts, instead of including in his resolution a real conception of it, whose courage has therefore lost its victory, just as good deeds lose their reward, because the victory anticipated it. Nor is he resolved who runs as if uncertainly, and

who certainly misses the goal when he believes he has attained it. Nor is he resolved who, improvidently trusting in some mysterious power, dares to begin the journey without including in the resolution a real conception of God's assistance, of its necessity, and of its sufficiency. Nor is the resolution of which we speak, a common resolution because in such a moment the two are of like mind, and both without a resolve.

Does life give evidence of only one kind of unhappy love in marriage, when death separates them and only the sorrowing one remains behind? Oh, death does not have this power to make unhappy; if nothing else separates them, they are nevertheless united. Yet perhaps someone says, "I know very well what you mean and what the discourse hints at, but such things happen only to those who were never in love; whoever really loves, conquers all." And it is impossible to deny that he who really loves, does as the word says; but does it follow that the speaker has even as much as a clear conception of what it means really to love, and about life, and about the others? A clear conception of the change which takes place in the lover when he is called upon really to conquer all, and when this all is something real. What a difference between youthfully desiring to change the whole world and then discovering that it is one's self that is to be changed, and that the requirement is to do it with enthusiasm; or that the task is to preserve himself unchanged, alas, while everything changes! What a difference between the novel surprise of being the first inventor of everything, and then when trouble comes, the discovering that it is the monotonous repetition of what has been experienced by others thousands and thousands of times! What a difference between youthfully wishing to fight, and the explanation that he must suffer, and that it is this which he must do with enthusiasm! To desire victory; well, one may yield to a superior force but with the consciousness of being the stronger in comparison with the individual — and now the explanation that it is his own weakness he must

fight against, and the requirement neither sympathizing nor regretful, but cruelly uncompromising: that one must be enthusiastic in the struggle. When then the great requirement of the imaginary task does not give imaginary strength, but it is in reality the small and despised task that is to be done; when one does not defy a world which cheated one's expectation, but sits there abandoned by the great expectation concerning oneself, deprived of every evasion; when no broad prospect tempts one to dare the venture, but one sits inactive, despondent before the humble task of patience, which becomes even more humble because time is wasted in dreaming youth's dream over again; aye, then there is opportunity to show that one really loves, or rather that the occasion has waited too long, that it should not have been permitted to become what it is; and had the beginning been made with a resolution, then one might have understood in time that things could come to such a pass.

Consider one who resembles a lover, an enthusiast. Does life show only a single case of half-finished labor, of interrupted plans, of a sorry and miserable outcome of a brilliant beginning? Is this the only case where the striving individual was prevented by death from finishing the work, from perfecting the plan, from attaining the goal? O Death, thou art powerless; dost thou presume to mock an enthusiast! No, the brief misfortune of the moment of death is soon overcome, and he truly dies with honor, aye, with the glorious accomplishment of his task who dares say with truth, "It was death that prevented me!"

"But," says perhaps an enthusiastic youth, and thus every enthusiastic youth, "I know what you refer to; you need not even name it. I will not be disturbed or delayed or made despondent — but such things do not happen to the really enthusiastic." And this is undeniable; but does it follow that the speaker even has a clear conception of what it is to be really enthusiastic? What he will say when it is no longer his task to spring forward like a lion,

but to remain in the same place and, in spite of all exertion, not to be able to move; when the task is not to traverse the world in easy flight, but to endure in a dead calm in which the enthusiasm threatens to expire; when the task is to feel the weakness, and yet not let go the enthusiasm, to hope against hope; when it is the task to endure in the long toilsome drudgery which is inseparable from every enthusiastic enterprise; when abandoned, one must even defend oneself against a sympathy which is the ruin of enthusiasm, although it seems so soothing, and be misunderstood because one does it; when it is of no avail to rush forward in wild abandon, but it is required that one assume a strait-jacket, and be enthusiastic in it: aye, there is the opportunity to show that one is really enthusiastic. And if one has begun with a resolution, it will indeed appear with what profit this was done, since it was not the drawing in of a youth's refreshing breath of air, but a self-questioning which from a distance apprehends the danger.

The first condition for a resolution is to have, that is to will to have, a real conception of life and of oneself. What is here sown in tears is reaped with songs of joy, and the grief is overcome; for the first loss is the best loss, and the first pain the saving pain, and the strict upbringing the profitable one, and the early discipline the strengthening discipline, and the shudder of the resolution gives courage, and its chastisement awakens the attention, and the final victory is the essential victory, and the last honor the only true one!

Oh, death has no power to place saddening signs upon the path of marriage through life. And yet the signs are there. What significance do they have then? There is in the folk-life many a curious custom connected with a wedding, many a mocking jest, which still has its significance, many a teasing roguery which is not without beauty, but might it not be an acceptable custom if the bridal couple before they go to the house of feasting should go to the house of mourning, that is, to the serious

contemplation from which one does not fetch the bridal veil, but the resolution? Let the bride appear before the altar in all her charm, let the myrtle-crown grace the beloved; it is the humility of the resolution which alone makes her acceptable in the eyes of God, and the real conception of the resolution makes her strong in holy weakness — strong to conquer all.

It is not the purpose of the discourse, even if it could do so, to terrify by means of harrowing descriptions, to evoke horror, to which only the serious speaker, when he speaks with authority, can give the sure effect of earnestness and prevent the intrusion of despondency and low spirits, aye, even of disgust, into the impression. Oh, but are those married people alone separated between whom a divorce was effected, between whom the uniting wedding pact became a curse; are they alone unworthy of the marriage state who made a wretched beginning by regarding the pact as a worldly agreement for earthly gain, and ended as they began; or for whom the wedding union became not a salvation but a snare that stimulated the craving of the senses; is he only a bad husband who in cowardice and lack of manliness courted adoringly a woman's beauty, who then slavishly ruled in a cowardly spirit over a slave, to whose beauty he was himself a slave in jealousy, until he ended with the ingratitude of a dastard, because the years had taken youth and beauty away from her to whom he was wedded?

Oh, no, it is here as it is with death in life. Not only are they the prey of death who lie upon a sickbed, and whom the physician has given up. Many a one whom death has marked goes about among us. And so there is many a marriage that divorce has marked. No separation has come between the married couple, but an aloof indifference divides them and makes them alien to one another — and yet, for this is why we speak about it, and yet, perhaps the old feelings are not wholly dead. There is no strife between them, no hostile difference, but feeling seems to have withdrawn itself far from the daily intercourse; and yet, perhaps they love one another, but they

await an event which will tense the bowstring of resolution and lure the feeling forth to expression, for the daily events are too insignificant. They feel almost ashamed before each other because of this boredom with the insignificant events. They long perhaps for an understanding, but they cannot rightly get to speak with one another, precisely because there is an opportunity every day, and consequently the opportunity goes unused because it is more difficult to reveal themselves to one another. They were once so happy, oh, so happy, and this consciousness which ought to strengthen them, which at least ought always to be clear, now weakens them. They lose the zest and the courage to venture, and this vanished happiness acquires a sickly, exaggerated glamor for the two lonely people. Time passes so slowly, a whole life lies there before them, they fear to make, one to the other, the first admission which could unite them in a vigorous resolution, boredom takes the place of harmony, and yet they abhor divorce as a sin. But life is so long — and then the thought of death steals in, for death looses all bonds; they scarcely dare admit it to themselves, and yet so it is. They wish themselves dead, as if that were not unfaithfulness — and yet perhaps they still love one another, and death would perhaps make them realize it. And then one seeks to find the fault in the other, and, 'instead of a candid discussion of the trouble, misunderstanding conducts its sorry business and estranges them from one another in suspicion and distrust, through uncharitableness and precipitancy, with reconciliation flaring up and nourishing the disease, while they still love one another.

Was it always poverty and straitened circumstances and the troubles of life which produced these consequences? Oh, a marriage of wealth and abundance is sometimes carried out, after the brief honeymoon is over, as if on bread and water, in the midst of superfluity. Was it always sorrow over incorrigible children which at last brought estrangement between the

parents? Oh, it is often evident that a rare good fortune in this respect did not help the parents. Was it always the years which led to this sorry condition? Oh, how short a time is sometimes needed before this change takes place. Was it always an original disparity in age, in culture, in social position, which soon or late must generate misunderstanding? Oh, sometimes the two are so well suited to one another that they only lack gratitude in order to be happy. Was it always environment and family relations and connections that ruined the well-begun marriage? Alas, what boots it to place the responsibility on others? The weed of evil has the peculiar property that all weeds have — it sows itself. The good seed requires care and labor; if that is lacking the good seed dies — and then the weeds come up of themselves.

Now let the observer who takes himself into account, who in a decisive moment evokes this thought, let him ask himself this question: “Dare I say that all these wedded couples did not begin with what one calls a real love for one another, so that they felt the sweetness of surprise when love awakened, felt the unrest of longing, found time to vanish when they were together, and found it so long when they were separated, found themselves glowing at the thought of being everything to one another?” Let him ask himself the question: “Dare I deny that the sad outcome may also have its explanation in the fact that in the time of youth and hope and surprise and precipitancy one lacked guidance and earnestness to renounce the softness and allure of the moment and the illusions of the imagination in order to subject oneself to the discipline of the resolve?”

For what does the resolution, which is the rebirth of love, desire? Will it stifle the joy because it wishes to save it; is its care a false friendship because it is not immediately understood? Is it nothing but pain because its beginning is not without pain; is it an eternal imprisonment because it in earnest and eternally binds the two lovers together? But its beginning is not

without pain, and not without a shudder. Consider an enthusiast. Filled with a highminded purpose, he would accomplish so much, but lo, under the labor of the resolution, the conception of life and of his own weakness so overwhelms him that he sinks in impotence, and only the conception of his duty holds him in continued effort to win the resolve. What a change! Now he fights bravely under the strict surveillance of duty, he does the little assigned for each day, but to a T as duty bids; and so he is still enthusiastic, since he understands that whether it is little or much, when duty bids it is always much. And lo, he succeeds, and the resolution is won, and the work is begun on a real scale, and lo, it is successful, and the work goes forward, and lo, it is successful, and lo, it succeeds beyond expectation, and the first enthusiasm awakens to a new and stronger life. And now his enthusiasm is not a precipitate purpose or a continued impetuosity; nor is it glowing hot in youth, drowsy in manhood, and as smoking flax in the evening of life. No, that first enthusiasm went out as in the night, when resolution came into being, and then he gained a new enthusiasm and the blessed surprise of wonder from year to year, even to the evening of life. And so will the wedding ceremony in the strict discipline of the resolution take away fancies and disappointments, and love will secure its sure refuge within the impregnable fortress of duty, and will give the resolving individual new enthusiasm, and, as time goes on, a daily wonder over his happiness.

But perhaps someone says: "It is insulting to speak thus to the lovers; instead of admiring and eulogizing, aye, of considering with respect the lovers' rare good fortune, thus enviously and pessimistically to make their good fortune suspect." Now, to show respect for a rare good fortune, even if it were ever so rare, would seem frivolous in an edifying discourse which is not even attuned to find edification in the variances of fortune in life. And could not that objection really be an outbreak of love's seductive persuasiveness, that dangerous power which generates impulsiveness in the

hearer? We show respect for the rare gift of the poet, if he uses it well; but I wonder if that love which inspires the poet to song is found thus in every day life and in every couple who are united by the marriage pact? The poet himself says that it is rare, and the poet's happy gift is also rare, just as is that love: the best wish of a perfect existence, yet no, the most beautiful dream of an imperfect view of life. Therefore the poet explains nothing; he seeks in sadness of song this remembered rarity, he seeks it burning in the craving of desire, he touches the strings powerfully in its honor, as if it were found. He sits weak in the whisper of longing, he creates by the power of his imagination the sought-for thought. We praise him, and a people is proud in the right place when it is proud of a distinguished poet! But the poet cannot help us ordinary folk, for he cannot tell us how we should conduct ourselves to become the rare individual he seeks. There is the poet's sadness. For the poet is no proud and haughty person, but his soul extends into the infinite. And when he must say to an individual, or of an individual, "No, it is not he," or "It was not she," then he has no wish to offend. Himself distressed, he seeks the consolation of song. Therefore we must not be angry with the poet; he loves existence and perhaps feels the most pain that this or that individual was not the rare example. "And yet," says the poet, "no one can make himself this rare thing. He is a paragon, and thereby the miracle."

Now, if this paragon existed, and one should talk with him about what this address is concerned with, he simply would not understand it, nor would he answer as that objector answered, for no speech can disturb so rare a genius. But an illusory echo from poets' songs, a delusive repetition of poetic works, this he finds disturbing. On the other hand, he who feels that he is not himself this gifted individual, is concerned, and he is not disturbed by a speech reminding him of his concern, but rather he seeks edification in religious reflection. Further than this the address does not

wish to go in meeting such an objection, but, my hearer, consider now the marriage ceremony itself. Who performs it? Is it a poet? No, it is a man of authority. And the rite lays everyone under sin, and the man of authority makes it earnest with the individual, and lays each one under sin who is pledged by this rite. Should it be offensive, then, if the address calls attention to the significance of the resolve, and that only the resolved individual dares to say at the beginning that love conquers all? To me it seems offensive to assume about anyone that he had not considered this. Even the happiest earthly love needs the rebirth of the resolve, the strict words of the marriage rite, its strengthening influence in the struggle, its blessing upon the way.

In seeking to make clear the sacred resolution of marriage, the address has thus reminded you, my hearer, of what you yourself have often considered, for the speech is far from being instructive. You are then in agreement with it, and yet perhaps you say: “The address is right, but much earnestness is required for the speech to produce the right impression, lest it foster impatience and disorder the spirit.” And in this you are quite right — that there is much earnestness required; verily to be a good reader or a good listener is just as great an art as to be a good speaker, and that is very great when, as here, the address is imperfect and without authority. Was not this your meaning? For you surely would not intend by this criticism to place the blame upon the speaker, as if you gained something by accusing him? Let us consider this a little more closely. Just as there is needed for making a resolution an actual conception of life, so there is also needed, as was said at the same time, an actual conception of oneself. There was perhaps one who sent his spying thoughts out to get a manifold impression of life, but who could not take himself back, who gave himself out — alas, and lost himself. But whoever binds another human being to himself by the marriage pact, by that pact enters into an obligation which no time can dissolve, and

which every day requires fulfillment; from him is required a resolution, and in this resolution an actual conception of himself. And this real conception of himself, and this inwardness, this is earnestness. Now, as it is doubtless true that as this love, which the poet sings, is a longing in every human heart, so there is also in everyone a longing, a wish that desires what we might call a teacher and a guide in life, a tried man upon whom one can rely, a wise man who knows how to advise, a noble man who encourages by his example, a gifted man who has the gift of eloquence and the emphasis of persuasiveness, the serious man who guarantees the appropriation.

As a child everything is easy, one is free from the difficulty of choosing; aye, even if a father was not as he should be, the respect the child has, his unconditional obedience, helps it sometimes to learn the good even from such a father. But then comes the period of youth and of freedom, and the time when with the beloved he seeks such a guide. Then it is important that this freedom and this choice do not become a snare. This guide which the longing seeks is a rare individual. Sometimes he is not found in every generation, and even if you are contemporaneous with such a highly worthy one, to whom you are wholly willing to yield yourself, he may not perhaps be in the same place as you, or he was there but had to leave, or you had to leave — and so, aye, so must you be content with less, that is you must try to help yourself. In life there is confusion enough; the most varied things are proclaimed and praised and despised and repeated; the most varied patterns show themselves, and disappoint, and show themselves again; the most varied guidance is proffered, and always there is companionship on the way; consolation and evasions and appeals, and warnings and songs of victory and cries of complaint are heard in wildest confusion. Ah, love and marriage are things in which everyone is experienced, and about which everyone has an opinion, and can in truth have if he earnestly wishes it. Every human being, even if unmarried, should have an abiding place, and

yet there is perhaps many a marriage which does not have it, but is blown about by every puff of wind.

Now the young man thinks, misled by an accidental experience, that when the external circumstances of prosperity and happy relations of life favor love, then it is secure, and he does not perhaps consider that the liberty of action which the mental state thus attains may generate difficulties. Now one has an exaggerated conception of the depth of sorrow in loving, and cannot settle down to the simple labor of making a living; now another gives himself up too much to a bubbling over of the feelings and distaste follows; now one of the parties has a little sober-mindedness and wishes to use it, but the other misunderstands it and believes it is coldness and indifference; now one party wishes to plan carefully and economize, and the other one does not understand it, and ascribes it to a lack of sensitiveness for anything higher. Now one becomes despondent because the repetition about him makes him bored with his own; now another's first happiness makes him impatient; now he compares, now he remembers, now he loses — who could ever finish recounting all this; no address can do it, and this makes little difference, but no human being can do it, and that is what is terrifying. Only one power is capable of doing it; that is resolution, taking heed in time.

Where is earnestness to be learned? In life. Quite true, and the state of marriage acceptable to God offers an exceptional opportunity. Thus is earnestness learned — provided one joins the resolution with an actual conception of oneself. The resolution itself is earnestness. And in order to learn earnestness from what we call the earnestness of life, earnestness is already presupposed. For earnestness of life is not like a schoolmaster in relation to a pupil, but rather in the position of an indifferent power in relation to that one who must himself be something of a schoolmaster in relation to himself as pupil. Otherwise one might even learn from the

earnestness of life indifference to everything. We wish for guidance, and yet it holds true even in relation to this, that we must have earnestness in order to be helped by it. Or is it not evident even in relation to this exceptional guide, when he stood among us, that one hit upon many things to weaken the impression he produced, as if one were not himself the loser by this, as if it were the wisdom of the years to become more and more fastidious, more and more inclined to reject, instead of becoming more and more judicious.

And when there is none such, what then? Aye, the world never has a lack of guides. Behold, here is a man who would guide everybody, and cannot help himself. Now one is proclaimed as wise, and admiration recognizes him as such because he cannot even understand what the common man understands. Now someone has a power of eloquence and leads astray, having the powerful works of untruth. Now what we learned in childhood has become old-fashioned, and we must learn it all over again. Now someone would tear a husband from his wife's side, make him important through participation in great enterprises, and teach him to think slightingly about the sacred vocation of marriage. Now one would tempt the wife, and teach her to sigh under the heavy yoke of matrimony. Now one dangles before the husband and wife a community fellowship that makes the marriage relation unimportant. Now one would teach the married couple to enjoy life, taking the children and therewith the cares of life away from them, so that the parents can live for higher things. And then our expectations are tensed by something extraordinary, a new order of things to come, and we all, both married and unmarried, get a vacation, like children because the school master is moving, and we are free until he gets settled. But we are no longer school children, and everyone shall give an account of himself before God, and the sacred obligation shall give every day its task and its responsibility. Where then do we find guidance if we do not work

out our own soul's salvation with fear and trembling, for thus we become really earnest? Otherwise it will soon appear that one guide cannot be followed because, although he means well, he is weak; and another not, for, though there is force and unction in what he says, they say he does not really mean it; or one is too old to satisfy the times, and another is too young. Aye, how could an address even come to an end if it tried to describe this confusion in life?

But what do you think, my hearer, of one who had the show of earnestness in rejecting everything, but not a trace of its power in possessing the least thing? What would you think of such a man if he were married, and had been married without forming a resolution, and then lived untroubled about the most sacred pledge, that is to say without seriously troubling himself about it? Had not separation already marked such a marriage, where the married couple belonged to one another, but not in earnest?

Nay, earnestness is within a man, and only a fool runs after it, and only a coward buys the indulgence of mediocrity by being like the majority, and striving after this; and only the fearful man is disturbed in a more noble striving by paying attention to the judgment of others. If there is no guide in life, the earnest man still does not walk blindly. Oh, and even if the appointed guide in the place where you live, my hearer, were perhaps incompetent, well, if you will, you may be the good auditor who still profits from the incompetent address. And if he who here speaks is too young, or if he perhaps does not express himself clearly, or if his thought is perhaps confused, well then, my hearer, lay the address aside, or, if you will, do the great thing, be the reader who profits even from an unfortunate address. Verily, as there may be a power of speech which can almost perform wonders, so there is also a power in the listener which can work wonders if he will. In such a listener there is earnestness; he says, "I wish to be

edified," and lo, he is edified. But the earnestness lies in a resolution. If someone fears this, what wonder then that he seeks consolation in the fact that others are caught in the same difficulty, and look to right and left; if anyone thinks that resolution is a fragile thing, and that the resolved individual skates on thin ice, ah, what wonder then that he must always have many about him to get courage to live? But you, my hearer, believe that the resolution offers the highest happiness, that even if love's richest happiness could be secured to you in some other way for your entire life, you would still choose the life of resolution and the wedded companionship in danger. For the resolution works the miracle with marriage, as with the wedding in Cana: it first pours the poorer wine, and keeps the best for the last. And love is the best adornment for the beloved, but resolution is a power in the heart of him who is imperfect. So the resolution of marriage is that love conquers all. Aye, it conquers all; but verily it goes out in adversity, if no resolution holds it fast; it perishes in prosperity, if no resolution holds it fast; it degenerates in the daily round, if no resolution heartens it; it is smothered in conceit, if no resolution humbles it. Love abides, but the resolution is its abiding place wherein it rests; love is the refreshing essence, but resolution is the flask in which it is preserved. Love abides; it guides through life when the resolution accompanies it, but it loses its way when the resolution does not guide; it gives life significance when resolution interprets it day by day; it suffices for the whole of life, when resolution exercises its restraint; it lays hold of the eternal if the resolution has made a place for it there; it conquers everything when the resolution is present in the day of battle — and the final honor is the only honor.

Is this kind of talk envious? Is it envious to say to the happy, "I know where you can keep your happiness secure"? A little coquettish sadness, which precisely is envy, might perhaps stir the senses of a happy man. Is

this sort of speech insulting? Is it insulting to say to anyone, “I am convinced that you yourself know and have considered this, for which reason I merely remind you”? Is the speaker intrusive who stands aside and speaks half softly to himself?

And then there is required for the resolution of marriage a real conception of life and of oneself; but herein there is already contained the second great requirement, which is like the first: a real conception of God. The one corresponds to the other; for no one can have a real conception of God without having a corresponding one about life and himself, nor can he have a real conception of himself without a similar one about God, and no real conception about life without a similar one about himself. A poetically creative imagination or a conception at the distance of an indifferent contemplation, is no real conception. Nor does the conception of God come as an accidental supplement to the conception of life and of oneself; on the contrary it comes and crowns the whole, interpenetrating everything, and it was present before it became manifest.

The lovers are happy, and on the day of happiness, one is surely nearest to God. But there is required a real conception of God, there is required an understanding between God and the happy individual, and thus there is required a language in which they can speak with one another. This language is resolution, the only language in which God wills to have intercourse with man. For if the happy individual were ever so enthusiastic in expressions of gratitude for his happiness (and where is the happy individual who does not feel this need of being grateful!) and if he even used God’s name, it does not follow that he really spoke with God, had a real conception of Him, entered into an understanding with Him, and profited by the understanding. For the thanksgiving for the happiness, were it ever so remarkable, were the expression ever so filled with pathos, the soul ever so burning with zeal, God will not understand — only the

resolution which takes over the happiness. And if the name of God be mentioned at the beginning and end, it does not therefore follow that one speaks with God, when the conception in which the worshipper offers his thanksgiving, is not of God, but of happiness, fortune, great profit, and other things; or about a mysterious power over whose intervention one stands amazed — and worships.

The resolution should not make the happy individual ungrateful, on the contrary it should make him worthy, and only in the resolution does gratitude become earnest. Therefore the gratitude of the resolution knows that this happiness is a task, and that the grateful individual now stands at the beginning. Hence the thanksgiving of resolution is sober-minded; it understands that God has in this happiness spoken to the resolved individual, but also understands that this is the beginning of the conversation. Is this to think deprecatingly of happiness? Is it not rather to think worthily about God? If someone talked with a wise man, and immediately upon the first words of the wise man, he interrupted him with his thanks, because he now needed no more help: what would this show other than that he did not talk with a wise man, but with a wise man whom he himself transformed into a fool? A wise man is a human being, and so something external, and in so far someone may say with truth, even if he talked foolishly, that he had talked with a wise man; but God exists only inwardly. Whoever speaks with Him therefore, as this man did with the wise man, does not really speak with God. Just as there is an immature love that says, “True love conquers all,” without having any conception of the struggle; just as there is an immature enthusiasm that says the same things with a similar rashness: so there is also an immature gratitude that would thank God, and yet only deceives itself into thinking that it thanks God, and defrauds God of the thanksgiving. The thankfulness of resolution is earnest, and therefore acceptable unto God; its thankfulness is also the good

beginning by which the task is half done; and with God’s help the resolution will certainly conquer all. It does not give thanks once for all, nor with earthly and deceptive selfconceit or folly; nay, the resolution is the beginning, and the thanksgiving of the resolution is the beginning of thankfulness, the beginning of the solemnity which will keep many an unnecessary danger at a distance, strengthen the soul in real danger, echo in paeans of praise on the day of victory; it is the beginning of the vigilance which will find the wedded pair preserving it in the evening of life, expectant after the wedding as the wise virgins were before the wedding, the watchfulness which will make the last thanksgiving the most beautiful, make the last response to God’s voice, whose beginning was this happiness, into an acceptable and true thanksgiving.

If anyone thinks that this is nevertheless disturbing, if without really understanding himself, he ventures in confusion of mind to think slightingly of God, if he thinks that happiness loses by becoming earnest, that the happiness was made less by being the beginning of happiness: would it then be more beautiful, would it be wiser, would it better stand the test of life, if the beginning were without resolution? Would it be more beautiful if the happiness, so to speak, immediately separated the two who were united: would it be more beautiful if a vain woman’s heart listened with pleasure to the praise of an adorer who thought that he owed her all, in that, though grateful for his happiness, but confused in his thought, he knew no one else to thank for it? Or that the proud head voluptuously bent its ear to listen to the adoration of the weak, who glad in her happiness, humbled in gratitude, knew no one else to go to but to him, him to whom she owed everything and her happiness — him who defrauded her of the best life? Would it be more beautiful, would it be wiser? Would it better stand the test — even then, when the yoke must be thrown off and the struggle begin; or if this did not take place, then when the wretch never became a man, but without

manly spirit went all his life tied to a woman's apron-strings? Or when the pitifully faithful woman slaved through life, not as a wife, but without frankness loved her master, and that master was her husband? Or is idolatry at first more beautiful, its foundations wiser, its progress in life more trustworthy, than a rational worship of God?

If anyone thinks that the conception of God which the resolution brings, is a check from which the happiness would rather be free: would it then be more beautiful, would it be wiser, would it better stand the test of life, if the two without a resolution were unchecked in passing the brief moment in sentimental dreaming with one another, if they danced away the health and vigor of love on their wedding-day? Was it more beautiful, was it wiser, did it better hold on to the best in life — then, when they stood weary at the beginning of the way, and lo, the jest was over, and it was not earnestness that remained, but distaste and boredom, and a confused awakening to a long life from a confused dream of youth? Should the brief lust of a pair of sensualists be more beautiful and wiser and more trustworthy in life, than the humble beginning of a true marriage?

Is there anyone who thinks that the resolution can come later when it is really needed? So it is not needed then, not on the wedding-day, when the eternal pledge is entered into? But then, later? Can he mean that there was no thought of leaving one another, but of enjoying the first gladness of their union — and so united, of finding support in the resolution? Then when toil and trouble come, and need, be it physical or spiritual, stands at the door, then the time is there? Aye, indeed, the time is there — the time for the resolved individual to muster up his resolution; but not just the time to form a resolution. It is true that distress and failure may help a man to seek God in a resolution, but the question is whether the conception is always the right one, whether it is joyful, whether it does not have a certain wretchedness, a secret wish that it were not necessary, whether it may not

be out of humor, envious, melancholy, and so no ennobling reflection of the trials of life. There is in the state a loan-association to which the indigent may apply. The poor man is helped, but I wonder if that poor man has a pleasant conception of the loan-association. And so there may also be a marriage which first sought God when in difficulty, alas, sought Him as a loan-association; and every-one who first seeks God for the first time when in difficulties, always runs this danger. Is then such a late resolution, which even if it were a worthy one, was not without shame and not without great danger, bought at the last moment, is that more beautiful, and wiser than the resolution at the beginning of marriage?

But perhaps no distress and difficulty come in life, so that the resolution is not needed. Far be it from this address to terrify childish people, and still farther from it, to praise resolution as a means of serving something lower. Well, then, O childish one, who knows not the peril of the spirit, suppose the marriage is fortunate, that here is a marriage that life coddles, and fortune smiles upon continuously — what then? Then this childish marriage has lost the best, for the resolution itself is the best. It is not a wretched invention against the misery of life, but the garment of salvation, and the resolved individual arrayed therein, worthily bears prosperity, and is strongly armored thereby to conquer in the evil day, and yet the garment is the same.

Alas, the life of marriage and the circumstances of marriage are so very different in the world, and yet there is one resolution that is, or may be common to every marriage: that love conquers all. This resolution is the beginning, and in this resolution there is contained a real conception of life and of oneself, and thereby also of God — so that the end may well be as the beginning, that love has conquered all. But imagine two marriages, my hearer. The one must wearily pursue its narrow way through many difficulties, the other is borne as on the hands of fortune through life; now

they have both come to the end of life, and love has conquered all. Of the first marriage it must be said that the wedded pair learned much in the strict school of life, but when it must also be said that in the evening of life they were not essentially different in their earnestness than when in the beginning they gained earnestness in the strict discipline of the resolution: was this not most beautiful? And if of the other couple it must be said that in the evening of life they were not essentially different in their earnestness, but had also through a long life, been essentially as earnest as when on their day of happiness, resolution had made them mature in earnestness: was not this most beautiful? For the youthful earnestness of the resolution is not formed piecemeal, but with God's help it is formed of a conception of life, and of one's self, and of God, and is therefore an eternal soundness, and perhaps never gained later in this way.

IX. THE JOY IN THE THOUGHT THAT IT IS NOT THE WAY WHICH IS NARROW, BUT THE NARROWNESS WHICH IS THE WAY

THERE IS A commonly accepted figure of speech, used by everyone, which compares life to a way. The simile can certainly be used to advantage in many ways, but the necessary unlikeness implied in the figure is no less worth attention. In the material sense the way is an external reality, indifferent as to whether anyone travels on it or not, indifferent as to how the individual travels it, the way is the way. In the spiritual sense, on the contrary, the way naturally cannot be physically pointed out. It does in a certain sense indeed exist, whether anyone travels it or not; and yet in another sense it only really becomes a way, or it becomes a way for each individual who travels it; the way is: *how* it is traveled. A man cannot point and say: "There runs the way of virtue"; he can only tell how to travel on the way of virtue; and if anyone does not wish to travel precisely this way, then he, in fact, goes another way. On the other hand, it would indeed be an absurd way of speaking, to define a highway by *how* it is traveled. Whether it is the youth who, with a confident spirit and head erect, walks easily and lightly, or it is one enfeebled by years, who with bowed head toils slowly forward; whether it is the fortunate man who hastens forward toward the goal of his desire, or the anxious individual who has turned his back on the wish, and goes slowly forward; whether it is the poor foot-sore wayfarer, or the rich man in his comfortable carriage: the way is the same for all, the way is and remains the same, the same highway.

The dissimilarity in the figure appears most clearly when there is at the same time talk about a way in the material sense, and a way in the spiritual sense. Thus when we read in the holy Gospel about the Good Samaritan,

then the way in question is the one between Jericho and Jerusalem. We are told about at least three, and indeed really about five, men, that they went "on the same way," whereas, in the spiritual sense, we may still say that each one went his own way — alas, the highway makes no difference; it is the spiritual which makes the difference and the difference of the way. The first was a peaceable traveler who went on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, perhaps on an errand, perhaps on a devout mission, in any case, a peaceable traveler on a lawful way. The second was a robber who traveled "on the same way" — and yet on an unlawful way. Then there came a priest "on the same way"; he saw the unfortunate man who had been attacked by the robber; he was perhaps moved momentarily, but nevertheless he continued his walk with his usual thoughtlessness, swiftly moved by an impulse, but without depth. Then came a Levite "on the same way"; he saw the unfortunate man, he passed by unmoved, proceeding on his way — alas, the highway really belonged to none of the travelers, and yet the Levite walked "on the same way," his way, on the way of selfishness and hardness of heart. Last of all there came a Samaritan "on the same way"; he found the unfortunate man on the way of mercy, he knew by his example how one walks on the way of mercy, he knew that, spiritually understood, the way is precisely this: how one goes. Therefore the Gospel says to the learner: "Go thou, and do likewise," that is, when you walk thus on the way, like that Samaritan, then you walk on the way of mercy, for the way between Jericho and Jerusalem has no advantage with respect to practicing mercy. All of this happened "on the same way," and yet once it was the law-abiding way, the second time the way of lawlessness, the third time of thoughtlessness, the fourth time of hard-heartedness, the fifth time of mercy. There were five travelers who, according to the evangelist, went "on the same way," and yet each went his own way.

Consequently, the spiritual fact, how one travels on the way of life, makes the difference and the difference of the way. That is, in so far as life, in the common understanding of it, the fact of living, is compared with a way, the metaphor expresses only the commonplace, that which all the living have in common through the fact of living; to that extent they all travel on the same way, they are all on the way of life. But when the matter of living becomes earnest, then the question becomes how a man is to walk, in order to walk the right way on the way of life. The wayfarer asks about it, not as one usually asks about where the way goes, but how one walks on that way, and how one is supposed to walk. Still, merely in order to ask this rightly, some power of reflection is required, for impatience will readily be deceived, and, spiritually understood, merely asking where the way is, is as if everything would then be decided, in the same sense as when the wayfarer has found the highway. And worldly wisdom is very willing to deceive by repeatedly answering the question of where the way is, while the difficulty is ignored, that, spiritually understood, the way is: *how* it is traveled. Sometimes worldly wisdom wishes to teach that the way goes over Gerizim, sometimes over Moriah, sometimes that it leads through one or another science, sometimes that it consists in certain maxims, sometimes certain external acts. A man is not willing to admit to himself that all this is deception, because the way is: how it is traveled. For it is indeed true, as the Scriptures say: two men may be sleeping in one bed, the one is saved, the other lost; two men can go up to the same temple, the one goes home saved, the other lost; two men can recite perfectly the same confession of faith, the one may be saved, the other lost. How does this happen, unless just because, in the spiritual sense, it is a deception to know where the way goes, since the way is: how it is traveled?

But even the one who has learned to ask correctly how one must go, still asks about one thing: whither the way leads. Any commendation regarding

the perfection of the way can still mean nothing if the way does not lead to perfection-alas, the more perfect the way is, if it nevertheless leads to perdition, the more distressing it is. And on the other hand, however hard and toilsome the way which is to be followed, if it still is the way of perfection, it is nevertheless joyful.

How now does one walk on the way of perfection? For on the way of pleasure one moves easily, as in a dance. On the way of honor one walks proudly, crowned with garlands. On the accommodating way of fortune one walks humored in all his wishes. But how does one walk on the way of perfection? The one who asks earnestly, the „ one who stands on the way and asks about the old accustomed paths, he will also receive an earnest answer: that the way is narrow, that on the way of perfection a man walks in tribulations. Whether you consult the Old Testament covenants or the New, concerning this there is only one opinion; there are many answers, but they all say the same thing, the answer is constantly the same, only the voice is different, so that the answer by the help of this difference may win the different. So definite and decided is this single opinion of the Scriptures, that the way of perfection is in afflictions, that perhaps concerning nothing else are there found so many scriptural passages which all say the same thing: that “he who wishes to serve God must dispose his soul to temptations” (Sirach 2:1); that “we must enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation” (Acts 14:22); that we “are appointed to tribulation” (I Thess. 3:3), and so on.

Therefore we shall not cite any particular Biblical passage, but rather rely upon the complete and perfect impression of the common teaching of the Scriptures, that on the way of perfection one walks in tribulations; and therefore we shall for the edification of a sufferer (for these discourses are indeed the Gospel of Suffering), consider the joy in the thought:

THAT IT IS NOT THE WAY WHICH IS NARROW, BUT THE NARROWNESS WHICH IS THE WAY

Consequently, the way of perfection leads through tribulations; and the subject of this discourse is, the joy for a sufferer in this thought. Hence the discourse is not this time the admonishing one of how one must walk on the way of affliction, but the joyful one for the sufferer, that the affliction is the how which indicates the way of perfection. In the spiritual sense the way is: how it is traveled. Which is then the way of perfection, that is, how does one walk on the way of perfection? One walks in afflictions. This is the first how; the second is, how one is to walk on the way of affliction. That this second must never be forgotten, either first or last, is certain enough, but neither must it be forgotten, on the contrary it must be remembered, moreover, the sufferer will be exactly strengthened for that purpose, when he has really found for himself the joy in the thought that the way of perfection is through afflictions — he who through being a sufferer is exactly in affliction.

When affliction is the way, then is this the joy: that it is hence IMMEDIATELY clear to the sufferer, and that he IMMEDIATELY knows definitely what the task is, so he does not need to use *any time, or waste his strength, in reflecting whether the task should not be different.*

What is it that makes a child, even if for comparison one uses a vigorous man, able to do what the vigorous man is hardly able to do; what is it which helps by giving the child a start? Manifestly this, that the child has no difficulty at all in learning definitely what the task is, what it has to do — for the child has only to obey. The task is a matter for the thought and consideration of the parents and superiors. As soon as the child is told what it is to do, then this is the task. How far it is right or wrong does not concern the child at all; it not only must not, but it dare not, spend even a single

moment on that kind of reflection; on the contrary, it must obey *at once.* The child is then indeed weak in comparison with a powerful man, but it is also the weak who has a very essential advantage, the weak who unconditionally comes to apply his whole strength in perfecting the task, and so effectively that there is not a single moment wasted in doubting about the task, not the least bit of strength lost in irresolution about the task. The task is set with the emphasis and reliability of authority, this is the start; but then one still gives the child headway by adding: "Do it at once" — so the child does the amazing, aye, truly, then a child can do, what even an energetic adult is rarely enough able to do. Who has not frequently looked with amazement at this amazing thing: what a child is able to do! If the father or mother, or merely the nursemaid, says with authority: "Now go to sleep at once" — then the child sleeps. There are current worldly stories about many amazing accomplishments of men, and yet there is only one, he who was called *der Einzige* (the only one), of whom it is said that he was able to sleep when he would. For otherwise, take an adult, even a very strong one; he is in the same situation as the child, who, in the opinion of its parents, needs to sleep; he says to himself: "You might as well go to sleep." I wonder too if he can, like the child who goes to sleep at once! Alas, when he is ready to lay his head on the pillow, then the opposite happens: the unruly thoughts at once awaken. Then perhaps all his thoughts become promiscuously confused; when he sometimes doubts whether it is right to sleep, whether his work will not be neglected, and what then is to be feared; when he again wishes to fall asleep, but is not able to. At last he becomes impatient; he says: "What good does it do to lie here if I cannot sleep?" He gets up again, yet not to work, for now he can neither work nor sleep. For if it is true that one rises up so refreshed from the rest of sleep that it is sometimes almost tempting to stay in bed and not get up, then truly, after a

vain attempt to sleep, it is in another sense difficult to get up; truly, after a vain attempt to sleep, one gets up even more tired.

The difficulty for the older person, which doubtless is also the advantage of authority and maturity, is that he has a two-fold task: he must work to find the task and to get it definitely established, and then he must work to discharge the task. And that which makes it difficult consists exactly in getting the task clearly in mind, or in establishing what the task really is. Perhaps men are after all not so unwilling to spend time and industry, nor are they incapable — if only it could become indubitably clear to them what their task is. But the trouble is that the communication of this cannot in any decisive sense fall to one's lot from without; it must come through the person concerned himself. The adult is indeed authoritative, he is to be his own master. But it is the Lord and Master who will assign the task, as the parents and superiors do with respect to the child; hence the adult is at one and the same time master and servant; the one who is to command and the one who must obey are one and the same. That the one commanding and the one obeying are one and the same is undeniably a difficult relationship; it can so easily happen that the servant intrudes in the consideration of the task and, conversely, that the master pays too much attention to the complaint of the servant over the hardships involved in performing his task. Alas, then confusion enters, so a man, instead of being his own master, becomes unstable, doubtful, fickle; he runs from one thing to the other, he tears down and builds up and begins from the beginning, he is tossed about by every gust, yet without moving from his place; moreover, the relationship at last becomes so preposterous that his whole strength is exhausted in hitting upon ever newer innovations in the task — like a plant which runs to seed, so he runs wild in fussy reflections or in unfruitful desires. In a certain sense he expends much time, much industry, much

energy, and it is all as if wasted, because the task is not established, because there is no master, for he should indeed be his own master.

When a team of horses must pull a heavy load, what can the driver do for them? Of course, he cannot himself pull it, and the mediocre driver can whip them, as can anyone, but the competent driver, what can he do for them? He can help them to get headway in pulling the wagon by concentrating their whole strength in a *single* moment and in a *single* start. If, on the contrary, the driver causes a misunderstanding, if he curbs them so that the horses think that they should merely be ready to pull together at a given signal — but the driver meant that they should pull now; or if he pulls on the reins unevenly, so that one horse thinks that it is to pull, the other, that the driver is merely holding it in so that they will start together: aye, then the wagon does not move, even if the horses have plenty of strength. But as one, not without a certain distress, sees this sight, sees that there is strength enough, but that the one who is master, the driver, wastes it: so one sees, not without distress, when a man behaves in a similar way. He does not lack strength, and a man never really does, but he wastes it; he who should be master (and that is certainly himself), demoralizes his energy — such a man works with scarcely one-third of his strength expended in the right place, and with more than two-thirds applied in the wrong place, or against himself. Now he stops the work in order to begin reflecting on it from the beginning, now he works instead of reflecting, now he foolishly pulls on the reins, now he wishes to do both things at once — and in spite of all this he never moves from the place; in spite of all this, life comes, as it were, to a standstill; he cannot get the task so firmly fixed that it is established, while he may break away from this labor and have his strength ready to perfect the task. The task does not become a burden, but he has plenty to do with the burdensome: bungling through the task in order if possible to get it established. If this is the case, then naturally he never

comes to bear the burden; he cannot even once get it established; at the moment, so to speak, he will turn his back in order to take up the burden, it is as if the burden fell off, and he must again pile it up. Alas, when one observes human life, one must frequently say with sadness: “They do not themselves know what energies they have; they more or less prevent themselves from learning, because with their many energies they work against themselves.”

Let us then consider more carefully the subject of this discourse. The sufferer is in affliction: now for it. If he can only get the task established, then he will surely succeed in holding out; if he immediately knows definitely what the task is, then much is already gained. But doubt will if possible prevent this; it wishes slyly to draw all his strength away from him, and to let it serve in the wrong place, in discovering what the task is, or in a thousand inventions with respect to what it might be. If this happens, if doubt triumphs, if it fools him into striving where he should not strive, then must he succumb to affliction.

Is it not then a joyful thought that it is true that affliction is the way? For then it is indeed immediately clear what the task is. Doubt wishes to make the sufferer wonder if it might not still be possible for the affliction to be taken away, and he still continue to walk on the same way — without affliction. But if affliction is the way, then it is indeed impossible for it to be taken away, and the way still remain the same. Doubt wishes to make the sufferer wonder if it were not possible that he had mistaken the way, that the fact that there is affliction might not mean that he is on the wrong road. But when the affliction is the way, the fact that there is affliction on the way cannot possibly signify that he has gone wrong; on the contrary, this is the sign that he is on the right way. Doubt wishes to make him wonder if it would not be possible to go another way. But when affliction is the way, then it is indeed impossible to walk on some other way. Consequently, there

can be no doubt as to what the task is; not one single moment, not the least bit of strength, is to be used in additional reflection; this, that affliction is the way, establishes the task, makes it certain what the task is. And truly, however hard the affliction may be, no affliction is still so hard as this affliction of restless thoughts in a doubtful and irresolute soul.

The sufferer then holds out; he goes forward in affliction on the way of perfection — but the affliction becomes harder and harder. Now that is as it should be. But if only the task is established, then much is already gained; and far be it from us to help to circulate the lying reports, that little by little it becomes easier on the narrow way, that it is only the beginning that is narrow. The relation is precisely reversed, it becomes harder and harder. We can easily make sure of this, if we only pay attention to men and *wish* to see. There is perhaps very rarely found a man who has not at some time made a beginning in willing the good, but most men fall away just when it appears that the way is becoming harder instead of easier. If a man has advanced so far that all illusions about wishing the good to a certain degree, about the good to a certain degree having a worldly reward, disappear; if he really becomes earnest in wishing the good, only then does the way really become hard, and from now on harder and harder. One is always correct in saying this, lest one deceive men by fabulous stories, entice them one moment in order in the next moment to make them even more impatient. But that which contains no deceit, the everlasting certainty is: that affliction is the way. So there must not be one single moment, not one bit of strength used in further reflection: the task is established, affliction is the way.

If anyone then wishes to make the sufferer believe that others walk the same way so easily, so carefree, without afflictions, while he walks in tribulation, then the task is again established; the sufferer has but one answer: the affliction is the way. Far be it from us, too, this hypocritical talk about things being so different in life, so that some travel on the same way

without tribulation, others in tribulation. For it is indeed possible that some walk without affliction, but truly, he does not walk on the same way without affliction as the one who walks in affliction, for the affliction is the way. There is a certain worldly prudence which does not like to break absolutely with the good, but also dislikes exceedingly to renounce absolutely the good days and worldly advantage of effeminacy; this prudence is really very resourceful in the kind of invention, that it is so different — not in life, for in that there is no untruth, that it is so different on the way of perfection. Let us recall what was explained at the beginning of this discourse, that in the spiritual sense the way is this: how it is traveled. Lo, when a poor wayfarer, whose feet are possibly sore, wincing at every step, almost drags himself forward on the way: then there is, even if it is never right for him to be envious, nevertheless, much good sense in the thought of envying the rich who ride by him in comfortable carriages. For the highway is completely indifferent to the distinction of how one travels it, and too it is undeniably pleasanter to drive in a comfortable carriage than to walk so oppressed. But in the spiritual sense the way is: how it is traveled; and then it would certainly be a strange thing if on the way of affliction there was the difference that there were some who walked on the way of affliction without afflictions. Thus the task is again established; the sufferer at once knows definitely what the task is, for the affliction is the way. If someone travels without afflictions, then so be it; then he merely goes on another road, which is his own affair. But doubt cannot lay hold on the sufferer and make him doubtful by the thought that others walk *on the same way* without afflictions.

If what the proverb says is true, that well begun is half done, then it is also true that establishing what the task is, is half the labor, aye, more than half. But since the affliction is the way, the task is also established; not even Satan himself is able to smuggle in a doubt as to what the task is. If doubt is

to secure full scope, then the affliction must be brought into an accidental relation to the way. Thus if a wayfarer is speaking about a road and says: “This way is hard,” then something accidental may be expressed by that, perhaps that there is another way which is easy, and which nevertheless leads to the same destination. Or the way may perhaps be easy at other times, but just at this time it is difficult. On the other hand, when affliction is the way, then every doubt about affliction being the task, is an attempt to go — on the wrong way, since there is only one single way, the way of affliction which the sufferer is on. The doubt concerning the task has its stronghold constantly in the idea that there might be other ways, or that the way might be changed so that the affliction would be taken away. But when affliction is the way, then the affliction cannot be taken away without taking away the way, and there cannot be *other ways,* but only a *wrong way.*

Is this then not a joyful thought, joyful for the sufferer, who is on the way of affliction, joyful because it does not need even the slightest reflection as to whether the way is the right one, joyful because he can immediately begin on the task, begin with the concentration which has all its strength collected and ready to endure the affliction. For when affliction is the way, then it is surely not in a disconsolate sense the unavoidable, by no means; he could not indeed wish to avoid it, since it is the way. With this thought the sufferer is at once under full headway to endure the affliction; he cannot so much as waste a moment or spare a glance to look about him; no, he is in affliction with all his might, joyful in affliction, rejoicing in the thought that the affliction is the way. That is, it is not really the task which gives strength, for the task is indeed that which is prescribed, for whose accomplishment the one to whom the task is assigned must use his strength; and yet we may say that the task gives strength. If the parents know how to set a task with authority, if a driver knows from experience how to set the task, then it helps indescribably. And so too for adults, when the task is

fixed with the authority of eternity, then it helps indescribably in performing the task. If a child is so unfortunate as to have a father who does not know how to command, or a horse is so unfortunate as to have a mediocre driver: then it looks as if the child and the horse do not have half the strength they actually possess. Alas, and when the adult, who is a sufferer, gives his own soul into the power of the fickle and inconstant: then he is actually weaker than a child. But then it is also joyful that the affliction is the way, for then it is immediately established, and established immovably, what the task is.

The affliction is the way — and this constitutes the joy: *that it is consequently not a characteristic of the way, that it is hard, but a characteristic of the affliction, that it is the way, so the affliction must consequently lead to something, it must he something practicable and appreciable, not superhuman.* Each of these thoughts contains a more closely edifying determination of this joy, and therefore we shall pause to consider each separately.

It is not a distinguishing quality of the way that it is hard, but a distinguishing quality of the affliction that it is the way. The more closely the affliction and the way are connected with each other, the more firmly established also is the task. When it is said: the way is hard, then the latter is a closer determination of the way; there are two thoughts: the way — and the fact that it is hard. Then we say: "It is indeed true, the way is actually hard." But then there are still two thoughts, so it is as if the doubt were granted a little concession, as if it might here squeeze itself in between the way and the fact that it is hard; as if the doubt might still have something for itself, when it wishes to make the sufferer wonder whether it might not be possible that there could be a way without its being hard, or without being as hard as it presumably is; for doubt whispers: "The question must be solved thus, the way, and after that: it is hard." But if the affliction is the way, then must doubt expire, then it cannot possibly recover. One

determination is not then superior to the other; the whole assertion does not split itself, for the apprehension, into a noun and an adjective, no, they are one and the same: the affliction is the way, and the way is the affliction; they belong together so exactly that doubt cannot even draw its breath between them, for they are one thought; they belong together so exactly that the relationship between the affliction and the way is one of inseparability. A closer relationship can never exist. Take the affliction away and you take the way away; take the way away, then you take the affliction away. So exactly do they belong together, so firmly is the task established.

The affliction must lead to something. That is, one cannot draw an inference in this way: a way is hard, consequently it must lead to something. In so far as a way is a way, the inference is valid, that it must lead to something, for as soon as it does not lead to something, it also ceases to be a way. The inference is valid in so far as the way is a way, but not because it is hard; this adjective makes it, for one who is not yet strong in the faith, almost, as it were, more doubtful whether the way can also lead to something. If, on the contrary, the affliction itself is the way, then the conclusion follows: it must lead to something. For here the inference is not drawn from the fact that it is hard, but from the fact that it is the way.

These are the Master's own words: "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life"; and when He has said that, it is everlastingly established. Truly, we do not commend the fact that someone has gone astray in a multiplicity of thoughts; oh, but if that were the case, then will we gladly assist him with a more imperfect expression of the same thing, more imperfect, because it is only understood by one who was not unacquainted with doubt, and therefore is also only temporarily serviceable to him, until he again learns the more perfect expression: to hold solely to the words of the Master. Certainly, the fact that the Master has said these words is still the most assured defense against doubt; for to believe it, in the sense of obedience, is

still far more certain than the certain: that, in the sense of thought, it is impossible for the thought to doubt it. Alas, because it is impossible for thought, it does not follow from that that it is impossible for the thinking man: he can, for all that, despondently or defiantly, will to doubt. However, if it is not the Master's own word, that the affliction is the way, it is nevertheless His teaching, for does He not teach that affliction is profitable? So it is He, nevertheless, who vouches for the words. For this a man can do; he can clearly and with clear thoughts explain what the thought implies, but he cannot vouch for the thought — only the authority can do that; and only He, who is the sole authority, can vouch for all authority.

When it is said: "Narrow is the way which leads to eternal life," then the thought is this: well, it is true that the way is narrow, the affliction an obstacle, a hindrance on the way; one must go through, but then it also leads to eternal happiness. Consequently, affliction is a barrier, a hindrance on the way, yet one must go through. But if the affliction itself is the way, what wonder then that one must go through, what wonder then that the affliction leads to something! Doubt will gladly deprive the sufferer of confidence, will let him stick in affliction, perish in the despondent, aye, the presumptuous thought, that he is forsaken of God, as if he had fallen into a way which could only circumscribe him, as if it were in a despondent sense that the Apostle said: "We are all appointed to afflictions" (I Thess. 3:3), as if there were no purpose in the affliction, but we were merely destined to affliction. If, on the contrary, the purpose of the affliction is to be the way, then there is immediately a breath of air, then the sufferer breathes, then it must lead to something; for then the affliction itself is indeed preferment. It is not a difficulty *on* the way, which, if I may speak in this way, makes a new relay necessary, but the affliction itself is a relay, the best relay; if one but lets it advise, then it helps one forward, for the affliction is the way.

Is this not joyful! How confidently the sufferer can breathe in this thought! He not only commits himself into the hands of God and goes to meet the affliction; no, he says: "The affliction itself is a sign to me that I am well advised, the affliction is my helper — for the affliction is the way." As long as the child still has a timid fear of the teacher, it can no doubt learn much; but when confidence has driven out the fear, and fearlessness has triumphed; then the higher instruction begins. And thus, too, when the sufferer, assured that the affliction is the way, has overcome the affliction; for is not this in the higher sense overcoming affliction, to be willing to believe that the affliction is the way, is the helper! The Apostle Paul says somewhere, "Faith is our victory," and in another place, "Yea, we are more than conquerors." But can one do more than conquer? Yes, if before the strife begins he has transformed the enemy into a friend. That is what it means to conquer in affliction, to overcome affliction, as one overcomes an enemy, assuming that the affliction is one's enemy. But it is more than conquering to believe that the affliction is one's friend, that it is not an obstacle on the way, but the way, not the hindering but the improving, not the discouraging but the ennobling.

The affliction must he something appreciable, practicable. What is it that can appear on a road and block it, so it becomes impassable? It is affliction. But when the affliction is the way, then is this way unconditionally passable. The sufferer can, if he so will, imagine the affliction increasingly terrible; this makes no difference one way or the other — it is everlastingly certain that the affliction is the way, and so it becomes impossible to imagine an affliction that can obstruct this way. Also one may see from this that the affliction may lead to something. For what could prevent a way from leading to something, what other than affliction. But if this cannot come as an obstruction on this way, then this way must eternally lead to something.

Wonderful! The way of affliction is the only one where there is no hindrance, for the affliction itself prepares the way instead of blocking it. But is not this good news! For what is more distressing than when a wayfarer must say: “Here there is no longer a path.” And hence what is more joyful than that a wayfarer constantly dares say: “Here there is always a way!”

The affliction is not superhuman. No, if it were so, then would the way be blocked, and affliction would not be the way. The Apostle Paul says: “No temptations have befallen you except the human; but God will make both the temptation and the escape such that you may be able to bear it.” But has God not made the temptation bearable when from eternity He has arranged it so that the affliction itself is the way? Then the affliction is made endurable once for all. And how can it be better assured that there is always a good way out of temptation, than when the affliction is itself the way? For then the affliction is always a way out, and a good way out of the affliction.

The superhuman temptation will tower high above a man; like the precipitous mountain which leads the wayfarer to despair, so the superhuman temptation will frighten the sufferer, transform him into a creeping thing, compared with the magnitude of the temptation. As a natural force belittles human effort, so will the superhuman temptation, strutting haughtily, proudly mock the poor sufferer. But, thank heaven, there are no superhuman temptations, there is only a lying fable, invented by a timorous or a cunning individual, who wishes to shift the guilt from his own shoulders, to diminish his own guilt by magnifying the temptation, to justify himself by making the temptation superhuman. The Scriptures say exactly the opposite; they not only say that there is no superhuman temptation, but they say in another place, where the discourse concerns the horror, in expectation of which men’s hearts shall fail them from fear, they say to the

believer: “When this happens, then lift up your heads.” Consequently, the temptation has no superhuman magnitude; on the contrary, when the affliction is most terrible, the believer is taller by a head, a head taller, aye, he is indeed a head taller, as he rises above the affliction. And when the affliction is the way, then is the believer also above the affliction; for the way *on which* a man goes certainly does not go over his head; no, when he walks on it, then he plants his foot on it.

Thus there is a perpetual joy contained in the thought that the affliction is the way. The sufferer immediately knows definitely what the task is; he can immediately begin on it with all his might; no doubt can come sneaking in between the way and the affliction, for they are eternally inseparable; and therefore it is eternally certain that this way must lead to something, for here no affliction can obstruct the way, which is always passable, as the affliction is never superhuman.

It must certainly never be forgotten, it must again be said here in conclusion, that the second point still remains: how the sufferer is to walk on the way of affliction. Oh, but if it is true that it will be of little use to a man with a cold heart to cling to a dead understanding: truly the understanding which keeps a man happy and warm in affliction will also strengthen him for the next step: to walk rightly on the way of affliction. And that with a sure spirit, without doubt in the belief that the affliction in which a man finds himself is the way; is it not also the way to walk rightly on the way of affliction!

X. THE GLORY OF OUR COMMON HUMANITY

IF IT IS true that the sorrow of concern, especially the longer and the more deeply it penetrates into the soul, or the longer it penetrates profoundly into the soul, also establishes itself more firmly: then it is indeed profitable to consider some diversion for the troubled soul, although not in the sense that the world frequently and foolishly enough recommends — the wild restlessness or the noisy stupefaction of vain diversions. If then the concerned one feels himself forsaken and yet, through a self-contradiction in his sorrow, does not desire sympathy, because this confining and restricting presses too closely upon him, so that he winces almost as much from the sympathy as from the pain: then if one leads him out into an environment where there is nothing to remind him of his sorrow — not even sympathy, where sympathy is, as it were, and yet is not; an environment which has the touching nearness of sympathy, in so far as it is sympathy, and also the soothing remoteness of sympathy, in so far as it is not sympathy.

This is the way the Gospel read leads the concerned individual out into the field, into surroundings which will include him in the great common life, which will gain for him the great fellowship of existence. But since the concern has now established itself firmly within him, it is evident that something must be done to get his eyes and mind diverted from it.

For this there are two exercises which the Gospel recommends. For if the concerned "beholds the lily" at his feet, then he looks *down* at it; and when he looks down at the lily, he does not see his concern. It is of course possible that in his sorrow he usually walked with bowed head, looked down and saw his concern; but if he looks down in order to see the lily, then he looks away from his concern. And if, according to the account in the

Gospel, he looks at the bird in the air, then he looks *up* at it, and if he looks up at the bird, then he does not see his own concern. Of course it is possible that in his sorrow he also sometimes looked up when he sent a concerned sigh up to God, and followed it with a glance of concern; but if he looks up in order to see the bird in the air, then he is looking away from his concern.

How can one better describe the fact of the concern having established itself in a man's soul, than by saying that it is as when the eye *stares?* When the eye stares then it looks fixedly before it, it constantly sees one thing, and yet it does not really see that, because, as science explains, it sees only its own seeing. But then the physician says: "Move your eye." And so the Gospel says: "Divert your mind, look down at the lily and refrain from staring at your concern; look up at the bird and stop staring at your concern." If, then, the tears stop while the eye is looking down at the lily, is it not as if it were the lily that dried the tears! When the wind dries the tears from the eyes that are following the bird, is it not then as if it were the bird that dried the tears! Even if the loved one sits by and wipes away the tears, if the concerned one still continues to weep, is this then really to dry the tears? But the one who causes the concerned to stop weeping, he dries the tears.

This is what we venture to call a *godly diversion,* not as the vain and worldly diversion excites impatience and fosters the concern, but as the diversion which diverts, soothes and persuades, the more devoutly the concerned yields himself to its influence. Human ingenuity has invented a great many things to amuse and divert the mind, and yet the law for this kind of invention mocks the fruitless striving by the self-contradiction of the diversion. The art itself is at the service of impatience; more and more impatiently it learns to compress the multitude of diversions into a short-lived moment: the more this ingenuity increases the more it works against itself, since it appears that as the ingenuity increases, the diversion

constantly lasts for a shorter and shorter time. Let us take an example, where the vain and worldly diversion shows itself as slight and self-contradictory as it is. Fireworks indeed delight the eye and divert the mind when the elaborate, blazing ephemerality is lighted in the darkness of the night. And yet, if it lasts merely one hour the spectator grows weary; if but one brief moment intervenes before each new ignition, then the spectator grows weary. The task of ingenuity is therefore to speed it up faster and faster; the highest, the most perfect performance consists in burning the whole display in a very few minutes. But if the purpose of the diversion is to while away the time, then the contradiction appears clearly, that the diversion, when it represents the most perfect art, may only while away a few moments — the more fearfully it becomes precisely evident how long the time is. One pays money then for admittance to a tension of impatience in having to await the beginning of the entertainment, and in the same moment it is over. As those antic flames blaze and immediately vanish into nothing, so must the soul be of him who knows only such diversions: in the moment of diversion he despairs over the length of time it takes.

Ah, how different are the godly diversions! For have you ever seen the star-lit heavens, and have you ever found any more authentic spectacle! It costs nothing, so there is no prompting of impatience; it does not say, "Tonight, not later than ten o'clock sharp." Oh, no, the heavens wait for you, even if in another sense they do not wait for you — as the twinkling stars shine in the night, so have they shone unchanged for thousands of years. As God makes Himself invisible, alas, because of that there are many who perhaps have never really noticed Him: so the starry heaven makes itself, as it were, insignificant; alas, perhaps that is the reason why there are so many who have never really seen it. The divine Majesty disdains the visible, the false obviousness; the solemnity of the starlit heavens is more than unostentatious. Oh, but if you stand quietly, if you perhaps went out

there without any particular motive, where year out and year in, unappreciated, it is visible; if accidentally you were to pause and turn your glance upward — you would still find it true that its persuasiveness increases with every moment; more and more movingly it draws you away from the temporal; what is to be forgotten sinks into deeper and deeper oblivion with every moment you continue to observe the starry heavens. O godly diversion! You do not disloyally and treacherously call yourself a diversion, while with empty noise and driving impatience you are still in a covenant with boredom, into which you plunge men deeper and deeper — through the diversion; no, you are in a covenant with the eternal, and therefore only the beginning is difficult; when it is made, then the quiet of the diversion increases and in it the persuasiveness.

Thus it is with everything in nature; it seems insignificant, and yet it is so infinitely right. If therefore you are going hastily on an important errand, and your way leads you along the sea shore — then take advantage of it! It is indeed true that no one calls to you, you hear no invitation, there is neither the voice of approval nor the thunder of cannon, as in human recreations; and yet, take advantage of it! Hasten, lest by pausing a moment you perhaps discover the persuasiveness in the uniformity of the swelling billows. And so, too, with the lily of the field and the bird in the air. If you are hurrying "to your fields, to your trade, to your wife" — and a bird flies past you, then do not watch its flight, for if your eye follows it, then you perhaps would pause too long watching the bird. If it is during working hours, when one must give attention to his work, if the harvest-hand whets his scythe briskly and swings it against the grain, then let him not look at the lily at his feet, lest it persuade him, so that both the lily and the harvest-hand remain standing.

But the concerned, he is not admonished; on the contrary, the Gospel prompts him to go out into the field, and then to stand still, in order to

observe the lily and the bird, so that the godly diversion may cause the staring eye to move, may divert the mind within which the concern has established itself. Consider the lily, see how it stands in loveliness at your feet; do not despise it; indeed it still waits for you that you may enjoy its beauty! See how it sways back and forth, shakes everything from it so that it may continue to be lovely! See how it sports with the wind, quivers with every movement, so that quiet again it may rejoice in its happy existence! See how gentle it is, always willing to jest and play, while by yielding it still triumphs over the most violent storm, and weathers it! Behold the bird in the air, see where it flies; perhaps it comes from far away, from far, far happier scenes — but then those indeed still exist; perhaps it flies away, far away, to far more distant regions — then let it take your concern with it! And it does it without noticing the burden, if only you continue to look after it. See where it now soars, it rests — in infinite space; hence it rests where no rest seems possible! See how it finds its way; and what way through all the adversities and afflictions of a human life is yet so difficult as the "mysterious way of a bird through the air"! Hence there is a way and a way to find, where no way seems possible.

However, as all diversion is intended not only to pass the time but also chiefly to give the concerned individual something else to think of, we shall now consider how the concerned, who looks at the lily and the bird, dispels the mists by the aid of the godly diversion, gets something else to think of besides his own concern, and by forgetting his concern in the diversion he is led to consider:

HOW GLORIOUS IT IS TO BE HUMAN

"*If then God so clothed the grass of the field... should he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!*" Consequently God clothes the grass, or the grass is clothed; the beautifully formed sheathes of the stalks, the fine

veining of the blades, the lovely shades of blended colors, the whole wealth, if we may speak in this way, of ribbons and bows and pageantry — all this is part of the clothing of the lily, and it is God who clothes it in this way. “Should He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”

“*Ye of little faith!*” This is the mild approach of the admonition; thus it is said to the one who was in the wrong, when love does not have the heart to speak severely: with uplifted finger it reproachfully says to him, “You of little faith,” but it says it so gently that the reproach does not wound, does not grieve, does not dishearten, but rather uplifts and gives confidence. If a child aggrieved came to its parents and begged for something which the child had already and had had for a long time, but had not been aware of having, and therefore believed that it must beg in order to get it, instead of being thankful for having it: I wonder if the mother, mildly reproachful, would not say, “O my dear child, you will get enough tomorrow, you of little faith! That is, if you once come to understand better, then you will appreciate that you have it, that you have always had it, and that therefore it was a kind of ingratitude, although forgivable, moreover, suitable for a child, that you asked for what you had.” But if this is the meaning of the words, then the Gospel says not only that man is clothed like the grass of the field, but that he is clothed far more gloriously. By the aid of the added reproof (ye of little faith) it is really said: Should not God much more *have* clothed you? So the discourse is not about the new coat one wishes to have for Sunday, or about the new coat one so greatly needs, but about the ingratitude of being willing to forget how gloriously man is clothed from the hand of God. Would there not be an incongruity in the discourse if the first statement was that the lily was more gloriously clad than Solomon, and the last, “Should not God much more clothe you?” Would it not be incongruous if the latter was to be understood as referring to some articles of clothing a man may need?

Let us, however, rightly consider this question. It is said that the lily is arrayed, but this is not to be understood in such a way that the lily's existence is one thing and the fact of having raiment something different; no its raiment is the fact of being lily. Understood in this sense, should not the human be far more gloriously clad? Or should he be permitted, out of concern for articles of clothing, absolutely to forget the first clothing. O ye of little faith! O ye ungrateful, with your imagined need! O ye concerned, even if your need is great, that you are absolutely willing to forget how God has clothed you. Learn from the ant how to be wise, but learn from the lily how glorious it is to be human, how gloriously you are clad, ye of little faith!

In the petty disquiet of the comparisons, the worldly concern always seeks to lead a man away from the elevated calm of simple thoughts. Being clothed means then being human — and so to be well clothed. Worldly concern occupies itself with clothes and with the distinctions of dress: is it not then like the child who aggrieved comes and begs for what it has, and to whom the mother, mildly reproachful, says: "You will get enough in the morning, you of little faith!" The Gospel wishes first to remind even an indigent one that he must not completely forget how gloriously he is clothed by God. And next, we are indeed very far from needy, not all in the more earnest and stricter sense, but, on the other hand, we are all perhaps only too inclined to be concerned about clothes, and ungratefully forget those first thoughts — and the first clothing. But by considering the lily, the concerned individual is reminded to compare his clothing with that of the lily — even if poverty has dressed him in rags.

Ought not then the invitation to learn from the lilies to be as acceptable to everyone, as the admonition is profitable to him! Ah, in the busy worldly life of the comparisons, those great elevating, simple first thoughts are perhaps forgotten more and more. One man compares himself with another;

one generation compares itself with another; and thus the accumulated multitude of comparisons really grows above a man's head. As everywhere ingenuity and busyness increase, there come to be in every generation more and more men who toilsomely labor throughout their whole life far down in the deep subterranean regions; aye, like miners, who never see the light of day, so these unfortunates never come to see the light: those elevating, simple, primary thoughts about how glorious it is to be human. And up above, in the high places of the comparison, there smiling vanity plays its false game, deceives the fortunate, so they get no impression of those elevated, simple first principles.

To be a ruler — aye, what a strife is not carried on about this in the world, whether it be to rule over kingdoms and countries, over thousands, or to rule over a single man — besides oneself, whom no one is greatly concerned in ruling over. But out in the field with the lilies, where every man who quietly and in solitude sucks the milk of those first principles is what he is according to the divine plan, he is ruler: moreover, there no one will be ruler! To be a prodigy! Ah, what strenuous efforts are not made in the world to attain this envied place, and how does not envy itself strive to frustrate them! But out in the field with the lilies, where every man is what God has made him, the wonder of creation: aye, there no one will be a prodigy! The better individual would certainly smile, the shrill laughter of the crowd would mock the fool who in such a sense could speak about being a ruler, and about being a prodigy.

And yet, what can the preacher really mean by those words: "that God separated the human in order to see whether he would regard himself as an animal." For the one who is not separated is willing to be soothed, consoled, edified and uplifted by the absoluteness of those first principles; the one who is willing to reconcile himself to disappearing and perishing in the insignificant service of the comparisons: he regards himself as an animal,

whether in the comparative sense he was distinguished or humble. Therefore God singled out the human, made every man into this separate entity which is implied in the absoluteness of those first principles. The individual animal is not singled out, is not unconditionally a separate entity, the individual animal is a number, and belongs under what the most celebrated pagan thinker has called the animal classification: the herd. And the human being who turns away in despair from those first principles to plunge into the herd of the comparisons makes himself into a number, he regards himself as an animal, whether in a comparative sense he becomes the distinguished or the humble However, with the lilies the concerned one is set apart, far away from all human or perhaps better inhuman comparisons between man and man: moreover, the one who turned his back on the greatest city in the world, has not left such a varied herd, such a tremendously confused manifold behind him as the one who turned his back on the inhuman comparisons — in order humanly to compare his raiment with that of the lily.

By clothing then must certainly be understood the fact of being human. A pagan has earlier been aware of this.

He did not know how to refer everything to God, but he believed it was the soul which, as he ingeniously says, like a weaver itself wove the body, the apparel of the man. And now in beautiful wonder he praised the ingenious creation of the human body, its glory, with which no plant and no animal can endure any comparison. In his thought he let it belong, as it were, to what is man's distinction: the erect walk, and when in thinking he imitated it, then was his mind uplifted. He wondered over the ingeniousness of the human eye, and even more at its glance; for an animal has an eye, but only the human has a glance, the human who therefore, also, in the beautiful mother-tongue of wonder, is called the erect, yet so that there is indicated the two-fold meaning, first the fact that the human form is erect like the

straight trunks of the trees, and next, that in this way the erect one directs his glance upward; even if the straight trunks of the trees rise higher, the erect one by means of his glance proudly lifts his head higher than the mountains. Thus the man stands erect — commanding, and therefore the fact of that wonder was deemed so glorious that the human was the only created thing which had hands, for the ruler indeed stretches forth his hand when he commands.

And so too that wondering pagan knew many ways in which to speak gloriously about the human's glorious raiment. Many have perhaps spoken more learnedly, more skilfully, perhaps more scientifically about it, but, strangely enough, no one has spoken more wonderingly than that noble wise man, who did not begin by doubting everything, but, on the contrary, when he became older, when he had seen and heard and experienced much, really began to *wonder,* to wonder about that *simple first thought,* which usually no one troubles himself over, not even the scholar and the scientist, for it still fails to interest those — as an object of wonder. But this discourse of wonder is still imperfect in so far as it refers the clothing to the soul. Most imperfect, aye, the discourse is foolish, which absolutely forgets that solemn *first* injunction, so it takes as a matter of course and thoughtlessly the fact of being human for granted, as if it were nothing, takes it in vain, and immediately begins the foolishness about articles of clothing, about trousers and jackets, about purple and ermine. But the discourse is also imperfect which does take notice of the first, but is not really aware of God. No, if the human is to compare himself with the lily, then he must say: "All that I am is due to my being human, that is my raiment; nothing is due to myself, but it is glorious."

How are we now to speak about this glory? We could speak a long time without finishing, but this is not the place for that. Let us therefore rather speak briefly and concentrate everything in one single word, the word

which the Scripture itself uses with authority: *God created man in His own image,* and yet again, for the sake of brevity, merely understand that word about one thing.

God created man in His own image; ought it not to be glorious to be thus clad! The Gospel says, in order to praise the lily, that it surpasses Solomon in glory — ought it not to be infinitely more glorious to resemble God! The lily does not resemble God, no, it does not do that; it has a little sign upon it whereby it reminds of God; it has a testimony, as God has indeed left nothing created without a testimony to Himself, but the lily does not resemble Him.

If a man sees his image in the mirror of the sea, then he himself sees his image, but the sea is not the man's image, and when he goes away, the image is gone. The sea is not the image, and it cannot even retain the image. How does this happen except because the visible form, precisely through its visibility is powerless (precisely in the same way that the physical presence makes it impossible to be omnipresent), so it cannot reflect itself in another in such a way that this other retains the image when the form removes itself. But God is spirit, is invisible, and the image of the invisible is in turn invisible: thus the invisible Creator reflects Himself in the invisibility, which is a spiritual determination, and God's image is precisely the invisible glory. If God were visible, aye, then there would be no one who could resemble Him or be His image; for *no* image of the visible *exists,* and among all visible things there is nothing, not even a blade of grass, which resembles another, or is its image; if such were the case, then the object itself would be the image. But since God is invisible, no one can *visibly* resemble Him. That is exactly why the lily does not resemble God, because the glory of the lily is the visible; and that is why the pagan still spoke imperfectly about the human, even when he spoke most perfectly about the

glory of the human body, but said nothing about the fact that the invisible God created every man in His own image.

To be spirit, that is man's invisible glory. So when the concerned person stands out in the field, surrounded by all the witnesses, when every blossom says to him, "Remember God!" then the man answers, "I shall certainly do that, little children, I shall worship Him; you, poor things, cannot do that." The erect one is consequently a worshipper. The upright walk was the distinction, but the ability to cast one's self down in worship, is still more glorious; and all nature is like the great staff of servants who remind the man, the master, to worship God. It is this which is expected, not that the man is to come and take over the control which is also gloriously appointed to him, but that in worshipping he is to praise the Creator, which nature does not do, for it can only remind the human to do it. It is glorious to be arrayed like the lily; it is even more glorious to be the ruler who stands erect; but it is most glorious to be nothing through the act of worship.

To worship is not to rule, and yet worship is precisely that whereby the man resembles God, and the fact of being able in truth to worship, is the superiority of the invisible glory above all creation. The pagan was not aware of God, and therefore he sought the resemblance in the fact of ruling. But the resemblance does not consist in this; no, on the contrary, it is then taken in vain. It is in truth only within the infinite difference, and therefore the act of worshipping is the resemblance with God, as it is the superiority over all creation. Man and God do not resemble each other directly, but conversely: only when God has infinitely become the eternal and omnipresent object of worship, and man always a worshipper, do they then resemble one another. If a man wishes to resemble God through the fact of ruling, then he has forgotten God, then God has gone away, and the man plays ruler in His absence. And paganism was like this, it was human life carried on in God's absence. Therefore paganism was still like nature; and

the hardest thing that can be said about it is: it could not worship even that simple, noble wise man, he could keep silent in wonder, but he could not worship. But the fact of being able to worship is not a visible glory, it cannot be seen; and yet the visible glory of nature groans, it implores the ruler, it incessantly reminds the man that finitely he must not forget — to worship. Oh, how glorious to be human!

But so the concerned in his diversion with the lilies got something quite different to think of than his own concern; he came really to consider how glorious it is to be human. If he again forgets that in the worldly intercrossing of the comparisons and the collision of the distinctions between man and man: then it is not the fault of the lilies, since, on the contrary, it is because he has also forgotten the lilies, forgotten that there was something he was supposed to learn from them, and something he must finally remember to do for them. That is, if we were to characterize the worldly concern in a single word, must we not say: it is a concern about clothing, a concern about being seen? Just for that reason the edification through the invisible glory is the highest exaltation over worldly concern: the fact of worshipping is the glory, and also a favor, that is accorded the lily.

So much for the instruction of the lilies. We shall now consider how the concerned learns from the BIRD *how glorious it is to be human.*

"*The bird sows not, neither does it reap, nor gather into barns*" The bird is without care for the necessities of life. But is this, then, really a perfection; is it a perfection to be carefree in danger, if one does not know it, does not know that it exists; is it a perfection to take assured steps — because one walks blindly, to walk confidently — because one is walking in his sleep! No. Then one must indeed say more truthfully that it is a perfection to know the danger, to see it before the eyes, to be awake: that it is a perfection *to be able* to have a care for the necessities of life — in order

to overcome this fear, in order to let faith and confidence drive out fear, so that one is in truth without a care for the necessities of life in the unconcern of faith. For only this freedom from care on the part of faith is in the divine sense the soaring, whose beautiful but imperfect symbol is the easy flight of the bird. Therefore we also speak of lifting ourselves on the wings of faith, and this wing-beat is in the divine sense the perfect, the wing-beat of the bird only a weak, a figurative foreshadowing. Moreover, as when the tired bird with weakened wing-beat slowly sinks to earth, so even the proudest, boldest flight of the bird is only earthly and temporal languor in comparison with the lofty soaring of faith, a slow sinking compared with the easy rise of faith.

We shall now consider this more carefully. Why does the bird have no worldly care for the necessities of life? Because it lives only in the moment, hence because there is no eternity for a bird. But is this indeed a perfection! On the contrary, how does the possibility of an anxiety about subsistence come about? From the fact that the temporal and the eternal touch one another in consciousness, or rather from the fact that the human has consciousness. In the possession of consciousness he is eternally far, far out beyond the moment; no bird flew so far away, and yet precisely thereby he becomes aware of the danger which the bird does not suspect: when eternity came into being for him, then the morrow also came into being. Through his consciousness he discovers a world which not even the most traveled bird knows: the future; and when this future through the consciousness is withdrawn in the moment, then a concern is discovered which the bird does not know; for however far it flew and from however far it returned, it never flew to the future and never returned from the future.

Since now the man has consciousness, he is the place where the temporal and the eternal constantly touch one another, where the eternal interests itself in the temporal. Therefore time can seem long to a man because he

has the eternal in his consciousness, and with this he measures the moments; but time never seems long to the bird. Therefore the man has a dangerous enemy which the bird does not know: time. An enemy? Aye, an enemy or a friend whose aspirations or whose intercourse the man cannot avoid, because he has the eternal in his consciousness, and must therefore measure it. The temporal and the eternal can painfully touch one another in numerous ways in the human consciousness, but one of the contacts at which the man particularly winces is the care for the necessities of life. Its distance from the eternal seems so infinite; there is no question of filling out the time with some glorious achievement, some great thought, some uplifting emotion, as in the hours of which one says that they are lived for eternity. Ah, no, there is only the question about the humble labor in the hours which are really absolutely lived for the temporal existence, the humble labor to produce the conditions for existing temporally. But, nevertheless, the fact of being able to have a care for the necessities of life is a perfection, and the expression of dejection is merely the expression for man's elevation; for as high as God lifts up, so deeply does He also depress, but consequently, the fact of being profoundly depressed also indicates the fact of being highly exalted. And as God elevated the human being above the bird through the eternal in his consciousness, so He depressed him again lower than the bird, so to speak, through his knowledge of the anxiety, the earthly, humble anxiety, which the bird does not even know. Oh, how superior it seems for the bird not to have a care for the necessities of life — and yet, how far more glorious it is to be able to know this care.

The human can therefore indeed learn from the bird, he can also call the bird his teacher, but not, however, in the highest sense. As the bird is without care for the necessities, so fundamentally the child is also; and who is there who would not gladly learn from a child! And when an imagined or an actual need makes a man in his concern despondent, depressed, and

dejected: oh, then he will willingly be soothed, willingly learn from a child; willingly, in his quiet, thankful mind, call the child his teacher. But if the child wished to accept the title and to speak instructively, *then* the parent would certainly say gently: “Oh, my dear child, that is something which you do not yourself understand.” And if the child then insisted, the parent would say that it was a naughty child, and perhaps would not even hesitate to slap the teacher, and perhaps with justice, and why? Because seriously the parent is the child’s teacher, and the child only in a playful sense of jesting earnestness the parent’s teacher. But then it is indeed a perfection to be able to be anxious about the necessities of life, and the human is far superior, even if he willingly learns, according to the instruction of the Gospel, from the bird, and in his quiet, thankful mind calls it his teacher.

The bird that is without subsistence cares, is then the symbol of the human, and yet the human, through being able to have these cares, is far more perfect than the symbol. Therefore the human never dares forget that the One who referred him to the bird of the air, as to a primary, a childish instruction, that precisely He in earnestness and truth is the real symbol, the true, essential human symbol of perfection. For when it is said, “The birds of the air have nests and foxes have holes, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head,” then there is mentioned a condition which is far more helpless than that of a bird, and is also itself conscious of this. But then, with the consciousness of this, to be without a nest, without a place in which to seek refuge, then — to be without anxiety: aye, this is the exalted image of creation, this is man’s divine pattern. For the bird this pattern does not exist, nor for the child; but consequently the fact of being able to know this care for the necessities is a perfection. Is this not so?

We are accustomed to say that it is an advantage for a woman that as the weaker she cannot go to war; that it is an advantage for the prisoner that he cannot get out and risk his life; that it is an advantage for the sleeper that he

sleeps unconscious of the danger; or we certainly say it is a perfection to be excluded from venturing to call the exalted his pattern! But why then is it said otherwise about the care for the necessities, as if the woman were more fortunate because it is particularly her husband who must earn the living; as if the prisoner were fortunate because the state supports him; as if that one were fortunate who acquired his wealth without effort; or as if that one were the most fortunate of all who, perhaps because of his wealth, was barred from calling the God-Man his pattern!

However, out in the field with the bird, the concerned cannot speak in this way; he looks at the bird and completely forgets his imagined concern; he even forgets the actual need momentarily; he is soothed, aye, he is edified, but if the bird were to presume to speak an instructive word, then he would certainly reply: "My little friend, that is something you yourself do not understand," that is, he would himself become conscious that it is a perfection to be able to feel a concern for the necessities of life.

"*The bird sows not, it reaps not, nor does it gather into barns*"*;* that is to say, the bird does not *labor.*

But is this then a perfection, not to work at all? Is it a perfection to steal the day-time in the same sense as sleep steals the night-time! For certainly the bird awakens early to song, and yet, yet when it has slept, it really awakens to dream; even its most beautiful song is indeed a dream about an unhappy love; and thus it sleeps and dreams its life away, a happy or a melancholy jest. But is this, however, really a perfection; is it a perfection in the child that it plays and gets tired — as a man gets tired from working — and sleeps, and plays again! It is charming in the child — ah, who would not willingly learn from a child! And if the parent sometimes indeed does his work, but is not happy in doing it, moreover, is perhaps even dejected: oh, then he will readily be soothed by the child, will gladly learn from it, will readily in his quiet, thankful mind call the child a teacher. But he will

not hesitate, if it becomes necessary, to rebuke the teacher, and he will do it justly. And why? Because the parent in the serious sense is the child's teacher, the child only in the charming sense of playful earnestness the parent's teacher.

The bird does not toil; its life in an innocent sense is in vain, and in an innocent sense it spends its life in vain. Is this indeed a perfection? Then is it also indeed an imperfection in God that He works, that He works hitherto! Is it a perfection in the bird that in a time of scarcity it sits and dies of hunger, and knows nothing at all that it can do; that confused it lets itself fall to the ground and die? Ordinarily we do not speak in this way.

When a sailor lies in his boat and leaves everything to chance in the storm, and does not know anything at all to do, then we do not speak of him as a perfect sailor. But if the brave seaman knows how to steer, if with skill and energy and persistence he combats the wind and storm, works himself out of danger, then we admire him. If late in the forenoon we see a man who has arisen late, sluggish and yet hungry, waiting to get his food by chance, then we do not commend him; but if early in the morning we see the active worker, or even if we do not see him, see that he has already been there, that the fisherman has already been out with his net, that the herdsman has already put away his churn, then we commend the fisherman and the herdsman. To work is the perfection of the human. Through working the human being resembles God, who also works. And if, then, a man works for food, we shall not foolishly say that he supports himself; we shall rather say, simply in order to recall how glorious it is to be human: "He works with God for food. He works with God, hence he is God's fellow-worker." The bird is not that; it gets its food, but it is not God's fellow-laborer. The bird gets its food, just as out in the country a tramp gets support, but the servant who works for his food calls the master his fellow-worker.

The bird does not work — and yet it gets its food: is this a perfection in the bird? Ordinarily we say that he who does not work shall not eat; and God too says this. If then God makes an exception of the bird, then it is because the poor bird cannot work. The poor bird cannot work — do we speak in this way about a perfection? Perfection then consists in working. It is not as we inadequately represent it, a hard necessity to be obliged to work in order to live. Oh, no, it is a perfection, not to be a child throughout one's whole life, not always to have parents to care for one, both while they live and after they are dead. The stern necessity which, however, still precisely recognizes the perfect in the human, is needed only to force the man who will not by himself freely understand that the fact of working is a perfection, and who is therefore unwilling to go to work. Even if, therefore, the so-called stern necessity were not there, it would still be an imperfection for a human being to refrain from working.

It is said about the medals a king distributes that some wear the medal as an honor to themselves, others honor the medal by wearing it. So let us cite a great example, who can really be said to have honored the fact of working: the Apostle Paul. If ever anyone might have been justified in wishing the day and the night doubly long — then certainly Paul. If ever anyone could have given each hour significance for the many — then certainly Paul. If ever anyone could have permitted himself to be supported by the congregation — then certainly Paul: and yet he preferred to work with his own hands! As he humbly thanked God that he could boast of the honor of having been scourged, persecuted, insulted; as he humbly before God proudly called his chains a badge of honor, so he also found it an honor to work with his own hands; an honor with respect to the Gospel, that with a woman's beautiful and an apostle's holy modesty he dared say: "I have not earned a farthing through the preaching of the Word; I have not married a fortune through becoming an apostle; an honor, that with respect to the

humblest man, he dared say: “I have not been exempt from any of the vicissitudes of life, nor have I through favor been excluded from any of its advantages; I have also had the honor of working with my own hands!”

Oh, in the desperate, brilliant or pitiful wretchedness of worldly comparisons, where one knows equally as little what honor is as what perfection is: there one speaks cowardly or treacherously in another fashion. But out there in the field with the bird, there the concerned understands how glorious it is to work, and from that how glorious it is to be human. For that which makes the distinction is not that one works for wealth, another for bread, one to accumulate a surplus, another to guard against poverty; no, that which makes the difference is — that the bird cannot work.

But in this way the concerned, diverted by the bird, got something absolutely other than his own concern to think of; he came rightly to consider how glorious a thing it is to work, how glorious it is to be human. If, under the strain of toil, he again forgets this, oh, then perhaps that lovable teacher, the bird, will fly past him and remind him about the thing forgotten — if only he looks at the bird.

XI. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD

TEXT The Epistle of James I: 17-21

EVERY GOOD GIFT and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

My hearer, you have listened to the reading of the text. How near at hand does it not seem now to turn our thoughts in the opposite direction, to the mutability of temporal and earthly things, to the changeableness of men. How depressing and wearisome to the spirit that all things are corruptible, that men are changeable, you, my hearer, and I! How sad that the change is so often for the worse! Poor human consolation, but yet a consolation, that there is still another change to which the changeable is subject, namely that it has an end!

And yet, if we were to speak in this manner, especially in this spirit of dejection, and hence not in the spirit of an earnest consideration of corruptibility, of human inconstancy, then we would not only fail to keep close to the text, but would depart from it, aye, even alter it. For the text speaks of the opposite, of the unchangeableness of God. The spirit of the text is unmixed joy and gladness. The words of the Apostle, coming as it were from the lofty silences of the highest mountain peaks, are uplifted above the mutabilities of the earthly life; he speaks of the unchangeablensss

of God, and of nothing else. He speaks of a ‘father of lights’, who dwells above, with whom there is no variableness, not even the shadow of any change. He speaks of good and perfect gifts’ that come to us from above, from this father, who as the father of ‘lights’ or light is infinitely well equipped to make sure that what comes from Him really is a good and perfect gift; and as a father He has no other ambition, nor any other thought, than invariably to send good and perfect gifts. And therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be ‘swift to hear’; not swift to listen to all sorts of loose talk, but swift to direct his attention upward, from whence comes invariably only good news. Let him be ‘slow to speak’; for our ordinary human talk, especially in relation to these things, and especially that which comes first over our lips, serves most frequently only to make the good and perfect gifts less good and perfect. Let him be ‘slow to wrath’; lest when the gifts do not seem to us good and perfect we become angry, and thus cause that which was good and perfect and intended for our welfare to become by our own fault ruinous to us — this is what the wrath of man is able to accomplish, and the ‘wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God’. ‘Wherefore put aside all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness’ — as when we cleanse and decorate the house and bedeck our persons, festively awaiting the visit, that we may worthily receive the good and perfect gifts. ‘And receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.’ With meekness! In truth, were it not the Apostle speaking, and did we not immediately obey the injunction to be ‘slow to speak, slow to wrath’, we might well be tempted to say: This is a very strange mode of speech; are we then altogether fools, that we need an admonition to be meek in relation to one who desires only our welfare? — it is as if it were meant to mock us, in this context to make use of the word ‘meekness’. For suppose someone were about to strike me unjustly, and another stood by, and said admonishingly: ‘Try to endure this treatment with meekness’ —

that would be straightforward speech. But imagine the friendliest of beings, one who is love itself; he has selected a gift for me, and the gift is good and perfect, as love itself; he comes to me and proposes to bestow this gift upon me — and then another man stands by and says admonishingly: ‘See that you accept this treatment meekly!’ And yet, so it is with us human beings. A pagan, and only a human being, the simple sage of antiquity, complains that whenever he proposed to take away from a man some folly or other, and so help him to a better insight, thus bestowing a benefit upon him, he had often experienced that the other became so angry that he even wished to bite him, as the simple sage said jestingly in earnest. Ah, and what has God not had to endure these six thousand years, what does He not endure from morning until night from each of mankind’s many millions — for we are sometimes most wrath when He most intends our welfare. Indeed, if we men truly understood what conduces to our welfare, and in the deepest sense truly willed our own welfare, then there would be no need to admonish us to be meek in this connexion. But we human beings (and who has not verified this in his own experience) are in our relationship to God as children. And hence there is need of an admonition to be meek in connexion with our reception of the good and perfect — so thoroughly is the Apostle convinced that all good and perfect gifts come from Him who is eternally unchangeable.

Different viewpoints! The merely human tendency (as paganism indeed gives evidence) is to speak less about God, and to speak almost exclusively and with sadness about the mutability of human affairs. The Apostle, on the other hand, desires only and alone to speak of God’s unchangeableness. Thus so far as the Apostle is concerned. For him the thought of God’s unchangeableness is one of pure and unmixed comfort, peace, joy, happiness. And this is indeed eternally true. But let us not forget that the Apostle’s joy has its explanation in the fact that the Apostle is the Apostle,

that he has already long since wholly yielded himself in unconditional obedience to God's unchangeableness. He does not stand at the beginning, but rather at the end of the way, the narrow but good way which he had chosen in renunciation of everything, pursuing it invariably and without a backward look, hasting towards eternity with stronger and ever stronger strides. But we on the contrary, who are still beginners, and subject to discipline, for us the unchangeableness of God must have also another aspect; and if we forget this, we readily run in danger of taking the lofty serenity of the Apostle in vain.

Let us then speak, if possible to the promotion both of a wholesome fear and of a genuine peace, of Thee, who art unchangeable, or about Thy unchangeableness.

God is unchangeable. In His omnipotence He created this visible world — and made Himself invisible. He clothed Himself in the visible world as in a garment; He changes it as one who shifts a garment — Himself unchanged. Thus in the world of sensible things. In the world of events He is present everywhere in every moment; in a truer sense than we can say of the most watchful human justice that it is present everywhere, God is omnipresent, though never seen by any mortal; present everywhere, in the least event as well as in the greatest, in that which can scarcely be called an event and in that which is the only event, in the death of a sparrow and in the birth of the Saviour of mankind. In each moment every actuality is a possibility in His almighty hand; He holds all in readiness, in every instant prepared to change everything: the opinions of men, their judgements, human greatness and human abasement; He changes all, Himself unchanged. When everything seems stable (for it is only in appearance that the external world is for a time unchanged, in reality it is always in flux) and in the overturn of all things, He remains equally unchanged; no change touches Him, not even

the shadow of a change; in unaltered clearness He, the father of lights, remains eternally unchanged. In unaltered clearness — aye, this is precisely why He is unchanged, because He is pure clearness, a clarity which betrays no trace of dimness, and which no dimness can come near. With us men it is not so. We are not in this manner clear, and precisely for this reason we are subject to change: now something becomes clearer in us, now something is dimmed, and we are changed; now changes take place about us, and the shadow of these changes glides over us to alter us; now there falls upon us from the surroundings an altering light, while under all this we are again changed within ourselves.

This thought *is terrifying*, *all fear and trembling*. This aspect of it is in general perhaps less often emphasized; we complain of men and their mutability, and of the mutability of all temporal things, but God is unchangeable, this is our consolation, an entirely comforting thought: so speaks even frivolity. Aye, God is in very truth unchangeable.

But first and foremost, do you also have an understanding with God? Do you earnestly consider and sincerely strive to understand — and this is God's eternally unchangeable will for you as for every human being, that you should sincerely strive to attain this understanding — what God's will for you may be? Or do you live your life in such a fashion that this thought has never so much as entered your mind? How terrifying then that He is eternally unchangeable! For with this immutable will you must nevertheless some time, sooner or later, come into collision — this immutable will, which desired that you should consider this because it desired your welfare; this immutable will, which cannot but crush you if you come into hostile collision with it.

In the second place, you who have some degree of understanding with God, do you also have a good understanding with Him? Is your will unconditionally His will, your wishes, each one of them, His

commandments, your thoughts, first and last, His thoughts? If not, how terrifying that God is unchangeable, everlastingly, eternally, unchangeable! Consider but in this connexion what it means to be at odds with merely a human being. But perhaps you are the stronger, and console yourself with the thought that the other will doubtless be compelled to change his attitude. But now if he happens to be the stronger — well, perhaps you think to have more endurance. But suppose it is an entire contemporary generation with which you are at odds; and yet, in that case you will perhaps say to yourself: seventy years is no eternity. But when the will is that of one eternally unchangeable — if you are at odds with this will it means an eternity: how terrifying!

Imagine a wayfarer. He has been brought to a standstill at the foot of a mountain, tremendous, impassable. It is this mountain... no, it is not his destiny to cross it, but he has set his heart upon the crossing; for his wishes, his longings, his desires, his very soul, which has an easier mode of conveyance, are already on the other side; it only remains for him to follow. Imagine him coming to be seventy years old; but the mountain still stands there, unchanged, impassable. Let him become twice seventy years; but the mountain stands there unalterably blocking his way, unchanged, impassable. Under all this he undergoes changes, perhaps; he dies away from his longings, his wishes, his desires; he now scarcely recognizes himself. And so a new generation finds him, altered, sitting at the foot of the mountain, which still stands there, unchanged, impassable. Suppose it to have happened a thousand years ago: the altered wayfarer is long since dead, and only a legend keeps his memory alive; it is the only thing that remains — aye, and also the mountain, unchanged, impassable. And now think of Him who is eternally unchangeable, for whom a thousand years are but as one day — ah, even this is too much to say, they are for Him as an instant, as if they did not even exist — consider then, if you have in the

most distant manner a will to walk a different path than that which He wills for you: how terrifying!

True enough, if your will, if my will, if the will of all these many thousands happens to be not so entirely in harmony with God's will: things nevertheless take their course as best they may in the hurly-burly of the so-called actual world; it is as if God did not pay any attention. It is rather as if a just man — if there were such a man! — contemplating this world, a world which, as the Scriptures say, is dominated by evil, must needs feel disheartened because God does not seem to make Himself felt. But do you believe on that account that God has undergone any change? Or is the fact that God does not seem to make Himself felt any the less a terrifying fact, as long as it is nevertheless certain that He is eternally unchangeable? To me it does not seem so. Consider the matter, and then tell me which is the more terrible to contemplate: the picture of one who is infinitely the stronger, who grows tired of letting himself be mocked, and rises in his might to crush the refractory spirits — a sight terrible indeed, and so represented when we say that God is not mocked, pointing to the times when His annihilating punishments were visited upon the human race — but is this really the most terrifying sight? Is not this other sight still more terrifying: one infinitely powerful, who — eternally unchanged! — sits quite still and sees everything, without altering a feature, almost as if He did not exist; while all the time, as the just man must needs complain, lies achieve success and win to power, violence and wrong gain the victory, to such an extent as even to tempt a better man to think that if he hopes to accomplish anything for the good he must in part use the same means; so that it is as if God were being mocked, God the infinitely powerful, the eternally unchangeable, who none the less is neither mocked nor changed — is not this the most terrifying sight? For why, do you think, is He so quiet? Because He knows with Himself that He is eternally unchangeable.

Anyone not eternally sure of Himself could not keep so still, but would rise in His strength. Only one who is eternally immutable can be in this manner so still.

He gives men time, and He can afford to give them time, since He has eternity and is eternally unchangeable. He gives time, and that with premeditation. And then there comes an accounting in eternity, where nothing is forgotten, not even a single one of the improper words that were spoken; and He is eternally unchanged. And yet, it may be also an expression for His mercy that men are thus afforded time, time for conversion and betterment. But how fearful if the time is not used for this purpose! For in that case the folly and frivolity in us would rather have Him straightway ready with His punishment, instead of thus giving men time, seeming to take no cognizance of the wrong, and yet remaining eternally unchanged. Ask one experienced in bringing up children — and in relation to God we are all more or less as children; ask one who has had to do with transgressors — and each one of us has at least once in his life gone astray, and goes astray for a longer or a shorter time, at longer or shorter intervals: you will find Him ready to confirm the observation that for the frivolous it is a great help, or rather, that it is a preventive of frivolity (and who dares wholly acquit himself of frivolity!) when the punishment follows if possible instantly upon the transgression, so that the memory of the frivolous may acquire the habit of associating the punishment immediately with the guilt, indeed, if transgression and punishment were so bound up with one another that, as in a double-barrelled shooting weapon, the pressure on a spring caused the punishment to follow instantly upon the seizure of the forbidden fruit, or immediately upon the commitment of the transgression — then I think that frivolity might take heed. But the longer the interval between guilt and punishment (which when truly understood is an expression for the gravity of the case) the greater the temptation to frivolity; as if the whole

might perhaps be forgotten, or as if justice itself might alter and acquire different ideas with the passage of time, or as if at least it would be so long since the wrong was committed that it will become impossible to make an unaltered presentation of it before the bar of justice. Thus frivolity changes, and by no means for the better. It comes to feel itself secure; and when it has become secure it becomes more daring; and so the years pass, punishment is withheld, forgetfulness intervenes, and again the punishment is withheld, but new transgressions do not fail, and the old evil becomes still more malignant. And then finally all is over; death rolls down the curtain — and to all this (it was only frivolity!) there was an eternally unchangeable witness: is this also frivolity? One eternally unchangeable, and it is with this witness that you must make your reckoning. In the instant that the minute-hand of time showed seventy years, and the man died, during all that time the clock of eternity has scarcely moved perceptibly: to such a degree is everything present for the eternal, and for Him who is unchangeable.

And therefore, whoever you may be, take time to consider what I say to myself, that for God there is nothing significant and nothing insignificant, that in a certain sense the significant is for Him insignificant, and in another sense even the least significant is for Him infinitely significant. If then your will is not in harmony with His will, consider that you will never be able to evade Him. Be grateful to Him if through the use of mildness or of severity He teaches you to bring your will into agreement with His — how fearful if He makes no move to arrest your course, how fearful if in the case of any human being it comes to pass that He almost defiantly relies either upon the notion that God does not exist, or upon His having been changed, or even upon His being too great to take note of what we call trifles! For the truth is that God both exists and is eternally unchangeable; and His infinite greatness consists precisely in seeing even the least thing, and remembering

even the least thing. Aye, and if you do not will as He wills, that He remembers it unchanged for an eternity!

There is thus sheer fear and trembling, for us frivolous and inconstant human beings, in this thought of God's unchangeableness. Oh, consider it well! Whether God makes Himself immediately felt or not, He is eternally unchangeable. He is eternally unchangeable, consider this, if as we say you have any matter outstanding with Him; He is unchangeable. You have perhaps promised Him something, obligated yourself in a sacred pledge... but in the course of time you have undergone a change, and now you rarely think of God — now that you have grown older, have you perhaps found more important things to think about? Or perhaps you now have different notions about God, and think that He does not concern Himself with the trifles of your life, regarding such beliefs as childishness. In any case you have just about forgotten what you promised Him; and thereupon you have proceeded to forget that you promised Him anything; and finally, you have forgotten, forgotten — aye, forgotten that He forgets nothing, since He is eternally unchangeable, forgotten that it is precisely the inverted childishness of mature years to imagine that anything is insignificant for God, or that God forgets anything, He who is eternally unchangeable!

In human relationships we so often complain of inconstancy, one party accuses the other of having changed. But even in the relationship between man and man, it is sometimes the case that the constancy of one party may come to seem like a tormenting affliction for the other. A man may, for example, have talked to another person about himself. What he said may have been merely a little childish, pardonably so. But perhaps, too, the matter was more serious than this: the poor foolish vain heart was tempted to speak in lofty tones of its enthusiasm, of the constancy of its feelings, and of its purposes in this world. The other man listened calmly; he did not even smile, or interrupt the speech; he let him speak on to the end, listened and

kept silence; only he promised, as he was asked to do, not to forget what had been said. Then some time elapsed, and the first man had long since forgotten all this; only the other had not forgotten. Aye, let us suppose something still stranger: he had permitted himself to be moved inwardly by the thoughts that the first man had expressed under the influence of his mood, when he poured out, so to speak, his momentary feeling; he had in sincere endeavour shaped his life in accordance with these ideas. What torment in this unchanged remembrance by one who showed only too clearly that he had retained in his memory every last detail of what had been said in that moment!

And now consider Him, who is eternally unchangeable — and this human heart! O this human heart, what is not hidden in your secret recesses, unknown to others — and that is the least of it — but sometimes almost unknown to the individual himself! When a man has lived a few years it is almost as if it were a burial-plot, this human heart! There they lie buried in forgetfulness, promises, intentions, resolutions, entire plans and fragments of plans, and God knows what — aye, so say we men, for we rarely think about what we say; we say: there lies God knows what. And this we say half in a spirit of frivolity, and half weary of life — and it is so fearfully true that God does know what to the last detail, knows what you have forgotten, knows what for your recollection has suffered alteration, knows it all unchanged. He does not remember it merely as having happened some time ago, nay, He remembers it as if it were to-day. He knows whether, in connexion with any of these wishes, intentions, resolutions, something so to speak was said to Him about it — and He is eternally unchanged and eternally unchangeable. Oh, if the remembrance that another human being carries about with him may seem as it were a burden to you — well, this remembrance is after all not always so entirely trustworthy, and in any case it cannot endure for an eternity: some time I may expect to be freed from

this other man and his remembrance. But an omniscient witness and an eternally unchangeable remembrance, one from which you can never free yourself, least of all in eternity: how fearful! No, in a manner eternally unchanged, everything is for God eternally present, always equally before Him. No shadow of variation, neither that of morning nor of evening, neither that of youth nor of old age, neither that of forgetfulness nor of excuse, changes Him; for Him there is no shadow. If we human beings are mere shadows, as is sometimes said, He is eternal clearness in eternal unchangeableness. If we are shadows that glide away — my soul, look well to thyself; for whether you will it or not, you go to meet eternity, to meet Him, and He is eternal clearness. Hence it is not so much that He keeps a reckoning, as that He is Himself the reckoning. It is said that we must render up an account, as if we perhaps had a long time to prepare for it, and also perhaps as if it were likely to be cluttered up with such an enormous mass of detail as to make it impossible to get the reckoning finished: O my soul, the account is every moment complete! For the unchangeable clearness of God is the reckoning, complete to the last detail, preserved by Him who is eternally unchangeable, and who has forgotten nothing of the things that I have forgotten, and who does not, as I do, remember some things otherwise than they really were.

There is thus sheer fear and trembling in this thought of the unchangeableness of God, almost as if it were far, far beyond the power of any human being to sustain a relationship to such an unchangeable power; aye, as if this thought must drive a man to such unrest and anxiety of mind as to bring him to the verge of despair.

But then it is also true that *there is rest and happiness in this thought.* It is really true that when, wearied with all this human inconstancy, this temporal and earthly mutability, and wearied also of your own inconstancy, you might wish to find a place where rest may be found for your weary

head, your weary thoughts, your weary spirit, so that you might rest and find complete repose: Oh, in the unchangeableness of God there is rest! When you therefore permit this unchangeableness to serve you according to His will, for your own welfare, your eternal welfare; when you submit yourself to discipline, so that your selfish will (and it is from this that the change chiefly comes, more than from the outside) dies away, the sooner the better — and there is no help for it, you must whether willing or resisting, for think how vain it is for your will to be at odds with an eternal immutability; be therefore as the child when it profoundly feels that it has over against itself a will in relation to which nothing avails except obedience — when you submit to be disciplined by His unchangeable will, so as to renounce inconstancy and changeableness and caprice and self-will: then you will steadily rest more and more securely, and more and more blessedly, in the unchangeableness of God. For that the thought of God's unchangeableness is a blessed thought — who can doubt it? But take heed that you become of such a mind that you can rest happily in this immutability! Oh, as one is wont to speak who has a happy home, so speaks such an individual. He says: my home is eternally secure, I rest in the unchangeableness of God. This is a rest that no one can disturb for you except yourself; if you could become completely obedient in invariable obedience, you would each and every moment, with the same necessity as that by which a heavy body sinks to the earth or a light body moves upward, freely rest in God.

And as for the rest, let all things change as they do. If the scene of your activity is on a larger stage, you will experience the mutability of all things in greater measure; but even on a lesser stage, or on the smallest stage of all, you will still experience the same, perhaps quite as painfully. You will learn how men change, how you yourself change; sometimes it will even seem to you as if God Himself changed, all of which belongs to the

upbringing. On this subject of the mutability of all things one older than I would be able to speak in better fashion, while perhaps what I could say might seem to someone very young as if it were new. But this we shall not further expound, leaving it rather for the manifold experiences of life to unfold for each one in particular, in a manner intended especially for him, that which all other men have experienced before him. Sometimes the changes will be such as to call to mind the saying that variety is a pleasure — an indescribable pleasure! There will also come times when you will have occasion to discover for yourself a saying which the language has suppressed, and you will say to yourself: 'Change is not pleasant — how could I ever have said that variety is a pleasure!' When this experience comes to you, you will have especial occasion (though you will surely not forget this in the first case either) to seek Him who is unchangeable.

My hearer, this hour is now soon past, and the discourse. Unless you yourself will it otherwise, this hour and its discourse will soon be forgotten. And unless you yourself will it otherwise, the thought of God's unchangeableness will also soon be forgotten in the midst of life's changes. But for this He will surely not be responsible, He who is unchangeable! But if you do not make yourself guilty of forgetfulness with respect to it, you will in this thought have found a sufficiency for your entire life, aye, for eternity.

Imagine a solitary wayfarer, a desert wanderer. Almost burned by the heat of the sun, languishing with thirst, he finds a spring. O refreshing coolness! Now God be praised, he says — and yet it was merely a spring he found; what then must not he say who found God! and yet he too must say: 'God be praised, I have found God — now I am well provided for. Your faithful coolness, O beloved well-spring, is not subject to any change. In the cold of winter, if winter visited this place, you would not become colder, but would preserve the same coolness unchanged, for the waters of the

spring do not freeze! In the midday heat of the summer sun you preserve precisely the same coolness, for the waters of the spring do not become lukewarm!' There is nothing untrue in what he says, no false exaggeration in his eulogy. (And he who chooses a spring as subject for his eulogy chooses in my opinion no ungrateful theme, as anyone may better understand the more he knows what the desert signifies, and solitude.) However, the life of our wanderer took a turn otherwise than he had thought; he lost touch with the spring, and wept astray in the wide world. Many years later he returned to the same place. His first thought was of the spring — but it was not, it had run dry. For a moment he stood silent in grief. Then he gathered himself together and said: 'No, I will not retract a single word of all that I said in your praise; it was all true. And if I praised your refreshing coolness while you were still in being, O beloved well-spring, let me now also praise it when you have vanished, in order that there may be some proof of unchangeableness in a human breast. Nor can I say that you deceived me; had I found you, I am convinced that your coolness would have been quite unchanged — and more you had not promised.'

But Thou O God, who art unchangeable, Thou art always and invariably to be found, and always to be found unchanged. Whether in life or in death, no one journeys so far afield that Thou art not to be found by Him, that Thou art not there, Thou who art everywhere. It is not so with the well-springs of earth, for they are to be found only in special places. And besides — overwhelming security! — Thou dost not remain, like the spring, in a single place, but Thou dost follow the traveller on his way. Ah, and no one ever wanders so far astray that he cannot find the way back to Thee, Thou who art not merely as a spring that may be found — how poor and inadequate a description of what Thou art! — but rather as a spring that itself seeks out the thirsty traveller, the errant wanderer: who has ever heard the like of any spring! Thus Thou art unchangeably always and everywhere

to be found. And whenever any human being comes to Thee, of whatever age, at whatever time of the day, in whatever state: if he comes in sincerity he always finds Thy love equally warm, like the spring's unchanged coolness, O Thou who art unchangeable! Amen!

Philosophical Fragments (1844)

Translated by David F. Swenson, 1936

Philosophical Fragments, a Christian philosophical work, was written as a reaction to both Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel, as well as the philosophic-historical use of speculation in regard to Christianity. The text employs familiar Christian vocabulary to develop Kierkegaard's unique method for arriving at Truth. He presents two views, the Socratic and the religious. Socrates is considered an authoritative voice in the philosophic community, so Kierkegaard opens with his ideas. He develops the doctrine of recollection, making use of his explanation of Truth and Ignorance. His aim is to advance beyond Socrates, who was interested in finite truth, to another Teacher that explained Eternal Truth. The Enlightenment movement was intent on combining concepts of God, nature, knowledge and man into one world view. As Kierkegaard was a counter-Enlightenment writer, he argues that knowledge of God is a "condition" that only "the God" can give and the "Moment" God gives the condition to the Learner has "decisive significance".

A marble head of Socrates in the Louvre; copy of bronze head by Lysippus

CONTENTS

Preface
Chapter 1: A Project of Thought
Chapter 2: The God as Teacher and Saviour: An Essay of the Imagination
Chapter 3: The Absolute Paradox: A Metaphysical Crotchet
Chapter 4: The Case of the Contemporary Disciple
Interlude
Chapter 5: The Disciple at Second Hand

Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) was a poet, literary critic, philosopher, philologist, and Indologist. With his older brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel, he was one of the main figures of Jena Romanticism.

Preface

Propositio:
The question is asked in ignorance,
by one who does not even know
what can have led him to ask it.

THE PRESENT OFFERING is merely a piece, *proprio Marte, propriis auspiciis, proprio stipendio.* It does not make the slightest pretension to share in the philosophical movement of the day, or to fill any of the various roles customarily assigned in this connection: transitional, intermediary, final, preparatory, participating, collaborating, volunteer follower, hero, or at any rate relative hero, or at the very least absolute trumpeter. The offering is a piece and such it will remain, even if like Holberg's *magister* I were *volente Deo* to write a sequel in seventeen pieces, just as half-hour literature is half-hour literature even in folio quantities. Such as it is, however, the offering is commensurate with my talents, since I cannot excuse my failure to serve the System after the manner of the noble Roman, *merito magis quam ignavia;* I am an idler from love of ease, *ex animi sententia,* and for good and sufficient reasons. Nevertheless, I am unwilling to incur the reproach of , at all times an offense against the State, and especially so in a period of ferment; in ancient times it was made punishable by death. But suppose my intervention served merely to increase the prevailing confusion, thus making me guilty of a still greater crime, would it not have been better had I kept to my own concerns? It is not given to everyone to have his private tasks of meditation and reflection so happily coincident with the public interest that it becomes difficult to judge how far he serves merely himself and how far the public good. Consider the example of Archimedes,

who sat unperturbed in the contemplation of his circles while Syracuse was being taken, and the beautiful words he spoke to the Roman soldier who slew him: *nolite perturbare circulos meos.* Let him who is not so fortunate look about him for another example. When Philip threatened to lay siege to the city of Corinth and all its inhabitants hastily bestirred themselves in defense, some polishing weapons, some gathering stones, some repairing the walls, Diogenes seeing all this hurriedly folded his mantle about him and began to roll his tub zealously back and forth through the streets. When he was asked why he did this he replied that he wished to be busy like all the rest, and rolled his tub lest he should be the only idler among so many industrious citizens. Such conduct is at any rate not sophistical, if Aristotle be right in describing sophistry as the art of making money. It is certainly not open to misunderstanding; it is quite inconceivable that Diogenes should have been hailed as the saviour and benefactor of the city. And it seems equally impossible that anyone could hit upon the idea of ascribing to a piece like the present any sort of epoch-making significance, in my eyes the greatest calamity that could possibly befall it. Nor is it likely that anyone will hail its author as the systematic Salomon Goldkalb so long and eagerly awaited in our dear royal residential city of Copenhagen. This could happen only if the guilty person were by nature endowed with extraordinary stupidity, and presumably by shouting in antistrophic and antiphonal song every time someone persuaded him that now was the beginning of a new era and a new epoch, had howled his head so empty of its original *quantum satis* of common sense as to have attained a state of ineffable bliss in what might be called the howling madness of the higher lunacy, recognizable by such symptoms as convulsive shouting; a constant reiteration of the words "era," "epoch," "era and epoch," "epoch and era," "the System"; an irrational exaltation of the spirits as if each day were not merely a quadrennial leap-year day, but one of those extraordinary days that come

only once in a thousand years; the concept all the while like an acrobatic clown in the current circus season, every moment performing these everlasting dog-tricks of flopping over and over, until it flops over the man himself. May a kind Heaven preserve me and my piece from such a fate! And may no noise-making busybody interfere to snatch me out of my carefree content as the author of a little piece, or prevent a kind and benevolent reader from examining it at his leisure, to see if it contains anything that he can use. May I escape the tragicomic predicament of being forced to laugh at my own misfortune, as must have been the case with the good people of Fredericia, when they awoke one morning to read in the newspaper an account of a fire in their town, in which it was described how "the drums beat the alarm, the fire-engines rushed through the streets" — although the town of Fredericia boasts of only one fire-engine and not much more than one street; leaving it to be inferred that this one engine, instead of making for the scene of the fire, took time to execute important maneuvers and flanking movements up and down the street. However, my little piece is not very apt to suggest the beating of a drum, and its author is perhaps the last man in the world to sound the alarm.

But what is my personal opinion of the matters herein discussed? . . . I could wish that no one would ask me this question; for next to knowing whether I have any opinion or not, nothing could very well be of less importance to another than the knowledge of what that opinion might be. To have an opinion is both too much and too little for my uses. To have an opinion presupposes a sense of ease and security in life, such as is implied in having a wife and children; it is a privilege not to be enjoyed by one who must keep himself in readiness night and day, or is without assured means of support. Such is my situation in the realm of the spirit. I have disciplined myself and keep myself under discipline, in order that I may be able to execute a sort of nimble dancing in the service of Thought, so far as

possible also to the honor of the God, and for my own satisfaction. For this reason I have had -to resign the domestic happiness, the civic respectability, the glad fellowship, the *communio bonorum,* which is implied in the possession of an opinion. — Do I enjoy any reward? Have I permission, like the priest at the altar, to eat of the sacrifices? . . . That must remain my own affair. My master is good for it, as the bankers say, and good in quite a different sense from theirs. But if anyone were to be so polite as to assume that I have an opinion, and if he were to carry his gallantry to the extreme of adopting this opinion because he believed it to be mine, I should have to be sorry for his politeness, in that it was bestowed upon so unworthy an object, and for his opinion, if he has no other opinion than mine. I stand ready to risk my own life, to play the game of thought with it in all earnest; but another's life I cannot jeopardize. This service is perhaps the only one I can render to Philosophy, I who have no learning to offer her, "scarcely enough for the course at one drachma, to say nothing of the great course at fifty drachmas" (*Cratylus*). I have only my life, and the instant a difficulty offers I put it in play. Then the dance goes merrily, for my partner is the thought of Death, and is indeed a nimble dancer; every human being, on the other hand, is too heavy for me. Therefore I pray, *per deos obsecro:* Let no one invite me, for I will not dance.

J. C.

Chapter 1: A Project of Thought

A

HOW FAR DOES the Truth admit of being learned? With this question let us begin. It was a Socratic question, or became such in consequence of the parallel Socratic question with respect to virtue, since virtue was again determined as insight. (*Protagoras, Gorgias, Meno, Euthydemus*.) In so far as the Truth is conceived as something to be learned, its non-existence is evidently presupposed, so that in proposing to learn it one makes it the object of an inquiry. Here we are confronted with the difficulty to which Socrates calls attention in the *Meno* (80, near the end), and there characterizes as a "pugnacious proposition"; one cannot seek for what he knows, and it seems equally impossible for him to seek for what he does not know. For what a man knows he cannot seek, since he knows it; and what he does not know he cannot seek, since he does not even know for what to seek. Socrates thinks the difficulty through in the doctrine of Recollection, by which all learning and inquiry is interpreted as a kind of remembering; one who is ignorant needs only a reminder to help him come to himself in the consciousness of what he knows. Thus the Truth is not introduced into the individual from without, but was within him. This thought receives further development at the hands of Socrates, and it ultimately becomes the point of concentration for the pathos of the Greek consciousness, since it serves as a proof for the immortality of the soul; but with a backward reference, it is important to note, and hence as proof for the soul's preëxistence.

In the light of this idea it becomes apparent with what wonderful consistency Socrates remained true to himself, through his manner of life giving artistic expression to what he had understood. He entered into the

role of midwife and sustained it throughout; not because his thought "had no positive content," but because he perceived that this relation is the highest that one human being can sustain to another. And in this surely Socrates was everlastingly right; for even if a divine point of departure is ever given, between man and man this is the true relationship, provided we reflect upon the absolute and refuse to daily with the accidental, from the heart renouncing the understanding of the half-truths which seem the delight of men and the secret of the System. Socrates was a midwife subjected to examination by the God; his work was in fulfillment of a divine mission (Plato's *Apology*), though he seemed to men in general a most singular creature (rorr *, Theaetetus* 149); it was in accordance with a divine principle, as Socrates also understood it, that he was by the God forbidden to beget (*, , Theactetus,* 150) ; for between man and man the maieutic relationship is the highest, and begetting belongs to the God alone.

From the standpoint of the Socratic thought every point of departure in time is *eo ipso* accidental, an occasion, a vanishing moment. The teacher himself is no more than this; and if he offers himself and his instruction on any other basis, he does not give but takes away, and is not even the other's friend, much less his teacher. Herein lies the profundity of the Socratic thought, and the noble humanity he so thoroughly expressed, which refused to enter into a false and vain fellowship with clever heads, but felt an equal kinship with a tanner; whence he soon "came to the conclusion that the study of Physics was not man's proper business, and therefore began to philosophize about moral matters in the workshops and in the market-place" (Diogenes Laertius, II, v, 21), but philosophized with equal absoluteness everywhere. With slipshod thoughts, with higgling and haggling, maintaining a little here and conceding a little there, as if the individual might to a certain extent owe something to another, but then again to a certain extent not; with loose words that explain everything except what this

“to a certain extent” means — with such makeshifts it is not possible to Such is the criticism commonly passed upon Socrates in our age, which boasts of its positivity much as if a polytheist were to speak with scorn of the negativity of a monotheist; for the polytheist has many gods, the monotheist only one. So our philosophers have many thoughts, all valid to a certain extent; Socrates had only one, which was absolute.

advance beyond Socrates, nor will one reach the concept of a Revelation, but merely remain within the sphere of idle chatter. In the Socratic view each individual is his own center, and the entire world centers in him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God. It was thus Socrates understood himself, and thus he thought that everyone must understand himself, in the light of this understanding interpreting his relationship to each individual, with equal humility and with equal pride. He had the courage and self-possession to be sufficient unto himself, but also in his relations to his fellowmen to be merely an occasion, even when dealing with the meanest capacity. How rare is such magnanimity! How rare in a time like ours, when the parson is something more than the clerk, when almost every second person is an authority, while all these distinctions and all these many authorities are mediated in a common madness, a *commune naufragium.* For while no human being was ever truly an authority for another, or ever helped anyone by posing as such, or was ever able to take his client with him in truth, there is another sort of success that may by such methods be won; for it has never yet been known to fail that one fool, when he goes astray, takes several others with him.

With this understanding of what it means to learn the Truth, the fact that I have been instructed by Socrates or by Prodicus or by a servant-girl, can concern me only historically; or in so far as lam a Plato in sentimental enthusiasm, it may concern me poetically. But this enthusiasm, beautiful as it is, and such that I could wish both for myself and all others a share of this

, which only a Stoic could frown upon; and though I may be lacking in the Socratic magnanimity and the Socratic self-denial to think its nothingness — this enthusiasm, so Socrates would say, is only an illusion, a want of clarity in a mind where earthly inequalities seethe almost voluptuously. Nor can it interest me otherwise than historically that Socrates' or Prodicus' doctrine was this or that; for the Truth in which I rest was within me, and came to light through myself, and not even Socrates could have given it to me, as little as the driver can pull the load for the horses, though he may help them by applying the lash. My relation to Socrates or Prodicus cannot concern me with respect to my eternal happiness, for this is given me retrogressively through my possession of the Truth, which I had from the beginning without knowing it. If I imagine myself meeting Socrates or Prodicus or the servant-girl in another life, then here again neither of them could be more to me than an occasion, which Socrates fearlessly expressed by saying that even in the lower world he proposed merely to ask questions; for the underlying principle of all questioning is that the one who is asked must have the Truth in himself, and be able to acquire it by himself. The temporal point of departure is nothing; for as soon as I discover that I have known the Truth from eternity without being aware of it, the same instant this moment of occasion is hidden in the Eternal, and so incorporated with it that I cannot even find it so to speak, even if I sought it; because in my eternal consciousness there is neither here nor there, but only an *ubique et nusquam*.

B

Now if things are to be otherwise, the Moment in time must have a decisive significance, so that I will never be able to forget it either in time or eternity; because the Eternal, which hitherto did not exist, came into existence in this moment. Under this presupposition let us now proceed to

consider the consequences for the problem of how far it is possible to acquire a knowledge of the Truth.

A. The Antecedent State

We begin with the Socratic difficulty about seeking the Truth, which seems equally impossible whether we have it or do not have it. The Socratic thought really abolishes this disjunction, since it appears that at bottom every human being is in possession of the Truth. This was Socrates' explanation; we have seen what follows from it with respect to the moment. Now if the latter is to have decisive significance, the seeker must be destitute of the Truth up to the very moment of his learning it; he cannot even have possessed it in the form of ignorance, for in that case the moment becomes merely occasional. What is more, he cannot even be described as a seeker; for such is the expression we must give to the difficulty if we do not wish to explain it Socratically. He must therefore be characterized as beyond the pale of the Truth, not approaching it like a proselyte, but departing from it; or as being in Error. He is then in a state of Error. But how is he now to be reminded, or what will it profit him to be reminded of what he has not known, and consequently cannot recall?

B. The Teacher

If the Teacher serves as an occasion by means of which the learner is reminded, he cannot help the learner to recall that he really knows the Truth; for the learner is in a state of Error. What the Teacher can give him occasion to remember is, that he is in Error. But in this consciousness the learner is excluded from the Truth even more decisively than before, when he lived in ignorance of his Error. In this manner the Teacher thrusts the learner away from him, precisely by serving as a reminder; only that the learner, in thus being thrust back upon himself, does not discover that he

knew the Truth already, but discovers his Error; with respect to which act of consciousness the Socratic principle holds, that the Teacher is merely an occasion whoever he may be, even if he is a God. For my own Error is something I can discover only by myself, since it is only when I have discovered it that it is discovered, even if the whole world knew of it before. (Under the presupposition we have adopted concerning the moment, this remains the only analogy to the Socratic order of things.)

Now if the learner is to acquire the Truth, the Teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it. For if the learner were in his own person the condition for understanding the Truth, be need only recall it. The condition for understanding the Truth is like the capacity to inquire for it: the condition contains the conditioned, and the question implies the answer. (Unless this is so, the moment must be understood in the Socratic sense.)

But one who gives the learner not only the Truth, but also the condition for understanding it, is more than teacher. All instruction depends upon the presence, in the last analysis, of the requisite condition; if this is lacking, no teacher can do anything. For otherwise he would find it necessary not only to transform the learner, but to recreate him before beginning to teach him. But this is something that no human being can do; if it is to be done, it must be done by the God himself.

In so far as the learner exists he is already created, and hence God must have endowed him with the condition for understanding the Truth. For otherwise his earlier existence must have been merely brutish, and the Teacher who gave him the Truth and with it the condition was the original creator of his human nature. But in so far as the moment is to have decisive significance (and unless we assume this we remain at the Socratic standpoint) the learner is destitute of this condition, and must therefore have been deprived of it. This deprivation cannot have been due to an act of the

God (which would be a contradiction), nor to an accident (for it would be a contradiction to assume that the lower could overcome the higher); it must therefore be due to himself. If he could have lost the condition in such a way that the loss was not due to himself, and if he could remain in the state of deprivation without his own responsibility, it would follow that his earlier possession of the condition was accidental merely. But this is a contradiction, since the condition for understanding the Truth is an essential condition. Error is then not only outside the Truth, but polemic in its attitude toward it; which is expressed by saying that the learner has himself forfeited the condition, and is engaged in forfeiting it.

The Teacher is then the God himself, who in acting as an occasion prompts the learner to recall that he is in Error, and that by reason of his own guilt. But this state, the being in Error by reason of one's own guilt, what shall we call it? Let us call it *Sin.*

The Teacher, then, is the God, and he gives the learner the requisite condition and the Truth. What shall we call such a Teacher? — for we are surely agreed that we have already far transcended the ordinary functions of a teacher. In so far as the learner is in Error, but in consequence of his own act (and in no other way can he possibly be in this state, as we have shown above), he might seem to be free; for to be what one is by one's own act is freedom. And yet he is in reality unfree and bound and exiled; for to be free from the Truth is to be exiled from the Truth, and to be exiled by one's own self is to be bound. But since he is bound by himself, may he not loose his bonds and set himself free? For whatever binds me, the same should be able to set me free when it wills; and since this power is here his own self, he should be able to liberate himself. But first at any rate he must will it. Suppose him now to be so profoundly impressed by what the Teacher gave him occasion to remember (and this must not be omitted from the reckoning); suppose that he wills his freedom. In that case, i.e., if by willing

to be free he could by himself became free, the fact that he had been bound would become a state of the past, tracelessly vanishing in the moment of liberation; the moment would not be charged with decisive significance. He was not aware that he had bound himself, and now he had freed himself. Thus interpreted the moment receives no decisive significance, and yet this was the hypothesis we proposed to ourselves in the beginning. By the terms of our hypothesis, therefore, he will not be able to set himself free — And so it is in very truth; for he forges the chains of his bondage with the strength of his freedom, since he exists in it without compulsion; and thus his bonds grow strong, and all his powers unite to make him the slave of sin. — What now shall we call such a Teacher, one who restores the lost condition and gives the learner the Truth? Let us call him *Saviour,* for he saves the learner from his bondage and from himself; let us call him *Redeemer,* for he redeems the learner from the captivity into which he had plunged himself, and no captivity is so terrible and so impossible to break, as that in which the individual keeps himself. And still we have not said all that is necessary; for by his self-imposed bondage the learner has brought upon himself a burden of guilt, and when the Teacher gives him the condition and the Truth he constitutes himself an *Atonement,* taking away the wrath impending upon that of which the learner has made himself guilty.

Such a Teacher the learner will never be able to forget. For the moment he forgets him he sinks back again into himself, just as one who while in original possession of the condition forgot that God exists, and thereby sank into bondage. If they should happen to meet in another life, the Teacher would again be able to give the condition to anyone who had not yet received it; but to one who had once received the condition he would stand in a different relation. The condition was a trust, for which the recipient would always be required to render an account. But what shall we call such

a Teacher? A teacher may determine whether the pupil makes progress or not, but he cannot judge him; for he ought to have Socratic insight enough to perceive that he cannot give him what is essential. This Teacher is thus not so much teacher as *Judge.* Even when the learner has most completely appropriated the condition, and most profoundly apprehended the Truth, he cannot forget this Teacher, or let him vanish Socratically, although this is far more profound than illusory sentimentality or untimely pettiness of spirit. It is indeed the highest, unless that other be the Truth.

And now the moment. Such a moment has a peculiar character. It is brief and temporal indeed, like every moment; it is transient as all moments are; it is past, like every moment in the next moment. And yet it is decisive, and filled with the Eternal. Such a moment ought to have a distinctive name; let us call it the *Fullness of Time.*

C. The Disciple

When the disciple is in a state of Error (and otherwise we return to Socrates) but is none the less a human being, and now receives the condition and the Truth, he does not become a human being for the first time, since he was a man already. But he becomes another man; not in the frivolous sense of becoming another individual of the same quality as before, but in the sense of becoming a man of a different quality, or as we may call him: *a new creature.*

In so far as he was in Error he was constantly in the act of departing from the Truth. In consequence of receiving the condition in the moment the course of his life has been given an opposite direction, so that he is now turned about. Let us call this change *Conversion,* even though this word be one not hitherto used; but that is precisely a reason for choosing it, in order namely to avoid confusion, for it is as if expressly coined for the change we have in mind.

In so far as the learner was in Error by reason of his own guilt, this conversion cannot take place without being taken up in his consciousness, or without his becoming aware that his former state was a consequence of his guilt. With this consciousness he will then take leave of his former state. But what leave-taking is without a sense of sadness? The sadness in this case, however, is on account of his having so long remained in his former state. Let us call such grief *Repentance;* for what is repentance but a kind of leave-taking, looking backward indeed, but yet in such a way as precisely to quicken the steps toward that which lies before?

In so far as the learner was in Error, and now receives the Truth and with it the condition for understanding it, a change takes place within him like the change from non-being to being. But this transition from non-being to being is the transition we call birth. Now one who exists cannot be born; nevertheless, the disciple is born. Let us call this transition the *New Birth,* in consequence of which the disciple enters the world quite as at the first birth, an individual human being knowing nothing as yet about the world into which he is born, whether it is inhabited, whether there are other human beings in it besides himself; for while it is indeed possible to be baptized *en masse,* it is not possible to be born anew *en masse.* Just as one who has begotten himself by the aid of the Socratic midwifery now forgets everything else in the world, and in a deeper sense owes no man anything, so the disciple who is born anew owes nothing to any man, but everything to his divine Teacher. And just as the former forgets the world in his discovery of himself, so the latter forgets himself in the discovery of his Teacher.

Hence if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance — and if not we speak Socratically whatever we may say, even if through not even understanding ourselves we imagine that we have advanced far beyond that simple man of wisdom who divided judgment incorruptibly between the

God and man and himself, a judge more just than Minos, Aeacus and Rhadamanthus — if the Moment has decisive significance the breach is made, and man cannot return. He will take no pleasure in remembering what Recollection brings to his mind; still less will he be able in his own strength to bring the God anew over to his side.

But is the hypothesis here expounded thinkable? Let us not be in haste to reply; for not only one whose deliberation is unduly prolonged may fail to produce an answer, but also one who while he exhibits a marvelous promptitude in replying, does not show the desirable degree of slowness in considering the difficulty before explaining it. Before we reply, let us ask ourselves from whom we may expect an answer to our question. The being born, is this fact thinkable? Certainly, why not? But for whom is it thinkable, for one who is born, or for one who is not born? This latter supposition is an absurdity which could never have entered anyone's head; for one who is born could scarcely have conceived the notion. When one who has experienced birth thinks of himself as born, he conceives this transition from non-being to being. The same principle must also hold in the case of the new birth. Or is the difficulty increased by the fact that the non-being which precedes the new birth contains more being than the non-being which preceded the first birth? But who then may be expected to think the new birth? Surely the man who has himself been born anew, since it would of course be absurd to imagine that one not so born should think it. Would it not be the height of the ridiculous for such an individual to entertain this notion?

If a human being is originally in possession of the condition for understanding the Truth, he thinks that God exists in and with his own existence. But if he is in Error he must comprehend this fact in his thinking, and Recollection will not be able to help him further than to think just this, Whether he is to advance beyond this point the *Moment* must decide

(although it was already active in giving him an insight into his Error). If he does not understand this we must refer him to Socrates, though through being obsessed with the idea that he has advanced far beyond this wise man he may cause him many a vexation, like those who were so incensed with Socrates for taking away from them one or another stupid notion*( )* that they actually wanted to bite him (*Theaetetus,* 151). In the *Moment* man becomes conscious that he is born; for his antecedent state, to which he may not cling, was one of non-being. In the *Moment* man also becomes conscious of the new birth, for his antecedent state was one of non-being. Had his preceding state in either instance been one of being, the moment would not have received decisive significance for him, as has been shown above. While then the pathos of the Greek consciousness concentrates itself upon Recollection, the pathos of our project is concentrated upon the Moment. And what wonder, for is it not a most pathetic thing to come into existence from non-being?

There you have my project. But I think I hear someone say: "This is the most ridiculous of all projects; or rather, you are of all projectors of hypotheses the most ridiculous. For even when a man propounds something nonsensical, it may still remain true that it is he who has propounded it; but you behave like a lazzarone who takes money for exhibiting premises open to everybody's inspection; you are like the man who collected a fee for exhibiting a ram in the afternoon, which in the forenoon could be seen gratis, grazing in the open field." – "Perhaps it is so; I hide my head in shame. But assuming that I am as ridiculous as you say, let me try to make amends by proposing a new hypothesis. Everybody knows that gunpowder was invented centuries ago, and in so far it would be ridiculous of me to pretend to be the inventor; but would it be equally ridiculous of me to assume that somebody was the inventor? Now I am going to be so polite as to assume that you are the author of my project; greater politeness than this

you can scarcely ask. Or if you deny this, will you also deny that someone is the author, that is to say, some human being? In that case I am as near to being the author as any other human being. So that your anger is not vented upon me because I appropriated something that belongs to another human being, but because I appropriated something of which no human being is the rightful owner; and hence your anger is by no means appeased when I deceitfully ascribe the authorship to you. Is it not strange that there should be something such in existence, in relation to which everyone who knows it knows also that he has not invented it, and that this "pass-me-by" neither stops nor can be stopped even if we ask all men in turn? This strange fact deeply impresses me, and casts over me a spell; for it constitutes a test of the hypothesis, and proves its truth. It would certainly be absurd to expect of a man that he should of his own accord discover that he did not exist. But this is precisely the transition of the new birth, from non-being to being. That he may come to understand it afterwards can make no difference; for because a man knows how to use gunpowder and can resolve it into its constituent elements, it does not follow that he has invented it. Be then angry with me and with whoever else pretends to the authorship of this thought; but that is no reason why you should be angry with the thought itself."

Chapter 2: The God as Teacher and Saviour: An Essay of the Imagination

LET US BRIEFLY consider Socrates, who was himself a teacher. He was born under such and such circumstances; he came under the formative influences of the people to which he belonged; and when upon reaching maturity he felt an inner impulse and call to this end, he began in his own way to teach others. Thus after having lived for some time as Socrates, circumstances seeming propitious, he emerged in the role of Socrates the teacher. He was himself influenced by circumstances, and reacted upon them in turn. In realizing his task he satisfied at one and the same time the demands of his own nature, and those that others might make upon him. So understood, and this was indeed the Socratic understanding, the teacher stands in a reciprocal relation, in that life and its circumstances constitute an occasion for him to become a teacher, while he in turn gives occasion for others to learn something. He thus embodies in his attitude an equal proportion of the autopathic and the sympathetic Such also was the Socratic understanding, and hence he would accept neither praise nor honors nor money for his instruction, but passed judgment with the incorruptibility of a departed spirit. Rare contentment! Rare especially in a time like ours, when no purse seems large enough nor crown of glory sufficiently glittering to match the splendor of the instruction; but when also the world's gold and the world's glory are the precisely adequate compensation, the one being worth as much as the other. To be sure, our age is positive and understands what is positive; Socrates on the other hand was negative. It might be well to consider whether this lack of positiveness does not perhaps explain the narrowness of his principles, which were doubtless rooted in a zeal for what is universally human, and in a discipline of self marked by the same divine

jealousy as his discipline of others, a zeal and discipline through which he loved the divine. As between man and man no higher relationship is possible; the disciple gives occasion for the teacher to understand himself, and the teacher gives occasion for the disciple to understand himself. When the teacher dies he leaves behind him no claim upon the soul of the disciple, just as the disciple can assert no claim that the teacher owes him anything. And if I were a Plato in sentimental enthusiasm, and if my heart beat as violently as Alcibiades' or more violently than that of the Corybantic mystic while listening to the words of Socrates; if the passion of my admiration knew no rest until I had clasped the wondrous master in my arms — Socrates would but smile at me and say: "My friend, how deceitful a lover you are! You wish to idolize me on account of my wisdom, and then to take your place as the friend who best understands me, from whose admiring embrace I shall never be able to tear myself free — is it not true that you are a seducer ?" And if I still refused to understand him, he would no doubt bring me to despair by the coldness of his irony, as he unfolded to me that he owed me as much as I owed him. Rare integrity, deceiving no one, not even one who would deem it his highest happiness to be deceived! How rare in our age, when all have transcended Socrates — in self-appreciation, in estimate of benefits conferred upon their pupils, in sentimentality of intercourse, in voluptuous enjoyment of admiration's warm embrace! Rare faithfulness, seducing no one, not even him who exercises all the arts of seduction in order to be seduced!

But the God needs no disciple to help him understand himself, nor can he be so determined by any occasion that there is as much significance in the occasion as in the resolve. What then could move him to make his appearance? He must indeed move himself, and continue to exemplify what Aristotle says of him: .. But if he moves himself it follows that he is not moved by some need, as if he could not endure the strain of silence, but had

to break out in speech. But if he moves himself, and is not moved by need, what else can move him but love? For love finds its satisfaction within and not without. His resolve, which stands in no equal reciprocal relation to the occasion, must be from eternity, though when realized in time it constitutes precisely the *Moment;* for when the occasion and the occasioned correspond, and are as commensurable as the answer of the desert with the cry that evokes it, the Moment does not appear, but is lost in the eternity of Recollection. The Moment makes its appearance when an eternal resolve comes into relation with an incommensurable occasion. Unless this is realized I we shall be thrown back on Socrates, and shall then have neither the God as Teacher, nor an Eternal Purpose, nor the Moment.

Moved by love, the God is thus eternally resolved to reveal himself. But as love is the motive so love must also be the end; for it would be a contradiction for the God to have a motive and an end which did not correspond. His love is a love of the learner, and his aim is to win him. For it is only in love that the unequal can be made equal, and it is only in equality or unity that an understanding can be effected, and without a perfect understanding the Teacher is not the God, unless the obstacle comes wholly from the side of the learner, in his refusing to realize that which had been made possible for him.

But this love is through and through unhappy, for how great is the difference between them! It may seem a small matter for the God to make himself understood, but this is not so easy of accomplishment if he is to refrain from annihilating the unlikeness that exists between them.

Let us not jump too quickly to a conclusion at this point; if it seems to some that we waste our time while we might be coming to a decision, we take comfort in the thought that it does not follow that we shall have only our trouble for our pains. Much is heard in the world about unhappy love, and we all know what this means: the lovers are prevented from realizing

their union, the causes being many and various. There is another kind of unhappy love, the theme of our present discourse, for which there is no perfect earthly parallel, though by dint of speaking foolishly a little while we may make shift to conceive it through an earthly figure. The unhappiness of this love does not come from the inability of the lovers to realize their union, but from their inability to understand one another. This grief is infinitely more profound than that of which men commonly speak, since it strikes at the very heart of love, and wounds for an eternity; not like that other misfortune which touches only the temporal and the external, and which for the magnanimous is as a sort of jest over the inability of the lovers to realize their union here in time. This infinitely deeper grief is essentially the prerogative of the superior, since only he likewise understands the misunderstanding; in reality it belongs to the God alone, and no human relationship can afford a valid analogy. Nevertheless, we shall here suggest such an analogy, in order to quicken the mind to an apprehension of the divine.

Suppose there was a king who loved a humble maiden. But the reader has perhaps already lost his patience, seeing that our beginning sounds like a fairy tale, and is not in the least systematic. So the very learned Polos found it tiresome that Socrates always talked about meat and drink and doctors, and similar unworthy trifles, which Polos deemed beneath him (*Gorgias*). But did not the Socratic manner of speech have at least one advantage, in that he himself and all others were from childhood equipped with the necessary prerequisites for understanding it? And would it not be desirable if I could confine the terms of my argument to meat and drink, and did not need to bring in kings, whose thoughts are not always like those of other men, if they are indeed kingly. But perhaps I may be pardoned the extravagance, seeing that I am only a poet, proceeding now to unfold the

carpet of my discourse (recalling the beautiful saying of Themistocles), lest its workmanship be concealed by the compactness of its folding.

Suppose then a king who loved a humble maiden. The heart of the king was not polluted by the wisdom that is loudly enough proclaimed; he knew nothing of the difficulties that the understanding discovers in order to ensnare the heart, which keep the poets so busy, and make their magic formulas necessary. It was easy to realize his purpose. Every statesman feared his wrath and dared not breathe a word of displeasure; every foreign state trembled before his power, and dared not omit sending ambassadors with congratulations for the nuptials; no courtier groveling in the dust dared wound him, lest his own head be crushed. Then let the harp be tuned, let the songs of the poets begin to sound, and let all be festive while love celebrates its triumph. For love is exultant when it unites equals, but it is triumphant when it makes that which was unequal equal in love. — Then there awoke in the heart of the king an anxious thought; who but a king who thinks kingly thoughts would have dreamed of it! He spoke to no one about his anxiety; for if he had, each courtier would doubtless have said: "Your majesty is about to confer a favor upon the maiden, for which she can never be sufficiently grateful her whole life long." This speech would have moved the king to wrath, so that he would have commanded the execution of the courtier for high treason against the beloved, and thus he would in still another way have found his grief increased. So he wrestled with his troubled thoughts alone. Would she be happy in the life at his side? Would she be able to summon confidence enough never to remember what the king wished only to forget, that he was king and she had been a humble maiden? For if this memory were to waken in her soul, and like a favored lover sometimes steal her thoughts away from the king, luring her reflections into the seclusion of a secret grief; or if this memory sometimes passed through her soul like the shadow of death over the grave: where would then be the

glory of their love? Then she would have been happier had she remained in her obscurity, loved by an equal, content in her humble cottage; but confident in her love, and cheerful early and late. What a rich abundance of grief is here laid bare, like ripened grain bent under the weight of its fruitfulness, merely waiting the time of the harvest, when the thought of the king will thresh out all its seed of sorrow! For even if the maiden would be content to become as nothing, this could not satisfy the king, precisely because he loved her, and because it was harder for him to be her benefactor than to lose her. And suppose she could not even understand him? For while we are thus speaking foolishly of human relationships, we may suppose a difference of mind between them such as to render an understanding impossible. What a depth of grief slumbers not in this unhappy love, who dares to rouse it! However, no human being is destined to suffer such grief; him we may refer to Socrates, or to that which in a still more beautiful sense can make the unequal equal.

But if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance (and if not we return to Socrates even if we think to advance beyond him), the learner is in Error, and that by reason of his own guilt. And yet he is the object of the God's love, and the God desires to teach him, and is concerned to bring him to equality with himself. If this equality cannot be established, the God's love becomes unhappy and his teaching meaningless, since they cannot understand one another. Men sometimes think that this might be a matter of indifference to the God, since he does not stand in need of the learner. But in this we forget — or rather alas! we prove how far we are from understanding him; we forget that the God loves the learner. And just as that kingly grief of which we have spoken can be found only in a kingly soul, and is not even named in the language of the multitude of men, so the entire human language is so selfish that it refuses even to suspect the existence of such a grief. But for that reason the God has reserved it to himself, this

unfathomable grief: to know that he may repel the learner, that he does not need him, that the learner has brought destruction upon himself by his own guilt, that he can leave the learner to his fate; to know also how well-nigh impossible it is to keep the learner's courage and confidence alive, without which the purposed understanding and equality will fail, and the love become unhappy. The man who cannot feel at least some faint intimation of this grief is a paltry soul of base coinage, bearing neither the image of Caesar nor the image of God.

Our problem is now before us, and we invite the poet, unless he is already engaged elsewhere, or belongs to the number of those who must be driven out from the house of mourning, together with the flute-players and the other noise-makers, before gladness can enter in. The poet's task will be to find a solution, some point of union, where love's understanding may be realized in truth, the God's anxiety be set at rest, his sorrow banished. For the divine love is that unfathomable love which cannot rest content with that which the beloved might in his folly prize as happiness.

A

The union might be brought about by an elevation of the learner. The God would then take him up unto himself, transfigure him, fill his cup with millennial joys (for a thousand years are as one day in his sight), and let the learner forget the misunderstanding in tumultuous joy. Alas, the learner might perhaps be greatly inclined to prize such happiness as this. How wonderful suddenly to find his fortune made, like the humble maiden, because the eye of the God happened to rest upon him! And how wonderful also to be his helper in taking all this in vain, deceived by his own heart! Even the noble king could perceive the difficulty of such a method, for he was not without insight into the human heart, and understood that the maiden was at bottom deceived; and no one is so terribly deceived as he

who does not himself suspect it, but is as if enchanted by a change in the outward habiliments of his existence.

The union might be brought about by the God's showing himself to the learner and receiving his worship, causing him to forget himself over the divine apparition. Thus the king might have shown himself to the humble maiden in all the pomp of his power, causing the sun of his presence to rise over her cottage, shedding a glory over the scene, and making her forget herself in worshipful admiration. Alas, and this might have satisfied the maiden, but it could not satisfy the king, who desired not his own glorification but hers. It was this that made his grief so hard to bear, his grief that she could not understand him; but it would have been still harder for him to deceive her. And merely to give his love for her an imperfect expression was in his eyes a deception, even though no one understood him and reproaches sought to mortify his soul.

Not in this manner then can their love be made happy, except perhaps in appearance, namely the learner's and the maiden's, but not the Teacher's and the king's, whom no delusion can satisfy. Thus the God takes pleasure in arraying the lily in a garb more glorious than that of Solomon; but if there could be any thought of an understanding here, would it not be a sorry delusion of the lily's, if when it looked upon its fine raiment it thought that it was on account of the raiment that the God loved it? Instead of standing dauntless in the field, sporting with the wind, carefree as the gust that blows, would it not under the influence of such a thought languish and droop, not daring to lift up its head? It was the God's solicitude to prevent this, for the lily's shoot is tender and easily broken. But if the Moment is to have decisive significance, how unspeakable will be the God's anxiety! There once lived a people who had a profound understanding of the divine; this people thought that no man could see the God and live. — Who grasps this contradiction of sorrow: not to reveal oneself is the death of love, to

reveal oneself is the death of the beloved! The minds of men so often yearn for might and power, and their thoughts are constantly being drawn to such things, as if by their attainment all mysteries would be resolved. Hence they do not even dream that there is sorrow in heaven as well as joy, the deep grief of having to deny the learner what he yearns for with all his heart, of having to deny him precisely because he is the beloved.

B

The union must therefore be brought about in some other way. Let us here again recall Socrates, for what was the Socratic ignorance if not an expression for his love of the learner, and for his sense of equality with him? But this equality was also the truth, as we have already seen. But if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance (—), this is not the truth, for the learner will owe everything to the Teacher. In the Socratic conception the teacher's love would be merely that of a deceiver if he permitted the disciple to rest in the belief that he really owed him anything, instead of fulfilling the function of the teacher to help the learner become sufficient to himself. But when the God becomes a Teacher, his love cannot be merely seconding and assisting, but is creative, giving a new being to the learner, or as we have called him, the man born anew; by which designation we signify the transition from non-being to being. The truth then is that the learner owes the Teacher everything. But this is what makes it so difficult to effect an understanding: that the learner becomes as nothing and yet is not destroyed; that he comes to owe everything to the Teacher and yet retains his confidence; that he understands the Truth and yet that the Truth makes him free; that he apprehends the guilt of his Error and yet that his confidence rises victorious in the Truth. Between man and man the Socratic midwifery is the highest relation, and begetting is reserved for the God, whose love is *creative,* but not merely in the sense which Socrates so

beautifully expounds on a certain festal occasion. This latter kind of begetting does not signify the relation between a teacher and his disciple, but that between an autodidact and the beautiful. In turning away from the scattered beauties of particular things to contemplate beauty in and for itself, the autodidact begets many beautiful and glorious discourses and thoughts, (*Symposium,* 210 D). In so doing he begets and brings forth that which he has long borne within him in the seed (209 E). He has the requisite condition in himself, and the bringing forth or birth is merely a manifestation of what was already present; whence here again, in this begetting, the moment vanishes instantly in the eternal consciousness of Recollection. And he who is begotten by a progressive dying away from self, of him it becomes increasingly clear that he can less and less be said to be begotten, since he only becomes more and more clearly reminded of his existence. And when in turn he begets expressions of the beautiful, he does not so much beget them, as he allows the beautiful within him to beget these expressions from itself.

Since we found that the union could not be brought about by an elevation it must be attempted by a descent. Let the learner be *x*. In this *x* we must include the lowliest; for if even Socrates refused to establish a false fellowship with the clever, how can we suppose that the God would make a distinction! In order that the union may be brought about, the God must therefore become the equal of such a one, and so he will appear in the likeness of the humblest. But the humblest is one who must serve others, and the God will therefore appear in the form of a *servant.* But this servant-form is no mere outer garment, like the king's beggar-cloak, which therefore flutters loosely about him and betrays the king; it is not like the filmy summer-cloak of Socrates, which though woven of nothing yet both conceals and reveals. It is his true form and figure. For this is the unfathomable nature of love, that it desires equality with the beloved, not in

jest merely, but in earnest and truth. And it is the omnipotence of the love which is so resolved that it is able to accomplish its purpose, which neither Socrates nor the king could do, whence their assumed figures constituted after all a kind of deceit.

Behold where he stands — the God! Where? There; do you not see him? He is the God; and yet he has not a resting-place for his head, and he dares not lean on any man lest he cause him to be offended. He is the God; and yet he picks his steps more carefully than if angels guided them, not to prevent his foot from stumbling against a stone, but lest he trample human beings in the dust, in that they are offended in him. He is the God; and yet his eye rests upon mankind with deep concern, for the tender shoots of an individual life may be crushed as easily as a blade of grass. How wonderful a life, all sorrow and all love: to yearn to express the equality of love, and yet to be misunderstood; to apprehend the danger that all men may be destroyed, and yet only so to be able really to save a single soul; his own life filled with sorrow, while each 7 hour of the day is taken up with the troubles of the learner who confides in him! This is the God as he stands upon the earth, like unto the humblest by the power of his omnipotent love. He knows that the learner is in Error — what if he should misunderstand, and droop, and lose his confidence! To sustain the heavens and the earth by the fiat of his omnipotent word, so that if this word were withdrawn for the fraction of a second the universe would be plunged into chaos — how light a task compared with bearing the burden that mankind may take offense, when one has been constrained by love to become its saviour!

But the servant-form is no mere outer garment, and therefore the God must suffer all things, endure all things, make experience of all things. He must suffer hunger in the desert, he must thirst in the time of his agony, he must be forsaken in death, absolutely like the humblest — behold the man His suffering is not that of his death, but this entire life is a story of

suffering; and it is love that suffers, the love which gives all is itself in want. What wonderful self-denial! for though the learner be one of the lowliest, he nevertheless asks him anxiously: Do you now really love me? For he knows where the danger threatens, and yet he also knows that every easier way would involve a deception, even though the learner might not understand it.

Every other form of revelation would be a deception in the eyes of love; for either the learner would first have to be changed, and the fact concealed from him that this was necessary (but love does not alter the beloved, it alters itself); or there would be permitted to prevail a frivolous ignorance of the fact that the entire relationship was a delusion. (This was the error of paganism.) Every other form of revelation would be a deception from the standpoint of the divine love. And if my eyes were more filled with tears than those of a repentant woman, and if each tear were more precious than a pardoned woman's many tears; if I could find a place more humble than the place at his feet, and if I could sit there more humbly than a woman whose heart's sole choice was this one thing needful; if I loved him more sincerely than the most loyal of his servants, eager to shed the last drop of his life-blood in his service; if I had found greater favor in his eyes than the purest among women — nevertheless, if I asked him to alter his purpose, to reveal himself differently, to be more lenient with himself, he would doubtless look at me and say: Man, what have I to do with thee? Get thee hence, for thou art Satan, though thou knowest it not! Or if he once or twice stretched forth his hand in command, and it happened, and I then meant to understand him better or love him more, I would doubtless see him weep also over me, and hear him say: To think that you could prove so faithless, and so wound my love! Is it then only the omnipotent wonder-worker that you love, and not him who humbled himself to become your equal?

But the servant-form is no mere outer garment; hence he must yield his spirit in death and again leave the earth. And if my grief were deeper than the sorrow of a mother when her heart is pierced by the sword, and if my danger were more terrible than the danger of a believer when his faith fails him, and if my misery were more pitiful than his who crucifies his hope and has nothing left but the cross — nevertheless, if I begged him to save his life and stay upon the earth, it would only be to see him sorrowful unto death, and stricken with grief also for my sake, because this suffering was for my profit, and now I had added to his sorrow the burden that I could not understand him. O bitter cup! More bitter than wormwood is the bitterness of death for a mortal, how bitter then for an immortal! O bitter refreshment, more bitter than aloes, to be refreshed by the misunderstanding of the beloved! O solace in affliction to suffer as one who is guilty, what solace then to suffer as one who is innocent!

Such will be our poet's picture. For how could it enter his mind that the God would reveal himself in this way in order to bring men to the most crucial and terrible decision; how could he find it in his heart to play frivolously with the God's sorrow, falsely poetizing his love away to poetize his wrath in!

And now the learner, has he no lot or part in this story of suffering, even though his lot cannot be that of the Teacher? Aye, it cannot be otherwise. And the cause of all this suffering is love, precisely because the God is not jealous for himself, but desires in love to be the equal of the humblest. When the seed of the oak is planted in earthen vessels, they break asunder; when new wine is poured in old leathern bottles, they burst; what must happen when the God implants himself in human weakness, unless man becomes a new vessel and a new creature! But this becoming, what labors will attend the change, how convulsed with birth-pangs! And the understanding — how precarious, and how close each moment to

misunderstanding, when the anguish of guilt seeks to disturb the peace of love! And how rapt in fear; for it is indeed less terrible to fall to the ground when the mountains tremble at the voice of the God, than to sit at table with him as an equal; and yet it is the God's concern precisely to have it so.

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Now if someone were to say: "This poem of yours is the most wretched piece of plagiarism ever perpetrated, for it is neither more nor less than what every child knows," I suppose I must blush with shame to hear myself called a liar. But why the most wretched? Every poet who steals, steals from some other poet, and in so far we are all equally wretched; indeed, my own theft is perhaps less harmful, since it is more readily discovered. If I were to be so polite as to ascribe the authorship to you who now condemn me, you would perhaps again be angry. Is there then no poet, although there is a poem? This would surely be strange, as strange as flute-playing without a flute-player. Or is this poem perhaps like a proverb, for which no author can be assigned, because it is as if it owed its existence to humanity at large; was this perhaps the reason you called my theft the most wretched, because I did not steal from any individual man but robbed the human race, and arrogantly, although I am only an individual man, aye, even a wretched thief, pretended to be mankind? If this then is the case, and I went about to all men in turn, and all knew the poem, but each one also knew that he was not the author of it, can I then conclude: mankind must be the author? Would not this be a strange conclusion? For if mankind were the author of this poem, this would have to be expressed by considering every individual equally close to the authorship. Does it not seem to you that this is a difficult case in which we have become involved, though the whole matter appeared to be so easily disposed of in the beginning, by your short and angry word about its being the most wretched plagiarism, and my shame in

having to hear it? So then perhaps it is no poem, or at any rate not one for which any human being is responsible, nor yet mankind; ah, now I understand you, it was for this reason you called my procedure the most wretched act of plagiarism, because I did not steal from any individual, nor from the race, but from the God or, as it were, stole the God away, and though I am only an individual man, aye, even a wretched thief, blasphemously pretended to be the God. Now I understand you fully, dear friend, and recognize the justice of your resentment. But then my soul is filled with new wonder, even more, with the spirit of worship; for it would surely have been strange had this poem been a human production. It is not impossible that it might occur to man to imagine himself the equal of the God, or to imagine the God the equal of man, but not to imagine that the God would make himself into the likeness of man; for if the God gave no sign, how could it enter into the mind of man that the blessed God should need him? This would be a most stupid thought, or rather, so stupid a thought could never have entered into his mind; though when the God has seen fit to entrust him with it he exclaims in worship: This thought did not arise in my own heart! and finds it a most miraculously beautiful thought. And is it not altogether miraculous, and does not this word come as a happy omen to my lips; for as I have just said, and as you yourself involuntarily exclaim, we stand here before the *Miracle.* And as we both now stand before this miracle, whose solemn silence cannot be perturbed by human wrangling over mine and thine, whose awe-inspiring speech infinitely subdues all human strife about mine and thine, forgive me, I pray, the strange delusion that I was the author of this poem. It was a delusion, and the poem is so different from every human poem as not to be a poem at all, but the *Miracle.*

Chapter 3: The Absolute Paradox: A Metaphysical Crotchet

In spite of the fact that Socrates studied with all diligence to acquire a knowledge of human nature and to understand himself, and in spite of the fame accorded him through the centuries as one who beyond all other men had an insight into the human heart, he has himself admitted that the reason for his shrinking from reflection upon the nature of such beings as Pegasus and the Gorgons was that he, the life-long student of human nature, had not yet been able to make up his mind whether he was a stranger monster than Typhon, or a creature of a gentler and simpler sort, partaking of something divine (*Phaedrus,* 229 E). This seems to be a paradox. However, one should not think slightingly of the paradoxical; for the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity. But the highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfall; and so it is also the supreme passion of the Reason to seek a collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. This passion is at bottom present in all thinking, even in the thinking of the individual, in so far as in thinking he participates in something transcending himself. But habit dulls our sensibilities, and prevents us from perceiving it. So for example the scientists tell us that our walking is a constant falling. But a sedate and proper gentleman who walks to his office in the morning and back again at noon, probably thinks this to be an exaggeration, for his progress is clearly a case of mediation; how should it occur to him that he is constantly falling when he religiously follows his nose!

But in order to make a beginning, let us now assume a daring proposition; let us assume that we know what man is. Here we have that

criterion of the Truth, which in the whole course of Greek philosophy was either *sought,* or *doubted,* or *postulated,* or *made fruitful.* Is it not remarkable that the Greeks should have borne us this testimony? And is it not an epitome, as it were, of the significance of Greek culture, an epigram of its own writing, with which it is also better served than with the frequently voluminous disquisitions sometimes devoted to it? Thus the proposition is well worth positing, and also for another reason, since we have already explained it in the two preceding chapters; while anyone who attempts to explain Socrates differently may well beware lest he fall into the snare of the earlier or later Greek skepticism. For unless we hold fast to the Socratic doctrine of Recollection, and to his principle that every individual man is Man, Sextus Empiricus stands ready to make the transition involved in "teaching" not only difficult but impossible; and Protagoras will begin where Sextus Empiricus leaves off, maintaining that man is the measure of all things, in the sense that the individual man is the measure for others, but by no means in the Socratic sense that each man is his own measure, neither more nor less.

So then we know what man is, and this wisdom, which I shall be the last to hold in light esteem, may progressively become richer and more significant, and with it also the Truth. But now the Reason stands still, just as Socrates did; for the paradoxical passion of the Reason is aroused and seeks a collision; without rightly understanding itself, it is bent upon its own downfall. This is like what happens in Connection with the paradox of love. Man lives undisturbed a self-centered life, until there awakens within him the paradox of self-love, in the form of love for another, the object of his longing. (Self-love lies as the ground of all love or is the ground in which all love perishes; there-fore if we conceive a religion of love, this religion need make but one assumption, as epigrammatic as true, and take its actuality for granted, namely, the condition that man loves himself, in

order to command him to love his neighbor as himself.) The lover is so completely transformed by the paradox of love that he scarcely recognizes himself; so say the poets, who are the spokesmen of love, and so say also the lovers themselves, since they permit the poets merely to take the words from their lips, but not the passion from their hearts. In like manner the paradoxical passion of the Reason, while as yet a mere presentiment, retroactively affects man and his self-knowledge, so that he who thought to know himself is no longer certain whether he is a more strangely composite animal than Typhon, or if perchance his nature contains a gentler and diviner part. *(o , , . Phaedrus,*230 A)

But what is this unknown something with which the Reason collides when inspired by its paradoxical passion, with the result of unsettling even man's knowledge of himself? It is the Unknown. It is not a human being, in so far as we know what man is; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something: *the God.* It is nothing more than a name we assign to it. The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (the God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to the Reason. For if the God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I would have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain (a presupposition is never doubtful, for the very reason that it is a presupposition), since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist. But if when I speak of proving the God's existence I mean that I propose to prove that the Unknown, which exists, is the God, then I express myself unfortunately. For in that case I do not prove anything, least of all an existence, but merely develop the content of a conception. Generally speaking, it is a difficult matter to prove that anything exists; and what is still worse for the intrepid souls who undertake the venture, the difficulty is such that fame scarcely awaits those who

concern themselves with it. The entire demonstration always turns into something very different and becomes an additional development of the consequences that flow from my having assumed that the object in question exists. Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought. I do not for example prove that a stone exists, but that some existing thing is a stone. The procedure in a court of justice does not prove that a criminal exists, but that the accused, whose existence is given, is a criminal. Whether we call existence an *accessorium* or the eternal *prius,* it is never subject to demonstration. Let us take ample time for consideration. We have no such reason for haste as have those who from concern for themselves or for the God or for some other thing, must make haste to get existence demonstrated. Under such circumstances there may indeed be need for haste, especially if the prover sincerely seeks to appreciate the danger that he himself, or the thing in question, may be non-existent unless the proof is finished and does not surreptitiously entertain the thought that it exists whether he succeeds in proving it or not.

If it were proposed to prove Napoleon's existence from Napoleon's deeds, would it not be a most curious proceeding? His existence does indeed explain his deeds, but the deeds do not prove *his* existence, unless I have already understood the word "his" so as thereby to have assumed his existence. But Napoleon is only an individual, and in so far there exists no absolute relationship between him and his deeds; some other person might have performed the same deeds. Perhaps this is the reason why I cannot pass from the deeds to existence. If I call these deeds the deeds of Napoleon the proof becomes superfluous, since I have already named him; if I ignore this, I can never prove from the deeds that they are Napoleon's, but only in a purely ideal manner that such deeds are the deeds of a great general, and so forth. But between the God and his works there is an absolute

relationship; God is not a name but a concept. Is this perhaps the reason that his *essentia involvit existentiam* ? The works of God are such that only the God can perform them. Just so, but where then are the works of the God? The works from which I would deduce his existence are not directly and immediately given. The wisdom in nature, the goodness, the wisdom in the governance of the world — are all these manifest, perhaps, upon the very face of things? Are we not here confronted with the most terrible temptations to doubt, and is it not impossible finally to dispose of all these doubts? But from such an order of things I will surely not attempt to prove God's existence; and even if I began I would never finish, and would in addition have to live constantly in suspense, lest something so terrible should suddenly happen that my bit of proof would be demolished. From what works then do I propose to derive the proof? From the works as apprehended through an ideal interpretation, i.e., such as they do not immediately reveal themselves. But in that case it is not from the works that I make the proof; I merely develop the ideality I have presupposed, and because of my confidence in *this* I make so bold as to defy all objections, even those that have not yet been made. In beginning my proof I presuppose the ideal interpretation, and also that I will be successful in carrying it through; but what else is this but to presuppose that the God exists, so that I really begin by virtue of confidence in him?

And how does the God's existence emerge from the proof? Does it follow straightway, without any breach of continuity? Or have we not here an analogy to the behavior of the little Cartesian dolls? As soon as I let go of the doll it stands on its head. As soon as I let it go — I must therefore let it go. So also with the proof. As long as I keep my hold on the proof, i.e., continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out, if for no other reason than that I am engaged in proving it; but when I let the proof go, the existence is there. But this act of letting go is surely also something; it is

indeed a contribution of mine. Must not this also be taken into the account, this little moment, brief as it may be — it need not be long, for it is a *leap.* However brief this moment, if only an instantaneous now, this “now” must be included in the reckoning. If anyone wishes to have it ignored, I will use it to tell a little anecdote, in order to show that it nevertheless does exist. Chrysippus was experimenting with a sorties to see if he could not bring about a break in its quality, either progressively or retrogressively. But Carneades could not get it in his head when the new quality actually emerged. Then Chrysippus told him to try making a little pause in the reckoning, and so — so it would be easier to understand. Carneades replied: With the greatest pleasure, please do not hesitate on my account; you may not only pause, but even lie down to sleep, and it will help you just as little; for when you awake we will begin again where you left *off.* Just so; it boots as little to try to get rid of something by sleeping as to try to come into the possession of something in the same manner.

Whoever therefore attempts to demonstrate the existence of God (except in the sense of clarifying the concept, and without the *reservatio finalis* noted above, that the existence emerges from the demonstration by a leap) proves in lieu thereof something else, something which at times perhaps does not need a proof, and in any case needs none better; for the fool says in his heart that there is no God, but whoever says in his heart or to men: Wait just a little and I will prove it — what a rare man of wisdom is he! If in the moment of beginning his proof it is not absolutely undetermined whether the God exists or not, he does not prove it; and if it is thus undetermined in the beginning he will never come to begin, partly from fear of failure, since the God perhaps does not exist, and partly because he has nothing with which to begin. — A project of this kind would scarcely have been undertaken by the ancients. Socrates at least, who is credited with having put forth the physico-teleological proof for God’s existence, did not go

about it in any such manner. He always presupposes the God's existence, and under this presupposition seeks to interpenetrate nature with the idea of purpose. Had he been asked why he pursued this method, he would doubtless have explained that he lacked the courage to venture out upon so perilous a voyage of discovery without having made sure of the God's existence behind him. At the word of the God he casts his net as if to catch the idea of purpose; for nature herself finds many means of frightening the inquirer, and distracts him by many a digression.

The paradoxical passion of the Reason thus comes repeatedly into collision with this Unknown, which does indeed exist, but is unknown, and in so far does not exist. The Reason cannot advance beyond this point, and yet it cannot refrain in its paradoxicalness from arriving at this limit and occupying itself therewith. It will not serve to dismiss its relation to it simply by asserting that the Unknown does not exist, since this itself involves a relationship. But what then is the Unknown, since the designation of it as the God merely signifies for us that it is unknown? To say that it is the Unknown because it cannot be known, and even if it were capable of being known, it could not be expressed, does not satisfy the demands of passion, though it correctly interprets the Unknown as a limit; but a limit is precisely a torment for passion, though it also serves as an incitement. And yet the Reason can come no further, whether it risks an issue *via negationis* or *via eminentia.*

What then is the Unknown? It is the limit to which the Reason repeatedly comes, and in so far, substituting a static form of conception for the dynamic, it is the different, the absolutely different. But because it is absolutely different, there is no mark by which it could be distinguished. When qualified as absolutely different it seems on the verge of disclosure, but this is not the case; for the Reason cannot even conceive an absolute unlikeness. The Reason cannot negate itself absolutely, but uses itself for

the purpose, and thus conceives only such an unlikeness within itself as it can conceive by means of itself; it Cannot absolutely transcend itself, and hence conceives only such a superiority over itself as it can conceive by means of itself. Unless the Unknown (the God) remains a mere limiting conception, the single idea of difference will be thrown into a state of confusion, and become many ideas of many differences. The Unknown is then in a condition of dispersion (), and the Reason may choose at pleasure from what is at hand and the imagination may suggest (the monstrous, the ludicrous, etc.).

But it is impossible to hold fast to a difference of this nature. Every time this is done it is essentially an arbitrary act, and deepest down in the heart of piety lurks the mad caprice which knows that it has itself produced the God. If no specific determination of difference can be held fast, because there is no distinguishing mark, like and unlike finally become identified with one another, thus sharing the fate of all such dialectical opposites. The unlikeness clings to the Reason and confounds it, so that the Reason no longer knows itself and quite consistently confuses itself with the unlikeness. On this point paganism has been sufficiently prolific in fantastic inventions. As for the last named supposition, the self-irony of the Reason, I shall attempt to delineate it merely by a stroke or two, without raising any question of its being historical. There exists an individual whose appearance is precisely like that of other men; he grows up to manhood like others, he marries, he has an occupation by which he earns his livelihood, and he makes provision for the future as befits a man. For though it may be beautiful to live like the birds of the air, it is not lawful, and may lead to the sorriest of consequences: either starvation if one has enough persistence, or dependence on the bounty of others. This man is also the God. How do I know? I cannot know it, for in order to know it I would have to know the God, and the nature of the difference between the God and man; and this I

cannot know, because the Reason has reduced it to likeness with that from which it was unlike. Thus the God becomes the most terrible of deceivers, because the Reason has deceived itself. The Reason has brought the God as near as possible, and yet he is as far away as ever.

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Now perhaps someone will say: “You are certainly a crotcheteer, as I know very well. But you surely do not believe that I would pay any attention to such a crotchet, so strange or so ridiculous that it has doubtless never occurred to anyone, and above all so absurd that I must exclude from my consciousness everything that I have in it in order to hit upon it.” — And so indeed you must. But do you think yourself warranted in retaining all the presuppositions you have in your consciousness, while pretending to think about your consciousness without presuppositions? Will you deny the consistency of our exposition: that the Reason, in attempting to determine the Unknown as the unlike, at last goes astray, and confounds the unlike with the like? From this there would seem to follow the further consequence, that if man is to receive any true knowledge about the Unknown (the God) he must be made to know that it is unlike him, absolutely unlike him. This knowledge the Reason cannot possibly obtain of itself; we have already seen that this would be a self-contradiction. It will therefore have to obtain this knowledge from the God. But even if it obtains such knowledge it cannot understand it, and thus is quite unable to possess such knowledge. For how should the Reason be able to understand what is absolutely different from itself? If this is not immediately evident, it will become clearer in the light of the consequences; for if the God is absolutely unlike man, then man is absolutely unlike the God; but how could the Reason be expected to understand this? Here we seem to be confronted with a paradox. Merely to obtain the knowledge that the God is unlike him, man

needs the help of the God; and now he learns that the God is absolutely different from himself. But if the God and man are absolutely different, this cannot be accounted for on the basis of what man derives from the God, for in so far they are akin. Their unlikeness must therefore be explained by what man derives from himself, or by what he has brought upon his own head. But what can this unlikeness be? Aye, what can it be but sin; since the unlikeness, the absolute unlikeness, is something that man has brought upon himself. We have expressed this in the preceding by saying that man was in Error, and had brought this upon his head ‘by his own guilt; and we came to the conclusion, partly in jest and yet also in earnest, that it was too much to expect of man that he should find this out for himself. Now we have again arrived at the same conclusion. The connoisseur in self-knowledge was perplexed over himself to the point of bewilderment when he came to grapple in thought with the unlike; he scarcely knew any longer whether he was a stranger monster than Typhon, or if his nature partook of something divine. What then did he lack? The consciousness of sin, which he indeed could no more teach to another than another could teach it to him, but only the God — if the God consents to become a Teacher. But this was his purpose, as we have imagined it. In order to be man’s Teacher, the God proposed to make himself like the individual man, so that he might understand him fully. Thus our paradox is rendered still more appalling, or the same paradox has the double aspect which proclaims it as the Absolute Paradox; negatively by revealing the absolute unlikeness of sin, positively by proposing to do away with the absolute unlikeness in absolute likeness.

But can such a paradox be conceived? Let us not be over-hasty in replying; and since we strive merely to find the answer to a question, and not as those who run a race, it may be well to remember that success is to the accurate rather than to the swift. The Reason will doubtless find it impossible to conceive it, could not of itself have discovered it, and when it

hears it announced will not be able to understand it, sensing merely that its downfall is threatened. In so far the Reason will have much to urge against it; and yet we have on the other hand seen that the Reason, in its paradoxical passion, precisely desires its own downfall. But this is what the Paradox also desires, and thus they are at bottom linked in understanding; but this understanding is present only in the moment of passion. Consider the analogy presented by love, though it is not a perfect one. Self-love lies as the ground of love; but the paradoxical passion of self-love when at its highest pitch wills precisely its own downfall. This is also what love desires, so that these two are linked in mutual understanding in the passion of the moment, and this passion is love. Why should not the lover find this conceivable? But he who in self-love shrinks from the touch of love can neither understand it nor summon the courage to venture it, since it means his downfall. Such is then the passion of love; self-love is indeed submerged but not annihilated; it is taken captive and become love's *spolia opima,* but may again come to life, and this is love's temptation. So also with the Paradox in its relation to the Reason, only that the passion in this case has another name; or rather, we must seek to find a name for it.

APPENDIX

The Paradox and the Offended Consciousness

(An Acoustic Illusion)

If the Paradox and the Reason come together in a mutual understanding of their unlikeness their encounter will be happy, like love's understanding, happy in the passion to which we have not yet assigned a name, and will postpone naming until later. If the encounter is not in understanding the relationship becomes unhappy, and this unhappy love of the Reason if I may so call it (which it should be noted is analogous only to that particular form of unhappy love which has its root in misunderstood self-love; no

further stretching of the analogy is possible, since accident can play no role in this realm), may be characterized more specifically as *Offense.*

All offense is in its deepest root passive. In this respect it is like that form of unhappy love to which we have just alluded. Even when such a self-love (and does it not already seem contradictory that love of sell should be passive?) announces itself in deeds of audacious daring, in astounding achievements, it is passive and wounded. It is the pain of its wound which gives it this illusory strength, expressing itself in what looks like self-activity and may A easily deceive, since self-love is especially bent on concealing its passivity. Even when it tramples on the object of affection, even when it painfully schools itself to a hardened indifference and tortures itself to show this indifference, even then, even when it abandons itself to a frivolous triumph over its success (this form is the most deceptive of all), even then it is passive. Such is also the case with the offended consciousness. Whatever be its mode of expression, even when it exultantly celebrates the triumph of its unspirituality, it is always passive. Whether the offended individual sits broken-hearted, staring almost like a beggar at the Paradox, paralyzed by his suffering, or he sheathes himself in the armor of derision, pointing the arrows of his wit as if from a distance — he is still passive and near at hand. Whether offense came and robbed the offended individual of his last bit of comfort and joy, or made him strong — the offended consciousness is nevertheless passive. It has wrestled with the stronger, and its show of strength is like the peculiar agility induced in the bodily sphere by a broken back.

However, it is quite possible to distinguish between an active and a passive form of the offended consciousness, if we take care to remember that the passive form is so far active as not to permit itself wholly to be annihilated (for offense is always an act, never an event); and that the active

form is always so weak that it cannot free itself from the cross to which it is nailed, or tear the arrow from out its wound.

But precisely because offense is thus passive, the discovery, if it be allowable to speak thus, does not derive from the Reason, but from the Paradox; for as the Truth is *index sui et falsi,* the Paradox is this also, and the offended consciousness does not understand itself but is understood by the Paradox. While therefore the expressions in which offense proclaims itself, of whatever kind they may be, sound as if they came from elsewhere, even from the opposite direction, they are nevertheless echoings of the Paradox. This is what is called an acoustic illusion. But if the Paradox is *index* and *judex sui et falsi,* the offended consciousness can be taken as an indirect proof of the validity of the Paradox; offense is the mistaken reckoning, the invalid consequence, with which the Paradox repels and thrusts aside. The offended individual does not speak from his own resources, but borrows those of the Paradox; just as one who mimics or parodies another does not invent, but merely copies perversely. The more profound the passion with which the offended consciousness (active or passive) expresses itself, the more apparent it is how much it owes to the Paradox. Offense was not discovered by the Reason, far from it, for then the Reason must also have been able to discover the Paradox. No, offense comes into existence with the Paradox; it *comes into existence.* Here again we have the Moment, on which everything depends. Let us recapitulate. If we do not posit the Moment we return to Socrates; but it was precisely from him that we departed, in order to discover something. If we posit the Moment the Paradox is there; for the Moment is the Paradox in its most abbreviated form. Because of the Moment the learner is in Error; and man, who had before possessed self-knowledge, now becomes bewildered with respect to himself; instead of self-knowledge he receives the consciousness

of sin, and so forth; for as soon as we posit the Moment everything follows of itself.

From the psychological point of view the offended consciousness will display a great variety of nuances within the more active and the more passive forms. To enter into a detailed description of these would not further our present purpose; but it is important to bear fixedly in mind that all offense is in its essence a misunderstanding of the *Moment,* since it is directed against the Paradox, which again is the Moment.

The dialectic of the *Moment* is not difficult. From the Socratic point of view the Moment is invisible and indistinguishable; it is not, it has not been, it will not come. Hence the learner is himself the Truth, and the moment of occasion is but a jest, like a bastard title that does not essentially belong to the book. From this point of view the Moment of decision becomes *folly;* for if a decision in time is postulated, then (by the preceding) the learner is in Error, which is precisely what makes a beginning in the Moment necessary. The reaction of the offended consciousness is to assert that the Moment is folly, and that the Paradox is folly, which is the contention of the Paradox that the Reason is absurd now reflected back as in an echo from the offended consciousness. Or the Moment is regarded as constantly about to come; it is so regarded, and the Reason holds it as *worthy of regard;* but since the Paradox has made the Reason absurd, the regard of the Reason is no reliable criterion.

The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox, and the reason is: *quia absurdum.* But it was not the Reason that made this discovery; on the contrary it was the Paradox that made the discovery, and now receives this testimony from the offended consciousness. The Reason says that the Paradox is absurd, but this is mere mimicry, since the Paradox is the Paradox, *quia absurdum.* The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox and keeps to the probable, since the Paradox is the most

improbable of things. Again it is not the Reason that made this discovery; it merely snatches the words from the mouth of the Paradox, strange as this may seem; for the Paradox itself says: Comedies and romances and lies must needs be probable, but why should I be probable? The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox, and what wonder, since the Paradox is the Miracle! This discovery was not made by the Reason; it was the Paradox that placed the Reason on the stool of wonderment and now replies: But why are you so astonished? It is precisely as you say, and the only wonder is that you regard it as an objection; but the truth in the mouth of a hypocrite is dearer to me than if it came from the lips of an angel or an apostle. When the Reason boasts of its splendors in comparison with the Paradox, which is most wretched and despised, the discovery was not made by the Reason but by the Paradox itself; it is content to leave to the Reason all its splendors, even the splendid sins (*vitia splendida*). When the Reason takes pity on the Paradox, and wishes to help it to an explanation, the Paradox does not indeed acquiesce, but nevertheless finds it quite natural that the Reason should do this; for why do we have our philosophers, if not to make supernatural things trivial and commonplace? When the Reason says that it cannot get the Paradox into its head, it was not the Reason that made the discovery but the Paradox, which is so paradoxical as to declare the Reason a blockhead and a dunce, capable at the most of saying yes and no to the same thing, which is not good divinity. And so always. All that the offended consciousness has to say about the Paradox it has learned from the Paradox, though it would like to pose as the discoverer, making use of an acoustic illusion.

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But I think I hear someone say: "It is really becoming tiresome the way you go on, for now we have the same story over again; not one of the

expressions you have put into the mouth of the Paradox belongs to you."— "Why should they belong to me, when they belong to the Paradox?"— "You can spare us your sophistry, you know very well what I mean. These expressions are not yours, nor by you put into the mouth of the Paradox, but are familiar quotations, and everybody knows who the authors are."— "My friend, your accusation does not grieve me, as you perhaps believe; what you say rather makes me exceedingly glad. For I must admit that I could not repress a shudder when I wrote them down; I scarcely recognized myself, that I who am usually so timid and apprehensive dared say such things. But if the expressions are not by me, perhaps you will explain to whom they belong ?"— "Nothing is easier. The first is by Tertullian, the second by Hamann, the third by Hamann, the fourth is by Lactantius and is frequently quoted; the fifth is by Shakespeare, in a comedy called *All's Well that Ends Well* Act II, Scene iii; the sixth is by Luther, and the seventh is a remark by King Lear. You see that I am well informed, and that I have caught you with the goods"— "Indeed I do perceive it; but will you now tell me whether all these men have not spoken of the relation between some paradox and an offended consciousness, and will you now note that the individuals who spoke thus were not themselves offended, but precisely persons who held to the paradox; and yet they speak as if they were offended, and offense cannot find a more characteristic expression for itself. Is it not strange that the Paradox should thus, as it were, take the bread from the mouth of the offended consciousness, reducing it to the practice of an idle and unprofitable art? It seems as curious as if an opponent at a disputation, instead of attacking the author's thesis, defended him in his distraction. Does it not seem so to you? However, one merit unquestionably belongs to the offended consciousness in that it brings out the unlikeness more clearly; for in that happy passion which we have not yet given a name, the Unlike is on good terms with the Reason. There must be a difference if there is to be a

synthesis in some third entity. But here the difference consisted in the fact that the Reason yielded itself while the Paradox bestowed itself (*halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin*), and the understanding is consummated in that happy passion which will doubtless soon find a name; and this is the smallest part of the matter, for even if my happiness does not have a name — when I am but happy, I ask for no more."

Chapter 4: The Case of the Contemporary Disciple

THE GOD HAS thus made his appearance as Teacher (for we now resume our story), and has assumed the form of a servant. To send another in his place, one high in his confidence, could not satisfy him; just as it could not satisfy the noble king to send in his stead even the most trusted man in his kingdom. But the God had also another reason; for between man and man the Socratic relationship is the highest and truest. If the God had not come himself, all the relations would have remained on the Socratic level; we would not have had the Moment, and we would have lost the Paradox. The God's servant-form however is not a mere disguise, but is actual; it is not a parastatic body but an actual body; and from the hour that in the omnipotent purpose of his omnipotent love the God become a servant, he has so to speak imprisoned himself in his resolve, and is now bound to go on (to speak foolishly) whether it pleases him or no. He cannot then betray himself. There exists for him no such possibility as that which is open to the noble king, suddenly to show that he is after all the king — which is no perfection in the king (that he has this possibility), but merely discloses his impotence, and the impotence of his resolve, that he cannot really become what he desires to be. But while the God will not be able to send anyone in his place, he can indeed send someone before him, to arouse the learner's attention. This forerunner can of course know nothing of what the God will teach. For the God's presence is not accidental in relation to his teaching, but essential. The God's presence in human form, aye in the humble form of a servant, is itself the teaching, and the God must give the condition along with it (Chapter I) or the learner will understand nothing. Such a forerunner may then serve to arouse the learner's attention, but nothing more.

But the God did not assume the form of a servant to make a mockery of men; hence it cannot be his intention to pass through the world in such manner that no single human being becomes aware of his presence. He will therefore doubtless give some sort of sign, though every understanding resting upon an accommodation is essentially without value for one who does not receive the condition; for which reason he yields to the necessity only unwillingly. Such a sign when given is as capable of repelling the learner as of drawing him nearer. He humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, but he did not come to spend his life as a servant in some private employment, attending to his tasks without in any manner making himself known, either to his master or to his fellow servants — such a measure of wrath we dare not ascribe to the God. That he was a servant means then only that he was a common man, humble and lowly, not to be distinguished from the multitude of men either by soft raiment or other earthly advantages, nor yet by the innumerable legions of angels he left behind him when he humbled himself. But though in these ways resembling common men, his thoughts and cares are not like those which fill the minds of men in general. He goes his way indifferent to the distribution and division of earthly goods, as one who has no possessions and desires none; he is not concerned for his daily bread, like the birds of the air; he does not trouble himself about house and home, as one who neither has nor seeks a shelter or a resting-place; he is not concerned to follow the dead to the grave; he does not turn his head to look at the things that usually claim the attention of men; he is not bound to any woman, so as to be charmed by her and desirous of pleasing her. He seeks one thing only, the love of the disciple. All this seems indeed beautiful, but is it also appropriate? Does he not by this manner of life lift himself above the plane of what is valid for a human life? Is it right for a man to be as care-free as a bird, and even to surpass these creatures in unconcern, since they fly hither and thither in

search of food? Ought he not rather to take thought for the morrow? True, we cannot imagine the God otherwise, but what does the imagination prove? Is it permissible thus to become a foot-loose wanderer, stopping wherever evening overtakes him? The question is whether a human being may venture to express the same idea; for otherwise the God has not realized the essential elements of a human life. We answer in the affirmative; a man may so venture if he has the needed strength. If he can so lose himself in the service of the spirit that it never occurs to him to take care for meat and drink; if he is certain that want will not distract him, and that distress will not confound for him the structure of his life, and teach him to rue that he did not first master the simple things before he presumed to understand more — then he may indeed venture, and his greatness will be more glorious than the serene security of the lilies of the field.

This lofty absorption in his mission will of itself suffice to attract the attention of the multitude, among whom the learner will doubtless be found. The latter will in all probability come from the humbler walks of life; for the wise and the learned will presumably wish first to propose captious questions to the Teacher, invite him to *colloquia,* or subject him to an examination, upon which they will assure him a permanent position and a secure livelihood.

Let us now picture the God going about in the city of his appearance (which city this is, is indifferent). To make his teaching known is the sole necessity of his life; it is his meat and drink. Teaching is his labor, and caring for the learner is his rest from labor. He has no friends nor kindred, but the learner is his brother and sister. It may readily be understood that a web of rumor will soon be woven, catching the curious multitude in its snare. Wherever the Teacher appears the crowd gathers, curious to see, curious to hear, and eager to tell others that they have seen and heard him. Is this curious multitude the learner? By no means. Or if some one of the

authorized teachers of that city sought him out secretly, in order to try his strength with him in argument — is he the learner? By no means. If this teacher or that multitude *learn* anything, the God serves merely as an occasion in the strict Socratic sense.

The God's appearance has now become the news of the day, in the market-place, in the homes of the people, in the council chamber, in the ruler's palace. It gives occasion for much foolish and idle talk, perhaps also for some earnest reflection. But for the learner the news of the day is not an occasion for something else, not even an occasion for the acquirement in Socratic sincerity of a deeper and fuller self-knowledge; for the learner it is the Eternal, the beginning of eternity. The news of the day the beginning of eternity! If the God had permitted himself to be born in an inn, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger, could the contradiction have been greater than that the news of the day should be the swaddling-clothes of the Eternal, aye, as in the supposed instance its actual form, so that the *Moment* is really decisive for eternity! Unless the God grants the condition which makes it possible to understand this, how is it to be supposed that the learner will be able to discover it! But that the God himself gives this condition has been shown above to be a consequence of the *Moment,* and it has also been shown that the Moment is the Paradox, and that without it we are unable to advance, but return to Socrates.

Here at the outset let us take care to make it clear that the question of an historical point of departure arises even for a contemporary disciple; for if we are not careful here, we shall meet with an insuperable difficulty later (in Chapter V), when we come to deal with the case of the disciple whom we call the disciple at second hand. The contemporary disciple gets an historical point of departure for his eternal consciousness as well as any later disciple; for he is contemporary with precisely that historical phenomenon which refuses to be reduced to a moment of merely occasional

significance, but proposes to interest him in another sense than the merely historical, presenting itself to him as a condition for his eternal happiness. If this is not so, then (deducing the consequences conversely) the Teacher is not the God but only a Socrates, and if he does not conduct himself like a Socrates, he is not even a Socrates.

But how does the learner come to realize an understanding with this Paradox? We do not ask that he understand the Paradox but only understand that this is the Paradox. How this takes place we have already shown. It comes to pass when the Reason and the Paradox encounter one another happily in the Moment, when the Reason sets itself aside and the Paradox bestows itself. The third entity in which this union is realized (for it is not realized in the Reason, since it is set aside: nor in the Paradox, which bestows itself — hence it is realized *in* something) is that happy passion to which we will now assign a name, though it is not the name that so much matters. We shall call this passion: *Faith.* This then must be the condition of which we have spoken, which the Paradox contributes. Let us not forget that if the Paradox does not grant this condition the learner must be in possession of it. But if the learner is in possession of the condition he is *eo ipso* himself the Truth, and the moment is merely the moment of occasion (Chapter I).

The contemporary learner finds it easy enough to acquire ad equate historical information. But let us not forget that with respect to the Teacher's birth he will be in the same position as the disciple at second hand; if we wish to urge absolute historical precision there will be only one human being who is fully informed, namely the woman of whom he permitted himself to be born. But though a contemporary learner readily becomes an historical eye-witness, the difficulty is that the knowledge of some historical circumstance, or indeed a knowledge of all the circumstances with the reliability of an eye-witness, does not make such an

eye-witness a disciple; which is apparent from the fact that this knowledge has merely historical significance for him. We see at once that the historical in the more concrete sense is a matter of indifference; we may suppose a degree of ignorance with respect to it, and permit this ignorance as if to annihilate one detail after the other, historically annihilating the historical; if only the Moment remains, as point of departure for the Eternal, the Paradox will be there. Suppose a contemporary who had reduced his hours of sleep to a minimum in order that he might follow this Teacher about, attending him more closely than the pilot-fish the shark; suppose him to keep a hundred spies in his service to watch over the Teacher everywhere, conferring with them each evening in order to obtain a description of the Teacher's movements exact to the minutest detail, accounting for what he had said and where he had been each hour of the day, because his zeal led him to attach importance even to the least trifle — would such a contemporary be the disciple? By no means. If he is accused of historical inaccuracy he can wash his hands of the accusation, but that is all. Suppose another contemporary who concerned himself solely with the doctrine which this Teacher was wont upon occasion to expound. If every word of instruction that fell from his lips seemed more important to him than his daily bread; if he kept a hundred assistants watching for every syllable, so that nothing should be lost; if he conferred with them carefully each evening, in order to obtain a presentation of the doctrine that should have the highest possible reliability — would he on this account be the disciple? By no means, no more than Plato was a disciple of Socrates. Suppose that a contemporary who had been living abroad returned at a time when the Teacher had only a day or two to live. If engagements had prevented him from going to see the Teacher, so that he was brought into touch with him only at the last moment, when he was about to yield his spirit — would this historical ignorance prevent him from becoming the disciple, provided the

Moment became for him decisive for eternity? For the first contemporary, the life of the Teacher was merely an historical event; for the second, the Teacher served as an occasion by which he came to an understanding of himself, and he will be able to forget the Teacher (Chapter I). As over against an eternal understanding of oneself, any knowledge about the Teacher is accidental and historical only, a mere matter of memory. As long as the Eternal and the historical are external to one another, the historical is merely an occasion. If then such a zealous learner, though not carrying things so far as to become a disciple, were to discourse loudly and volubly of how much he owed the Teacher, so that his eulogy was almost endless and its gilding priceless; if he were to resent our explanation that the Teacher had been merely an occasion, neither his eulogy nor his resentment could further our inquiry, since both had the same ground, namely, that though lacking in the courage to understand he had nevertheless not lacked the audacity to go beyond. By romancing and trumpeting in his manner one only deceives oneself and others, in so far as one persuades oneself and others that one really has thoughts — since one owes them to another. Though politeness is ordinarily not supposed to cost anything, such politeness as his is dearly purchased. The enthusiastic outpouring of gratitude, perhaps itself not devoid of tears nor without a moving effect upon others, is a misunderstanding; for the thoughts that such a man has he certainly does not owe to another, and the nonsense he talks is all his own. Ah, how often has it not happened that someone has politely insisted upon owing Socrates a great debt, although he owed Socrates absolutely nothing! Whoever understands Socrates best understands precisely that he owes him nothing, which is as Socrates would have it, and which it is beautiful to have been able to will; whoever believes that he owes Socrates so great a debt may be tolerably certain that Socrates stands ready to acquit him of it without payment, since it will doubtless cause him regret to learn that he

has unwittingly furnished anyone with capital for such usurious speculations. But if the entire situation is non-Socratic, as we have assumed, the disciple will owe *all* to the Teacher; which is quite impossible in relation to Socrates , since as he himself says, he was unable to *beget.* This relationship of owing all to the Teacher cannot be expressed in terms of romancing and trumpeting, but only in that happy passion we call Faith, whose object is the Paradox. But the Paradox unites the contradictories, and is the historical made eternal, and the Eternal made historical. Everyone who understands the Paradox differently may keep the honor of having explained it, which honor he won by not being content to understand it.

It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that the Reason is set aside, that Faith is not a form of knowledge; for all knowledge is either a knowledge of the Eternal, excluding the temporal and historical as indifferent, or it is pure historical knowledge. No knowledge can have for its object the absurdity that the Eternal is the historical. If I know Spinoza's doctrine, then I am in so far not concerned with Spinoza but with his doctrine; at some other time I may be concerned historically with Spinoza himself. But the disciple is in Faith so related to his Teacher as to be eternally concerned with his historical existence.

Now if we assume that it is as we have supposed (and without this assumption we return to the Socratic order of things), that the Teacher himself contributes the condition to the learner, it will follow that the object of Faith is not the *teaching* but the *Teacher.* The Socratic principle is, that the learner being himself the Truth and in possession of the condition can thrust the teacher aside; the Socratic art and the Socratic heroism consisted precisely in helping men to do this. But Faith must steadily hold fast to the Teacher. In order that he may have the power to give the condition the Teacher must be the God; in order that he may be able to put the learner in

possession of it he must be Man. This contradiction is again the object of Faith, and is the Paradox, the Moment. That the God has once for all given man the requisite condition is the eternal Socratic presupposition, which comes into no hostile collision with time, but is incommensurable with the temporal and its determinations. The contradiction of our hypothesis is that man receives the condition in the Moment, the same condition which, since it is requisite for the understanding of the eternal Truth, is *eo ipso* an eternal condition. If the case is otherwise we stand at the Socratic principle of Recollection.

It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that the Reason is set aside, that Faith is not an act of will; for all human volition has its capacity within the scope of an underlying condition. Thus if I have the courage to will the understanding, I am able to understand the Socratic principle, i.e., to understand myself, because from the Socratic point of view I have the condition, and so have the power to will this understanding. But if I do not have the condition (and this is our assumption, in order not to be forced back on the Socratic order of things) all my willing is of no avail; although as soon as the condition is given, the Socratic principle will again apply.

The contemporary learner enjoys one advantage, which the learner of a later generation alas! will doubtless greatly envy him, if only for the sake of doing something. A contemporary may go where he can see the Teacher — and may he then believe his eyes? Why not? But may he also believe that this makes him a disciple? By no means. If he believes his eyes he is deceived, for the God is not immediately knowable. But then perhaps he may shut his eyes. Just so; but if he does, what profit does he have from his contemporaneity? And when he shuts his eyes he will presumably try to form some conception of the God. But if he is able to do this by himself, he is evidently in possession of the condition. What he conceives, moreover,

will be a figure revealing itself to the inner eye of the soul; if he now beholds this, the figure of the servant will confuse him when he again opens his eyes. Let us go on. We have assumed that the Teacher dies; now that he is dead, what will the learner who had been his contemporary do? Perhaps he has sketched some portraits of him; he may even have in his possession an entire series of such portraits, depicting and accurately reflecting every change that by reason of age or state of mind may have taken place in the outward appearance of the Teacher. When he examines these portraits and assures himself that such and such was his appearance, may he then believe his eyes? Why not? But is he on that account a disciple? By no means. But then he may proceed to form some conception of the God. But the God cannot be conceived; it was for this very reason that he appeared in the form of a servant. And yet the servant-form is no deception; for if such were the case, this moment would not be the Moment, but an accidental circumstance, a mere appearance, which as an occasion infinitely vanishes in comparison with the Eternal. And if the learner had the power to form a conception of the God by himself, he must himself have had the condition. Thus he needed only a reminder to be enabled to form this conception, in a manner well within his capacity; though of this he may not previously have been aware. But if this is the case, the reminder will vanish instantly like a tiny atom in the eternal potentiality which was present in his soul, and which now becomes a reality, but again as reality eternally presupposes itself.

How does the learner then become a believer or disciple? When the Reason is set aside and he receives the condition. When does he receive the condition? In the Moment. What does this condition condition? The understanding of the Eternal. But such a condition must be an eternal condition. — He receives accordingly the eternal condition in the Moment, and is aware that he has so received it; for otherwise he merely comes to

himself in the consciousness that he had it from eternity. It is in the Moment that he receives it, and from the Teacher himself. All romancing and trumpeting abroad about one's cleverness in penetrating the God's incognito, though without receiving the condition from the Teacher; that one took notice of him by the impression he made, such a strange feeling coming over one in his presence; that there was a something in his voice and mien, etc., etc. — all this is but silly twaddle, by which one does not become a disciple but only makes a mockery of the God. The servant-figure was no incognito. And when in the strength of his omnipotent resolve, which is like his love, the God makes himself the equal of the humblest, let no innkeeper or professor of philosophy imagine that he is a shrewd enough fellow to detect anything, unless the God gives the condition. And when the God in the form of a servant stretches forth the hand of omnipotence, let no astonished and open-mouthed beholder imagine that he is a disciple because he is astonished, and because he can gather others about him who in their turn are astonished over his story. If there is no necessity for the God to give the condition, the learner knew from the beginning how it is with the God, even if he did not know that he knew it; the other is not even the Socratic thought, but infinitely lower.

But the outward figure (we do not mean its detail) is not a matter of indifference to the disciple. It is what he has seen and his hands have handled. However, the outward figure is not important in the sense that he would cease to be a believer if he happened to meet the Teacher some day on the street and did not at once recognize him or even walked some distance with him on the way without realizing that it was he. The God gave to the disciple the condition that enables him to see him, opening for him the eyes of Faith. But it was a terrible thing to see this outward figure, to have converse with him as with one of us, and every moment that Faith was not present to see only the servant-form. When the Teacher is gone from the

disciple in death, memory may bring his figure before him; but it is not on this account that the disciple believes, but because he received the condition from the God, and hence is enabled again to see, in memory s trustworthy mage, the person of the God. So it is with the disciple, who knows that he would have seen nothing without the condition, since the first thing he learned to understand was that he was in Error.

But in that case is not Faith as paradoxical as the Paradox? Precisely so; how else could it have the Paradox for its object, and be happy in its relation to the Paradox? Faith is itself a miracle, and all that holds true of the Paradox also holds true of Faith. But within the framework of this miracle everything is again Socratic, yet so that the miracle is never cancelled — the miracle namely, that the eternal condition is given in time. Everything is Socratic; the relation between one contemporary and another in so far as both are believers is entirely Socratic: the one owes the other nothing, but both owe everything to the God.

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I think I hear someone say: "Then it seems that the contemporary derives absolutely no advantage from his contemporaneity; and yet if we assume what you have assumed about God's appearance among men, it lies so near at hand to count the contemporary generation blessed, because it saw and heard."— "Aye, truly it lies near at hand; so near I think, that this generation has doubtless also counted itself blessed. Shall we assume that this was the case? For otherwise it was surely not happy, and our praise of this generation is merely an expression for the fact that by acting differently under the same circumstances, one might have become happy. But if this is the case, our praise may need to be qualified in a variety of ways, when we consider the matter more carefully, and may in the last analysis become altogether ambiguous. Suppose, as we sometimes read in old chronicles,

that an emperor celebrated his marriage for an entire week with festivities the like of which had never before been seen, every breath of air being scented with perfume, while the ear found it constantly vibrant with music and song, so as to enhance the enjoyment of the costliest viands, set forth in richest abundance. Day and night the festivities continued, for the night was made as bright as the day by torches that illumined the scene — but whether seen by the light of day or by the illumination of the night, the queen was more beautiful and more gracious than any mortal woman; and the whole was an enchantment, wonderful as the most audacious desire in its still more audacious fulfillment. Let us assume that all this had happened in the past, and that we had to be content with the meager and fasting report of what had taken place — why should we not, humanly speaking, count the contemporaries happy? That is to say those contemporaries who saw and heard and grasped with their hands; for otherwise of what avail would it be to be contemporary? The splendors of the imperial marriage-feast and the rich abundance of its pleasures were directly accessible to sight and touch, so that anyone who was a contemporary in the stricter sense would presumably have feasted his eyes and made his heart to be glad. But suppose the splendor had been of a different kind, not immediately apparent to the senses, what profit would there then be in being a contemporary, since one would not on that account necessarily be contemporary with the splendor? Such a contemporary could scarcely be counted happy, nor could we bless his eyes and ears; for he was not contemporary with the splendor, neither hearing nor seeing anything of it. And this not because he lacked time and opportunity (in the immediate sense), but because of something else, which could be lacking even if he himself had been present, and favored with opportunities for seeing and hearing to the fullest extent, and had not permitted these opportunities (in the immediate sense) to go unused. But what does it mean thus to say that one can be a contemporary without

being contemporary, that one may be a contemporary and though utilizing this advantage (in the immediate sense) yet be a non-contemporary — what does this mean except that it is quite impossible to be an immediate contemporary of such a Teacher and of such an event; so that the real contemporary is not the real contemporary by virtue of an immediate contemporaneity, but by virtue of something else? A contemporary may for all that be a non-contemporary; the real contemporary is such not by virtue of his immediate contemporaneity; *ergo,* it must also be possible for a non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) to be a contemporary, by virtue of that something which makes the contemporary a real contemporary. But the non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) is of course the member of a later generation, whence it must be possible for an individual so situated to be a real contemporary. Or what do we mean by being contemporary? Is it perhaps this kind of a contemporary that we praise, one who can speak as follows: 'I ate and drank in his presence, and he taught in our streets. I saw him often, and knew him for a common man of humble origin. Only a very few thought to find something extraordinary in him; as far as I am concerned, I could see nothing remarkable about him, and I was certainly as much of a contemporary as anybody.' Or is this what we mean by calling anyone a contemporary, and is he a contemporary to whom the God must say if they meet in another life, and he seeks to urge his contemporaneity: 'I do not know you'? And so it was in truth, just as it was equally true that such a contemporary could not have known the Teacher. Only the believer, i.e., the non-immediate contemporary, knows the Teacher, since he receives the condition from him, and therefore knows him even as he is known."— "Stop there a moment, I beg you; for if you keep on talking in this fashion I will not be able to get in a single word. You talk like a disputant for the doctorate, or better still, you talk like a book; and what is worse for you, you talk like a very particular book. For here again, whether wittingly or

unwittingly, you have introduced some words into the discourse which are not your own, nor by you placed in the mouths of the speakers. The words are very well known, except that you have substituted the singular for the plural. Here are the scripture passages (for the words are taken from the Bible): 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets'; 'I tell ye, I know not whence ye are.' However, let this pass without further comment for the present. But are you not drawing too sweeping a conclusion when you infer from the Teacher's reply to a given individual, 'I do not know you, that this individual was not a contemporary and had not known the Teacher? If the emperor of whom you spoke had said to one who claimed contemporaneity with his splendid marriage-feast, 'I do not know you,' would the emperor thereby have proved that he was not a contemporary ?"— "By no means would the emperor have proved such a thing; he would at the most have proved himself a fool, not content like Mithridates to know the name of every soldier in his army, but pretending to know every contemporary, and assuming to decide by this knowledge whether any given individual had been contemporary or not. The emperor was immediately knowable, and hence someone may very well have known the emperor, even if the emperor did not know him. But the Teacher of our hypothesis was not immediately knowable; he could be known only when he himself gave the condition. Whoever received the condition received it from the Teacher himself, and hence the Teacher must know everyone who knows him, and no one can know the Teacher except through being known by him. Are we not agreed on this point, and do you perhaps at once perceive the remoter consequences of what we have been saying? When the believer is the believer and knows the God through having received the condition from the God himself, every successor must receive the condition from the God himself in precisely the same sense, and cannot receive it at second hand; for if he did, this second hand would have

to be the hand of the God himself, and in that case there is no question of a second hand. But a successor who receives the condition from the God himself is a contemporary, a real contemporary; a privilege enjoyed only by the believer, but also enjoyed by every believer."— "Indeed, now that you have pointed it out I clearly perceive the truth of this, and I already descry the far-reaching consequences. I am only surprised that I had not discovered it for myself, and I would give a great deal for the honor of having been the discoverer."— "And I would give still more if I could be sure that I had fully understood it; this concerns me far more than who discovered it. But I have not yet entirely understood it, as I shall show you presently in a later chapter, at which time I will rely on your assistance, you who have at once understood the whole. But with your permission I shall now submit what the lawyers call a brief, summarizing what I have expounded and understood up to the present time. And as I present this brief I ask you to look to your rights and to assert them; for I hereby summon you *sub poena praeclusi et perpetui silentii.* The immediate contemporaneity can serve only as an occasion. (a) It can serve as occasion for the acquirement of historical knowledge. In this respect a contemporary of the emperor's marriage-feast is far more fortunately situated than a contemporary of the Teacher; for the latter merely gets an opportunity to see the servant-form, and at most one or another mysterious deed, in relation to which he must remain uncertain whether to admire or to resent being made a fool of, since he will presumably not even wish to persuade the Teacher to do it over again, as a juggler does, in order to give the spectators a better opportunity to see how the trick is turned. (b) It may serve as an occasion for the contemporary to acquire a Socratic deepening of his self-knowledge, in which case the contemporaneity vanishes as nothing in comparison with the Eternal which he discovers within himself. (c) Finally (and this is our assumption, lest we be thrown 'back on Socrates), it may serve as an

occasion by means of which the contemporary, as one who is in Error, receives the condition from the God, and so beholds his glory with the eyes of faith. Aye, happy such a contemporary! But such a contemporary is not in the immediate sense an eye-witness; he is contemporary as a believer, in the autopsy of Faith. But in this autopsy every non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) becomes a contemporary. If then some member of a later generation, perhaps even moved by his own romanticism, yearns to be a contemporary in the immediate sense, he only proves himself a pretender, recognizable like the false Smerdes by the absence of ears — the ears of Faith namely, though he may have asses' ears long enough to permit even a contemporary (in the immediate sense) to hear himself into being a non-contemporary. If such a man continues to romance about how splendid it is to be a contemporary (in the immediate sense), betraying a restless eagerness to be up and away, he must doubtless be allowed to go; but if you watch him you will readily see, both from the nature of his movements and the direction he takes, that he goes not 'to meet the Paradox with its awe and fear, but rather trips off like a dancing-master to be in time for the emperor's nuptials. And though he gives his expedition a sacred name, preaching fellowship for others so that they join the pilgrimage in crowds, he will none the less scarcely discover the holy land (in the immediate sense), since it is not to be found either on the map or on the earth; his journey is a jest, like the children's game of seeing somebody to 'grandmother's door.' And though he may give himself no rest, but runs faster than a horse can trot or a man can lie, he runs only with the lime-rod, misunderstanding himself as bird-catcher; for if the birds do not come to him of their own accord, it will certainly not help to run after them. — In only one respect could I be tempted to count a contemporary (in the immediate sense) more fortunate than the member of some later generation. For if we assume that centuries intervene between this event and the period

of a succeeding generation there will presumably have accumulated much gossip about this thing, so much foolish chatter that the untrue and confusing rumors with which the contemporary (in the immediate sense) had to contend, did not prove nearly so serious an obstacle to the realization of a right relationship. And that so much the more, since the echo of the centuries, like the echo in some of our churches, would not only have tended to surround Faith with noisy chatter, but might even have transformed Faith itself into chatter; which could not very well have happened in the first generation, when Faith must have revealed itself in all its pristine vigor, through the contrast easily distinguishable from everything else.”

Interlude

DEAR READER! LET us now assume that this Teacher has made his appearance, that he is dead and buried, and that some time intervenes between Chapters IV and V. Likewise it sometimes happens in a comedy that several years elapse between two successive acts. In order to indicate this passage of time, the orchestra is occasionally made to play a symphony or the like, foreshortening the time by filling it with music. In a somewhat similar manner I have thought to fill out the intervening time by a consideration of the problem set forth above. How long the interval should be, I am content to leave to your discretion; but if it seems agreeable to you, let us in a spirit of jest and earnest assume that precisely 1843 years have elapsed. You will note that I ought to proceed somewhat leisurely, if only for the sake of the illusion; for 1843 years is an exceptionally generous allotment of time, likely to put me in a predicament the opposite of that in which our philosophers find themselves, whom the time usually permits only an indication of their meaning; and the opposite also to that of our historians, who find that not the material, but the time, leaves them in the lurch. Hence when you find me somewhat long-winded, repeating the same things, "about the same things" please notice, you must remember that it is for the sake of the illusion; and then you will no doubt pardon my prolixity, and interpret it in a manner more satisfactory to yourself rather than suppose that I allowed myself to think that this matter needed consideration, even by you, in that I suspected you of not completely understanding yourself with respect to it. And this in spite of the fact that I do not by any means doubt that you have completely understood and assented to the newest philosophy, which like the modern age generally seems to suffer from a curious distraction, confusing promise with performance, the

superscription with the execution; for what age and what philosophy was ever so wonderful and wonderfully great as our own — in superscriptions!

1. Coming into Existence

In what sense is there change in that which comes into existence? Or, what is the nature of the coming-into-existence kind of change ()*?* All other change () presupposes the existence of that which changes, even when the change consists in ceasing to exist But this is not the case with coming into existence. For if the subject of coming into existence does not itself remain unchanged during the change of coming into existence, that which comes into existence is not *this* subject which comes into existence, but something else. Then the question involves a in that the inquirer in the given case either sees another change co-present with the change of coming into existence, which confuses the question for him, or he mistakes the nature of what is coming into existence and therefore is not in position to ask the question. If a plan in coming into existence [in being fulfilled or carried out] is in itself changed, it is not this plan which comes into existence; but if it comes into existence without being changed, what then is the change of coming into existence? This coming-into-existence kind of change, therefore, is not a change in essence but in being and is a transition from not existing to existing. But this non-being which the subject of coming into existence leaves behind must itself have some sort of being. Otherwise "the subject of coming into existence would not remain unchanged during the change of coming into existence," unless it had not been at all, and then the change of coming into existence would for another reason be absolutely different from every other kind of change, since it would be no change at all, for every change always presupposes something which changes. But such a being, which is nevertheless a non-being, is precisely what possibility is; and a being which is being is indeed actual being or actuality;

and the change of coming into existence is a transition from possibility to actuality.

Can the necessary come into existence? Coming into existence is a change, but the necessary cannot be changed, since it always relates itself to itself and relates itself to itself in the same way. All coming into existence is a *suffering,* and the necessary cannot suffer; it cannot undergo the suffering of the actual, which is that the possible (not only the excluded possibility but also the accepted possibility) reveals itself as nothing in the moment it becomes actual, for the possible is made into nothing by the actual. Everything which comes into-existence proves precisely by coming into existence that it is not necessary, for the only thing which cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary *is.*

Is not necessity then a synthesis of possibility and actuality? What could this mean? Possibility and actuality do not differ in essence but in being; how could there from this difference be formed a synthesis constituting necessity, which is not a determination of being but a determination of essence, since it is the essence of the necessary to be. If possibility and actuality could be united to become necessity, they would become an absolutely different essence, which is not a kind of change; and in becoming necessity or the necessary, they would become that which alone of all things excludes coming into existence, which is just as impossible as it is self-contradictory. (Compare the Aristotelian principle: "it is possible," "it is possible that not," "it is not possible." — The theory of true and false propositions — Epicurus — tends only to confuse the issue here, since essence and not being is reflected upon, and in this way no help is given with respect to the characterization of the future.)

The necessary is a category entirely by itself. Nothing ever comes into existence with necessity; likewise the necessary never comes into existence and something by coming into existence never becomes the necessary.

Nothing whatever exists because it is necessary, but the necessary exists because it is necessary or because the necessary Is. The actual is no more necessary than the possible, for the necessary is absolutely different from both. (Compare Aristotle's doctrine of the two kinds of possibility in relationship to the necessary. His mistake lies in his beginning with the principle that everything necessary is possible. In order to avoid having to assert contradictory and even self-contradictory predicates about the necessary, he helps himself out by two kinds of possibility, instead of discovering that his first principle is incorrect, since possibility cannot be predicated of the necessary.)

The change involved in coming into existence is actuality; the transition takes place with freedom. No coming into existence is necessary. It was not necessary before the coming into existence, for then there could not have been the coming into existence, nor after the coming into existence, for then there would not have been the coming into existence.

All coming into existence takes place with freedom, not by necessity. Nothing comes into existence by virtue of a logical ground, but only by a cause. Every cause terminates in a freely effecting cause. The illusion occasioned by the intervening causes is that the coming into existence seems to be necessary; the truth about intervening causes is that just as they themselves have come Into existence they point back ultimately to a freely effecting cause. Even the possibility of deducing consequences from a law of nature gives no evidence for the necessity of any coming into existence, which is clear as soon as one reflects definitively on coming into existence. The same is the case with manifestations of freedom, provided we do not let ourselves be deceived by the manifestations of freedom but reflect upon the coming into existence.

2. The Historical

Everything that has come into existence is *eo ipso* historical. For even if it accepts no further historical predicate, It nevertheless accepts the one decisive historical predicate: it has come into existence. That whose coming into existence is a simultaneous coming into existence (*Nebeneinander,* Space) has no other history than this. But even when viewed in this light (*en masse*), and abstracting from what an ingenious speculation calls the history of nature in a special sense, nature has a history.

But the historical is the past (for the present pressing upon the confines of the future has not yet become historical). How then can it be said that nature, though immediately present, is historical, except in the sense of the said ingenious speculation? The difficulty comes from the fact that nature is too abstract to have a dialectic with respect to time in the stricter sense. This is nature's imperfection, that it has no history in any other sense; but it is a perfection in nature that it nevertheless has this suggestion of a history, namely that it has come into existence. (This constitutes its past, the fact that it exists is its present.) On the other hand, it is the perfection of the Eternal to have no history and, of all that is, the Eternal alone has absolutely no history.

However, coming into existence may present a reduplication, i.e., the possibility of a second coming into existence within the first coming into existence. Here we have the historical in the stricter sense, subject to a dialectic with respect to time. The coming into existence which in this is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole sphere is identical with the coming into existence of nature is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole reality. But this historical coming into existence in the stricter sense is a coming into existence within a coming into existence, which should constantly be kept in mind. The more specifically historical coming into existence occurs by the operation of a relatively freely effecting

cause, which in turn points ultimately to an absolutely freely effecting cause.

3. The Past

What has happened has happened, and cannot be undone; in this sense it does not admit of change (Chrysippus the Stoic — Diodorus the Megarian). Is this immutability identical with the immutability of the necessary? The immutability of the past has been brought about by a change, namely the change of coming into existence; such an immutability does not exclude all change, since it did not exclude this change. All change is excluded (subjecting the concept to a temporal dialectic) only by being excluded in every moment. If the past is conceived as necessary, this can happen only by virtue of forgetting that it has come into existence; is such forgetfulness perhaps also necessary?

What has happened has happened as it happened; in this sense it does not admit of change. But is this immutability identical with the immutability of the necessary? The immutability of the past consists in the fact that its actual "thus" cannot become different; but does it follow from this that its possible "how" could not have been realized in a different manner? The immutability of the necessary, on the contrary, consists in its constant relating itself to itself, and in its relating itself to itself always in the same manner, excluding every change. It is not content with the immutability that belongs to the past, which as we have shown is not merely subject to a dialectic with respect to a prior change from which it emerges, but must even suffer a dialectic with respect to a higher change which annuls it. (Repentance, for example, which seeks to annul an actuality.)

The future has not yet happened. But it is not *on that account* less necessary than the past, since the past did not become necessary by coming into existence, but on the contrary proved by coming into existence that it

was not necessary. If the past had become necessary it would not be possible to infer the opposite about the future, but it would rather follow that the future also was necessary. If necessity could gain a foothold at a single point, there would no longer be any distinguishing between the past and the future. To assume to predict the future (prophesy) and to assume to understand the necessity of the past are one and the same thing, and only custom makes the one seem more plausible than the other to a given generation. The past has come into existence; coming into existence is the change of actuality brought about by freedom. If the past had become necessary it would no longer belong to freedom, i.e., it would no longer belong to that by which it came into existence. Freedom would then be in a sorry case, both an object of laughter and deserving of tears, since it would be responsible for what did not belong necessity to devour. Freedom itself would be an illusion, to it, being destined to bring offspring into the world for and coming into existence no less so; freedom would be witchcraft and coming into existence a false alarm.

4. The Apprehension of the Past

Nature, as the spatial order, has only an immediate existence. But everything that admits of a dialectic with respect to time is characterized ‘by a certain duality, in that after having been present it can persist as past. The essentially historical is always the past (it is over, but whether years since or only a matter of days ago makes no difference), and has as past its own actuality; for the fact that it has happened is certain and dependable. But the fact that it has happened is on the other hand the ground of an uncertainty, by which the apprehension will always be prevented from assimilating the past as if it had been thus from all eternity. Only in terms of this conflict between certainty and uncertainty, the distinguishing mark of all that has come into existence, and hence also of the past, can the past be

understood. When the past is understood in any other manner, the apprehension has misunderstood itself in the role of apprehension; and it has misunderstood its object, as if anything such could be the object of an apprehension. Every apprehension of the past which proposes to understand it better by construing it,; has only the more thoroughly misunderstood it. (A manifestation theory instead of a construction theory is at first sight deceptive, but the next moment we have the secondary construction and the necessary manifestation.) The past is not necessary, since it came into existence; it did not become necessary by coming into existence (which is a contradiction); still less does it become necessary through someone’s apprehension of it. (Distance in time tends to promote an intellectual illusion, just as distance in space provokes a sensory illusion. A contemporary does not perceive the necessity of what comes into existence, but when centuries intervene between the event and the beholder he perceives the necessity, just as distance makes the square tower seem round.) If the past became necessary through being apprehended, the past would be the gainer by as much as the apprehension lost, since the latter would come to apprehend something else, which is a poof sort of apprehension. If the object of apprehension is changed in the process of apprehension, the apprehension is changed into a misapprehension. Knowledge of the present does not confer necessity upon it; foreknowledge of the future gives it no necessity (Boethius); knowledge of the past confers no necessity upon the past; for no knowledge and no apprehension has anything of its own to give.

Whoever apprehends the past, *historico-philosophus,* is therefore a prophet in retrospect (Daub). That he is a prophet expresses the fact that the certainty of the past is based upon an uncertainty, an uncertainty that exists for the past in precisely the same sense that it exists for the future, being rooted in the possibility (Leibniz and the possible worlds) out of which it

could not *emerge* with necessity, *nam necessariam se ipso prius sit, necesse est.* The historian thus again confronts the past, moved by the emotion which is the passionate sense for coming into existence: wonder. If the philosopher never finds occasion to wonder (and how could it occur to anyone to wonder at a necessary construction, except by a new kind of contradiction?) he has *eo ipso* nothing to do with the historical; for wherever the process of coming into existence is involved, as is the case in relation to the past, there the uncertainty attaching to the most certain of events (the uncertainty of coming into existence) can find expression only in this passion, which is as necessary to the philosopher as it is worthy of him. (Plato, Aristotle.) Even if the event is certain in the extreme, even if wonder offers its consent in advance, saying that if this had not happened it would have had to be invented (Baader), even then the passion of wonder would fall into contradiction with itself if it falsely imputed necessity, and thereby cheated itself. — As for the Method, both the word itself and the concept sufficiently show that the progress connoted is teleological. But in every such movement there is each instant a pause (where wonder stands *in pausa* and waits upon coming into existence), the pause of coming into existence and of possibility, precisely because the lies outside. If there is only one way possible, the is not outside, but in the movement itself, and even behind it, as in the case of an immanent progression.

So much for the apprehension of the past. We have in the meanwhile presupposed that a knowledge of the past is given; how is such knowledge acquired? The historical cannot be given immediately to the senses, since the *elusiveness* of coming into existence is involved in it. The immediate impression of a natural phenomenon or of an event is not the impression of the historical, for the *coming into existence* involved cannot be sensed immediately, but only the immediate presence. But the presence of the

historical includes the process of coming into existence, or else it is not the presence of the historical as such.

Immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive. This is by itself enough to show that the historical -cannot be the object of either, because the historical has the elusiveness which is implicit in all coming into existence. As compared with the immediate, coming into existence has an elusiveness by which even the most dependable fact is rendered doubtful. Thus when the observer sees a star, the star becomes involved in doubt the moment he seeks to become aware of its having come into existence. It is as if reflection took the star away from the senses. So much then is clear, that the organ for the historical must have a structure analogous with the historical itself; it must comprise a corresponding somewhat by which it may repeatedly negate in its certainty the uncertainty that corresponds to the uncertainty of coming into existence. The latter uncertainty is two-fold: the nothingness of the antecedent non-being is one side of it, while the annihilation of the possible is another, the latter being at the same time the annihilation of every other possibility. Now faith has precisely the required character; for in the certainty of belief (*Tro* is translated here and in the following three pages as *belief* or "faith . . . in a direct and ordinary sense," as distinguished from Faith "in an eminent sense." See p-09. — H.V.H.) [Danish: *Tro, faith* or *belief*] there is always present a negated uncertainty, in every way corresponding to the uncertainty of coming into existence. Faith believes what it does not see; it does not believe that the star is there, for that it sees, but it believes that the star has come into existence. The same holds true of an event. The "what" of a happening may be known immediately, but by no means can it be known immediately that it has happened. Nor can it be known immediately that it happens, not even if it happens as we say in front of our very noses. The elusiveness pertaining to an event consists in its having happened, in which

fact lies the transition from nothing, from non-being, and from the manifold possible “how.” Immediate sensation and immediate cognition have no suspicion of the uncertainty with which belief approaches its object, but neither do they suspect the certainty which emerges from this uncertainty. Immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive, This is important for the understanding of doubt, and for the assignment to belief of its proper place through a comparison with doubt. This thought underlies Greek skepticism, strange as it may seem. Yet it should not be so difficult to understand, nor to perceive the light that this throws upon the nature of belief, provided one has escaped being altogether confused by the Hegelian doctrine of a universal doubt, against which it is certainly not necessary to preach. For what the Hegelians say about this is of such a character as rather to encourage a modest little doubt of how far it can be true that they have ever doubted anything at all. Greek skepticism was of the retiring kind (). The Greek skeptic did not doubt by virtue of his knowledge, but by an act of will (refusal to give assent —). From this it follows that doubt can be overcome only by a free act, an act of will, as every Greek skeptic would understand as soon as he had understood himself. But he did not wish to overcome his skepticism, precisely because he willed to doubt. For this he will have to assume the responsibility; but let us not impute to him the stupidity of supposing that doubt is necessary, or the still greater stupidity of supposing that if it were, it could ever be overcome. The Greek skeptic did not deny the validity of sensation or immediate cognition; error, he says, has an entirely different ground, for it comes from the conclusions that I draw. If I can only refrain from drawing conclusions, I will never be deceived. If my senses, for example, show me an object that seems round at a distance but square near at hand, or a stick bent in the water which is straight when taken out, the senses have not deceived me. But I run the risk of being deceived when I draw a conclusion about the stick or the object.

Hence the skeptic keeps his mind constantly in suspense, and it was this frame of mind that he *willed* to maintain. In so far as Greek skepticism has been called *, ,* , these predicates do not express its distinctive feature, for Greek skepticism had recourse to knowledge only for the sake of protecting the state of mind which was its principal concern, and therefore did not even express its negative cognitive results , for fear of being caught in a conclusion. The state of mind was the skeptic's chief concern. *(,* Diogenes Laertius, IX, 107.) — By way of contrast it now becomes easy to see that belief is not a form of knowledge, but a free act, an expression of will. It believes the fact of coming into existence, and has thus succeeded in overcoming within itself the uncertainty that corresponds to the nothingness of the antecedent non-being; it believes the "thus" of what has come into existence, and has consequently succeeded in annulling within itself the possible "how." Without denying the possibility of another "thus," this present "thus" is for belief most certain.

In so far as that which through its relation to belief becomes historical and as historical becomes the object of belief (the one corresponds to the other) has an immediate existence, and is immediately apprehended, it is not subject to error. A contemporary may then safely use his eyes and so forth, but let him look to his conclusions.

He cannot know, as a matter of immediate cognition, that his fact has come into existence, but neither can he know it as a matter of necessity; for the very first expression for coming into existence is a 'breach of continuity. The moment faith believes that its fact has come into existence, has happened, it makes the event and the fact doubtful in the process of becoming, and makes its "thus" also doubtful through its relation to the possible "how" of the coming into existence. The conclusion of belief is not so much a conclusion as a resolution, and it is for this reason that belief excludes doubt. When belief concludes: this exists, *ergo,* it must have come

into existence, it might appear to be making an inference from effect to cause. However, this is not quite the case; and even if it were so it must be remembered that the cognitive inference is from cause to effect, or rather, from ground to consequent (Jacobi). But it is not accurate to say that the conclusion of belief is an inference from effect to cause; I cannot sense or know immediately that what I sense or know immediately is an effect, since for the immediate apprehension it merely is. I 'believe that it is an effect, for in order to bring it under this category I must already have made it doubtful with the uncertainty implicit in coming into existence. When belief resolves to do this, doubt has been overcome; in that very instant the indifference of doubt has been dispelled and its equilibrium overthrown, not by knowledge but by will. Thus it will be seen that belief is the most disputable of things while in process of approximation; for the uncertainty of doubt, strong and invincible in making things ambiguous, *dis-putare,* is brought into subjection within it. But it is the least disputable when once constituted, by virtue of its new quality. Belief is the opposite of doubt. Belief and doubt are not two forms of knowledge, determinable in continuity with one another, for neither of them is a cognitive act; they are opposite passions. Belief is a sense for coming into existence, and doubt is a protest against every conclusion that transcends immediate sensation and immediate cognition. The skeptic does not, for example, deny his own existence; but he draws no conclusion from fear of being deceived. In so far as he has recourse to dialectics in order to make the opposite of any given conclusion seem equally probable, it is not on the foundation of these dialectical arguments that he sets up his skepticism. They are but outworks, human accommodations. He has no result, therefore, not even a negative result; for this would be to recognize the validity of knowledge. By an act of will he resolves to keep himself under restraint, and to refrain from every conclusion ( ).

One who is not contemporary with the historical, has, instead of the immediacy of sense and cognition, in which the historical is not contained, the testimony of contemporaries, to which he stands related in the same manner as the contemporaries stand related to the said immediacy. Even if the content of the testimony has undergone in the process of communication the change which makes it historical, the non-contemporary cannot take it up into his consciousness without giving it his assent, thus making it historical for himself, unless he is to transform it into something unhistorical for himself. The immediacy of the testimony, i.e., the fact that the testimony is there, is what is given as immediately present to him; but the historicity of the present consists in its having come into existence, and the historicity of the past consists in its having once been present through having come into existence. Whenever a successor believes the past (not its truth, which is a matter of cognition and concerns not existence but essence), whenever he believes that the past was once present through having come into existence, the uncertainty which is implicit in coming into existence is present in the past that is the object of his belief. This uncertainty (the nothingness of the antecedent non-being — the possible "how" corresponding to the actual "thus") will exist for him as well as for a contemporary; his mind will be in a state of suspense exactly as was the mind of a contemporary. He has no longer a mere immediacy before him; neither does he confront a necessary coming into *existence.* A successor believes, to be sure, on accounting into existence, but only the "thus" of *coming into existence.* A successor believes, to be sure, on account of the testimony some contemporary; but only in the same sense as a contemporary believes on account of his immediate sensation and immediate cognition. But no contemporary can believe by virtue of this immediacy alone, and neither can any successor believe solely by virtue of the testimony to which he has access.

* *

Thus at no time does the past become necessary, just as it was not necessary when it came into existence nor revealed itself as necessary to the contemporary who believed it, i.e., believed that it had come into existence. For belief and coming into existence correspond to one another, and are concerned with the two negative determinations of being, namely the past and the future, and with the present in so far as it is conceived from the point of view of a negative determination of being, namely as having come into existence. Necessity, on the other hand, is wholly a matter of essence, and thus it is of the essence of the necessary to exclude coming into existence. The possibility from which that which became actual once emerged still clings to it and remains with it as past, even after the lapse of centuries. Whenever a successor reasserts its having come into existence, which he does by believing it, he evokes this potentiality anew, irrespective of whether there can be any question of his having a more specific conception of it or not.

Supplement: Application

What has here been said applies to the historical in the direct and ordinary sense, whose only contradiction is that it has come into existence, which contradiction is implicit in all coming into existence. Here again one must guard against the illusion of supposing that it is easier to understand after the event than before the event. Whoever thinks this does not yet grasp the fact that what he apprehends has come into existence; he has before him only the present content of a sensory and cognitive immediacy, in which coming into existence is not contained. Let us now return to our story, and to our hypothesis that the God *has been.* As far ‘as the direct and ordinary form of the historical is concerned, we have seen that this cannot become

historical for immediate sensation or cognition, either for a contemporary or for a successor. But this historical fact which is the content of our hypothesis has a peculiar character, since it is not an ordinary historical fact, but a fact based on a self-contradiction. (This is sufficient to show that in relation to this fact there is no difference between an immediate contemporary and a successor; for over against a self-contradiction, and the risk involved in giving it assent, an immediate contemporaneity can yield no advantage.) Yet it is an historical fact, and only for the apprehension of Faith. Faith is here taken first in the direct and ordinary sense [belief], as the relationship of the mind to the historical; but secondly also in the eminent sense, the sense in which the word can be used only once, i.e., many times, but only in one relationship. From the eternal point of view, one does not *have Faith* that the God exists [eternally is], even if one assumes that he does exist. The use of the word Faith in this connection enshrines a misunderstanding. Socrates did not have faith that the God existed. What he knew about the God he arrived at by way of Recollection; the God's existence was for him by no means historical existence. If his knowledge of the God was imperfect in comparison with his who according to our supposition receives the condition from the God himself, this does not concern us here; for Faith does not have to do with essence, but with being [historical existence], and the assumption that the God is determines him eternally and not historically. The historical fact for a contemporary is that the God has *come into existence;* for the member of a later generation the historical fact is that the God has been present through *having come into existence.* Herein precisely lies the contradiction. No one can become immediately contemporary with this historical fact, as has been shown in the preceding; it is the object of Faith, since it concerns coming into existence. No question is here raised as to the true content of this; the question is if one will give assent to the God's having come into existence,

by which the God’s eternal essence is inflected in the dialectical determinations of coming into existence.

Our historical fact thus stands before us. It has no immediate contemporary, since it is historical in the first degree, corresponding to faith [belief] in the ordinary sense; it has no immediate contemporary in the second degree, since it is based upon a contradiction, corresponding to Faith in the eminent sense. But this last resemblance, subsisting between those who are most diversely situated temporally, cancels the difference which in respect of the first relation exists for those of diverse temporal situations. Every time the believer makes this fact an object of his Faith, every time he makes it historical for himself, he re-instates the dialectical determinations of coming into existence with respect to it. If ever so many thousands of years have intervened, if the fact came to entail ever so many consequences, it does not on that account become more necessary (and the consequences themselves, from an ultimate point of view, are only relatively necessary, since they derive from the freely effecting cause); to say nothing of the topsy-turvy notion that the fact might become necessary by reason of the consequences, the consequences being wont to seek their ground in something else, and not to constitute a ground for that of which they are the consequences. If a contemporary or a predecessor saw ever so clearly the preparations, perceived intimations and symptoms of what was about to come, the fact was nevertheless not necessary when it came into existence. That is to say, this fact is no more necessary when viewed as future, than it is necessary when viewed as past.

Chapter 5: The Disciple at Second Hand

DEAR READER! SINCE by our supposition 1843 years have elapsed between the contemporary disciple and the time of this conversation, there would seem to be ample reason to raise the question of a disciple at second hand, for this relationship must often have been repeated. The question seems one, therefore, that we cannot refuse to discuss; nor does it seem that we can dismiss the demand involved in the question for an explanation of the difficulties that may offer when we seek to determine the disciple at second hand in his resemblance to, and difference from, the contemporary disciple. But in spite of this, should we not perhaps first consider whether the above question is as legitimate as it lies near at hand? For if it should appear that the question is illegitimate, or that one cannot ask such a question without stupidity, and hence forfeiting the right to charge one with stupidity who happens to be so wise as not to be able to answer it — in that case the difficulties would seem to be removed."— "Undoubtedly; for when the question cannot be asked the answer need not trouble us, and the difficulty becomes slight indeed."— "This does not quite follow; for suppose the difficulty lay in perceiving that one cannot ask such a question. Or have you perhaps already perceived this; was it this you meant by what you said in our last conversation (Chapter IV), that you had understood me and all the consequences of my proposition, while I confess that I had not yet entirely understood myself ?"— "By no means was this my meaning; nor is it my opinion that the question can be dismissed, so much the less as it immediately involves a new question, whether there is not a difference between the many who consort under the head: the disciple at second hand. In other words, is it right to divide so tremendous a section of time into two such unequal parts: the generation of contemporary disciples on the one

hand, and all the subsequent generations on the other?"— "You mean that there must be room for question concerning the disciple at fifth hand, at seventh hand, and so forth. But even if to please you something were to be said about this, does it follow that a discussion of all these differences, unless it be in contradiction with itself, may not properly be comprised under a single head, over against the class: the contemporary disciple? Or would our discussion be justified if it imitated your example, in its simplicity following in the steps of your cunning, so as to transform the problem of the disciple at second hand into an entirely different problem, by which, instead of assenting to or dissenting from my proposal, you would find opportunity to trick me by raising a new question? But since you probably do not wish to continue this conversation from fear of Its degenerating into sophistry and bickering, I will break it off at this point; but from the exposition I now intend to place before you, you will observe that notice has been taken of the remarks that have passed between us."

1

The class of disciples at second hand considered with respect to the differences comprised within it

In this section we do not reflect upon the relation between the secondary disciple and the contemporary disciple, but the differences considered are such as to leave intact the identity which the internally different exhibits over against something external; for the variation which is only a variation within a class remains subordinate to the identity which constitutes the class. For this reason it is not arbitrary to cut off the discussion where we please; the relative differences here in question constitute no sorties, from which a new quality may be made to emerge by a *coup de mains,* since they are all comprised within a determinate common quality. A sorties would arise only if we subjected the concept of contemporaneity to a false

dialectic, for example by showing that in a certain sense no one could be a contemporary, since no one could be contemporary with every moment or phase; or by asking where contemporaneity leaves off and non-contemporaneity begins, whether there may not exist a twilight zone subject to bargaining, of which the prating understanding might say: to a certain degree, and so forth. All such inhuman profundities lead nowhere, or perhaps in our day they may lead to a reputation for genuine speculative insight; for the despised sophism, the devil only knows how, has become the wretched secret of genuine speculation, and the to-a-certain-degree mode of thought (that travesty on tolerance which mediates everything without petty scrupulosity), regarded as negative by the ancients, has now become positive; and what the ancients regarded as positive, the passion for distinctions, has now become a childish folly.

Opposites stand revealed most clearly when they are juxtaposed, and hence we choose for discussion here the first generation of secondary disciples and the last, i.e., that which limits the given *spatium,* the 1843 years. We shall make our exposition as brief as possible, since we do not speak historically but algebraically, and have no wish to distract or beguile the mind by the enchantments of the manifold. On the contrary, we shall strive constantly to remember to hold fast the common likeness subsisting beneath the differences discussed, as over against the contemporary disciple (not until we come to the next paragraph will we have occasion to note more precisely that the question of the disciple at second hand is at bottom illegitimate); and we shall take care to see that the differences do not swell to such proportions as to confuse everything.

A. The First Generation of Secondary Disciples

This generation enjoys the (relative) advantage of being nearer to an immediate certainty, of being nearer to the attainment of an exact and

reliable account of what happened, from witnesses whose reliability is subject to collateral control. We have already in Chapter IV calculated the value of this immediate certainty. To be somewhat nearer to it is doubtless an illusory advantage; for he who is not so near to immediate certainty as to be immediately certain, is absolutely separated from it. But suppose we try to estimate the value of this relative difference, that which marks the first generation of secondary disciples over against later ones; how great a value shall we assign to it? We can evaluate it only by comparing it with the advantage enjoyed by a contemporary. But his advantage, the advantage namely of immediate certainty in the strict sense, we have already shown in Chapter IV to be ambiguous (*anceps* — dangerous), and we shall show this further in the next paragraph. — Suppose there lived a man in the immediately succeeding generation who combined in his own person a tyrant's power with a tyrant's passion, and suppose that this man had somehow conceived the idea of concentrating his entire time and energy upon the problem of bringing the truth to light on this point, would this constitute him a disciple? Suppose he possessed himself of all the contemporary witnesses still living, together with the immediate circle of their associates; suppose he subjected them one by one to the most searching inquisition, shutting them up in prison like the seventy interpreters, starving them to make them tell the truth, confronting them with one another in the craftiest possible manner, all for the sake of making sure by every possible means of a reliable account — would the possession of this account constitute him a disciple? Must not the God rather smile at him, because he thought to arrogate to himself in this manner what cannot be purchased for money, nor yet seized by violence? Even if the fact we speak of were a simple historical fact, difficulties would not fail to present themselves as soon as he tried to realize an absolute agreement in all petty details, which would be of extreme importance to him, because the passion

of faith, i.e., the passion with the intensity of faith, had been misdirected upon the merely historical as its object. It is a familiar fact that the most conscientious and truthful of witnesses are the first to involve themselves in contradiction when subjected to inquisitorial treatment and questioned in the light of an inquisitor's fixed idea; while it is the prerogative of a hardened criminal, on account of the precision which an evil conscience tends to enforce, not to contradict himself in his lie. But leaving this aside, the fact of which we speak is not a simple historical fact: of what advantage then is all this precision? If he succeeded in bringing to pass a complicated account, consistent to the letter and to the minute, he would beyond all doubt be deceived. He would have obtained a certainty even greater than was possible for a contemporary observer, one who saw and heard; for the latter would quickly discover that he sometimes failed to see what was there, and sometimes saw what was not there, and so with his hearing. And besides, a contemporary would constantly be reminded that he did not see or hear the God immediately, but merely a humble human being who said of himself that he was the God; in other words, he would constantly be reminded that the fact in question was based upon a self-contradiction. Would this man then gain anything by reason of the reliability of his account? Historically speaking yes, but otherwise not; for all talk of the God's earthly beauty, when he was after all only in the form of a servant, an individual human being like one of us, the cause of offense; all talk of his immediately manifest divinity, though divinity is not an immediate characteristic, and the Teacher must first develop in the learner the most profound self-reflection, the sense of sin, as a condition for the understanding; all talk of the immediate miraculousness of his deeds, though a miracle does not exist for immediate apprehension, but only for faith, if it be true that whoever does not believe does not see the miracle —

all such talk is here as everywhere galimatias, an attempt to substitute idle words for serious consideration.

This generation has the relative advantage of being nearer to the shock produced by the impact of our fact. This shock and its reverberations will help to arouse the attention. The significance of such an aroused attention (which may also issue in taking offense) has already been evaluated in Chapter IV. The being somewhat nearer to it in comparison with later generations, well, suppose we call it an advantage; its value can only be relative to the doubtful advantage enjoyed by an immediate contemporary. The advantage is entirely dialectical, like the aroused attention itself. It consists in having one's attention aroused, whether the result is that one believes or is offended. The aroused attention is by no means partial to faith, as if faith followed from the attention by a simple consequence. The advantage is that a state of mind is induced in which the crucial nature of the decision confronting the individual becomes more clearly evident. This is an advantage, and the only one of any account; aye, so significant is it that it is fearful, by no means an easy and comfortable convenience. Unless in consequence of a stupid insensibility this fact should some time deteriorate into a meaningless human conventionality, each subsequent generation will exhibit the same proportion of offense as the first; for there is no immediacy by the aid of which anyone could come any nearer to it. One may be educated up to this fact as much as you please, it will be of no avail. On the contrary, and especially if the educator is himself accomplished in this direction, it may help one to become a well-drilled chatterer, in whose mind there is no suspicion of the possibility of offense, nor any room for faith.

B. The Last Generation

This generation is far removed from the initial shock, but it has on the other hand the consequences to lean upon, the proof of probability afforded by the results. It has before it, as immediate datum, the consequences with which this fact must doubtless have invested everything; it has an obvious recourse to a demonstration of probability, from which however no immediate transition to Faith is possible, since as we have shown Faith is by no means partial to probability; to make such an assertion about Faith is to slander it. If this fact came into the world as the Absolute Paradox, nothing that happens subsequently can avail to change this. The consequences will in all eternity remain the consequences of a paradox, and hence in an ultimate view will be precisely as improbable as the Paradox itself; unless it is to be supposed that the consequences, which as such are derivative, have retroactive power to transform the Paradox, which would be about as reasonable as to suppose that a son had retroactive power to transform his own father. Even if the consequences be conceived in a purely logical relation to their cause, and hence under the form of immanence, it still remains true that they can be conceived only as identical and homogeneous with their cause; least of all will they have a transforming power. To have the consequences as a datum is then precisely as dubious an advantage as to have an immediate certainty; whoever takes the consequences immediately to his credit is deceived, precisely as one who takes the immediate certainty for Faith.

The advantage of the consequences would seem to lie in a gradual *naturalization* of this fact. If such is the case, i.e., if such a thing is conceivable, the later generation has even a direct advantage over the contemporary generation; and a man would surely have to be very stupid if he could speak of the consequences in this sense, and yet rave about how fortunate the contemporaries were. Under the assumption of naturalization, it will be possible for a later generation to appropriate the fact without the

slightest embarrassment, without sensing anything of the ambiguity of the aroused attention, from which offense may issue as well as faith. However, this fact is no respecter of the drill-master's discipline; it is too proud to desire a disciple whose willingness to attach himself to the cause is based upon the favorable turn that events have taken; it disdains naturalization, whether under the protection of a king or a professor. It is and remains the Paradox, and cannot be assimilated by any speculation. This fact exists for Faith alone. Faith may indeed become the *second nature* in a man, but the man in whom it becomes a second nature must surely have had a *first* nature, since Faith became the second. If the fact in question is *naturalized,* this may be expressed in relation to the individual by saying that the individual is born with faith, i.e., with his second nature. If we begin in this manner all sorts of galimatias will simultaneously begin to jubilate; for now the flood of nonsense has broken through and nothing can stop it. This particular nonsense will naturally have been discovered by the process of making an advance; for in Socrates' view there was certainly a genuine meaning, though we left it behind in order to discover the hypothesis here set forth; such galimatias as that just described would doubtless feel deeply insulted if anyone refused to concede that it had advanced far beyond Socrates. There is meaning even in a doctrine of transmigration; but the doctrine that a man may be born with his second nature, a second nature involving a reference to a temporally dated historical fact, is a veritable *non plus ultra* of absurdity. From the Socratic point of view the individual has an existence prior to his coming into being and remembers himself, so that the Recollection here involved is his preexistence, and not a recollection about his preexistence. His nature (his one nature, for here there is no question of a first and second nature) is determined in continuity with itself. But in our project, on the contrary, everything is forward-looking and historical, so that the notion of being born with faith is as plausible as the

notion of being born twenty-four years old. Were it really possible to find an individual born with Faith, he would constitute a prodigy, more notable even than the marvel told of by the barber in *The Busy Man,* the birth in the Neuen-Buden; even though barbers and "busy" men be inclined to regard him as a precious little darling, the crowning triumph of philosophical speculation. — Or is it perhaps the case that the individual is born with both natures simultaneously; please to note, not with two natures which supplement one another and together form an ordinary human nature, but with two complete human natures, one of which pre-supposes the intermediation of an historical event. If this is the case, everything which we have proposed in our first chapter is confounded, nor do we stand at the Socratic order of things, but we stand before a confusion which not even Socrates would have been able to master. It would be a confusion in the forward direction having much in common with that invented by Apollonius of Tyana in the backward direction. Apollonius was not content like Socrates to remember himself as being before he came into existence (the eternity and continuity of the consciousness is the fundamental meaning of the Socratic thought), but was quick to make an advance; he remembered who he was before he became himself. If this fact has been naturalized, birth is no longer merely birth, but is at the same time a *new birth,* so that one who has never before been in existence is born anew — in being born the first time. In the individual life the hypothesis of naturalization is expressed in the principle that the individual is born with faith; in the life of the race it must be expressed in the proposition that the human race, after the introduction of this fact, has become an entirely different race, though determined in continuity with the first. In that event the race ought to adopt a new name; for there is nothing inhuman about faith as we have proposed to conceive it, as a birth within a birth (the new

birth); but if it were as the proposed objection would conceive it, it would be a fabulous monstrosity.

The advantage afforded by the consequences is dubious for still another reason, in so far as the consequences do not follow directly, as simple consequences. Let us assess the advantage of the consequences at its highest maximum, and assume that this fact has completely transformed the world, that it has interpenetrated even the smallest detail of life with its omnipresence — how has this come to pass? Surely not all at once, but by a succession of steps; and how have these steps been taken? By each particular generation again coming into relationship with this fact. This intermediary determination must be brought under control, so that the entire virtue of the consequences can redound to one's advantage only by means of a conversion. Or may not a misunderstanding also have consequences, may not a lie also be powerful? And has it not happened so to each generation? If now the previous generations collectively propose to bequeath to the last the whole splendid array of consequences without further ado, will not the consequences constitute a misunderstanding? Or is not Venice built over the sea, even if it became so solidly built up that a generation finally came upon the scene that did not notice it; and would it not be a sad misunderstanding if this last generation made the mistake of permitting the piles to rot and the city to sink? But consequences founded on a paradox are humanly speaking built over a yawning chasm, and their total content, which can be transmitted to the individual only with the express understanding that they rest upon a paradox, are not to be appropriated as a settled estate, for their entire value trembles in the balance.

C. Comparison

We shall not pursue these considerations further, but leave it to each one in particular to practice for himself the art of coming back to this thought from the most diverse angles, using his imagination to hit upon the strangest cases of relativity in difference and situation, in order thereupon to cast up the account. Thus the quantitative is confined within its limits, and within these limits it has unrestricted scope. It is the quantitative that gives to life its manifold variety, ever weaving its motley tapestry; it is that sister of Destiny who sat spinning at the wheel. But Thought is the other sister, whose task it is to cut the thread; which, leaving the figure, should be done every time the quantitative attempts to create a new quality.

The first generation of secondary disciples has the advantage that the difficulty is patently there; for it is always an advantage, an alleviation of a difficult task, that it is made to appear difficult. If the last generation, beholding the first, and seeing it almost sink under its burden of awe and fear, were to find it in its heart to say: “It is impossible to understand why they should take it so hard, for the whole is not heavier than that one could easily take it up and run with it,” there will doubtless be someone to answer: “You are welcome to run with it if you like; but you ought at all events make sure that what you run with really is that of which we are speaking; for there is no disputing the fact that it is easy enough to run with the wind.”

The last generation has the advantage of a greater ease; but as soon as it discovers that this ease is precisely the danger which breeds the difficulty, this new difficulty will correspond to the difficulty of the fear confronting the first generation, and it will be gripped as primitively by awe and fear as the first generation of secondary disciples.

2

The problem of the disciple at second hand

Before taking up the problem itself, let us first present one or two considerations by way of orientation. (a) If our fact is assumed to be a simple historical fact, contemporaneity is a *desideratum.* It is an advantage to be a contemporary in the more precise sense described in Chapter IV, or to be as near to such contemporaneity as possible, or to be in a position to check the reliability of contemporary witnesses, and so forth. Every historical fact is merely relative, and hence it is in order for time, the relative power, to decide the relative fortunes of men with respect to contemporaneity; such a fact has no greater significance, and only childishness or stupidity could so exaggerate its importance as to make it absolute. (b) If the fact in question is an eternal fact, every age is equally near; but not, it should be noted, in Faith; for Faith and the historical are correlative concepts, and it is only by an accommodation to a less exact usage that I employ in this connection the word "fact," which is derived from the historical realm. (c) If the fact in question is an absolute fact, or to determine it still more precisely, if it is the fact we have described, it would be a contradiction to suppose that time had any power to differentiate the fortunes of men with respect to it, that is to say, in any decisive sense. Whatever can be essentially differentiated by time is *eo ipso* not the Absolute; this would be to make the Absolute itself a *casus* in life, or a *status* relative to other things. But though the Absolute is declinable in all the *casibus* of life, it remains itself ever the same; and though it enters continually into relations with other things, it constantly remains *status absolutus.* But the absolute fact is also an historical fact. Unless we are careful to insist on this point our entire hypothesis is nullified; for then we speak only of an eternal fact. The absolute fact is an historical fact, and as such it is the object of Faith. The historical aspect must indeed be accentuated, but not in such a way that it becomes decisive for the individuals, for then we stand at the alternative described in (a), though

when so understood it involves a contradiction; for a simple historical fact is not absolute, and has no power to force an absolute decision. But neither may the historical aspect of our fact be eliminated, for then we have only an eternal fact. — Now just as the historical gives occasion for the contemporary to become a disciple, but only it must be noted through receiving the condition from the God himself, since otherwise we speak Socratically, so the testimony of contemporaries gives occasion for each successor to become a disciple, but only it must be noted through receiving the condition from the God himself.

Now we are ready to begin. From the God himself everyone receives the condition who by virtue of the condition becomes the disciple. If this is the case (and this has been expounded in the foregoing, where it was shown that the immediate contemporaneity is merely an occasion, but not in the sense that the condition was presupposed as already present), what becomes of the problem of the disciple at second hand? For whoever has what he has from the God himself clearly has it at first hand; and he who does not have it from the God himself is not a disciple.

Let us assume that it is otherwise, that the contemporary generation of disciples had received the condition from the God, and that the subsequent generations were to receive it from these contemporaries — what would follow? We shall not distract the attention by reflecting upon the historical pusillanimity with which the contemporary accounts would presumably be sought after, as if everything depended on that, thus introducing a new contradiction and a new confusion (for if we once begin in this manner, the confusions will be inexhaustible). No, if the contemporary disciple gives the condition to the successor, the latter will come to believe in him. He receives the condition from him, and thus the contemporary becomes the object of Faith for the successor; for whoever gives the individual this condition is *eo ipso* (cf. the preceding) the object of Faith, and the God.

Such a meaningless consequence will surely deter thought from making this assumption. If on the contrary the successor also receives the condition from the God, the Socratic relationships will return, of course within the total difference which is constituted by the fact in question, and by the individual's (the contemporary's and the successor's) particular relationship to the God. The above meaningless consequence on the other hand is unthinkable, in a different sense than when we say of the fact in question and of the individual's particular relationship to the God, that it is unthinkable. Our hypothetical assumption of this fact and of the individual's particular relationship to the God contains no self-contradiction, and thought is free to occupy itself therewith as with the strangest proposal possible. But the meaningless consequence developed above contains a self-contradiction; it does not rest content with positing an absurdity, the content of our hypothesis, but within this absurdity it brings forth a self-contradiction, namely that the God is the God for the contemporary, but that the contemporary is the God for a third party. Only through placing the God in particular relationship with the individual did our project go beyond Socrates; but who would dare to appear before Socrates with the nonsense that a human being is a God in his relation to another human being? The nature of the relationship between one human being and another is something that Socrates understood with a heroism of soul which it requires courage even to appreciate. And yet it is necessary to acquire the same understanding within the framework of what has here been assumed, namely the understanding that one human being, in so far as he is a believer, owes nothing to another but everything to the God. It will doubtless be readily perceived that this understanding is not easy, and especially not easy constantly to preserve (for to understand it once for all without meeting the concrete objections that present themselves in life, i.e., to imagine that one has understood it, is not difficult); and he who will

make a beginning of practicing himself in this understanding will often enough catch himself in a misunderstanding, and will have need of the utmost circumspection if he proposes to enter into communication with others. But if he has understood it, he will also understand that there is not and never can be a disciple at second hand; for the believer, and he alone is a disciple, is always in possession of the autopsy of Faith; he does not see through the eyes of another, and he sees only what every believer sees — with the eyes of Faith.

What then can a contemporary do for a successor? (a) He can inform him that he has himself believed this fact, which is not in the strict sense a communication (as expressed in the absence of any immediate contemporaneity, and in the circumstance that the fact is based upon a contradiction), but merely affords an occasion. For when I say that this or that has happened, I make an historical communication; but when I say: "I believe and have believed that so-and-so has taken place, *although it is a folly to the understanding and an offense to the human heart,"* then I have simultaneously done everything in my power to prevent anyone else from determining his own attitude in immediate continuity with mine, asking to be excused from all companionship, since every individual is compelled to make up his own mind in precisely the same manner. (b) In this form he can relate the content of the fact. But this content exists only for Faith, in the same sense that colors exist only for sight and sounds for hearing. In this form, then, the content can be related; in any other form he merely indulges in empty words, perhaps misleading the successor to determine himself in continuity with the inanity.

In what sense may the credibility of a contemporary witness interest a successor? Not with respect to whether he really has had Faith, as he has testified of himself. This does not concern a successor in the least; such knowledge would profit him nothing; it can neither help him nor hurt him

with respect to becoming a believer. Only one who receives the condition from the God is a believer. (This corresponds exactly to the requirement that man must renounce his reason, and on the other hand discloses the only form of authority that corresponds to Faith.) If anyone proposes to believe, i.e., imagines himself to believe, because many good and upright people living here on the hill have believed, i.e., have said that they believed (for no man can control the profession of another further than this; even if the other has endured, borne, suffered all for the Faith, an outsider cannot get beyond what he says about himself, for a lie can be stretched precisely as far as the truth — in the eyes of men, but not in the sight of God), then he is a fool, and it is essentially indifferent whether he believes on account of his own and perhaps a widely held opinion about what good and upright people believe, or believes a Münchausen. If the credibility of a contemporary is to have any interest for him — and alas! one may be sure that this will create a tremendous sensation, and give occasion for the writing of folios; for this counterfeit earnestness, which asks whether so-and-so is trustworthy instead of whether the inquirer himself has faith, is an excellent mask for spiritual indolence, and for town gossip on a European scale — if the credibility of such a witness is to have any significance it must be with respect to the historical fact. But what historical fact? The historical fact which can become an object only for Faith, and which one human being cannot communicate to another, i.e., which can indeed be communicated to another but not so that the other believes it; and which if communicated in the form of Faith is so communicated as to prevent the other, so far as possible, from accepting it immediately. If the fact spoken of were a simple historical fact, the accuracy of the historical sources would be of great importance. Here this is not the case, for Faith cannot be distilled from I even the nicest accuracy of detail. The historical fact that the God has been in human form is the essence of the matter; the rest of the historical detail is not even as

important as if we had to do with a human being instead of with the God. Jurists say that a capital crime submerges all lesser crimes, and so it is with Faith. Its absurdity makes all petty difficulties vanish. Inconsistencies which would otherwise be disconcerting do not count for anything here; they make no difference whatsoever. But it does make a difference on the contrary, if someone by petty calculation should try to auction off faith to the highest bidder; it makes so much difference as to prevent him from ever becoming a believer. If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: "We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died," it would be more than enough. The contemporary generation would have done all that was necessary; for this little advertisement, this *nota bene* on a page of universal history, would be sufficient to afford an occasion for a successor, and the most voluminous account can in all eternity do nothing more.

If we wish to express the relation subsisting between a contemporary and his successor in the briefest possible compass, but without sacrificing accuracy to brevity, we may say: The successor believes *by means of* (this expresses the occasional) the testimony of the contemporary, and *in virtue of* the condition he himself receives from the God. — The testimony of the contemporary provides an occasion for the successor, just as the immediate contemporaneity provides an occasion for the contemporary. And if the testimony is what it ought to be, namely the testimony of a believer, it will give occasion for precisely the same ambiguity of the aroused attention as the witness himself has experienced, occasioned by the immediate contemporaneity. If the testimony is not of this nature, then it is *either* by an historian, and does not deal essentially with the object of Faith, as when a contemporary historian who was not a believer recounts one or another fact; *or* it is by a philosopher, and does not deal with the object of Faith. The

believer on the other hand communicates his testimony in such form as to forbid immediate acceptance; for the words: I believe — in spite of the Reason and my own powers of invention, present a very serious counter-consideration. There is no disciple at second hand. The first and the last are essentially on the same plane, only that a later generation finds its occasion in the testimony of a contemporary generation, while the contemporary generation finds this occasion in its own immediate contemporaneity, and in so far owes nothing to any other generation. But this immediate contemporaneity is merely an occasion, which can scarcely be expressed more emphatically than in the proposition that the disciple, if he understood himself, must wish that the immediate contemporaneity should cease, by the God's leaving the earth.

* *

But I think I hear someone say: "It is very strange; I have now read your exposition through to the end, and really not without a certain degree of interest, noting with pleasure that there was no catchword, no invisible script. But how you twist and turn, so that, just as Saft always ended up in the pantry, you inevitably always manage to introduce some little word or phrase that is not your own, and which awakens disturbing recollections. This thought, that it is profitable for the disciple that the God should again leave the earth, is taken from the New Testament; it is found in the Gospel of John. However, whether this procedure of yours is intentional or not, whether you have perhaps desired to give this remark a special significance by clothing it in this form or not, as the case now stands it would seem that the advantage of the contemporary, which I was originally inclined to estimate very highly, is considerably reduced, since there can be no question of a disciple at second hand; which in plain English is as much as to say that all are essentially alike. But not only so for the immediate

contemporaneity viewed as an advantage seems by your last remark so dubious that the most that can be said for it is that it is better that it should cease. This would seem to indicate that it is an intermediate situation, having its significance indeed, and not eliminable without, as you would say, turning back to the Socratic order of things, but nevertheless without absolute significance for the contemporary; he is not deprived of anything essential by its cessation, but rather profits by it; although if it had not been he loses all, and returns to the Socratic order of things."— "Well said, I would reply, did not modesty forbid; for you speak as if it were myself. It is precisely as you say, the immediate contemporaneity is by no means a decisive advantage. This is readily seen if we think it through, and are not merely prompted by curiosity; provided we are not in too much of a hurry, provided we are not overly desirous, aye, perhaps in desire already standing on tip-toe in readiness to risk our lives to be first to tell remarkable news, like the barber in ancient Greece; and provided we are not so stupid as to consider such a death to be the death of a martyr. The immediate contemporaneity is so far from being an advantage that the contemporary must precisely desire its cessation, lest he be tempted to devote himself to seeing and hearing with his bodily eyes and ears, which is all a waste of effort and a grievous, aye a dangerous toil. But these considerations, as you have doubtless observed, belong in another place, in connection with the problem of what advantage a contemporary believer, after having become a believer, might have of his contemporaneity; while here we speak only of how far the immediate contemporaneity makes it easier to become a believer. A successor cannot be so tempted, for he is confined to the testimony of contemporaries, which in so far as it is the testimony of believers, has the prohibitive form of Faith. If the successor therefore understands himself he will wish that the contemporary testimony be not altogether too voluminous, and above all not filling so many books that the

world can scarce contain them. There is in the immediate contemporaneity an unrest, which does not cease until the word goes forth that it is finished. But the succeeding tranquillity must not be such as to do away with the historical, for then everything will be Socratic."— "In this manner then equality seems to have been achieved, and the differences between the parties involved brought back to a fundamental likeness."— "Such is also my opinion; but you should take into consideration the fact that it is the God himself who effects the reconciliation. Is it thinkable that the God would enter into a covenant with a few, such that this their covenant with him established a difference between them and all other men so unjust as to cry to heaven for vengeance? That would be to bring strife instead of peace. Is it conceivable that the God would permit an accident of time to decide to whom he would grant his favor? Or is it not rather worthy of the God to make his covenant with men equally difficult for every human being in every time and place; equally difficult, since no man is able to give himself the condition, nor yet is to receive it from another, thus introducing new strife; equally difficult but also equally easy, since the God grants the condition. This is why I looked upon my project in the beginning as a godly one (in so far as an hypothesis can be viewed in this light), and still so consider it, though not on that account being indifferent to any human objection; on the contrary I now ask you once more, if you have any valid objection, to bring it forward."— "How festive you suddenly become! Even if the case did not demand it, one would almost have to make some objection for the sake of the festiveness; unless it should be regarded as more festive to omit it, and your solemn challenge is merely intended indirectly to enjoin silence. But that the nature of the objection may at least be such as not to disturb this festive mood, I will draw it from the festivity by which it seems to me that a later generation will distinguish itself from the contemporary generation. I recognize indeed that the contemporary

generation must profoundly feel and suffer the pain entailed by the coming into being of such a Paradox, or as you have put it, the God's implantation of himself in human life. But gradually the new order of things will presumably struggle its way through to victory; and then at last will come the happy generation which garners with songs of joy the fruits of the seed sowed in the first generation with so many tears. Now this triumphant generation, which passes through life with song and clang, is surely different from the first and earlier ones ?"— "Aye, undoubtedly it is different, and perhaps so different as not to retain the resemblance which makes it necessary for us to take it into consideration; it may be lacking in the condition which could cause its difference to disconcert our efforts to establish equality. But can such a triumphant generation, which goes through life as you say with song and clang, by which if my memory does not fail me you intend to remind me of the sophomoric and ale-Norse translation of a scripture passage by a not unknown genius — can this generation actually be a believing generation? Verily, if Faith ever gets the notion of marching forward triumphantly *en masse,* it will not be necessary to license the singing of songs of mockery, for it would not help to forbid them to all. Even if men were stricken dumb, this mad procession would draw upon itself a shrill laughter, like the mocking nature-tones on the island of Ceylon; for a faith that celebrates its triumph is the most ridiculous thing conceivable. If the contemporary generation of believers found no time to triumph, neither will any later generation; for the task is always the same, and Faith is always militant. But as long as there is struggle there is always a possibility of defeat, and with respect to Faith it is there fore well not to triumph before the time, that is to say, in time; for when will there be found time to compose songs of triumph or occasion to sing them? If such a thing were to happen it would be as if an army drawn up in battle array, instead of marching forward to meet the enemy, were to march home again

in triumph to their barracks in the city — even if no human being laughed at this, even if the entire contemporary generation sympathized with this abracadabra, would not the stifled laughter of the universe break forth where it was least expected? What would the behavior of such a so-called believer be but an intensification of the offense committed by the contemporary believer (compare Chapter II) who begged of the God — in vain, since the God would not — that he refrain from exposing himself to humiliation and contempt? For this later so-called believer was not only himself unwilling to bear humiliation and contempt, unwilling to strive as the world's fool, but *was* willing to believe when this could be done with song and clang. To such a man the God will not, nay cannot say, as to the contemporary in question: And so you love only the omnipotent wonder-worker, but not Him who humbled himself to become your equal! But here I will break off. Even if I were a better dialectician than I am, there would still be a limit to my powers; at bottom it is an immovable firmness with respect to the absolute, and with respect to absolute distinctions, that makes a man a good dialectician. This is something that our age has altogether overlooked, in and by its repudiation of the principle of contradiction, failing to perceive what Aristotle nevertheless pointed out, namely that the proposition: the principle of contradiction is annulled, itself rests upon the principle of contradiction, since otherwise the opposite proposition, that it is not annulled, is equally true. One further remark I wish to make, however, with respect to your many animadversions, all pointing to my having introduced borrowed expressions in the course of my exposition. That such is the case I do not deny, nor will I now conceal from you that it was done purposely, and that in the next section of this piece, if I ever write such a section, it is my intention to call the whole by its right name, and to clothe the problem in its historical costume. If I ever write a next section; for an author of pieces such as I am has no seriousness of purpose, as you will

doubtless hear said about me; why then should I now at the end feign a seriousness I do not have, in order to please men by making what is perhaps a great promise? It is a frivolous matter, namely, to write a piece — but to promise the System is a serious thing; many a man has become serious both in his own eyes and in those of others by making such a promise. However, what the historical costume of the following section will be is not hard to see. It is well known that Christianity is the only historical phenomenon which in spite of the historical, nay precisely by means of the historical, has intended itself to be for the single individual the point of departure for his eternal consciousness, has intended to interest him otherwise than merely historically, has intended to base his eternal happiness on his relationship to something historical. No system of philosophy, addressing itself only to thought, no mythology, addressing itself solely to the imagination, no historical knowledge, addressing itself to the memory, has ever had this idea: of which it may be said with all possible ambiguity in this connection, that it did not arise in the heart of any man. But this is something I have to a certain extent wished to forget, and, making use of the unlimited freedom of an hypothesis, have assumed that the whole was a curious conceit of my own; which I did not wish to abandon, however, until I had thought it through. The monks never finished telling the history of the world because they always began with the creation; if in dealing with the relations between philosophy and Christianity we begin by first recounting what has previously been said, how will it ever be possible — not to finish but to begin; for history continues to grow. If we have to begin first with 'that great thinker and sage, *executor Novi Testamenti,* Pontius Pilate,' who in his own way has been of considerable service to Christianity and to philosophy, even if he did not discover the principle of mediation; and if before beginning with him we must wait for one or another decisive contribution

(perhaps the System), for which the banns have several times already been published *ex cathedra;* in that case how will we ever come to begin ?"

MORAL

The projected hypothesis indisputably makes an advance upon Socrates, which is apparent at every point. Whether it is therefore more true than the Socratic doctrine is an entirely different question, which cannot be decided in the same breath, since we have here assumed a new organ: Faith; a new presupposition: the consciousness of Sin; a new decision: the Moment; and a new Teacher: the God in Time. Without these I certainly never would have dared present myself for inspection before that master of Irony, admired through the centuries, whom I approach with a palpitating enthusiasm that yields to none. But to make an advance upon Socrates and yet say essentially the same things as he, only not nearly so well — that at least is not Socratic.

The Concept of Dread (1844)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1941

CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE
INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR
THE CONCEPT OF DREAD
PREFACE
INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.

An early twentieth depiction of Kierkegaard

TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE

THIS BEING ONE of the first books S. K. wrote, why is it published so near the end in the English edition? This question has been asked frequently, and lately it has been addressed to me almost petulantly — as though I were responsible! Recently, because many are trying to understand S. K.’s thought as a whole, and in theological seminaries, which in wartime are the last resort of higher learning, courses on S. K. are given wherever any lecturer can be found, this question is being asked more persistently, because the lack of this book is keenly felt. But surely most people will reflect that nobody is culpably responsible for this omission, seeing that the English edition was not planned but simply grew. It is remarkable that it has grown so fast that in the space of eight years thirty of S.K.’s books, besides Dru’s big volume of selections from the Journal, have been published in English — at a rate which exceeds the capacity of the public to assimilate them. Yet seeing that this work has been accomplished by ten translators, it is not nearly so remarkable as the fact that all of these works, and as much more again in the way of journals, unfinished writings, etc., were published by S. K. in the space of only ten years — poured out upon the Danish public at a rate which would have produced mental indigestion, if anyone had seriously tried to digest them. It was true also that the original order of publication was not planned. The works simply welled forth as from an inexhaustible spring. Between the Philosophical Tidbits and a Bit of Philosophy Too (Swenson called the book Fragments, and I owe this name to the Reverend William M. Weber, who invented it when he was a student in Germany) and the Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Tidbits, the big book which the little book had promised as its sequel, there intervened nearly two years during which five other books

were published. Tidbits (as I am fain to call this book ever since I heard the name proposed, which is evidently better than “Scraps,” which I first used, not to speak of “Fragments” and “Morsels,” and better than “Crumbs,” even though I suspect that S. K. may have been thinking of “the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table”) — Tidbits, or whatever you would call it, was published on June 13, 1844. Two Edifying Discourses had been published only five days earlier, The Concept of Dread was published on June 17, and on the same day appeared the book called *Prefaces,* which will not likely be translated into English. Thus in one month, indeed in the space of ten days, S. K. issued four books of the most various character: the first was purely religious, the second gave in a nutshell his philosophical position, the third, that is, *The Concept of Dread,* was rightly called psychological, and the fourth S. K. properly described as “light reading,” for it was almost purely humorous.

There was, however, a good deal more planning for the English edition than the human understanding is capable of perceiving without revelation. What was lacking was cooperation. How much futile planning there was is attested by the voluminous correspondence I maintained with Professor Swenson on the one hand and with Mr. Dru on the other. Mr. Dru began earlier than I to agitate for the publication of S. K.’s works in English. The first of the many instructive and entertaining letters I received from him was of December 1934, and in that he proposed that the Stages (or else Either/Or) be published first, and immediately after that The Concept of Dread and The Sickness unto Death. Early the following year he began to translate The Concept of Dread, and that has ever since been regarded as his task. That same year he and Mr. Charles William (on behalf of the Oxford Press) proposed that Dru’s translation of that book and my translation of The Sickness unto Death might be published at the same time, in September 1939. It would have been very appropriate to publish on the same date the

two books which S. K. described as psychological. S. K., however, recognized that with them belonged Fear and Trembling, forming a trilogy: Fear, Dread, Despair. He said in the Postscript (p. 240, where I do not follow Swenson's translation), "As Fear and Trembling was the state of the man teleologically suspended when God tried him, so is Dread the psychic state of the suspended man in that desperate moment of exemption from realizing the ethical." Alas, although my translation of The Sickness unto Death was held back for nearly two years, The Concept of Dread was not ready to accompany it. Then came the war. At the very beginning of it Mr. Dru was wounded, but he recovered, and now he is employed in the armed forces. In this situation, being unable himself to pursue the work he had begun so zealously, he magnanimously yielded to me the task of translating this book. Upon receipt of his friendly letter I set to work at once to meet the growing demand for this missing link in the English publication of S. K.'s works, and I labored so diligently that in one month I finished the job — in a month of thirty-one days, working twelve hours a day. There really was no need of putting on so much steam, and it was perhaps petulance at the long delay which prompted me to make this tour de force; for the printing presses in wartime cannot keep pace with such speed. I cannot hope to see this book published before next spring; for the two volumes of Either/Or were given to the Press seven months ago, and I do not know when they will be printed. Lately I finished the translation of a big book, S. K.'s *Attack upon "Christendom,"* but rather than hold up *The Concept of Oread,* I prefer to run the risk that the bigger book may not be published before next summer.

It may be judged how important is The Concept of Dread from the fact that besides the German translation there are two translations in French and one in Spanish. It is the first time I have had the pleasure of comparing four translations with the original text. It is hard on the eyes to keep five texts in

view when I am making my translation, but it is interesting. I soon discovered to my chagrin that the Spanish translation was made, not from the Danish, but from Schrempf's translation, and therefore could be discarded. The translator had not emulated the noble example of Don Miguel de Unamuno, who said in one of his essays, "I learned the language for the sake of reading Ibsen and was rewarded by reading Kierkegaard." Because this translator was only a hack hired by the publisher, his name is not given. But of the French translations, which were both published in 1935 and are therefore entirely independent, it would be churlish of me to say that they are not very good, seeing that I have profited much by both of them. They were the more useful to me because in eight cases out of ten, even when they discovered the same meaning in the passage, they chose different words to express it. How rich is the French language! A German translation, though it were perfect, would not have helped me so much; for what the English translator seeks and often has to grope after, is the equivalent word in the rich Romance treasury of our language. Professor Ferlov is a Dane. I met him in Rome, where he is an instructor in the University. Such a combination, it seemed to me, must be ideal: a Dane to insure that the Danish is correctly understood, and a Frenchman to put the thing into perfect French. I tried this sort of teamwork, but, alas, it was not a success. To understand Kierkegaard it is not enough to know the Danish language. And in this instance I prefer the work of M. Tisseau, although he did not always understand so well the more colloquial expressions.

This constant comparison impressed upon me the sorrowful thought that at its best the translation of a great writer can hardly be much better than a profanation, a fact which in the Italian language seems axiomatic when it is said, *Traduttore traditore.* Of course I am thinking principally of my own work as a translator. One of the last letters I had from Dru contained this challenging sentence: "As for Kierkegaard, I am at this moment going

through the proofs of our translations. It is a question whether I dislike you or myself most while reading them, and I usually settle it by answering that more than either I loathe Kierkegaard. One of these days I am going to say what I think of his vile, slovenly style, his clumsy, unnecessary terminology."

I was shocked by this impiety. But it is true after all that S. K. was not always a good writer, and now that I have finished the last translation that needs to be done, I am inclined to relieve my feeling in the same way. I have resolved before, "This shall be the last," and have not kept that resolution. This time I shall be faithful to it for the same reason that Adam was faithful to Eve... because there was no other. But I would vent my spite first of all upon the Danish language. S. K. praised his mother tongue in noble terms, and he is said to have done more than anyone else to improve it. He strove to make it better by making it bigger, by introducing innumerable German words and many French ones, so that one needs to have three dictionaries to read him, since the Danish lexicographers have excluded his inventions. As Dru says, his terminology is often maddening. He renounced Hegel, but used his terminology. That we can manage to understand. But, alas, no one can make out what he meant by *bestemt*, Bestemmelse, etc. Swenson once asked me anxiously if I had found any way of dealing with them. I sadly shook my head, and he looked in my eyes with silent despair. I have acquired such a dread of these words, any one of which may mean a dozen things, that when my eye glances furtively down the page and foresees that one of them is coming, I am disposed to close the book and give the whole thing up, or, in the words of Uncle Toby, "I wish I were asleep. Forhold is another terrifying word. And why, oh, why did he use so often the words which I have to translate by constantly and "precisely"? I beg the reader not to believe that the bad style is always my fault. I express no moral condemnation of punning when I say that the

frequent plays on words which S. K. often makes instructive are a great tribulation to the translator, hurdles which he cannot always clear. Since S. K. knew that he “would be studied and studied,” knew doubtless that he would be translated into all the greater languages, surely he might have done a little something to make the task of the translator a bit easier.

Having now translated in whole or in part twenty-three of S. K.’s books, I have the impression that this is the most tormenting of them all. It seems to me also that this book shows the greatest unevenness of style. Sudden transitions of style are everywhere observable in S. K.’s works, and it is likely they reflect the changes of mood in a man who was characterized by blended “mania” and depression; but here the situation is not exactly that, here there are no purple patches, no sublime heights attained, the poet is not in evidence; but he does dive to great depths, and then for long stretches moves pedestrianly. In the Postscript (p. 240) S. K. himself says about this book that “*The Concept of Dread* is unlike the other pseudonymous works for the fact that its form is direct and even a little like lecturing” (Swenson translates it as “objective dogmatic,” which would be well enough except that it does not suggest the contempt which S. K. felt for everything that savors of the docent or the professor).

On the other hand, I cannot ignore the fact that the English language is not always rich enough to render adequately the Danish words. I have mentioned in a note the tribulations everybody has encountered in the effort to translate Indesluttedhed. Both Dru and Swenson opened their hearts to me about their troubles with this word. Also, we have no word in our language ambiguous enough to render aufgehoben, which Hegel used so adroitly, and for which unfortunately S. K. found a precise equivalent in his mother tongue. It was convenient also for S. K. that in Danish the same word means “sensuous” and “sensual.” The reader must keep this in mind. But the very title of this book reveals a serious lack in our language: we

have no word which adequately translates Angst. In the first translations of fragments of S. K. published by Professor Hollander in 1924 he used the word “dread,” and everyone has agreed to continue it — after a desperate search for something better. The Spanish translation uses angustia; Unamuno, writing in French, spoke of agonie; it has been seen that both the French translators use angoisse. These words rightly indicate the distress of the moment, but do not suggest what is essential to the experience S. K. deals with, that it is an apprehension of the future, a presentiment of a something which is “nothing,” that (as he says in the Christian Discourses, p. 80) it is “the next day,” and, in another place, “it is fighting against the future,” therefore against oneself— “and no man is stronger than himself.”

Because this book was, as he says, his first effort at “direct” communication, S. K. did not at first propose to use a pseudonym: the title-page as he first devised it (Papers V B 42) was to bear his name as the author. Perhaps because it contained so intimate a confession of his “stern upbringing from innate dread to faith” X B 493) he hid behind the name of Vigilius Haufniensis (the Watchman of Copenhagen), and because the preface he originally planned for it (now No. VII in the book called *Prefaces*) was not appropriate to Vigilius he invented a new one to suit him.

And yet this book was not anonymous in the strictest sense, for it was dedicated to Poul Moller in terms which indicate clearly enough a personal affection, even when the stronger terms he at first intended to use were discarded, as I have noted in my Kierkegaard, pp. 143 f.

We need not therefore apply to this book S. K.’s emphatic admonition not to attribute to him anything that is said by his pseudonyms. This was his first completely serious book, and everything we find in it may safely be regarded as his own way of thinking.

If I had not worked at such a furious speed, the Reverend Howard Johnson, who did me the favor of correcting the manuscript, might not

perhaps have found so many errors; but all’s well that ends well, and I am glad to be beholden to him.

Princeton —

WALTER LOWRIE

May 26, 1943

INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR

THE READER WILL see at once that this book, in spite of its insistence that every science should be treated by itself, is by no means confined to the science of psychology. The long introduction deals with methodology and metaphysics. Here S. K.'s metaphysical position is stated only negatively, in opposition to Hegel and every school of Idealistic Philosophy. This was the first opportunity he found to deliver a broadside against the Hegelianism which was introduced into Denmark by Heiberg and Martensen. His positive position had already been suggested in the *Fragments* (or *Tidbits).* This metaphysical polemic is by no means unimportant, but we are hardly prepared for it by the title.

There is also in the first chapter more dogmatics than we might expect in a deliberation which proposes to lead us only to the borders of that science. Also there is more mythology than some of us (myself among them) may hanker after. For although S. K. denounced the disposition to treat the story of Adam and Eve as a myth, he nevertheless treats it pretty much as if it were, and is quite frank in rejecting at least the story of the serpent. There is too much about Adam for my taste, and perhaps too much about original sin, although it is very interesting that S. K. is the only modern man who has so profound a sense of the solidarity of the race that original sin makes any sense to him. I have remarked in my preface that there are arid passages in this book which are characterized by abstruse and oversubtle reasoning.

For all that, it was reasonable to describe this book on the title page as "psychological deliberation, and in this is to be found its unique value. This work and The Sickness unto Death, the only books expressly described as psychological, though by no means the only ones in which this interest is prominent, are sufficient in themselves to insure to S. K. a prominent and

peculiar place among psychologists. A very peculiar place indeed, for in his time, and still more in ours, even when it does not decline to admit that there is such a thing as a psyche, psychology has been content to remain so much on the surface that there is not much to distinguish it from histology, and even the so-called deep psychology" of Freud and Jung and Adler does not delve deep enough to discover soul. S. K., because he was intent upon psychoanalyzing himself, his own ego, could not well forget that he was dealing with a soul, a synthesis of soul and body; and because spirit is not obviously and inevitably present in this synthesis, he was compelled (in the best sense of the word) to revert to the Greek and New Testament trichotomy: body, soul, and spirit.

It will not do to dispose of S. K.'s psychology by remarking that his own soul, the soul he chiefly studied, was a sick soul. For not only could he reply that all souls are sick, and that the notion that one has a "healthy-minded" soul is the most perilous of all sicknesses; but all pathologists will agree with him that the study of abnormal states is essential for the understanding of normal health. If it is true that few men have had so sick a soul to deal with as had S. K., and also that no one of them has ever probed so deeply into his sick soul, with such intellectual competence, we may reasonably expect to learn something from his psychology.

Although this book was written, like all of S. K.'s works, in a brief space of time, and, as I remarked in my preface, was published in conjunction with several books which are completely heterogeneous, it must not be supposed that it was hastily thought out. On the contrary, S. K. began early to follow the Delphic (or Socratic) maxim: Know thyself. This appears in the first long entry in his Journal (I A 75; Dru No. 22), and already he was aware of a dread of the good which was nevertheless a fascination, like the fascination which draws the moth to the flame. He developed this thought clearly two years before this book was written (III A 233; Dru No. 402):

“People have often explained the nature of original sin, and yet they lacked a primary category — dread, which really is its determinant. For dread is a desire for what one dreads, a sympathetic antipathy. Dread is an alien power which lays hold of an individual, and yet one cannot tear oneself away, nor has a will to do so; for one fears, but what one fears one desires. Dread then makes the individual impotent, and the first sin always occurs in impotence. Apparently, therefore, the man lacks accountability, but this lack is what ensnares him.”

Anyone who knows anything about S. K. — even if it is only so much as may be learned from my big and my little biographies — will recognize that his case is described in many of the examples which are adduced as psychological experiments. He suffered from dread of the good as well as from dread of evil (who can entirely disclaim that experience!), and when he says that “the first sin is always committed in impotence” he was mindful of his own case. He wrote in his Journal on May 17, 1843 (IV A 107, p. 43; Dru No. 44, p. 122), “After all, it was dread which caused me to go astray, and where might I seek support when I knew or suspected that the only man I had admired for his strength and power was wavering?”

From the comment upon the pseudonyms which Johannes Climacus is permitted to make in the Postscript (pp. 239 f.) we do not get as much enlightenment as we could wish about *The Concept of Dread.* I need refer only to the remark that in view of the futile efforts that have been made to understand sin abstractly, “it is well that it is treated here psychologically.” This means that at least a concrete place is assigned to it, for Vigilius rightly insists that sin cannot be understood psychologically.

Because S. K. has furnished us with so little comment upon this book, either in his subsequent works or in his Journal, upon which I am accustomed to draw for my introductions, this introduction may end here. The *Edifying Discourses* often shed light upon the books which they

“accompany,” but this is the only pseudonymous work (with exception of the serious works of Anti-Climacus) which had no such accompaniment. It was itself so serious that S. K. thought it appropriate to accompany it with the humorous book which he called *Prefaces,* a book which will not likely be translated into English, for the reason only that it dealt with ephemeral interests in the little world of Copenhagen.

THE CONCEPT OF DREAD

A simple psychological deliberation oriented in the direction of the dogmatic problem of original sin

BY

VIGILIUS HAUFNIENSIS

Copenhagen To be had from the University Bookseller C. A. Reitzel

Printed by Bianco Luno's Press 1844

[June 17.]

The age of distinctions is past and gone, the System has overcome it. He who in our age loves distinctions is an eccentric man whose soul clings to that which has long vanished. That may be so, and yet *Socrates* remains what he was, the simple wise man with the curious distinction which he himself expressed by word and by his life, which after full two thousand years the eccentric *Hamann* reiterated, exclaiming with admiration, "Socrates was great for the fact that he 'distinguished between what he understood and what he did not understand.'"

TO THE LATE

PROFESSOR POUL MARTIN MOLLER

THE HAPPY LOVER OF HELLENIC CULTURE, HOMER'S ADMIRER, SOCRATES' INTIMATE FRIEND, THE INTERPRETER OF ARISTOTLE — DENMARK'S JOY IN "JOY OVER DENMARK,"

ALTHOUGH A “FAR-TRAVELED MAN,” YET ALWAYS
“REMEMBERED IN THE DANISH SUMMER”

MY ADMIRATION, MY DEEP-FELT LOSS, THIS WORK IS
DEDICATED

PREFACE

ACCORDING TO MY notion, he who would write a book does well to think a good deal about the subject on which he would write. Neither would he do ill to form acquaintance, so far as possible, with what has previously been written on the same subject. If along that road he should encounter an individual who has dealt exhaustively and adequately with one or another part of the subject, he does well to rejoice as does the friend of the bridegroom when he stands and gives ear to the bridegroom's voice. When he has done that in perfect silence and with the enthusiasm of a lover, which always seeks solitude, then no more is needed then he writes his book straightway as the bird sings its ditty, if there be one who profits by it and finds joy in it, so much the better; then he publishes it, carefree and unconcerned, without any self-importance, as though he had said the last word, or as though by his book all generations would be blessed. Every generation has its task and need not disturb itself overmuch to be everything for the preceding and the following generations. Every individual in each generation has likewise every day his own troubles and enough to do in taking care of himself, and does not need to embrace all the contemporary world with sovereign and parental concern, nor to make an era or an epoch begin with his book, still less with the New Year's torch of his vow, or with the far-seeing promises of his suggestive hints, or by reassuring indications with regard to a currency of doubtful value. Not everyone who is round-shouldered is therefore an Atlas or has become so by carrying a world; not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord, enters into the kingdom of heaven; not everyone who offers to go bond for the whole contemporary generation has thereby proved that he is able to vouch for himself; not everyone who cries

"Bravo!" "*Schwere Noth!*" "*Gottsblitz!*" "*Bravissimo!*" has therefore understood himself in his admiration.

So far as concerns my humble person, I admit with all honesty that as an author I am a king without a country, but also that in fear and much trembling I am an author without pretensions. If to a noble envy, a jealous criticism, it seems too much that I bear a Latin name, I shall gladly assume the name of John Brown, preferring as I do to be regarded as a layman, one who speculates, it is true, but stands nevertheless far removed from Speculation, even though I am as much a devotee in my faith in authority as the Roman was tolerant in his fear of the gods. As for human authority, I am a fetish-worshiper and with equal piety adore whosoever it may be, if only it is adequately announced betimes by the beating of drums that it is to him I must pay adoration, that he is the Authority and the *Imprimatur* for the current year. It is beyond my understanding how the decision is made, whether this choice comes about by the casting of lots and ballots, or whether the dignity is passed around and the individual sits by turn as an authority just as does a citizen-representative in the Commission of Conciliation.

I have nothing further to add, except that to everyone who shares my view, as also to everyone who does not, to everyone who reads the book, as also to everyone who has enough in the Preface, I would wish a sincere *Lebewohl*!

Respectfully,

VIGILIUS HAUFNIENSIS

INTRODUCTION

IN WHAT SENSE the subject of this deliberation is a theme of interest to psychology, and in what sense, after having interested psychology, it points precisely to dogmatics.

THE notion that every scientific problem within the great field embraced by science has its definite place, its measure and its bounds, and precisely thereby has its resonance in the whole, its legitimate consonance in what the whole expresses — this notion, I say, is not merely a *pium desiderium* which ennobles the man of science by the visionary enthusiasm or melancholy which it begets, is not merely a sacred duty which employs him in the service of the whole, bidding him renounce lawlessness and the romantic lust to lose sight of land, but it is also in the interest of every more highly specialized deliberation, which by forgetting where its home properly is, forgets at the same time itself (a thought which the very language I use with its striking ambiguity expresses), becomes another thing, and attains a dubious perfectibility by being able to become anything at all. By thus failing to let the scientific call to order be heard, by not being vigilant to forbid the individual problems to hurry by one another as though it were a question of arriving first at the masquerade, one may indeed attain sometimes an appearance of brilliancy, may give sometimes the impression of having already comprehended, when in fact one is far from it, may sometimes by the use of vague words strike up an agreement between things that differ. This gain, however, avenges itself subsequently, like all unlawful acquisitions, which neither in civic life nor in the field of science can really be owned.

Thus when a person entitles the last section of his Logic Reality,” he thereby gains the advantage of appearing to have already reached by logic the highest thing, or, if one prefers to say so, the lowest. The loss is obvious nevertheless, for this is not to the advantage either of logic or of reality. Not to that of reality, for the contingent, which is an integral part of reality, cannot be permitted to slip into logic. It is not to the advantage of logic, for if logic has conceived the thought of reality it has taken into its system something it cannot assimilate, it has anticipated what it ought merely to predispose. The punishment is clear: that every deliberation about what reality is must by this be made difficult, yea, perhaps for a long time impossible, because this word “reality will, as it were, require some time to recall to mind what it is, must have time to forget the mistake.

Thus when in dogmatics a person says that *faith* is the *immediate,* without more precise definition, he gains the advantage of convincing everyone of the necessity of not stopping at faith, yea, he compels even the orthodox man to make this concession, because this man perhaps does not at once penetrate the misunderstanding and perceive that it is not due to a subsequent flaw in the argument but to this πρωτον φεθδος. The loss is indubitable, for thereby faith loses by being deprived of what legitimately belongs to it: its historical presupposition. Dogmatics loses for the fact that it has to begin, not where it properly has its beginning, within the compass of an earlier beginning. Instead of presupposing an earlier beginning, it ignores this and begins straightway as if it were logic; for logic in fact begins with the most volatile essence produced by the finest abstraction: the immediate. What then logically is correct, namely, that the immediate is *eo ipso* annulled, becomes twaddle in dogmatics; for to no one could it occur to want to stop with the immediate (not further defined), seeing that in fact it is annulled the instant it is mentioned, just as a sleepwalker awakes the instant his name is called.

Thus when sometimes in the course of investigations which are hardly more than propaedeutic one finds the word "reconciliation" used to designate speculative knowledge, or the identity of the knowing subject and the thing known, the subjective-objective, etc., then one easily sees that the author is brilliant and that by the aid of his *esprit* he has explained all riddles, especially for those who do not even scientifically take the precaution, which yet one takes in everyday life, to listen carefully to the words of the riddle before guessing it. Otherwise one acquires the incomparable merit of having by one's explanation propounded a new riddle, namely, how it could occur to any man that this might be the explanation. That thought possesses reality was the assumption of all ancient philosophy as well as of the philosophy of the Middle Ages. With Kant this assumption became doubtful. Suppose now that the Hegelian school had really *thought through* Kant's scepticism (however, this ought always to remain a big question, in spite of all Hegel and his school have done, by the help of the catchwords "Method and Manifestation," to hide what Schelling recognized more openly by the cue "intellectual intuition and construction, the fact, namely, that this was a new point of departure) and then reconstructed the earlier view in a higher form, in such wise that thought does not possess reality by virtue of a presupposition is then this consciously produced reality of thought a reconciliation? In fact philosophy is merely brought back to the point where in old days one began, in the old days when precisely the word "reconciliation" had immense significance. We have an old and respectable philosophical terminology: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. They invent a newer one in which mediation occupies the third place. Is this to be considered such an extraordinary step in advance? Mediation is equivocal, for it designates at once the relation between the two terms and the result of the relation, that in which they stand related to one another as having been brought into relationship; it

designates movement, but at the same time rest. Whether this is a perfection, only a far deeper dialectical test will decide; but for that unfortunately we are still waiting. They do away with synthesis and say "mediation." All right. But *esprit* requires more — so they say "reconciliation." What is the consequence? It is of no advantage to their propaedeutic investigations, for of course they gain as little as truth thereby gains in clarity, or as a man's soul increases in blessedness by acquiring a title. On the contrary, they have fundamentally confounded two sciences, ethics and dogmatics — especially in view of the fact that, having got the word "reconciliation" introduced, they now hint that logic is properly the doctrine about the λογος. Ethics and dogmatics contend in a fateful *confinium* about reconciliation. Repentance and guilt torture out reconciliation ethically, whereas dogmatics in its receptivity for the proffered reconciliation has the historically concrete immediateness with which it begins its discourse in the great conversation of science. What then will be the consequence? That language will presumably have to celebrate a great sabbatical year in which we let speech and thought rest, in order to be able to begin with the beginning.

In logic they use the negative as the motive power which brings movement into everything. And movement in logic they must have, any way they can get it, by fair means or foul. The negative helps them, and if the negative cannot, then quibbles and phrases can, just as the negative itself has become a play on words. [Exempli gratia: Wesen ist was ist gewesen; ist gewesen is the preterite tense of to be, ergo Wesen is das aufgehoben being "the being which has been." This is a logical movement! If in the Hegelian logic (such as it is in itself and through the contributions of the School) one were to take the trouble to pick out and make a collection of all the fabulous hobgoblins and kobolds which like busy swains help the logical movement along, a later age would perhaps be

astonished to discover that witticisms which then will appear superannuated once played a great role in logic, not as incidental explanations and brilliant observations, but as masters of movement which made Hegel's logic a miracle and gave the logical thoughts feet to walk on, without anybody noticing it, since the long cloak of admiration concealed the performer who trained the animals, just as Lulu [in a play] comes running without anybody seeing the machinery. Movement in logic is the meritorious service of Hegel, in comparison with which it is hardly worth the trouble of mentioning the never-to-be-forgotten merits which Hegel has, and has disdained in order to run after the uncertain — I mean the merit of having in manifold ways enriched the categorical definitions and their arrangement.] In logic no movement can come about, for logic is, and everything logical simply is, and this impotence of logic is the transition to the sphere of becoming where existence and reality appear. So when logic is absorbed in the concretion of the categories it is constantly the same that it was from the beginning. In logic every movement (if for an instant one would use this expression) is an immanent movement, which in a deeper sense is no movement, as one will easily convince oneself if one reflects that the very concept of movement is a transcendence which can find no place in logic. The negative then is the immanence of movement, it is the vanishing factor, the thing that is annulled (aufgehoben). If everything comes to pass in that way, then nothing comes to pass, and the negative becomes a phantom. But precisely for the sake of getting something to come to pass in logic, the negative becomes something more, it becomes the producer of the opposition, and not a negation but a counterposition. The negative then is not the muteness of the immanent movement, it is the "necessary other," which doubtless must be very necessary to logic in order to set things going, but the negative it is not. Leaving logic to go on to ethics, one encounters here again the negative, which is indefatigably active

in the whole Hegelian philosophy. Here too a man discovers to his amazement that the negative is the evil. Now the confusion is in full swing; there is no bound to brilliancy, and what Mme. de Staël-Holstein said of Schelling's philosophy, that it gave a man *esprit* for his whole life, applies in every respect to the Hegelian philosophy. One sees how illogical movements must be in logic since the negative is the evil, and how unethical they must be in ethics since the evil is the negative. In logic this is too much, in ethics too little; it fits nowhere if it has to fit both places. If ethics has no other transcendence, it is essentially logic; if logic is to have so much transcendence as after all has been left in ethics out of a sense of shame, then it is no longer logic.

What I have expounded is perhaps rather prolix for the place where it stands (in relation to the subject with which it deals it is far from being too long), but it is by no means superfluous, since the particular observations are selected with reference to the subject of this work. The examples are taken from the greater world, but what occurs in the great may be repeated in the lesser, and the misunderstanding remains the same, even if the injurious consequences are less. He who gives himself the airs of writing the System has the great responsibility, but he who writes a monograph can be and ought to be faithful over a little.

The present work has taken as its theme the psychological treatment of "dread," in such a way that it has *in mente* and before its eye the dogma of original sin. It has therefore to take account, although tacitly, of the concept of sin. Sin, however, is not a theme for psychological interest, and it would only be to abandon oneself to the service of a misunderstood cleverness if one were to treat it thus. Sin has its definite place, or rather it has no place, and that is what characterizes it. By treating it in a place other than its own, one distorts it, in that one subjects it to an unessential reflective refraction. Its concept is altered, and at the same time the mood which properly

corresponds to the correct concept [The fact that science, fully as much as poetry and art, assumes a mood both on the part of the producer and on the part of the recipient, that an error in modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the exposition of thought, has been entirely forgotten in our age, when people have altogether forgotten the nature of inwardness and appropriation in their joy over all the glory they believed they possessed, or through cupidity have lost it, like the dog which preferred the shadow. However, every error begets its own enemy. An error of thought has outside of it as its enemy, dialectics; the absence of mood or its falsification has outside of it its enemy, the comical.] is confused, and instead of the endurance of the genuine mood one has the fleeting jugglery of the false mood. Thus when sin is drawn into aesthetics the mood becomes either frivolous or melancholy; for the category under which sin lies is contradiction, and this is either comic or tragic. The mood is therefore falsified, for the mood corresponding to sin is seriousness. Its concept is altered, for whether it becomes comic or tragic, it is either an enduring thing, or a thing which as unessential is annulled [*aufgehoben],* whereas properly its concept is, to be overcome. In a deeper sense the comical and the tragical have no enemies; the antagonist is either a bogy which makes one weep, or a bogy which makes one laugh.

If sin is dealt with in metaphysics, the mood is the dialectical indifference and disinterestedness which thinks sin through as something which cannot resist thought. The concept is altered; for it is true that sin has to be overcome, not however as that to which thought is unable to give life, but as that which exists and as such is everybody’s concern.

If sin is dealt with in psychology, the mood becomes the persistence of observation, the dauntlessness of the spy, not the ardent flight of seriousness away from and out of sin. The concept becomes a different one, for sin becomes a state. But sin is not a state. Its idea is that its concept is

constantly annulled. As a state *(de potentia)* it *is* not, whereas *de actu* or *in actu* it is and is again. The mood of psychology would be antipathetic curiosity, but the correct mood is the stouthearted opposition of seriousness. The mood of psychology is the dread corresponding to its discovery, and in its dread it delineates sin, while again and again it is alarmed by the sketch it produces. When sin is treated in such a way it becomes the stronger; for psychology is really related to it in a feminine way. Doubtless there is an element of truth in this state of mind, and doubtless it emerges in every man's life more or less before the ethical makes its appearance; but by such treatment sin becomes not what it is but more or less than it is.

As soon therefore as one sees the problem of sin treated, it is possible at once to see from the mood whether the concept is the right one. For example, as soon as sin is talked about as a sickness, an abnormality, a poison, a disharmony, then the concept too is falsified.

Sin does not properly belong in any science. It is the theme with which the sermon deals, where the individual talks as an individual to the individual. In our age scientific self-importance has turned the priests into professorial parish-clerks of a sort, who also serve science and think it beneath their dignity to preach. It is no wonder therefore that preaching has come to be regarded as a pretty poor art. Nevertheless, preaching is the most difficult of all arts, and essentially it is the art which Socrates extols: the art of being able to converse. From this of course it does not follow that there must be someone in the congregation to make answer, or that it might be a help to have someone regularly introduced to speak. When Socrates censured the Sophists by making the distinction that they were able to talk but not to converse, what he really meant was that they were able to say a great deal about everything, but lacked the factor of personal appropriation. Appropriation is precisely the secret of conversation.

To the concept of sin corresponds the mood of seriousness. The science in which sin might most plausibly find a place would surely be ethics. About this, however, there is a great difficulty. Ethics is after all an ideal science, and that not only in the sense that every other science is ideal. Ethics would bring ideality into reality, on the other hand its movement is not designed to raise reality up into ideality. [If one will consider this more sharply, one will have opportunity to perceive how brilliant it was to entitle the last section of logic ‘Reality, inasmuch as not even ethics reaches that. The reality with which logic ends signifies therefore in the way of reality no more than that “being” with which it begins.] Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that man is in possession of the conditions requisite for performing it. Thereby ethics develops a contradiction, precisely for the fact that it makes the difficulty and the impossibility clear. What is said of the Law applies to ethics, that it is a severe schoolmaster, which in making a demand, by its demand only condemns, does not give birth to life. Only the Greek ethics constituted an exception, due to the fact that it was not ethics in the proper sense but contained an aesthetic factor. This is evinced clearly in its definition of virtue and in what Aristotle says often but also in *Ethica Nicomochea* affirms with charming Greek naïveté that, after all, virtue alone does not make a man happy and content, but he must have health, friends, earthly goods, be happy in his family. The more ideal ethics is, the better. It must not let itself be disturbed by the twaddle that it is no use requiring the impossible; for even to listen to such talk is unethical, is something for which ethics has neither *time* nor *opportunity.* Ethics does not have to chaffer, nor in that way does one reach reality. If that is to be reached, the whole movement must be reversed. This characteristic of ethics, namely, that it is so ideal, is what tempts one in the treatment of it to employ now a metaphysical category, now an aesthetical, now a psychological. But of course ethics above all sciences must withstand

temptations, but because there are these temptations no one can write an ethics without having entirely different categories up his sleeve.

Sin belongs to ethics only in so far as upon this concept it founders by the aid of repentance. [With regard to this point one will find several observations by Johannes de silentio, author of Fear and Trembling (Copenhagen 1843). There the author several times allows the wishful ideality of the aesthetical to founder upon the exacting ideality of the ethical, in order by these collisions to let the religious ideality come to evidence, which is precisely the ideality of reality, and therefore is just as desirable as that of aesthetics and not impossible like that of ethics, yet to let it come to evidence in such a way that it breaks out in the dialectical leap and with the positive feeling, “Behold, all things have become new!” and in the negative feeling which is the passion of the absurd to which the concept of “repetition” corresponds. Either the whole of existence is locked up in the requirement of ethics, or the condition for its fulfillment must be provided — and with that the whole of life and of existence begins afresh, not through an immanent continuity with the foregoing (which is a contradiction), but by a transcendent fact which separates the repetition from the first existence by such a cleft that it is only a figure of speech to say that the foregoing and the subsequent state are related to one another as the totality of the living creatures in the sea are related to those in the air and on the land, although according to the opinion of some natural scientists the former is supposed to be the prototype which in its imperfection prefigures everything which becomes manifest in the latter. With regard to this category one may compare Repetition by Constantine Constantius (Copenhagen 1843). This book is in fact a whimsical book, as its author meant it to be, but nevertheless it is so far as I know the first which has energetically conceived repetition and let it be glimpsed in its pregnance to explain the relation between the ethnical and the Christian, by indicating the

invisible summit and the discrimen rerum where science breaks against science until the new science comes forth. But what he has discovered he has hidden again by arraying the concept in the form of jest which aptly offers itself as a mode of presentation. What has moved him to do this it is difficult to say, or rather it is difficult to understand; for he says himself that he writes this “so that the heretics might not be able to understand him.” As he has only wished to employ himself with this subject aesthetically and psychologically, he had to plan it all humoristically, and the effect is produced by the fact that the word at one moment signifies everything, and the next moment the most insignificant thing, and the transition, or rather the perpetual falling from the stars, is justified as a burlesque contrast. However, he stated the whole thing pretty clearly on page 34: “Repetition is the interest of metaphysics and at the same time the interest upon which metaphysics founders. Repetition is the solution in every ethical view; repetition is a conditio sine qua non of every dogmatic problem.” The first sentence contains an allusion to the thesis that metaphysics is disinterested, as Kant affirmed of aesthetics. As soon as the interest emerges, metaphysics steps to one side. For this reason the word interest is italicized. The whole interest of subjectivity emerges in real life, and then metaphysics founders. In case repetition is not posited, ethics remains a binding power; presumably it is for this reason he says that “it is the solution in every ethical view.” If repetition is not posited, dogmatics cannot exist at all; for in faith repetition begins, and faith is the organ for the dogmatic problems. — In the sphere of nature repetition exists in its immovable necessity. In the sphere of spirit the problem is not to get change out of repetition and find oneself comfortable under repetition, as though the spirit stood only in an external relation to the repetitions of the spirit (in consequence of which good and evil alternate like summer and winter), but the problem is to transform repetition into something inward, into the proper task of freedom,

into freedom's highest interest, as to whether, while everything changes, it can actually realize repetition. Here the finite spirit falls into despair. This Constantine has indicated by stepping aside and letting repetition break forth in the young man by virtue of the religious. Therefore Constantine says several times that repetition is a religious category, too transcendent for him, that it is a movement by virtue of the absurd, and on page 144 it is said eternity is the true repetition. All this Professor Heiberg has failed to observe, but he has very kindly wished by his knowledge (which like his New Year's gift-book is singularly elegant and up-to-date) to help this work to become a tasteful and elegant insignificance, by pompously bringing the question back to the point where (to recall a recent book) the aesthetic writer in Either/Or had brought it in "The Rotation of Crops." If Constantine were really to feel himself flattered by enjoying in this instance the rare honor which brings him into an undeniably elect company — then to my way of thinking, since it was he who wrote the book, he must have become stark mad. But if on the other hand an author like him, who writes in order to be misunderstood, were so far to forget himself and had not ataraxia enough to account it to his credit that Professor Heiberg had not understood him — then again he must be stark mad. And this I have no need to fear, for the circumstance that hitherto he has not replied to Professor Heiberg indicates that he has adequately understood himself.] If ethics must include sin, its ideality is lost. The more it remains in its ideality, and yet never becomes inhuman enough to lose sight of reality, but corresponds with this by willing to suggest itself as a task for every man, in such a way as to make him the true man, the whole man, the man, all the greater is the tension of the difficulty it proposes. In the fight to realize the task of ethics sin shows itself not as something which only casually belongs to a casual individual, but sin withdraws deeper and deeper as a deeper and deeper presupposition, as a presupposition which goes well beyond the

individual. Now all is lost for ethics, and ethics has contributed to the loss of all. There has come to the fore a category which lies entirely outside its province. Original sin makes everything still more desperate — that is to say, it settles the difficulty, not, however, by the help of ethics but by the help of dogmatics. As all ancient thought and speculation were founded upon the assumption that thought had reality, so also all ancient ethics upon the assumption that virtue is realizable. Scepticism of sin is entirely foreign to paganism. For the ethical consciousness, sin is what an error is in relation to knowledge, it is the particular exception which proves nothing.

With dogmatics begins the science which, in contrast to that science of ethics which can strictly be called ideal, starts with reality. It begins with the real in order to raise it up into the ideality. It does not deny the presence of sin, on the contrary, it assumes it, and explains it by assuming original sin. However, since dogmatics is very seldom treated purely, one will often find original sin drawn into its domain in such a way that the impression of the heterogeneous originality of dogmatics does not strike the eye but is obscured, which happens also when one finds in it a dogma about angels, about the Holy Scripture, etc. Dogmatics therefore should not explain original sin but expound it by assuming it, like that vortex the Greeks talked so much about, a something originating movement, upon which no science can lay its hand.

That such is the case with dogmatics will readily be admitted when one finds leisure to understand for a second time Schleiermacher's immortal services to this science. People long ago deserted him when they chose Hegel, and yet Schleiermacher was in the beautiful Greek sense a thinker who could talk of what he has known, whereas Hegel, in spite of his remarkable and colossal learning, reminds us nevertheless again and again by his performance that he was in the German sense a professor of philosophy on a big scale, who à tout *prix* must explain all things.

The new science then begins with dogmatics, in the same sense that the immanent science begins with metaphysics. Here ethics finds its place again as the science which has the dogmatic consciousness of reality as a task for reality. This ethic does not ignore sin, and its ideality does not consist in making ideal requirements, but its ideality consists in the penetrating consciousness of reality, of the reality of sin, yet not, be it observed, with metaphysical frivolity or psychological concupiscence.

One readily sees the difference of the movement, and that the ethic of which we are now speaking belongs to another order. The first ethic foundered upon the sinfulness of the individual. So far from being able to explain this, the difficulty had to become still greater and ethically more enigmatic, for the fact that the sin of the individual widens out and becomes the sin of the whole race. At this juncture came dogmatics and helped by the doctrine of original sin. The new ethics presupposes dogmatics and along with that original sin, and by this it now explains the sin of the individual, while at the same time it presents ideality as a task, not however by a movement from above down, but from below up.

It is well known that Aristotle used the name proto philosophia [the first philosophy] and denoted by that more especially metaphysics, although he included also a part of what to our notion belongs to theology. It is entirely natural that in paganism theology should be treated in this place; it evinces the same lack of infinite penetrating reflection which accounts for the fact that in paganism the theater had reality as a sort of divine worship. If now one will waive the objection to this ambiguity, we might retain this name and understand by proto philosophia the totality of science, we might describe it as ethnic, the nature of it being immanence, or use the Greek term “recollection”; and understand by *secunda philosophia* that of which the nature is transcendence or “repetition.”

The concept of sin does not properly belong in any science; only the second ethics can deal with its apparition but not with its origin. If any other science were to discuss it, the concept would be confused. For example, coming closer to our theme, if psychology were to do so.

What psychology has to deal with must be something in repose, something which abides in a mobile state of quiet, not with an unquiet thing which constantly reproduces itself or is repressed. But the abiding state, that out of which sin constantly becomes (comes into being), not by necessity, for a becoming by necessity is simply a state of being (as is for example the entire history of the plant), but by freedom — in this abiding state, I say, which is the predisposing assumption, the real possibility of sin, we have a subject for the interest of psychology. That which can concern psychology and with which it can concern itself is the question how sin can come into existence, not the fact that it exists. In its interest in its object psychology carries the thing so far that it is as if sin were there; but the next thing, the fact that it is there, is qualitatively different from this. To show then that this presupposition for the careful observation of psychology turns out to be more and more comprehensive is the interest of psychology; yea, psychology is willing to abandon itself to the illusion that hereby sin is really posited. But this last illusion betrays the impotence of psychology and shows that it has served its turn.

That human nature must be such that it makes sin possible, is, psychologically speaking, perfectly true; but to want to let this possibility of sin become its reality is shocking to ethics and sounds to dogmatics like blasphemy; for freedom is never possible; as soon as it is, it is actual, in the same sense in which it has been said by an earlier philosophy that when God’s existence is possible it is necessary.

As soon as sin is really posited, ethics is on the spot and follows every step it takes. How it came into being does not concern ethics, except in so

far as it is certain that sin came into the world as sin. But still less than with the genesis of sin is ethics concerned with the still life of its possibility.

If one would ask more particularly in what sense and to what extent psychology pursues the object of its investigation, it is clear from the foregoing and in itself that every observation of the reality of sin as an object of thought is irrelevant to it, nor as the object of observation does it belong to ethics either, for ethics never acts as observer, but accuses, condemns, acts. In the next place, it follows from the foregoing and is evident in itself that psychology has nothing to do with the details of empirical actuality, except in so far as they are outside of sin. As a science, psychology can never have anything to do empirically with the detail which underlies it, and yet this detail may receive its scientific representation in proportion as psychology becomes more and more concrete. In our age this science, which above all others has leave to intoxicate itself, one might almost say, with the foaming multifariousness of life, has become as spare in its diet and as ascetic as any anchorite. This is not the fault of the science but of its devotees. In relation to sin, on the other hand, this whole content of reality is properly denied to it, only the possibility of it still belongs to it. To ethics of course the possibility of sin never presents itself, and ethics never lets itself be fooled into wasting its time upon such reflections. Psychology, on the other hand, loves them; it sits sketching the contours and measuring the angles of possibility, and no more would let itself be disturbed than would Archimedes.

But while psychology thus delves into the possibility of sin, it is without knowing it in the service of another science, which is only waiting for it to be finished in order to begin for its part and help psychology to an explanation. This other science is not ethics, for ethics has nothing whatsoever to do with this possibility. No, it is dogmatics, and here in turn the problem of original! sin emerges. While psychology is fathoming the

real possibility of sin, dogmatics explains original sin, which is the ideal possibility of sin. On the other hand, the second ethics has nothing to do with the possibility of sin nor with original sin. The first ethics ignores sin, the second ethics has the reality of sin in its province, and here only by a misunderstanding can psychology intrude.

If what has been here expounded is correct, one will easily see with what justification I have called this book a psychological deliberation, and will see also how this deliberation, in so far as it brings to consciousness its relation to science in general, properly belongs to psychology and leads in turn to dogmatics. Psychology has been called the doctrine of the subjective spirit. If one will pursue this science a little more precisely, one will see how, when it comes to the problem of sin, it must change suddenly into the doctrine of the Absolute Spirit. Here is the place of dogmatics. The first ethics presupposes metaphysics, and the second dogmatics; but it also completes it in such a way that here as everywhere the presupposition comes to evidence.

This was the task of the introduction. The introduction may be correct while the deliberation itself dealing with the concept of dread may be entirely incorrect. That remains to be seen.

CHAPTER I.

Dread as the presupposition of original sin and as explaining it retrogressively by going back to its origin

§1. Historical indications relative to the concept of original sin

Is this concept identical with the concept of the Adam's sin, the Fall? So it has sometimes been understood, and consequently the task proposed was to explain in an identical way original sin and the sin of Adam. Since thought here stumbles upon difficulties, theologians sought a way out. In at least to explain something they introduced a fantastic assumption, a state which by its loss involved the Fall. They gained in the advantage that everybody would be willing to concede such a state as that described is not found in the world, but they forgot that the doubt was a different one, namely, whether it ever had existed-and that was pretty clearly necessary to lose it The history of the human race acquires a fantastic beginning, Adam was 'fantastically put outside, pious sentiment and fantasy got what it desired, a godly prelude, but thought got nothing In a double way Adam was kept fantastically outside The assumption was a dialectic-fantastic one, especially in Catholicism (Adam lost donum divinitus datum supranaturale et It was historically fantastic, especially in the Covenant Theo which lost itself dramatically in an imaginary notion of Adam Sing as plenipotentiary representative of the whole race Of course both explanations explain nothing, since the one explains away what it had itself poetically interpolated, and the other merely introduced poetry which explains nothing.

Is the concept of original sin so different from the concept of the first sin that the individual participates in it only through his relation to Adam and not through his primordial relation to sin If so, then Adam is again fantastically placed outside history. Adam sin is then more than passed (plus quant perfèctum). Original sin is present, it is sinfulness, and Adam was the only one in whom this was not, since it came into being by means of him. They were not attempting therefore to explain Adam's sin, but would explain original sin by its consequences. The explanation, however, was not meant for thought. Hence one can understand very well that a symbolical document affirms the impossibility of an explanation, and that this affirmation is made without contradicting the explanation. The Articles of Smalkald teach expressly: peccatum haereditarium tam profunda et tetra est corruptio naturae, ut nullius hominis ratione intelligi possit, sed ex scripturae patefactione agnoscenda et credenda sit. This affirmation is perfectly compatible with the explanations; for in them we have not thought-definitions as such, but here pious feelings (in the direction of the ethical) give vent to their indignation at original sin, assume the role of prosecutor, and then, with an almost feminine passion, with the exaltation of a young girl in love, they are solely concerned to make sinfulness more and more odious, oneself included, so that no word is hard enough to denounce the participation of the individual in this sinfulness. If with this in mind one will survey the various confessions, one will discover a gradation in which the profound Protestant piety comes off victorious. The Greek Church calls original sin [the sin of the first father]. It has not even a concept, for this term is only a historical statement, which does not like a concept indicate a present condition but only the historically concluded fact. Vitium originis [a sin of origin] (Tertullian) is indeed a concept but nevertheless the form of the language allows one to conceive the historical factor as predominant. Pcccatum originale (quia onginaliter tradatur)

(Augustine) states the concept, which becomes even more clearly defined by the distinction between peccatum originate and originatum. Protestantism rejects Scholastic definitions (carentia imaginis dei, defectus justitiae originalis), as it does also the notion that sin might be poena (concupiscentiam poenam esse non peccatum, disputant adversarii, Apol. A.C.); and now begins the enthusiastic climax: vitium, peccatum, reatns, culpa. One cares only for the eloquence of the contrite soul, and therefore may sometimes let a perfectly contradictory thought slip into the discourse about original sin (nunc quoque afferens Irani dei iis, qui secundum exemplum Adanti peccarunt). Or that troubled eloquence is utterly careless of thought but affirms terrific things about original sin (quo fit ut omnes propter inobedientiam Adae et Hevae in odio apud deum simus, says the Formula Concordiae, which nevertheless is prudent enough to protest against thinking this, for if one were to think it, sin, as it says, would become man's substance).

As soon as the exaltation of faith and contrition has vanished one can no longer be helped by such definitions, which only make it easy for cunning common sense to escape the recognition of sin. But to need other definitions is a dubious proof of the perfection of our age, quite in the same sense as is our need of other than Draconian laws.

The same fantastic effect so evident here is repeated again at another point in dogmatics, the Atonement. It is affirmed that Christ made satisfaction for original sin. But how was it then with Adam? He in fact brought original sin into the world. Was not then original sin an actual sin in him? Or does original sin signify the same thing for Adam as for every man in the race? If so, then the concept is annulled. Or was Adam's whole life original sin?

Did not the first sin engender in him other sins, i.e. actual sins? The defect in the previous theory is here more evident; for Adam now finds

himself so fantastically outside that he is the only one who is excluded from the Atonement.

However one may state the problem, as soon as Adam finds himself fantastically outside, everything is confused. To explain Adam's sin is therefore to explain original sin, and no explanation is of any avail which explains original sin and does not explain Adam. The deepest reason for this is to be discovered in the essential characteristic of human existence, that man is an individual and as such is at once himself and the whole race, in such wise that the whole race has part in the individual, and the individual has part in the whole race. If one does not hold fast to this, one either gets into the singularity of Pelagianism, Socinianism, or philanthropy, or else falls into the fantastic. The prose of common sense is that the race is resolved numerically into a "one times one. The fantastic is that Adam enjoys the well-meant honor of being more than the whole race, or the ambiguous honor of standing outside the race.

The fact is that at every moment the individual is himself and the race. This is man's perfection, regarded as a state. At the same time it is a contradiction; but a contradiction is always the expression for a task; but a task is movement; but a movement towards that same thing as a task which first was given up as an enigma is a historical movement. Hence the individual has a history; but if the individual has a history, so has also the race. Every individual has the same perfection; precisely for this cause the individuals do not fall away from one another numerically, any more than does the concept of the race become a phantom. Every individual is essentially interested in the history of all other individuals, yea, just as essentially as in his own. Perfection in oneself means therefore the perfect participation in the whole. No individual is indifferent to the history of the race, any more than is the race to that of any individual. While the history

of the race goes on, the individual regularly begins afresh, because he is himself and the race, and hence in turn his is the history of the race.

Adam is the first man; he is at once himself and the race. It is not by virtue of the aesthetically beautiful that we adhere to him, it is not by virtue of a magnanimous sentiment that we attach ourselves to him, in order not to leave him so to say in the lurch as one who was to blame for everything; it is not by virtue of the enthusiasm of sympathy and the persuasiveness of piety that we resolve to share this guilt with him, as the child wishes to be guilty along with the father; it is not by virtue of a forced compassion which teaches us to put up with what we cannot mend; but it is by virtue of thought we hold fast to him. Therefore every effort to explain Adam's significance for the race as *caput generis humani naturale, seminale, foederale* (to recall the dogmatic expressions), confuses everything. He is not essentially different from the race, for in that case there is no race; he is not the race, for in that case there is no race: he is himself and the race. Therefore what explains Adam explains the race, and vice versa.

§2. The concept of the first sin

ACCORDING to traditional conceptions, the difference between Adam's first sin and the first sin of every man is this: Adam's sin conditions sinfulnesses as a consequence; the other first sin assumes sinfulness as a condition. If that were so, then Adam would really be outside the race, and the race did not begin with him but had a beginning outside itself, and this runs contrary to every concept.

It is easy to see that the first sin signifies something different from a sin (i.e. a sin like several others), something different from one sin (i.e. No. 1 in relation to No. 2). The first sin is a determinant of quality, the first sin is *the* sin. This is the secret of the first," and the scandal of it for abstract intelligence, which thinks that once is nothing much, but that many times is

something, a notion which is altogether preposterous, inasmuch as each of the many times either signifies as much as the first time, or all of them taken together not nearly so much. It is therefore a superstition to affirm in logic that by a continued quantitative progression a new quality is produced; it is an unpardonable reticence when one does not indeed conceal the fact that things do not go on quite in this way but conceals the consequence of this for the whole logical immanence by inserting it in the midst of the logical movement as Hegel does. The new quality appears with the first, with the leap, with the suddenness of the enigmatic.

If the first sin signifies numerically one sin, then no history results from it, and sin has no history either in the individual or in the race; for the condition for both is the same, even though the history of the race is not for this reason the history of the individual, any more than the history of the individual is that of the race, except in so far as the contradiction constantly expresses the task.

With the first sin came sin into the world. Exactly in the same way is this true of every subsequent first sin of man, that with it sin comes into the world. The fact that it was not there before Adam's first sin is (in relation to sin itself) an altogether accidental and irrelevant reflection which has altogether no significance, and is no justification for making Adam's sin greater or the first sin of every other man less. It is really a logical and ethical heresy to give the impression that sinfulness in a man goes on determining itself quantitatively for so long a time that at last by a generatio aequivoca it produces the first sin in man. This does not come to pass. It did not come to pass that Trop, who yet was a master in quantitative determination, got the degree of candidate in law by the aid of it. Let the mathematicians and astronomers help themselves out if they can with infinitely small magnitudes; in everyday life this does not help one to get one's certificate as candidate, and still less to explain spirit. If the first sin of

every subsequent man were to issue in this way out of sinfulness, his first sin is only unessentially defined when we call it “the first,” but would be essentially defined by its serial number (if we can think of such a thing) in the general sinking fund of the race. But thus it is not, and it is equally foolish, illogical, unethical, un-Christian, to want to sue for the honor of being the first discoverer, and to want to slink away from something by not being willing to think anything by saying that one has not done anything else but what all the others have done. The presence of sinfulness in a man, the power of example, etc., are only quantitative determinants which explain nothing, unless it is assumed that one individual is the whole race, instead of every individual being himself and the whole race.

The account of the first sin in Genesis has, especially in our age, been regarded rather carelessly as a myth. There is some reason for this, inasmuch as what one put in place of it was indeed a myth, and a poor one at that. For when the understanding takes to mythology there seldom comes out of it anything but twaddle. That account in Genesis is the only dialectically consistent account. Really its whole substance is concentrated in the clause: Sin came into the world by a sin. If this were not so, then sin would have come in as something accidental, which man would do well not to try to explain. The difficulty for the understanding the triumph of the explanation, its profound consistency in representing that sin presupposes itself, that it so came into the world that by the fact that it is, it is presupposed. Sin comes in as the sudden, i.e. with the leap; but this leap posits at the same time the quality; but when the quality was posited, the leap that same instant turned into the quality and was presupposed by the quality, and the quality by the leap. This is a stumbling block to the understanding, *ergo* it is a myth. In requital the understanding composes poetically a myth which denies the leap, construes the circle as a straight line, and then everything goes on as a matter of course. It paints a fantastic

picture of *how* man was before the Fall, and gradually, as the understanding chatters about it, the assumed innocence becomes little by little, in the course of the twaddle, sinfulness and so there it is. The discourse of the understanding in this instance may aptly be compared with the infantile rigmarole in which childhood takes delight: “One nis ball,” “two nis balls,” “three nis balls,” etc., up to “nine nis balls” and “tennis balls” — here it is, and elicited quite naturally by the foregoing. If there What significance they may have in other regards, as concomitants in the history of the race, as the run preparatory to the leap, which does not, however, explain the leap, is another question might be anything in this myth invented by the understanding, it would be that sinfulness precedes sin. But if this is true in the sense that sinfulness has come in by any other way but by sin, then the concept is annulled. But if it has come in by sin, then sin has preceded it. This contradiction is the only dialectically consistent statement, which is able to do justice to both the leap and immanence (i.e. the subsequent immanence).

So by Adam’s sin sin came into the world. This statement, which is the common one, implies however a reflection which is entirely external, and this doubtless has contributed much to the rise of the vague misunderstanding. That sin came into the world is quite true, but this statement as it stands does not concern Adam. To express the situation quite sharply and accurately one must say that by the first sin sinfulness came into Adam. It would not occur to anybody to say of any subsequent man that by his first sin sinfulness came into the world, and yet it comes through him in like manner (i.e. in a manner which is not essentially different) into the world; for, sharply and accurately expressed, sinfulness is in the world only in so far as it comes in through sin.

The fact that Adam has been interpreted differently is due solely to the consideration that the consequences of Adam’s fantastic relation to the race

must be everywhere made evident. His sin is original sin. Nothing else is known of him. But original sin as seen in Adam is only that first sin. Is Adam the only individual who has no history? Then indeed the race has to begin with an individual who is not an individual, whereby both the concept of the race and that of the individual are annulled. If any other individual in the race can by his history have significance in the history of the race, Adam has it, too; if Adam has significance only by reason of that first sin, then the concept of history is annulled, that is to say, history was finished the same instant it began.

Owing to the fact that the race does not begin afresh with every individual the sinfulness of the race acquires a history. This however proceeds by quantitative determinants, while the individual by the qualitative leap participates in it. The race therefore does not begin afresh with every individual, for in that way the race would be no race, but every individual begins afresh with the race.

If one would say that Adam's sin brought the sin of the race into the world, one either means this fantastically, and thereby every concept is annulled, or one can with the same justification say it of every man who by his first sin brings in sinfulness. Getting an individual who has to stand outside the race to begin the race is a myth of the understanding, like that of letting sinfulness begin in any other way but by sin. What one attains is merely to retard the problem, which naturally turns then to man No. 2 for an explanation, or rather now it is man No. I, since the first man No. 1 has become in effect No. 0.

What often deludes people and helps to start all sorts of fantastic notions going is the fact of generation, as if the subsequent man were essentially different from the first because he is a descendant. Descent is only the expression for the continuity in the history of the race, which always moves by quantitative determinants and therefore is never capable of bringing forth

an individual. For an animal species, even if it has preserved itself through a thousand and again another thousand generations, never brings forth an individual. If the second man had not descended from Adam, he would not have been the second man but an empty repetition, and from this would have been derived neither a race nor an individual. Every particular Adam would have been a statue by himself, and only to be defined by the indifferent specification, that is, by number, and that in a still more defective sense than when the Blue Boys are designated by number. At the most, every particular man would have been himself, not himself and the race, and would have had no history, just as an angel has no history, is only himself and does not participate in any history.

It hardly need be said that this view is not chargeable with any sort of Pelagianism, which lets every individual, unconcerned about the race, play his own little history in his private theater; for the history of the race calmly pursues its course, and in this no individual commences at the same place as another, whereas every individual begins afresh and that same instant is at the place where he ought to begin in history.

§3. The concept of innocence

IN THIS instance as usual, if one in our day would have a dogmatic definition, one must make a beginning by forgetting what Hegel invented in order to help dogmatics. One has a queer feeling when, in the dogmaticians who in other respects wish to be rather orthodox, one sees Hegel's favorite remark introduced, that the characteristic of the immediate is to be annulled *(aufgehoben*), as though immediacy and innocence were entirely identical. Hegel has quite consistently volatilized every dogmatic concept just far enough for it to support life in reduced circumstances as a *spirituel* expression for the logical. That the immediate needs to be annulled we do not need Hegel to tell us, neither does he deserve immortal merit for having

said it, since, logically thought, it is not even correct; for the immediate may not be annulled, forasmuch as it never is [in the sense of *Dasein].* The concept of immediacy properly belongs in logic, but the concept of innocence in ethics, and every concept must be dealt with as from that science to which it belongs, whether the concept belongs to the science in such a way that it is developed there, or is developed by being presupposed.

Now it is unethical to say that innocence must be annulled (*aufgehoben),* for even if it were annulled the instant this is uttered, ethics forbids us to forget that it can only be annulled by guilt. Therefore when one speaks of innocence as of immediacy, and is logically insolent and gruff enough to let this volatile thing have vanished, or aesthetically sentimental over what it was and that it has vanished, then one is only *geistreich* and forgets the point.

As Adam lost innocence by guilt, so does every man lose it. If it was not by guilt he lost it, neither was it innocence he lost and if he was not innocent before he became guilty, he never became guilty.

As for Adam's innocence, there has been no lack of all sorts of fantastic conceptions, whether these attained symbolical sanction in times when the velvet on the church pulpit as well as on the beginnings of the race was not so frayed as it is now, or whether they roamed about romantically as the suspicious inventions of poetry. The more fantastically they managed to get Adam attired, the more inexplicable it became that he could sin, and the more frightful his sin became. He had however once and for all forfeited all the glory, and over that, according to time and circumstance, one became sentimental or witty, melancholy or frivolous, historically contrite or fantastically merry — but the point of it they did not grasp ethically.

As for the innocence of subsequent men (i.e. all with the exception of Adam and Eve), rather lowly notions have been entertained. Ethical rigorism ignored the limits of the ethical and was itself so upright as to

believe that men would not seize the opportunity to give the slip to all that when escape was made so easy. Frivolity of course perceived nothing at all. But only by guilt is innocence lost; every man loses innocence in essentially the same way that Adam did, and it is not in the interest of ethics to represent all men as troubled and interested spectators of guilt, but not guilty, nor is it to the interest of dogmatics to represent all as interested and sympathetic spectators of redemption, but not redeemed.

If men have so often wasted the time of dogmatics and ethics, and their own time, by pondering about what would have happened in case Adam had not sinned, this merely shows that they have brought with them an incorrect mood and an incorrect concept. To the innocent man it never can occur to ask such a question, but the guilty man sins when he asks it; for with his aesthetic curiosity he would like to obscure the fact that he himself has brought guilt into the world has himself lost innocence by guilt.

Innocence therefore is not some kind of immediacy which must be annulled (aufgehoben), the destination of which is to be annulled, something which properly speaking does not exist [in the sense of Dasein], but only comes into existence by the very fact that it is annulled, comes into existence as that which was before it was annulled and now is annulled. Immediacy is not annulled by mediacy, but when mediacy emerges it has that same instant annulled immediacy. The annulment of immediacy is therefore an immanent movement within immediacy, or it is an immanent movement in an opposite direction within mediacy, by which mediacy presupposes immediacy. Innocence is something which is annulled by transcendency, precisely because innocence is a something (whereas the correct expression for immediacy is that which Hegel uses for pure being, saying that it is nothing), and for this reason also, when innocence is annulled by a transcendency, something quite different comes out of it, whereas mediacy is just immediacy. Innocence is a quality, it is a state

which can very well endure, and therefore the logical haste to get it annulled is out of place, whereas immediacy in logic should try to hurry a little more, for it always arrives too late, even when it goes at full speed. Innocence is not a perfection one ought to wish to recover; for as soon as one wishes for it, it is lost, and it is a new guilt to waste time on wishes. Innocence is not an imperfection with which one cannot be content to stop but must go further; for innocence is always sufficient unto itself, and he who has lost it (lost it, that is to say, in the I only way it can be lost, i.e. by guilt, and not in the way it perhaps pleases him to have lost it) — to that man it will not occur to boast of his perfection at the cost of innocence.

The account in Genesis gives also the right explanation of innocence. Innocence is ignorance. This is by no means the pure being of immediacy, but it is ignorance. The fact that ignorance regarded from without seems as though designed to become knowledge is entirely irrelevant to ignorance.

It is quite evident that this view is not tainted with Pelagianism. The race has its history, and within it sinfulness has its continuous quantitative modification, but invariably innocence is lost only by the qualitative leap of the individual. That this sinfulness which is the progression of the race may show itself as a greater or lesser disposition in the individual who by his act assumes it, is indeed true; but this is a more or less, a quantitative determination which does not constitute the concept of guilt.

§4. The concept of the Fall

IF then innocency is ignorance, it might seem that, inasmuch as of the race in its quantitative determination is present in the ignorance of the single individual and by his act manifests itself as his guiltiness, there must be a difference between Adam's innocence and that of every other man. The answer is already given, that a more does not constitute a quality. It might seem too that it would be easier to explain how a subsequent man lost

innocence. This, however, is only apparently true. The highest degree of quantitative modification no more explains the qualitative leap than does the lowest. If I can explain guilt in the later man, I can equally well explain it in Adam. By habit, and still more by thoughtlessness and ethical stupidity, it has come to look as if the former were easier than the latter. One is so fain to avoid the sunstroke of consistency which falls directly upon the crown of one's head. One would put up with sinfulness, help to bear it, etc., etc. He need not give himself the pains. Sinfulness is not an epidemic which is transmitted like cowpox— "and every mouth shall be stopped." It is quite true that every man can say with profound seriousness that he was born in misery and his mother conceived him in sin; but really he can only sorrow rightly over it when he himself has brought guilt into the world and brought all this upon himself, for it is a contradiction to want to sorrow *aesthetically* over *sinfulness*. The only one who innocently sorrowed over sinfulness was Christ, but He did not sorrow over it as a destiny which He must put up with, but He sorrowed as one who freely chose to bear all the sin of the world and to suffer its punishment. This is not an aesthetic determinant, for Christ was more than an individual.

Innocence is ignorance — but how is it lost? It is not my intention to report here all the ingenious and absurd hypotheses by which the beginning of history has been encumbered by thinkers and speculators who only out of curiosity are interested in this great human affair we call "sin." I do not do so, partly because I would not waste other people's time by reciting that on the learning of which I have wasted my own time, and partly because the whole thing lies outside of history in the twilight where witches and speculators ride a race on broomsticks and sausage-pegs.

The science which has to do with the explanation is psychology, which, however, can only explain up to the explanation, and above all must guard against seeming to explain what no science explains, and which only ethics

explains further by presupposing it through what it owes to dogmatics. If one wants to take the psychological explanation and repeat it several times, and thereupon is of the opinion that it is not improbable that in this way sin came into the world, one has confounded everything. Psychology must stay within its bounds, and then its explanation must always have significance.

A psychological explanation of the Fall is well and clearly expressed in Usteri's exposition of the Pauline doctrine. Theology has now become so speculative that it scorns this sort of thing. It is in fact much easier to explain that the immediate must be annulled; and what theology sometimes does is even more convenient, namely, at the decisive moment of the explanation to become invisible before the eyes of the speculative worshipers. Usteri's exposition is to the effect that the command itself prohibiting Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge engendered sin in him. It does not by any means ignore the ethical but admits that the prohibition merely predisposes, as it were, what breaks out in Adam's qualitative leap. I have no intention of stating this exposition of Usteri's more fully. Everyone has read it, or can read it, in the works of this author.

The lack in this explanation is that it does not wish to be thoroughly psychological. This is not censure, for it did not wish to be that; it had set itself another task, that of expounding the doctrine of Paul and attaching itself to the Bible. But in this way the Bible has often had a harmful effect. In beginning a deliberation one has certain classical texts fixed in one's mind, and now one's explanation and knowledge remains no more than an arrangement of these texts, as if the whole subject were so foreign to one. The more natural the better, even though one is willing with all deference to confront one's explanation with the judgment of the Scriptures, and, if it does not stand the test, tries to explain again. In this way one does not get into the preposterous position of having to understand the explanation before one has understood what it is it is supposed to explain, nor into the

disingenuous position of using Bible texts as the Persian king used against the Egyptians their sacred animals to secure himself.

In making the prohibition the conditioning cause, one assumes that the prohibition awakens a concupiscentia. Here psychology has overstepped the bounds of its competence. A concupiscentia is a determinant of guilt and sin anterior to guilt and sin, to what therefore is not guilt and sin; that is to say, it is posited by them. The qualitative leap is enervated, the fall becomes something progressive. Nor does one see how the prohibition awakens concupiscentia, even though it is certain both from pagan and from Christian experience that man's desire is for the forbidden. But one cannot appeal thus without more ado to experience, since it rather might be asked in which period of life this is experienced. Nor is the intermediate determinant concupiscentia equivocal, and by this sign one sees at once that it is not the psychological explanation. The strongest and, I would say, the most positive expression the Protestant Church uses for the presence of original sin in man is precisely that he is born in concupiscentia (Omnes homines secundum naturam propagati nascuntur cum peccato, h.e.. sine *metu dei, sine fiducia erga deum, et cum concupiscentia*), And yet the Protestant doctrine assumes a difference between the innocence of the subsequent man (if there can properly be any question of such a thing) and the innocence of Adam.

The psychological explanation must not befuddle the point, but must remain in its elastic ambiguity, from which guilt breaks forth in the qualitative leap.

§5. The concept of dread

INNOCENCE is ignorance. In his innocence man is not determined as spirit but is soulishly determined in immediate unity with his natural condition. Spirit is dreaming in man. This view is in perfect accord with that of the

Bible, and by refusing to ascribe to man in the state of innocence a knowledge of the difference between good and evil it condemns all the notions of merit Catholicism has imagined.

In this state there is peace and repose; but at the same time there is something different, which is not dissension and strife, for there is nothing to strive with. What is it then? Nothing. But what effect does nothing produce? It begets dread. This is the profound secret of innocence, that at the same time it is dread. Dreamingly the spirit projects its own reality, but this reality is nothing, but this nothing constantly sees innocence outside of it.

Dread is a qualification of the dreaming spirit; and as such it has its place in psychology. When awake, the difference between myself and my other is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is a nothing vaguely hinted at. The reality of the spirit constantly shows itself in a form which entices its possibility, but it is away as soon as one grasps after it, and it is a nothing which is able only to alarm. More it cannot do so long as it only shows itself. One almost never sees the concept dread dealt with in psychology, and I must therefore call attention to the fact that it is different from fear and similar concepts which refer to something definite, whereas dread is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility. One does not therefore find dread in the beast, precisely for the reason that by nature the beast is not qualified by spirit.

When we consider the dialectical determinants in dread, it appears that they have precisely the characteristic ambiguity of psychology. Dread is a *sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy.* One easily sees, I think, that this is much more truly a psychological subject than is the concupiscence of which we have spoken. Language confirms this completely. One speaks of a sweet dread, a sweet feeling of apprehension, one speaks of a strange dread, a shrinking dread, etc.

The dread which is posited in innocence is, in the first place, not guilt; in the second place, it is not a heavy burden, not a suffering which cannot be brought into harmony with the felicity of innocence. If we observe children, we find this dread more definitely indicated as a seeking after adventure, a thirst for the prodigious, the mysterious. The fact that there are children in whom this is not found proves nothing, for neither in the beast does it exist, and the less spirit, the less dread. This dread belongs to the child so essentially that it cannot do without it; even though it alarms him, it captivates him nevertheless by its sweet feeling of apprehension. In all nations in which the childish character is preserved as the dreaming of the spirit this dread is found, and the deeper it is, the more profound is the nation. It is only a prosaic stupidity which thinks that this is a disorganization. Dread has here the same significance melancholy has at a far later point where freedom, after having passed through imperfect forms of its history, has to come to itself in a deeper sense.

Just as the relation of dread to its object, to something which is nothing (language in this instance also is pregnant: it speaks of being in dread of nothing), is altogether ambiguous, so will the transition here from innocence to guilt be correspondingly so dialectical that the explanation is and must be psychological. The qualitative leap is outside of ambiguity, but he who through dread becomes guilty is innocent, for it was not he himself but dread, an alien power, which laid hold of him, a power he did not love, but dreaded — and yet he is guilty, for he sank in the dread which he loved even while he feared it. There is nothing in the world more ambiguous, and therefore this is the only psychological explanation, although (to repeat what I have said) it never occurs to it to want to be the explanation which explains the qualitative leap. Every theory about the prohibition tempting Adam or the seducer deceiving him has only for a superficial observation sufficient ambiguity, while it perverts ethics, introduces a quantitative

determination, and would by the help of psychology pay man a compliment from which everyone who is ethically developed would beg to *be* excused, regarding it as a new and deeper seduction.

Everything turns upon dread coming into view. Man is a synthesis of the soulish and the bodily. But a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third factor. This third factor is the spirit. In the state of innocence man is not merely an animal, for if at any time of his life he was merely an animal, he never would become a man. So then the spirit is present, but in a state of immediacy, a dreaming state. Forasmuch as it is present, it is in one way a hostile power, for it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body, a relation which endures, and yet does not endure, inasmuch as it has endurance only by means of the spirit. On the other hand, it is a friendly power which has precisely the function of constituting the relationship. What then is man's relation to this ambiguous power? How is spirit related to itself and to its situation? It is related as dread. The spirit cannot do away with itself; nor can it grasp itself so long as it has itself outside of itself. Neither can man sink down into the vegetative life, for he is determined as spirit. He cannot flee from dread, for he loves it; really he does not love it, for he flees from it. Innocence has now reached its apex. It is ignorance, but not an animal brutality, but an ignorance which is qualified by spirit, but which precisely is dread, because its ignorance is about nothing. Here there is no knowledge of good and evil, etc., but the whole reality of knowledge is projected in dread as the immense nothing of ignorance.

Innocence still *is,* but one word suffices, and with that ignorance is concentrated. Innocence of course cannot understand this word; but dread has as it were obtained its first prey; instead of nothing, innocence gets an enigmatic word. So when it is related in Genesis that God said to Adam, "Only of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat," it is

a matter of course that Adam did not really understand this word. For how could he have understood the difference between good and evil, seeing that this distinction was in fact consequent upon the enjoyment of the fruit?

When one assumes that the prohibition awakens the desire, one posits a knowledge instead of ignorance; for Adam would have had to have a knowledge of freedom, since his desire was to use it. The explanation therefore anticipates what was subsequent. The prohibition alarms Adam [induces a state of dread] became the prohibition awakens in him the possibility of freedom. That which passed innocence by as the nothing "of dread has now entered into him, and here again it is a nothing, the alarming possibility of *being able.* What it is he is able to do, of that he has no conception; to suppose that he had some conception is to presuppose, as commonly is done, what came later, the distinction between good and evil. There is only the possibility of being able, as a higher form of ignorance, as a heightened expression of dread, because this in a more profound sense is and is not, because in a more profound sense he loves it and flees from it.

After the word of prohibition follows the word of judgment: "Thou shalt surely die." What it means to die, Adam of course cannot conceive; but if one assumes that these words were said to him, there is nothing to prevent his having a notion of the terrible. Indeed even the beast is able to understand the mimic expression and movement in the speaker's voice, without understanding the word. In case one lets the prohibition awaken desire, one may also let the word about punishment awaken a deterring conception. However, this confuses things. The terrible becomes in this instance merely dread; for Adam has not understood what was said, and here again we have only the ambiguity of dread. The infinite possibility of being able (awakened by the prohibition) draws closer for the fact that this possibility indicates a possibility as its consequence.

Thus innocence is brought to its last extremity. It is in dread in relation to the prohibition and the punishment. It is not guilty, and yet it is in dread, as though it were lost.

Further than this psychology cannot go, but so far it can reach, and moreover it can verify this point again and again in its observation of human life.

Here in the conclusion I attached myself to the Biblical account. I let the voice of the prohibition and the punishment come from without. This naturally has tormented many thinkers. The difficulty, however, is one we need only smile at. Innocence is indeed well able to talk, inasmuch as in language it possesses the expression for everything in the spiritual order. In view of this one need only assume that Adam talked with himself. The imperfection in the account, that another speaks to Adam about what he does not understand, is thus eliminated. Adam was able to talk. From this it does not follow that in a deeper sense he was able to understand the word uttered. This applies above all to the distinction between good and evil, which is made in language, to be sure, but is only intelligible to freedom. Innocence can very well utter this distinction, but the distinction is not for it, and for it this has only the significance we have shown above.

§6. Dread as the presupposition of original sin and as explaining original sin retrogressively in the direction of its origin

LET us now examine the account of Genesis more closely, trying to put aside the fixed idea that it is a myth, and reminding ourselves that no age has been so intent upon producing myths as our own, which is producing myths at the same time that it wants to extirpate all myths.

So Adam was created, had bestowed names upon the animals (so here we have language, even though of a kind as imperfect as that of children when they are learning to recognize an animal on the ABC card), but had

not found society for himself. Eve was created, formed from his rib. She stood in as intimate a relation to him as possible, and yet this was still an external relation. Adam and Eve are merely a numerical repetition. The existence in this sense of a thousand Adams signifies no more than one. This may be said in view of the descent of the race from one pair. Nature has no liking for a meaningless profusion. If therefore it is assumed that the race descends from several couples, there would have been a moment when nature had an unnecessary profusion. As soon as the fact of generation is posited no man is a superfluity, for every individual is himself and the race.

Then follows the prohibition and the judgment. But the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. He enticed woman. Even though one would call this a myth, one must remember that it does not disturb thought nor confuse the concept as a myth of the understanding does. The myth represents as outward that which occurred inwardly.

What first we have to remark upon here is that woman is first seduced, and that thereupon she seduces man. Subsequently in another chapter I seek to explain in what sense woman is the weaker sex, as is commonly said of her, and also to show that dread is more natural to her than to man.

In the foregoing I have several times called attention to the fact that the view presented in this work does not deny the propagation of sinfulness through generation, or in other words that sinfulness has its history in the fact of generation; I have only said that sinfulness moves by quantitative determinants, whereas sin comes in constantly by the qualitative leap of the individual. Here one can already see one significance of the quantitative process of generation. Eve is the derived being. True, she is created like Adam, but she is created out of a precedent creature. True, she is innocent like Adam, but there is as it were a presentiment of a disposition, which indeed is not yet in existence, yet may seem like a hint of the sinfulness

posited by reproduction. It is the fact of being derived which predisposes the individual, without for all that making him guilty.

What was said in §5 about the word of prohibition and judgment must be recalled here. The imperfection in the account, the doubt how it could have occurred to anyone to say to Adam what he cannot understand, is eliminated when one reflects that the speaker is language, and that hence it is Adam himself who speaks.

Now remains the serpent. I am no lover of esprit, and volente Deo I shall withstand the temptation of that serpent who, as at the beginning of time he tempted Eve, has in the course of time tempted writers to be spirituel. I prefer to admit bluntly that I can associate no definite thought with the serpent. The difficulty, about the serpent moreover is quite a different one, namely, that it lets the temptation come from without. This conflicts directly with the teaching of the Bible, with the well-known classical passage in St. James affirming that God tempts no man and also is tempted by no one, but that every man is tempted by himself. For when one thinks that one has rescued God by letting man be tempted by the serpent, and that thus one is in accord with St. James's saying, that God tempts no man, one then collides with the second saying, that God is not tempted by anyone, for the serpent's temptation of man was at the same time an indirect temptation directed against God, by mixing himself up in the relation between God and man; and one collides with the third saying, that every man is tempted by himself.

Then follows the Fall. This is what psychology is unable to explain, for it is the qualitative leap. But let us for a moment consider the consequence as it is reported in the narrative, in order to fix attention once again upon dread as the presupposition of original sin.

The consequence was a double one: that sin came into the world, and that sexuality was posited — the one being inseparable from the other. This

is of the utmost importance in order to show what was man’s original state. For if in fact he was not a synthesis which reposes in a third factor, one thing could not have two consequences. If he were not a synthesis of soul and body which is sustained by spirit, the sexual could never come into the world with sinfulness.

We will leave speculators out of account and simply assume the presence of sexual differentiation before the Fall, with the observation however that it did not strictly exist, because it does not exist in ignorance. In this respect we have support in the Scripture.

In his innocence man was, in so far as he was spirit, a dreaming spirit. The synthesis therefore is not actual; for the combining factor is precisely the spirit, and this is not yet posited as spirit. In the animal sexual diversity can be developed instinctively; but in this way man cannot have it, precisely because he is a synthesis. The instant the spirit posits itself it posits the synthesis, but to posit the synthesis it must first permeate it differentially, and the extremest expression of the sensuous is precisely the sexual. This extreme man can attain only at the instant when the spirit becomes actual. Before that time he is not an animal, but neither is he properly a man. The instant he becomes a man he becomes such only by being at the same time an animal.

Sinfulness then is not sensuousness, not by any means; but without sin there is no sexuality, and without sexuality no history. A perfect spirit has neither the one nor the other, hence also the sexual difference’s annulled in the resurrection, and hence too no angel has history. Even though the archangel Michael had recorded all the missions on which he was sent and which he performed, this nevertheless is not his history. The synthesis is first posited in the sexual as a contradiction, but at the same time, like every contradiction, as a task, the history of which begins that very instant. This is the actuality which is preceded by the possibility of freedom. But the

possibility of freedom does not consist in being able to choose the good or the evil. Such thoughtlessness has as little support in the Scripture as in philosophy. Possibility means *I can.* In a logical system it is convenient enough to say that possibility passes over into actuality. In reality it is not so easy, and an intermediate determinant is necessary. This intermediate determinant is dread, which no more explains the qualitative leap than it justifies it ethically. Dread is not a determinant of necessity, but neither is it of freedom; it is a trammeled freedom, where freedom is not free in itself but trammeled, not by necessity but in itself. If sin has come into the world by necessity (which is a self-contradiction), then there is no dread. If sin has come into the world by an act of abstract *liberum arbitrium* (which no more existed at the beginning than it does at a later period of the world for it is a non-sense to thought), neither in this case is there dread. To want to explain logically the entrance of sin into the world is a stupidity which could only occur to people who are comically anxious to get an explanation.

If I were allowed to make a wish, I would wish that no reader might be profound enough to ask the question, "If then Adam had not sinned?" The moment reality is posited, possibility steps to one side as a nothing which serves as a temptation to all men devoid of thought. What a pity science cannot resolve to keep people under discipline and to keep itself in check! When someone asks a stupid question, we should take heed not to answer him, for if we do we are as stupid as the questioner. The foolishness of that question consists not so much in the question itself as in the fact that it is addressed to science. When one stays at home with it, like the shrewd Else with her projects, and calls together like-minded friends, it is a sign that in some measure one has understood one's stupidity. Science cannot explain such things. Every science has its province either in immanent logic, or in an immanence within a transcendence which it cannot explain. Now sin is precisely that transcendence, that *discrimren rerum,* by which sin enters into

the individual as an individual. In no other way does sin enter the world, and never has it entered otherwise. When the individual then is foolish enough to inquire about sin as about something irrelevant to him, he speaks as a fool; for either he does not know in the least what the question is about and cannot possibly learn to know it, or else he knows it and understands it, and knows too that no science can explain it. Nevertheless science has sometimes been accommodating enough to respond to sentimental wishes with deeply pondered hypotheses, which, as science itself admits, do not adequately explain. This is quite true, but the confusion is due to the fact that science did not energetically repel foolish questions, that on the contrary it confirmed superstitious people in the notion that some day there would come a scientific speculator who would be man enough to hit upon the right answer. They speak about sin coming into the world 6000 years ago, just as they speak about Nebuchadnezzar becoming an ox 4000 years ago. When they conceive the case thus, what wonder the explanation is no better? That which in one sense is the simplest thing in the world, they have made the most difficult. That which the simplest man understands in his way, and quite rightly, for he understands that it is not exactly 6000 years ago sin came into the world, this thing science by the aid of the speculator's art has propounded as a prize question which has never yet been satisfactorily answered. How sin came into the world every man understands by himself alone; if he would learn it from another, he *eo ipso* misunderstands it. The only science which can do a little is psychology, which nevertheless concedes that it does not, that it *can* and *will* not, explain more. If any science could explain it, everything would be brought to confusion. That the man of science ought to forget himself is perfectly true, but for this reason it is so fortunate that sin is not a scientific problem, and therefore the man of science is no more obliged than is any speculator to forget how sin came into the world. If he would do that, if he would

magnanimously forget himself, he with his zeal to explain humanity as a whole becomes just as ridiculous as the privy counselor who sacrificed himself to such a degree in leaving his visiting cards on Tom, Dick and Harry, that in doing so he finally forgot his own name. Or else his philosophical enthusiasm makes him so forgetful of himself that he is in need of an honest and sober wedded wife of whom he can ask as the bookseller Soldin asked Rebecca when he also in enthusiastic self-forgetfulness had lost himself in the objectivity of twaddle, “Rebecca, is it I that am speaking?”

That the admired men of science in this respected generation to which I have the honor to belong will find this chapter exceedingly unscientific is a matter of course. In their concern for and search after the System they are naturally concerned, as the whole congregation knows, to find a place in it for sin too. Only let the congregation join in the search, or at least include these profound seekers in their pious intercessions; they will find the place as surely as he who hunts for the burning tow finds it when he takes no heed that it is burning his own hand.

CHAPTER II.

Anxiety as Explaining Hereditary Sin Progressively

WITH SINFULNESS, SEXUALITY was posited. In that same moment the history of the race begins. Just as the sinfulness of the race moves in quantitative determinations, so also does anxiety. The consequence of hereditary sin or the presence of hereditary sin in the single individual is anxiety, which differs only quantitatively from that of Adam. In the state of innocence — and of such a state one might also speak in the case of subsequent man — inherited sin must also have the same dialectical ambiguity out of which guilt breaks forth by a qualitative leap. On the other hand, anxiety will be more reflective in a subsequent individual than in Adam, because the quantitative accumulation left behind by the race now makes itself felt in that individual. Anxiety becomes no more an imperfection in man than before. On the contrary, the more primitive a man is, the more profound is his anxiety, because the presupposition of sinfulness, which his individual life must assume when indeed he enters into the history of the race, must be appropriated. Thus sinfulness has now attained a greater power, and hereditary sin is growing. That there may be men who never experience any anxiety must be understood in the sense that Adam would have perceived no anxiety had he been merely animal.

The subsequent individual, like Adam, is a synthesis that is sustained by spirit, but the synthesis is derived, and accordingly, the history of the race is posited in it. Herein lies the more or less of anxiety in the subsequent individual. Nevertheless, his anxiety is not anxiety about sin, for as yet the distinction between good and evil is not, because this distinction first comes about with the actuality of freedom. This distinction, if present, is only a

foreboding presentiment that through the history of the race may signify a more or a less.

Anxiety in a later individual is more reflective as a consequence of his participation in the history of the race — something that can be compared with habit, which is something of a second nature, not a new quality but simply a quantitative progression — because anxiety has now entered into the world with a new significance. Sin entered in anxiety, but sin in turn brought anxiety along with it. To be sure, the actuality of sin is an actuality that has no endurance. On the one hand, the continuity of sin is the possibility that brings anxiety. On the other hand, the possibility of salvation is again a nothing, which the individual both loves and fears, because this is always possibility's relation to individuality. Only in the moment that salvation is actually posited is this anxiety overcome. Man's and creation's eager longing is not, as has been sentimentally expressed, a sweet longing; in order for longing to be such, sin would have to be disarmed. He who will truly acquaint himself with the state of sin, and with what the expectation of salvation might be, will no doubt acknowledge this and be a little embarrassed by the esthetic unembarrassment. As long as it is only a question of expectation, sin continues to be in control and naturally conceives of the expectation in a hostile manner. (This will be dealt with later.) When salvation is posited, anxiety, together with possibility, is left behind. This does not mean that anxiety is annihilated, but that when rightly used it plays another role (see).

Strictly speaking, the anxiety that sin brings with it is only when the individual himself posits sin, and yet this anxiety is obscurely present as a more or a less in the quantitative history of the race. Hence one will even encounter the phenomenon that a person seems to become guilty merely through anxiety about himself, something that could not have happened in the case of Adam. It is nevertheless true that every individual becomes

guilty only through himself; yet what is quantitative in his relation to the race in this case reaches its maximum here and will have the power to confuse every view so long as one does not hold fast to the distinction specified earlier between the quantitative accumulation and the qualitative leap. This phenomenon will be considered later. Usually it is ignored, which of course is easiest. Or it is construed sentimentally and movingly with a cowardly sympathy that thanks God for not being like such a person, without understanding that such a thanksgiving is treason against both God and oneself, and without considering that life always holds in store analogous phenomena that one probably will not escape. One must have sympathy. However, this sympathy is true only when one admits rightly and profoundly to oneself that what has happened to one human being can happen to all. Only then can one benefit both oneself and others. The physician at an insane asylum who is foolish enough to believe that he is eternally right and that his bit of reason is ensured against all injury in this life is in a sense wiser than the demented, but he is also more foolish, and surely he will not heal many.

Consequently, anxiety means two things: the anxiety in which the individual posits sin by the qualitative leap, and the anxiety that entered in and enters in with sin, and that also, accordingly, enters quantitatively into the world every time an individual posits sin.

It is not my intention to write a learned work or to waste time in search of literary proof texts. Often the examples mentioned in psychologies lack true psychological-poetic authority. They stand as isolated *notarialiter* [notarized facts], and as a result one does not know whether to laugh or to weep at the attempts of such lonely and obstinate persons to form some sort of a rule. One who has properly occupied himself with psychology and psychological observation acquires a general human flexibility that enables him at once to construct his example which even though it lacks factual

authority nevertheless has an authority of a different kind. The psychological observer ought to be more nimble than a tightrope dancer in order to incline and bend himself to other people and imitate their attitudes, and his silence in the moment of confidence should be seductive and voluptuous, so that what is hidden may find satisfaction in slipping out to chat with itself in the artificially constructed nonobservance and silence. Hence he ought also to have a poetic originality in his soul so as to be able at once to create both the totality and the invariable from what in the individual is always partially and variably present. Then, when he has perfected himself, he will have no need to take his examples from literary repertoires and serve up half-dead reminiscences, but will bring his observations entirely fresh from the water, wriggling and sparkling in the play of their colors. Nor will he have to run himself to death to become aware of something. On the contrary, he should sit entirely composed in his room, like a police agent who nevertheless knows everything that takes place. What he needs he can fashion at once; what he needs he has at hand at once by virtue of his general practice, just as in a well-equipped house one need not carry water from the street but has it on his level by high pressure. If he were to become doubtful, he is so well-oriented in human life and his eyes are so inquisitorially sharp that he knows where to look to discover easily a suitable individuality who can be useful to the imaginary construction [*Experimentet*]. His observation will be more reliable than that of others, even though he does not support it by references to names and learned quotations — such as, that in Saxony there once lived a peasant girl in whom a physician observed, that in Rome there was once an emperor of whom a historian relates, etc. — as if such things happen only once in a thousand years. What interest could psychology have in that? No, such things happen every day, if only the observer is present. His observation will have the quality of freshness and the interest of actuality if he is

prudent enough to control his observations. To that end he imitates in himself every mood, every psychic state that he discovers in another. Thereupon he sees whether he can delude the other by the imitation and carry him along into the subsequent development, which is his own creation by virtue of the idea. Thus if someone wants to observe a passion, he must choose his individual. At that point, what counts is stillness, quietness, and obscurity, so that he may discover the individual's secret. Then he must practice what he has learned until he is able to delude the individual. Thereupon he fictitiously invents the passion and appears before the individual in a preternatural magnitude of the passion. If it is done correctly, the individual will feel an indescribable relief and satisfaction, such as an insane person will feel when someone has uncovered and poetically grasped his fixation and then proceeds to develop it further. If it does not succeed, it may be because of a defect in the operation, but it may also be because the individual is a poor example.

§1. OBJECTIVE ANXIETY

When we use the expression objective anxiety, it might seem natural to think of the anxiety belonging to innocence, the anxiety that is freedom's reflection within itself in its possibility. To object to this by saying that we now find ourselves at a different place in the inquiry would be an unsatisfactory claim. It might be more useful to remember that what distinguishes objective anxiety lies in its difference from subjective anxiety, a distinction that does not pertain to Adam's state of innocence. In the strictest sense, subjective anxiety is the anxiety that is posited in the individual and is the consequence of his sin. Anxiety in this sense will be dealt with in a later chapter. If the term "anxiety" is to be understood in this sense, the contrast of an objective anxiety is removed, and anxiety appears precisely as what it is, namely, as the subjective. The distinction between

objective and subjective anxiety belongs in the contemplation of the world and the subsequent individual's state of innocence. The distinction made here is that subjective anxiety signifies the anxiety that is present in the individual's state of innocence and corresponds to that of Adam, but it is nevertheless quantitatively different from that of Adam because of the quantitative determination of the generation. By objective anxiety we understand, on the other hand, the reflection of the sinfulness of the generation in the whole world.

The purpose of §2 of the previous chapter was to call to mind that the expression "by Adam's sin, sinfulness came *into the world*" contains an external reflection. Therefore we shall return to that expression to discover the truth that may be found in it. The moment Adam has posited sin, our consideration leaves him in order to consider the beginning of every subsequent individual's sin, for as a result generation is introduced. If by Adam's sin the sinfulness of the race is posited in the same sense as his erect walking etc., the concept of the individual is canceled. This was developed previously, where objection also was made against the imaginatively constructing inquisitiveness that wants to treat sin as a curiosity. The dilemma was also raised that one would have to imagine either a questioner who did not even know what he was asking about or a questioner who knew and whose pretended ignorance became a new sin.

If all this is kept in mind, the above expression will have a limited truth. The first posits the quality. Adam, then, posits sin in himself, but also for the race. However, the concept of race is too abstract to allow the positing of so concrete a category as sin, which is posited precisely in that the single individual himself, as the single individual, posits it. Thus sinfulness in the race becomes only a quantitative approximation. Still this has its beginning with Adam. Herein lies the great significance of Adam above that of every other individual in the race, and herein lies the truth of the above

expression. Even orthodoxy, if it is to understand itself, must admit this, because it teaches that by the sin of Adam nature as well as the race was brought under sin. However, in the case of nature it certainly will not do to maintain that sin entered in as the quality of sin.

By coming into the world, sin acquired significance for the whole creation. This effect of sin in nonhuman existence [*Tilværelse*] I have called objective anxiety.

The meaning of this I can indicate by calling attention to the Scriptural expression ἀποκαραδοκία τη˜ς κτισεως [the eager longing of creation] (Romans 8:19). Inasmuch as one can speak of an eager longing, it follows as a matter of course that the creation is in a state of imperfection. One often fails to see that expressions and concepts such as longing, eager longing, expectation, etc. imply a preceding state, and that this state is present and makes itself felt at the same time that longing is developing. A person is not in this state of expectation by accident etc., so that he finds himself a total stranger to it, but he himself is at the same time producing it. The expression for such a longing is anxiety, for the state out of which he longs to be proclaims itself in anxiety, and it proclaims itself because the longing alone is not sufficient to save him.

The sense in which creation sank into corruption through Adam's sin, how freedom was posited by the fact that its misuse was posited and thus cast a reflection of possibility and a trembling of complicity over creation, the sense in which this had to take place because man is a synthesis whose most extreme opposites were posited and whose one opposite, precisely on account of man's sin, became a far more extreme opposite than it was before — all this has no place in a psychological deliberation but belongs in dogmatics, in the Atonement, in the explanation by which this science explains the presupposition of sinfulness.

This anxiety in creation may rightly be called objective anxiety. It is not brought forth by creation but by the fact that creation is placed in an entirely different light because of Adam's sin, and insofar as it continues to come into the world, sensuousness is constantly degraded to mean sinfulness. One can easily see that this interpretation also has its eyes open in the sense that it parries the rationalistic view according to which sensuousness as such is sinfulness. After sin came into the world, and every time sin comes into the world, sensuousness becomes sinfulness. But what it becomes is not what it first was. Franz Baader has often protested against the proposition that finitude and sensuousness as such are sinfulness. If care is not taken at this point, Pelagianism emerges from an entirely different side. Franz Baader, however, did not take into account the history of the race. In the quantitation of the race (i.e., nonessentially), sensuousness is sinfulness, but, in relation to the individual, this is not the case until he himself, by positing sin, again makes sensuousness sinfulness.

Some men of Schelling's school have been especially aware of the alteration that has taken place in nature because of sin. Mention has been made also of the anxiety that is supposed to be in inanimate nature. The effect, however, is weakened when at one moment one is to believe that he is dealing with a subject in natural philosophy that is treated cleverly with the help of dogmatics, and in another moment a dogmatic definition that glories in the borrowed reflection of the magical marvels of the contemplation of nature.

However, at this point I break off the digression, which for a moment I permitted to go beyond the boundary of this investigation. Anxiety as it appeared in Adam will never again return, for by him sinfulness came into the world. Because of this, Adam's anxiety has two analogies, the objective anxiety in nature and the subjective anxiety in the individual, of which the latter contains a more and the first a less than the anxiety in Adam.

§2. SUBJECTIVE ANXIETY

The more reflective one dares to posit anxiety, the easier it may seem for anxiety to pass over into guilt. But here it is important not to allow oneself to be deluded by determinants of approximation: a "more" cannot bring forth the leap, and no "easier" can in truth make the explanation easier. If this is not held fast, one runs the risk of suddenly meeting a phenomenon in which everything takes place so easily that the transition becomes a simple transition, or the other risk of never daring to bring one's thought to a conclusion, since a purely empirical observation can never be finished. Therefore, although anxiety becomes more and more reflective, the guilt that breaks forth in anxiety by the qualitative leap retains the same accountability as that of Adam, and the anxiety the same ambiguity.

To want to deny that every subsequent individual has and must be assumed to have had a state of innocence analogous to that of Adam would be shocking to everyone and would also annul all thought, because there would then be an individual who is not an individual and who relates himself merely as a specimen [*Exemplar*] to his species, although he would at the same time be regarded as guilty under the category of the individual.

Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness. Further than this, psychology cannot and will not go. In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises, sees that it is guilty. Between these two moments lies the leap, which no science has explained and which no science can explain. He who becomes guilty in anxiety becomes as ambiguously guilty as it is possible to

become. Anxiety is a feminine weakness in which freedom faints. Psychologically speaking, the fall into sin always takes place in weakness. But anxiety is of all things the most selfish, and no concrete expression of freedom is as selfish as the possibility of every concretion. This again is the overwhelming factor that determines the individual's ambiguous relation, sympathetic and antipathetic. In anxiety there is the selfish infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a choice but ensnaringly disquiets [*ængster*] with its sweet anxiousness [*Beængstelse*].

In each subsequent individual, anxiety is more reflective. This may be expressed by saying that the nothing that is the object of anxiety becomes, as it were, more and more a something. We do not say that it actually becomes a something or actually signifies something; we do not say that instead of a nothing we shall now substitute sin or something else, for what holds true of the innocence of the subsequent individual also holds true of Adam. All of this *is* only for freedom, and it *is* only as the single individual himself posits sin by the qualitative leap. Here the nothing of anxiety is a complex of presentiments, which, reflecting themselves in themselves, come nearer and nearer to the individual, even though again, when viewed essentially in anxiety, they signify a nothing — yet, mark well, not a nothing with which the individual has nothing to do, but a nothing that communicates vigorously with the ignorance of innocence. This reflectiveness is a predisposition that, before the individual becomes guilty, signifies essentially nothing; whereas when by the qualitative leap he becomes guilty, it is the presupposition by which he goes beyond himself, because sin presupposes itself, obviously not before it is posited (which is predestination), but in that it is posited.

We shall now consider more particularly the something that the nothing of anxiety may signify in the subsequent individual. In the psychological deliberation, it truly counts as something. But the psychological

deliberation does not forget that if an individual becomes guilty as a matter of course by this something, then all consideration is annulled. This something, which hereditary sin signifies *stricte sic dicta* [in the strict sense of the word], is:

A. The Consequence of the Relationship of Generation

It is obvious that our subject is not one that may occupy physicians, such as whether one is born deformed etc., nor is the subject that of arriving at results by tabulated surveys. Here, as elsewhere, it is important that the mood be the correct one. When a person has been taught that hail and crop failures are to be ascribed to the devil, this may be very well meant, but such a teaching is essentially a cleverness that weakens the concept of evil and introduces into it an almost jesting note, just as, esthetically, it is jest to speak of a stupid devil. So when in dealing with the concept of faith the historical is made so one-sidedly significant that the primitive originality of faith in the individual is overlooked, faith becomes a finite pettiness instead of a free infinitude. The consequence is that faith may come to be regarded in the manner of Hieronymus in Holberg's play, when he says about Erasmus Montanus that he has heretical views of faith because he believes that the earth is round and not flat, as one generation after another in the village had believed. Thus a person might become a heretic in his faith by wearing wide pants when everyone else in the village wears tight pants. When someone offers statistical surveys of the proportions of sinfulness, draws a map of it in color and relief, so as to guide the eye quickly in its perspicuity, he makes an attempt at treating sin as a peculiarity of nature that is not to be annulled but is to be calculated just as atmospheric pressure and rainfall are. The mean and the arithmetical average that result are nonsense of a kind that has no comparison in the purely empirical sciences. It would be a very ridiculous abracadabra if anyone should seriously

suggest that sinfulness averages 3⅜ inches in every man or that in Languedoc the average is merely 2¼ inches, while in Bretagne it is 3⅞. Examples such as these are no more superfluous than those in the introduction, because they are drawn from the sphere within which the following discussion moves.

By sin, sensuousness became sinfulness. This proposition has a double significance: by sin sensuousness becomes sinfulness, and by Adam sin entered into the world. These two determinations must constantly counterbalance each other; otherwise what is said becomes something untrue. That sensuousness at one time became sinfulness is the history of the generation, but that sensuousness becomes sinfulness is the qualitative leap of the individual.

Attention has been called to the fact (§6) that the creation of Eve outwardly prefigures the consequence of the relationship of generation. In a sense, she signifies that which is derived. What is derived is never as perfect as the original. However, here the difference is merely quantitative. Each subsequent individual is essentially as original as the first. The difference *in pleno* [common] to all subsequent individuals is derivation, but for the single individual derivation may again signify a more or a less.

The derivation of woman also contains an explanation of the sense in which she is weaker than man, something that in all times has been assumed, whether it is a pasha speaking or a romantic knight. Nevertheless, the difference is not such that man and woman are not essentially alike despite the dissimilarity. The expression for the difference is that anxiety is reflected more in Eve than in Adam. This is because woman is more sensuous than man. Obviously, the point here is not an empirical state or an average, but the dissimilarity in the synthesis. If in one part of the synthesis there is a "more," a consequence will be that when the spirit posits itself the cleft becomes deeper and that in freedom's possibility anxiety will find a

greater scope. In the Genesis account, it is Eve who seduces Adam. But from this it in no way follows that her guilt is greater than Adam's, and still less that anxiety is an imperfection; on the contrary, the greatness of anxiety is a prophecy of the greatness of the perfection.

At this point, the investigation already shows that the proportion of sensuousness corresponds to that of anxiety. Therefore, as soon as the relationship of generation appears, whatever was said of Eve becomes an intimation of every subsequent individual's relation to Adam, namely, that as sensuousness is increased in the generation, anxiety is also increased. The consequence of the relationship of generation signifies a "more" in such a way that no individual can escape this "more," which is a "more" to all subsequent individuals in their relation to Adam. But this "more" is never of such a kind that one becomes essentially different from Adam.

However, before we proceed to this, I shall first shed some light on the proposition that woman is more sensuous than man and has more anxiety.

That woman is more sensuous than man appears at once in her physical structure. To deal more particularly with this is not my concern but is a task for physiology. However, I shall present my proposition in a different way. First I shall introduce her esthetically under her ideal aspect, which is beauty. To call attention to the circumstance that this is her ideal aspect indicates precisely that she is more sensuous than man. Then I shall introduce her ethically under her ideal aspect, which is procreation, and point out that the circumstance that this is her ideal aspect indicates precisely that she is more sensuous than man.

When beauty must reign, a synthesis results, from which spirit is excluded. This is the secret of all of Greek culture. Because of this, there is a repose, a quiet solemnity about Greek beauty, but precisely for this reason there is also an anxiety of which the Greek was scarcely aware, although his plastic beauty trembled with this anxiety. Therefore there is light-

heartedness in Greek beauty, because the spirit is excluded, and also a profound, unexplained sorrow. Thus sensuousness is not sinfulness but an unexplained riddle that causes anxiety. Hence this naiveté is accompanied by an inexplicable nothing, which is the nothing of anxiety.

It is true that Greek beauty conceives of man and of woman in the same way, as nonspiritual. Nevertheless, there is a distinction within this likeness. The spiritual has its expression in the face. In the beauty of the man, the face and its expression are more essential than in the beauty of the woman, although the eternal youthfulness of plastic art constantly prevents the more deeply spiritual from appearing. To develop this further is not my task, but I shall indicate the dissimilarity with a single suggestion. Venus is essentially just as beautiful when she is represented as sleeping, possibly more so, yet the sleeping state is the expression for the absence of spirit. For this reason, the older and the more spiritually developed the individuality is, the less beautiful it is in sleep, whereas the child is more beautiful in sleep. Venus arises from the sea and is represented in a position of repose, a position that reduces the expression of the face to the nonessential. If, on the other hand, Apollo is to be represented, it would no more be appropriate to have him sleep than it would be to have Jupiter do so. Apollo would thereby become ugly and Jupiter ridiculous. One might make an exception of Bacchus, because in Greek art he represents the similarity between manly and womanly beauty, as a consequence of which his forms are also feminine. In the case of a Ganymede, however, the expression of the face is already more essential.

As the conception of beauty becomes different in romanticism, the dissimilarity is again repeated within the essential likeness. While the history of spirit (and it is precisely the secret of spirit that it has a history) ventures to stamp itself upon the countenance of the man in such a way that everything is forgotten if only the imprint is distinct and noble, the woman

on the other hand will make her effect as a whole in another way, even though her face has acquired a greater significance than in classical art. The expression must be that of a totality with no history. Therefore silence is not only woman's greatest wisdom but also her highest beauty.

Viewed ethically, woman culminates in procreation. Therefore the Scriptures say that her desire shall be for her husband. Although it is also true that the husband's desire is for her, his life does not culminate in this desire, unless his life is wretched or lost. But the fact that woman's life culminates in procreation indicates precisely that she is more sensuous.

Woman is more anxious than man. This is not because of her lesser physical strength etc., for that kind of anxiety is not the issue here, but because she is more sensuous than man and yet, like him, is essentially qualified as spirit. What has often been said about her, that she is the weaker sex, is something entirely indifferent to me, because she therefore could very well be less anxious than man. In this investigation, anxiety is always conceived in the direction of freedom. So when the Genesis story, contrary to all analogy, represents the woman as seducing the man, this is on further reflection quite correct, for this seduction is precisely a feminine seduction, because only through Eve could Adam be seduced by the serpent. In every other place where there is a question of seduction, linguistic usage (delude, persuade, etc.) always attributes superiority to man.

What is assumed to be recognized in all experience, I shall merely point out by an imaginatively constructed observation. Picture an innocent young girl; let a man fasten his desirous glance upon her, and she becomes anxious. In addition, she might become indignant etc., but first she will be in anxiety. On the other hand, if I picture a young woman fastening her desirous look upon an innocent young man, his mood will not be anxiety

but disgust mingled with modesty, precisely because he is more qualified as spirit.

By Adam's sin, sinfulness entered into the world, and for Adam, sexuality came to signify sinfulness. The sexual was posited. There has been a great deal of idle talk both spoken and written in the world about naiveté. However, although innocence alone is naive, it is also ignorant. As soon as the sexual is brought to consciousness, to speak of naiveté is thoughtlessness, affectation, and, what is worse, a disguise for lust. But from the fact that man is no longer naive, it by no means follows that he sins. Such dull flatteries only allure men precisely by diverting their attention from the true and the moral.

The whole question of the significance of the sexual, as well as its significance in the particular spheres, has undeniably been answered poorly until now; moreover, it has seldom been answered in the correct mood. To offer witticisms about the sexual is a paltry art, to admonish is not difficult, to preach about it in such a way that the difficulty is omitted is not hard, but to speak humanly about it is an art. To leave it to the stage and the pulpit to undertake the answer in such a way that the one is embarrassed by what the other says, with the result that the explanation of the one is revoltingly different from that of the other, is really to surrender all and to place upon men the heavy burden, which one does not oneself lift a finger to relieve, finding meaning in both explanations while the respective teachers continually expound the one or the other. This inconsistency would long since have been recognized if in our day men had not perfected themselves thoughtlessly to waste lives so beautifully designed, and thoughtlessly to participate noisily whenever there is talk about one or another imposing, prodigious idea, in the fulfillment of which they unite in an unshakable faith that in union there is strength, a faith as marvelous as that of the alehouse keeper who sold his beer for a penny less than he paid for it and still

counted on a profit, "for it is the *quantity* that does it." Since this is the case, it is not surprising that in these days no one pays attention to such a deliberation. But this I know: had Socrates lived now, he would have reflected on such things and would have done it better and, if I may say so, more divinely than I can do. I am convinced that he would have said to me: "My dear fellow, you act correctly in considering such things, which are well worth pondering; indeed, one could converse whole nights and never finish fathoming the wonders of human nature." And this assurance is worth infinitely more to me than the loud praises of all my contemporaries, for this assurance makes my soul unshakable; the applause would make it doubtful.

The sexual as such is not the sinful. Real ignorance of it, when it nevertheless is essentially present, is reserved for the beast, which therefore is a slave of blind instinct and acts blindly. An ignorance that is also an ignorance of that which is not is the ignorance of the child. Innocence is a knowledge that denotes ignorance. Its distinction from moral ignorance is easily recognized by the fact that innocence is qualified in the direction of knowledge. With innocence, a knowledge begins that has ignorance as its first qualification. This is the concept of modesty (*Scham*). In modesty there is an anxiety, because spirit is found at the extreme point of the difference of the synthesis in such a way that spirit is not merely qualified as body but as body with a generic difference. Nevertheless, modesty is a knowledge of the generic difference, but not as a relation to a generic difference, which is to say, the sexual urge as such is not present. The real significance of modesty is that spirit, so to speak, cannot acknowledge itself at the extreme point of the synthesis. Therefore the anxiety found in modesty is prodigiously ambiguous. There is no trace of sensuous lust, and yet there is a sense of shame. Shame of what? Of nothing. And yet the individual may die of shame. A wounded modesty is the deepest pain, because it is the most

inexplicable of all. For this reason, the anxiety in modesty can awaken by itself. Here, of course, it is important that it is not lust that plays this role. An example of the latter is found in one of Friedrich Schlegel's tales (*Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 7, , the story of Merlin).

In modesty, the generic difference is posited, but not in relation to its other. That takes place in the sexual drive. But since the drive is not instinct or instinct only, it *eo ipso* has a *τέλος* [end], which is propagation, while the reposing is love, the purely erotic. As yet spirit is not posited. As soon as it is posited not merely as that which constitutes the synthesis but as spirit, the erotic comes to an end. The highest pagan expression for this is that the erotic is the comic. Of course, this must not be understood in the sense in which a sensualist might take the erotic to be comical and material for his lascivious wit; but it is the power of intelligence and its preponderance that in the indifference of the spirit neutralize both the erotic and the moral relation to the erotic. This power has a very deep source. The anxiety in modesty arose from the spirit's feeling that it was a foreigner; now spirit has conquered completely and perceives the sexual as the foreign and as the comic. Modesty naturally could not have this freedom of the spirit. The sexual is the expression for the prodigious *Widerspruch* [contradiction] that the immortal spirit is determined as *genus*. This contradiction expresses itself in the profound *Scham* that conceals this contradiction and does not dare to understand it. In the erotic, the contradiction is understood as the beautiful, for beauty is precisely the unity of the psychic and the somatic. But this contradiction, which the erotic transfigures in beauty, is for spirit at once both the beautiful and the comic. The expression of spirit for the erotic is, therefore, that it is simultaneously the beautiful and the comic. Here there is no sensuous reflection upon the erotic, for that would be sensuality, in which case the individual would lie far below the beauty of the erotic; rather it is the maturity of spirit. Obviously, very few have understood this

in its purity. Socrates did. Therefore when Xenophon represents Socrates as having said that one ought to love ugly women, this expression, like everything else by Xenophon, becomes a repulsive, narrow-minded philistinism, which is most unlike Socrates. The meaning is that Socrates has reduced the erotic to indifference, and the contradiction that underlies the comic he expresses correctly by the corresponding ironic contradiction that one should love the ugly. However, such a view rarely occurs in its lofty purity. It requires an unusual interplay of a fortunate historical development and primitive talent. If such an objection is even remotely possible, the view is repulsive and an affectation.

In Christianity, the religious has suspended the erotic, not merely as sinful, through an *ethical* misunderstanding, but as indifferent, because in spirit there is no difference between man and woman. Here the erotic is not neutralized by irony, but it is suspended because the tendency of Christianity is to bring the spirit further. When in modesty the spirit becomes anxious of and shy of putting on the generic difference, the individuality suddenly leaps off and, instead of pervading the generic difference ethically, seizes an explanation from the highest sphere of the spirit. This is one side of the monastic view, whether it is more particularly determined as ethical rigor or as predominantly contemplation.

As anxiety is posited in modesty, so it is present in all erotic enjoyment, and by no means because it is sinful. This is the case even though the minister blesses the couple ten times. Even when the erotic expresses itself as beautifully, purely, and, morally as possible, undisturbed in its joy by any lascivious reflection, anxiety is nevertheless present, not as a disturbing but as an accompanying factor.

In these matters, it is extremely difficult to make observations. The observer must especially exercise the caution of physicians who when they take the pulse make sure that it is not their own they feel but that of the

patient. In the same manner, the observer must take care that the movement he discovers is not his own restlessness in carrying out his observation. It is indeed certain that all poets describe love, but however pure and innocent, it is presented in such a way that anxiety is also posited with it. To pursue this further is a matter for an esthetician. But why this anxiety? It is because spirit cannot participate in the culmination of the erotic. Let me express myself in the manner of the Greeks. The spirit is indeed present, because it is spirit that establishes the synthesis, but it cannot express itself in the erotic. It feels itself a stranger. It says, as it were, to the erotic: My dear, in this I cannot be a third party; therefore I shall hide myself for the time being. But this precisely is anxiety, and modesty as well. For it is a great stupidity to assume that the marriage ceremony of the church or the faithfulness of the husband in keeping himself to his wife alone is all that is needed. Many a marriage has been profaned, and not by a stranger. However, when the erotic is pure, innocent, and beautiful, this anxiety is friendly and gentle. Therefore the poets are correct in speaking of a sweet anxiousness. Yet it is quite obvious that anxiety is greater in woman than in man.

We shall now return to the subject with which we were dealing, namely, the consequence of the relationship of generation in the individual, which is the "more" that every subsequent individual has in his relation to Adam. In the moment of conception, spirit is furthest away, and therefore the anxiety is the greatest. In this anxiety the new individual comes into being. In the moment of birth, anxiety culminates a second time in the woman, and in this moment the new individual comes into the world. It is well-known that a woman in childbirth is in anxiety. Physiology has its explanation, and psychology must also have its explanation. In childbirth the woman is again at the furthest point of one extreme of the synthesis. Therefore the spirit trembles, for in this moment it does not have its task, it is as if it were

suspended. Anxiety, however, is an expression of the perfection of human nature; therefore it is only among aboriginal peoples that one finds the analogy to the easy delivery of animals.

The more anxiety, the more sensuousness. The procreated individual is more sensuous than the original, and this “more” is the universal “more” of the generation for every subsequent individual in relation to Adam.

But this “more” of anxiety and sensuousness for every subsequent man in relation to Adam may, of course, signify a more or a less in the particular individual. Here lie differences that in truth are so appalling that surely no one would dare to think about them in a deeper sense, i.e., with true human sympathy, unless he was firmly and unshakably convinced that never in the world has there been or ever will be a “more” such that by a simple transition it transforms the quantitative into the qualitative. What Scripture teaches, that God avenges the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation, life proclaims loudly enough. To want to talk oneself out of this dreadful fact by explaining that this saying is a Jewish teaching is of no help. Christianity has never assented to giving each particular individual the privilege of starting from the beginning in an external sense. Each individual begins in an historical nexus, and the consequences of nature still hold true. The difference, however, consists in that Christianity teaches him to lift himself above this “more,” and it judges him who does not do so as being unwilling.

Precisely because sensuousness is here determined as a “more,” the spirit’s anxiety in assuming responsibility for sensuousness becomes a greater anxiety. At the maximum we find here the dreadful fact that *anxiety about sin produces sin*. If evil desire, concupiscence, etc. are regarded as innate in the individual, there is not the ambiguity in which the individual becomes both guilty and innocent. In the impotence of anxiety, the

individual succumbs, and precisely for that reason he is both guilty and innocent.

I shall not cite detailed examples of this infinitely fluctuating more or less. To have any significance, such examples would require extensive and careful esthetic-psychological treatment.

B. The Consequence of the Historical Relationship

If I should express in a single sentence the "more" that every subsequent individual has in his relation to Adam, I would say: It is that sensuousness may signify sinfulness, that is, signify the obscure knowledge of it, in addition to an obscure knowledge of whatever else sin might signify, as well as a misunderstood appropriation of the historical *de te fabula narratur* [the story is told about you], in which the point, the originality of the individual, is excluded, and the individual forthwith confounds himself with the race and its history. We do not say that sensuousness is sinfulness, but that sin makes it sinfulness. Now if we consider the subsequent individual, every such individual has an historical environment in which it may become apparent that sensuousness can signify sinfulness. For the individual himself, sensuousness does not signify this, but this knowledge gives anxiety a "more." So spirit is posited not only in relation to the opposite of sensuousness, but also to that of sinfulness. It follows as a matter of course that the innocent individual does not as yet understand this knowledge, for it can only be understood qualitatively. However, this knowledge is again a new possibility, so that freedom in its possibility, as it relates itself to the sensuous, comes into still greater anxiety.

That this universal "more" may indicate a more and a less for the particular individual follows as a matter of course. Attention is at once called to an imposing difference. After Christianity had come into the world and redemption was posited, sensuousness was placed in a light of

opposition such as was not found in paganism, which serves to confirm the proposition that sensuousness is sinfulness.

Within the Christian difference, this “more” may again signify a more and a less. This is owing to the relation of the particular innocent individual to his historical environment. In this respect, the most dissimilar things may produce the same effect. Freedom’s possibility announces itself in anxiety. Consequently, a warning may bring an individual to succumb to anxiety (it should be remembered that, as always, I only speak psychologically and never annul the qualitative leap), although of course the warning was intended to do the opposite. The sight of the sinful may save one individual and bring another to fall. A jest may have the effect of seriousness, but also the opposite. Speech and silence can produce an effect opposite to what was intended. In this respect there are no limits. So here again one observes the correctness of the determination that this is a quantitative more or less, for the quantitative is precisely the infinite limit.

I shall not pursue this any further by means of imaginatively constructed observations, because to do so would cause a delay. However, life is rich enough, if only one understands how to see. One need not travel to Paris and London; besides, this would be of no help if one is unable to see.

Moreover, anxiety has the same ambiguity here as it always has. At this point a maximum may appear that corresponds to the aforementioned — that the individual in anxiety about sin brings forth sin — namely, *the individual, in anxiety not about becoming guilty but about being regarded as guilty, becomes guilty*.

Furthermore, the ultimate more in this respect is that an individual from his earliest awakening is placed and influenced in such a way that sensuousness for him has become identical with sinfulness, and this ultimate more will appear in the most painful form of collision if in the whole surrounding world he finds nothing that can give him support. If to

this ultimate more is added the confusion that the individual confounds himself with his historical knowledge of sinfulness, and in the pallor of anxiety at once subsumes himself *qua* individual under the same category while forgetting the pronouncement of freedom, “If you do likewise” — then the ultimate more is present.

What has here been briefly indicated, namely, that it requires a very rich experience to understand and that much has been said both clearly and definitely, has often enough been the object of deliberation. This deliberation is usually called: concerning the power of the example. It cannot be denied — although this has not been the case in recent superphilosophical times — that fine things have been said about this subject; however, a psychological intermediate term is frequently lacking, namely, the explanation of how it happens that the example has such power. Moreover, in these spheres the matter is often treated a little too carelessly and without the awareness that a single little mistake in the smallest detail is capable of confusing the prodigious balance sheet of life. The attention of psychology is fixed exclusively upon the particular phenomenon, but at the same time it does not have its eternal categories ready and does not lay adequate emphasis upon saving mankind, which can be done only by saving each particular individual into the race, whatever the cost may be. The example is supposed to have had an influence upon the child. The child is represented as just a little angel, but the corrupt environment plunged it into corruption. Accounts are given again and again of how bad the environment was — and so, so the child became depraved. But if this takes place through a simple quantitative process, every concept is canceled. This is something that is overlooked. The child is represented as being basically wicked, as having not had the advantage of the good example. However, care must be taken that the child does not become so wicked that it acquires the power to make fools not only of its parents but of all human speech and thought, just

as the *rana paradoxa* [paradoxical frog] mocks and defies the naturalists' classification of frogs. There are many men who well understand how to view the particular, but who at the same time are unable to keep the totality *in mente* [in mind]. Every such view, although otherwise meritorious, can only bring about confusion. Or, the child was, like most children, neither good nor bad. But then it came into good company and became good or into bad company and became evil. Intermediate terms! Intermediate terms! An intermediate term is provided that has the ambiguity that rescues thought (without which the salvation of the child becomes an illusion), namely, that the child, whatever its circumstance was, can become both guilty and innocent. If one does not have the intermediate terms promptly and clearly at hand, the concepts of hereditary sin, of sin, of race, and of the individual are lost, and with these the child also.

Sensuousness, then, is not sinfulness, but since sin was posited and continues to be posited, it makes sensuousness sinfulness. That sinfulness consequently signifies something else as well goes without saying. But what sin further signifies is not within the scope of our investigation, the task of which is to immerse oneself psychologically in the state that precedes sin and, psychologically speaking, predisposes more or less to sin.

By the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the distinction between good and evil came into the world, but also the sexual difference as a drive. How this came about, no science can explain. Psychology comes closest and explains the last approximation, which is freedom's showing-itself-for-itself in the anxiety of possibility, or in the nothing of possibility, or in the nothing of anxiety. If the object of anxiety is a something, we have no leap but a quantitative transition. The subsequent individual has a "more" in relation to Adam, and again a more or a less in relation to other individuals. Nevertheless, it remains true that the object of anxiety is a nothing. If the object of anxiety is such a something that when viewed

essentially, i.e., in the direction of freedom, it signifies something, then we do not have a leap but a quantitative transition that confuses every concept. Even when I say that for an individual sensuousness is posited as sinfulness before the leap, it remains true nevertheless that it is not essentially posited as such, for essentially the individual does not posit it or understand it. Even when I say that there is posited a “more” of sensuousness in the procreated individual with respect to the leap, this “more” is nevertheless an invalid “more.”

Consequently, if science has any other psychological intermediate term that has the dogmatic, the ethical, and the psychological advantages that anxiety possesses, then that should be preferred.

Moreover, it is easily seen that what has been presented here can very well be brought into conformity with the explanation commonly given of sin, namely, that it is selfishness. But when someone becomes absorbed in this qualification, he does not undertake at all to explain the preceding psychological difficulty. Furthermore, this also defines sin too pneumatically, and it is not adequately observed that by being introduced, sin posits just as much a sensuous as a spiritual consequence.

Although in the newer science sin has so often been explained as selfishness, it is incomprehensible that it has not been recognized that precisely here lies the difficulty of finding a place for its explanation in any science. For selfishness is precisely the particular, and what this signifies only the single individual can know as the single individual, because when it is viewed under universal categories it may signify everything in such a way that it signifies nothing at all. The definition of sin as selfishness may therefore be quite correct, especially when at the same time it is held that scientifically it is so empty of content that it signifies nothing at all. Finally, in the definition of sin as selfishness, no account is taken of the distinction

between sin and hereditary sin, nor of the sense in which the one explains the other, sin explaining hereditary sin and hereditary sin explaining sin.

As soon as one wants to speak scientifically about this selfishness, everything is dissolved into tautology, or one becomes clever and everything becomes confused. Who can forget that natural philosophy found selfishness in all creation, found it in the movement of the stars that nevertheless are bound in obedience to the laws of the universe, found that the centrifugal force in nature is selfishness. If a concept is brought that far, it might just as well lie down and, if possible, sleep off its drunkenness and become sober again. In this respect, our age has been untiring in its efforts to make everything signify all things. Has it not often been seen how cleverly and doggedly some clever mystagogue prostituted a whole mythology so that by his falcon eye every particular myth might become a whim for his jew's-harp? Cannot at times an entire Christian terminology be seen to degenerate into ruin by some pretentious speculator's treatment?

If a person does not first make clear to himself the meaning of "self," it is of no use to say of sin that it is selfishness. But "self" signifies precisely the contradiction of positing the universal as the particular. Only when the concept of the particular is given can there be any talk of selfishness; however, although there have lived countless millions of such "selves," no science can say what the self is without again stating it quite generally. And this is the wonder of life, that each man who is mindful of himself knows what no science knows, since he knows who he himself is, and this is the profundity of the Greek saying γνῶθι σεαυτόν [know yourself], which too long has been understood in the German way as pure self-consciousness, the airiness of idealism. It is about time to seek to understand it in the Greek way, and then again as the Greeks would have understood it if they had possessed Christian presuppositions. However, the real "self" is posited only by the qualitative leap. In the prior state there can be no question about

it. Therefore, when sin is explained by selfishness, one becomes entangled in indistinctness, because, on the contrary, it is by sin and in sin that selfishness comes into being. If selfishness is supposed to have been the occasion for Adam's sin, the explanation becomes a game in which the interpreter finds what he himself first has hidden. If it is to be said that selfishness brought about Adam's sin, one has leaped over the intermediate state and the explanation has acquired a suspicious ease. Moreover, it gives us no knowledge of the significance of the sexual. Here I am back to my old point. Sexuality is not sinfulness. However, to speak foolishly for a moment and by way of accommodation, let us suppose that Adam had not sinned: then the sexual would never have come into being as a drive. A perfect spirit cannot be conceived as sexually qualified. This is also in accord with the teaching of the Church about the nature of the Resurrection, in accord with its representation of angels, and in accord with the dogmatic definitions with respect to the person of Christ. Just by way of suggestion, while it is said that Christ was tried in all human ordeals, there is no mention of a temptation in this respect, which has its explanation precisely in that he withstood all temptations.

Sensuousness is not sinfulness. Sensuousness in innocence is not sinfulness; nevertheless, sensuousness is there. Adam of course needed food, drink, etc. The generic difference is posited in innocence, but it is not posited as such. Only at the moment that sin is posited is the generic difference posited as a drive.

Here, as everywhere, I must decline every misunderstood conclusion, as if, for instance, the true task should now be to abstract from the sexual, i.e., in an outward sense to annihilate it. When the sexual is once posited as the extreme point of the synthesis, all abstraction is of no avail. The task, of course, is to bring it under the qualification of the spirit (here lie all the moral problems of the erotic). The realization of this is the victory of love

in a person in whom the spirit is so victorious that the sexual is forgotten, and recollected only in forgetfulness. When this has come about, sensuousness is transfigured in spirit and anxiety is driven out.

If this view, whether called Christian or called by any other name, is compared with the Greek view, then I believe that more has been gained than lost. Doubtless something of the plaintive, erotic *Heiterkeit* [cheerfulness] has been lost. But something has also been gained, namely, a qualification of spirit unknown to Greek culture. The only ones who truly lose are the many who constantly live on as if it were 6,000 years since sin entered into the world, as if it were a curiosity that did not concern them. They do not gain the Greek *Heiterkeit*, which precisely cannot be *won* but can only be lost, nor do they gain the eternal qualification of spirit.

CHAPTER III.

Anxiety as the Consequence of that Sin which Is Absence of the Consciousness of Sin

IN THE TWO previous chapters, it was maintained continually that man is a synthesis of psyche and body that is constituted and sustained by spirit. In the individual life, anxiety is the moment — to use a new expression that says the same as was said in the previous discussion, but that also points toward that which follows.

In recent philosophy there is a category that is continually used in logical no less than in historical-philosophical inquiries. It is the category of transition. However, no further explanation is given. The term is freely used without any ado, and while Hegel and the Hegelian school startled the world with the great insight of the presuppositionless beginning of philosophy, or the thought that before philosophy there must be nothing but the most complete absence of presuppositions, there is no embarrassment at all over the use in Hegelian thought of the terms "transition," "negation," "mediation," i.e., the principles of motion, in such a way that they do not find their place in the systematic progression. If this is not a presupposition, I do not know what a presupposition is. For to use something that is nowhere explained is indeed to presuppose it. The system is supposed to have such marvelous transparency and inner vision that in the manner of the *omphalopsychoi* [navel souls] it would gaze immovably at the central nothing until at last everything would explain itself and its whole content would come into being by itself. Such introverted openness to the public was to characterize the system. Nevertheless, this is not the case, because systematic thought seems to pay homage to secretiveness with respect to its innermost movements. Negation, transition, mediation are three disguised,

suspicious, and secret agents (*agentia* [main springs]) that bring about all movements. Hegel would hardly call them presumptuous, because it is with his gracious permission that they carry on their ploy so unembarrassedly that even logic uses terms and phrases borrowed from transition in time: “thereupon,” “when,” “as being it is this,” “as becoming it is this,” etc.

Let this be as it may. Let logic take care to help itself. The term “transition” is and remains a clever turn in logic. Transition belongs in the sphere of historical freedom, for transition is a *state* and it is actual. Plato fully recognized the difficulty of placing transition in the realm of the purely metaphysical, and for that reason the category of *the moment* cost him so much effort. To ignore the difficulty certainly is not to “go further” than Plato. To ignore it, and thus piously to deceive thought in order to get speculation afloat and the movement in logic going, is to treat speculation as a rather finite affair. However, I remember once having heard a speculator say that one must not give undue thought to the difficulties beforehand, because then one never arrives at the point where he can speculate. If the important thing is to get to the point where one can begin to speculate, and not that one’s speculation in fact becomes true speculation, it is indeed resolutely said that the important thing is to get the point of speculating, just as it is praiseworthy for a man who has no means of riding to Deer Park in his own carriage to say: One must not trouble himself about such things, because he can just as well ride a coffee grinder. This, of course, is the case. Both riders hope to arrive at Deer Park. On the other hand, the man who firmly resolves not to trouble himself about the means of conveyance, just as long as he can get to the point where he can speculate, will hardly reach speculation.

In the sphere of historical freedom, transition is a state. However, in order to understand this correctly, one must not forget that the new is

brought about through the leap. If this is not maintained, the transition will have a quantitative preponderance over the elasticity of the leap.

Man, then, is a synthesis of psyche and body, but he is also a *synthesis of the temporal and the eternal*. That this often has been stated, I do not object to at all, for it is not my wish to discover something new, but rather it is my joy and dearest occupation to ponder over that which is quite simple.

As for the latter synthesis, it is immediately striking that it is formed differently from the former. In the former, the two factors are psyche and body, and spirit is the third, yet in such a way that one can speak of a synthesis only when spirit is posited. The latter synthesis has only two factors, the temporal and the eternal. Where is the third factor? And if there is no third factor, there really is no synthesis, for a synthesis that is a contradiction cannot be completed as a synthesis without a third factor, because the fact that the synthesis is a contradiction asserts that it is not. What, then, is the temporal?

If time is correctly defined as an infinite succession, it most likely is also defined as the present, the past, and the future. This distinction, however, is incorrect if it is considered to be implicit in time itself, because the distinction appears only through the relation of time to eternity and through the reflection of eternity in time. If in the infinite succession of time a foothold could be found, i.e., a present, which was the dividing point, the division would be quite correct. However, precisely because every moment, as well as the sum of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present, and accordingly there is in time neither present, nor past, nor future. If it is claimed that this division can be maintained, it is because the moment is *spatialized*, but thereby the infinite succession comes to a halt, it is because representation is introduced that allows time to be represented instead of being thought. Even so, this is not correct procedure, for even as representation, the infinite succession of time is an infinitely contentless

present (this is the parody of the eternal). The Hindus speak of a line of kings that has ruled for 70,000 years. Nothing is known about the kings, not even their names (this I assume). If we take this as an example of time, the 70,000 years are for thought an infinite vanishing; in representation it is expanded and is spatialized into an illusionary view of an infinite, contentless nothing. As soon as the one is regarded as succeeding the other, the present is posited.

The present, however, is not a concept of time, except precisely as something infinitely contentless, which again is the infinite vanishing. If this is not kept in mind, no matter how quickly it may disappear, the present is posited, and being posited it again appears in the categories: the past and the future.

The eternal, on the contrary, is the present. For thought, the eternal is the present in terms of an annulled succession (time is the succession that passes by). For representation, it is a going forth that nevertheless does not get off the spot, because the eternal is for representation the infinitely contentful present. So also in the eternal there is no division into the past and the future, because the present is posited as the annulled succession.

Time is, then, infinite succession; the life that is in time and is only of time has no present. In order to define the sensuous life, it is usually said that it is in the moment and only in the moment. By the moment, then, is understood that abstraction from the eternal that, if it is to be the present, is a parody of it. The present is the eternal, or rather, the eternal is the present, and the present is full. In this sense the Latin said of the deity that he is *praesens* (*praesentes dii* [the presence of the gods]), by which expression, when used about the deity, he also signified the powerful assistance of the deity.

The moment signifies the present as that which has no past and no future, and precisely in this lies the imperfection of the sensuous life. The

eternal also signifies the present as that which has no past and no future, and this is the perfection of the eternal.

If at this point one wants to use the moment to define time and let the moment signify the purely abstract exclusion of the past and the future and as such the present, then the moment is precisely not the present, because the intermediary between the past and the future, purely abstractly conceived, is not at all. Thus it is seen that the moment is not a determination of time, because the determination of time is that it "passes by." For this reason time, if it is to be defined by any of the determinations revealed in time itself, is time past. If, on the contrary, time and eternity touch each other, then it must be in time, and now we have come to the moment.

"The moment" is a figurative expression, and therefore it is not easy to deal with. However, it is a beautiful word to consider. Nothing is as swift as a blink of the eye, and yet it is commensurable with the content of the eternal. Thus when Ingeborg looks out over the sea after Frithiof, this is a picture of what is expressed in the figurative word. An outburst of her emotion, a sigh or a word, already has as a sound more of the determination of time and is more present as something that is vanishing and does not have in it so much of the presence of the eternal. For this reason a sigh, a word, etc. have power to relieve the soul of the burdensome weight, precisely because the burden, when merely expressed, already begins to become something of the past. A blink is therefore a designation of time, but mark well, of time in the fateful conflict when it is touched by eternity. What we call the moment, Plato calls τὸ ἐξαίφνης [the sudden]. Whatever its etymological explanation, it is related to the category of the invisible, because time and eternity were conceived equally abstractly, because the concept of temporality was lacking, and this again was due to the lack of

the concept of spirit. The Latin term is *momentum* (from *movere* [to move]), which by derivation expresses the merely vanishing.

Thus understood, the moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity. It is the first reflection of eternity in time, its first attempt, as it were, at stopping time. For this reason, Greek culture did not comprehend the moment, and even if it had comprehended the atom of eternity, it did not comprehend that it was the moment, did not define it with a forward direction but with a backward direction. Because for Greek culture the atom of eternity was essentially eternity, neither time nor eternity received what was properly its due.

The synthesis of the temporal and the eternal is not another synthesis but is the expression for the first synthesis, according to which man is a synthesis of psyche and body that is sustained by spirit. As soon as the spirit is posited, the moment is present. Therefore one may rightly say reproachfully of man that he lives only in the moment, because that comes to pass by an arbitrary abstraction. Nature does not lie in the moment.

It is with temporality as it is with sensuousness, for temporality seems still more imperfect and the moment still more insignificant than nature's apparently secure endurance in time. However, the contrary is the case. Nature's security has its source in the fact that time has no significance at all for nature. Only with the moment does history begin. By sin, man's sensuousness is posited as sinfulness and is therefore lower than that of the beast, and yet this is because it is here that the higher begins, for at this point spirit begins.

The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time. As a result, the above-mentioned division acquires its significance: the present time, the past time, the future time.

By this division, attention is immediately drawn to the fact that the future in a certain sense signifies more than the present and the past, because in a certain sense the future is the whole of which the past is a part, and the future can in a certain sense signify the whole. This is because the eternal first signifies the future or because the future is the incognito in which the eternal, even though it is incommensurable with time, nevertheless preserves its association with time. Linguistic usage at times also takes the future as identical with the eternal (the future life — the eternal life). In a deeper sense, the Greeks did not have the concept of the eternal; so neither did they have the concept of the future. Therefore Greek life cannot be reproached for being lost in the moment, or more correctly, it cannot even be said that it was lost, for temporality was conceived by the Greeks just as naively as sensuousness, because they lacked the category of spirit.

The moment and the future in turn posit the past. If Greek life in any way denotes any qualification of time, it is past time. However, past time is not defined in its relation to the present and the future but as a qualification of time in general, as a passing by. Here the significance of the Platonic "recollection" is obvious. For the Greeks, the eternal lies behind as the past that can only be entered backwards. However, the eternal thought of as the past is an altogether abstract concept, whether the eternal is further defined philosophically (a philosophical dying away) or historically.

On the whole, in defining the concepts of the past, the future, and the eternal, it can be seen how the moment is defined. If there is no moment, the eternal appears behind as the past. It is as when I imagine a man walking along a road but do not posit the step, and so the road appears behind him as the distance covered. If the moment is posited but merely as a *discrimen* [division], then the future is the eternal. If the moment is posited, so is the eternal, but also the future, which reappears as the past. This is clearly seen in the Greek, the Jewish, and the Christian views. The

pivotal concept in Christianity, that which made all things new, is the fullness of time, but the fullness of time is the moment as the eternal, and yet this eternal is also the future and the past. If attention is not paid to this, not a single concept can be saved from a heretical and treasonable admixture that annihilates the concept. One does not get the past by itself but in a simple continuity with the future (with this the concepts of conversion, atonement, and redemption are lost in the world-historical significance and lost in the individual historical development). The future is not by itself but in a simple continuity with the present (thereby the concepts of resurrection and judgment are destroyed).

Let us now consider Adam and also remember that every subsequent individual begins in the very same way, but within the quantitative difference that is the consequence of the relationship of generation and the historical relationship. Thus the moment is there for Adam as well as for every subsequent individual. The synthesis of the psychical and the physical is to be posited by spirit; but spirit is eternal, and the synthesis is, therefore, only when spirit posits the first synthesis along with the second synthesis of the temporal and the eternal. As long as the eternal is not introduced, the moment is not, or is only a *discrimen* [boundary]. Because in innocence spirit is qualified only as dreaming spirit, the eternal appears as the future, for this is, as has been said, the first expression of the eternal, and its incognito. Just as (in the previous chapter) the spirit, when it is about to be posited in the synthesis, or, more correctly, when it is about to posit the synthesis as the spirit's (freedom's) possibility in the individuality, expresses itself as anxiety, so here the future in turn is the eternal's (freedom's) possibility in the individuality expressed as anxiety. As freedom's possibility manifests itself for freedom, freedom succumbs, and temporality emerges in the same way as sensuousness in its significance as sinfulness. Here again I repeat that this is only the final psychological

expression for the final psychological approximation to the qualitative leap. The difference between Adam and the subsequent individual is that for the latter the future is reflected more than for Adam. Psychologically speaking, this more may signify what is appalling, but in terms of the qualitative leap it signifies the nonessential. The highest difference in relation to Adam is that the future seems to be anticipated by the past or by the anxiety that the possibility is lost before it has been.

The possible corresponds exactly to the future. For freedom, the possible is the future, and the future is for time the possible. To both of these corresponds anxiety in the individual life. An accurate and correct linguistic usage therefore associates anxiety and the future. When it is sometimes said that one is anxious about the past, this seems to be a contradiction of this usage. However, to a more careful examination, it appears that this is only a manner of speaking and that the future in one way or another manifests itself. The past about which I am supposed to be anxious must stand in a relation of possibility to me. If I am anxious about a past misfortune, then this is not because it is in the past but because it may be repeated, i.e., become future. If I am anxious because of a past offense, it is because I have not placed it in an essential relation to myself as past and have in some deceitful way or another prevented it from being past. If indeed it is actually past, then I cannot be anxious but only repentant. If I do not repent, I have allowed myself to make my relation to the offense dialectical, and by this the offense itself has become a possibility and not something past. If I am anxious about the punishment, it is only because this has been placed in a dialectical relation to the offense (otherwise I suffer my punishment), and then I am anxious for the possible and the future.

Thus we have returned to where we were in . Anxiety is the psychological state that precedes sin. It approaches sin as closely as

possible, as anxiously as possible, but without explaining sin, which breaks forth only in the qualitative leap.

The moment sin is posited, temporality is sinfulness. We do not say that temporality is sinfulness any more than that sensuousness is sinfulness, but rather that when sin is posited, temporality signifies sinfulness. Therefore he sins who lives only in the moment as abstracted from the eternal. But to speak foolishly and by way of accommodation, had Adam not sinned, he would in the same moment have passed over into eternity. On the other hand, as soon as sin is posited, it is of no help to wish to abstract from the temporal any more than from the sensuous.

§1. THE ANXIETY OF SPIRITLESSNESS

A person who observes life will soon convince himself that what has been set forth here is correct, namely, that anxiety is the final psychological state from which sin breaks forth in the qualitative leap. Nevertheless, the whole of paganism and its repetition within Christianity lie in a merely quantitative determination from which the qualitative leap of sin does not break forth. This state, however, is not the state of innocence; rather, viewed from the standpoint of spirit, it is precisely that of sinfulness.

It is quite remarkable that Christian orthodoxy has always taught that paganism lay in sin, while the consciousness of sin was first posited by Christianity. Orthodoxy, however, is correct when it explains itself more precisely. By quantitative determinations, paganism stretches out time, as it were, and never arrives at sin in the deepest sense, yet this is precisely sin.

It is easy to show that this is the case in paganism. But in the case of paganism within Christianity, it is a different matter. The life of Christian paganism is neither guilty nor not guilty. It really knows no distinction between the present, the past, the future, and the eternal. Its life and its history go on crabbedly like the writing in ancient manuscripts, without any

punctuation marks, one word, one sentence after the other. From an esthetic point of view, this is very comical, for while it is beautiful to listen to a brook running murmuring through life, it is nevertheless comical that a sum of rational creatures is transformed into a perpetual muttering without meaning. Whether philosophy can use this *plebs* [multitude] as a category by making it a substratum for the greater, just as vegetative sludge gradually becomes solid earth, first peat and so on, I do not know. Viewed from the standpoint of spirit, such an existence is sin, and the least one can do is to state this and demand spirit from it.

What has been set forth here does not apply to paganism. Such an existence can be found only within Christianity. The reason for this is that the higher that spirit is posited, the more profound the exclusion appears, and the higher that is which is lost, the more wretched in their contentment are οἱ ἀπηλγηκότες [those who are past feeling] (Eph. 4:19). If the bliss of this spiritlessness is compared with the state of slaves in paganism, then there is after all some sense in slavery, because it is nothing in itself. On the other hand, the lostness of spiritlessness is the most terrible of all, because the misfortune is precisely that spiritlessness has a relation to spirit, which is nothing. To a certain degree, spiritlessness may therefore possess the whole content of spirit, but mark well, not as spirit but as the haunting of ghosts, as gibberish, as a slogan, etc. It may possess the truth, but mark well, not as truth but as rumor and old wives' tales. Esthetically viewed, this is the profoundly comical in spiritlessness, something that is not generally noticed, because the actor himself is more or less insecure with regard to spirit. So when spiritlessness is to be represented, mere twaddle is simply put into the mouth of the actor, because no one has the courage to put into the mouth of spiritlessness the same words one uses oneself. This is insecurity. Spiritlessness can say exactly the same thing that the richest spirit has said, but it does not say it by virtue of spirit. Man qualified as

spiritless has become a talking machine, and there is nothing to prevent him from repeating by rote a philosophical rigmarole, a confession of faith, or a political recitative. Is it not remarkable that the only ironist and the greatest humorist joined forces in saying what seems the simplest of all, namely, that a person must distinguish between what he understands and what he does not understand? And what can prevent the most spiritless man from repeating the same thing verbatim? There is only one proof of spirit, and that is the spirit's proof within oneself. Whoever demands something else may get proofs in superabundance, but he is already characterized as spiritless.

In spiritlessness there is no anxiety, because it is too happy, too content, and too spiritless for that. But this is a very lamentable reason, and paganism differs from spiritlessness in that the former is qualified *toward* spirit and the latter *away from* spirit. Paganism is, if I may say so, the absence of spirit, and thus quite different from spiritlessness. To that extent, paganism is much to be preferred. Spiritlessness is the stagnation of spirit and the caricature of ideality. Spiritlessness, therefore, is not dumb when it comes to repetition by rote, but it is dumb in the sense in which salt is said to be so. If the salt becomes dumb, with what shall it be salted? The lostness of spiritlessness, as well as its security, consists in its understanding nothing spiritually and comprehending nothing as a task, even if it is able to fumble after everything with its limp clamminess. If on a particular occasion spiritlessness is touched by spirit and for a moment begins to twitch like a galvanized frog, a phenomenon occurs that corresponds perfectly to pagan fetishism. For spiritlessness there is no authority, because it knows indeed that for spirit there is no authority; however, since it unfortunately is not spirit, despite its knowledge, it is a perfect idol worshipper. It worships a dunce and a hero with equal veneration, but above anything else its real fetish is a charlatan.

Even though there is no anxiety in spiritlessness, because it is excluded as is spirit, anxiety is nevertheless present, except that it is waiting. It is conceivable that a debtor may be fortunate enough to slip away from a creditor and hold him off with talk, but there is a creditor who never came off badly, namely, spirit. Viewed from the standpoint of spirit, anxiety is also present in spiritlessness, but it is hidden and disguised. Even observation shudders at the sight of it, because just as the figure of anxiety — if the imagination is allowed to form such a figure — is appalling and terrifying to look at, so the figure will terrify still more when it finds it necessary to disguise itself in order not to appear as what it is, even though it nevertheless is what it is. When death appears in its true form as the lean and dismal reaper, one does not look at it without terror; however, when it appears disguised in order to mock the men who fancy they can mock death, when the observer sees that the unknown figure who captivates all by his courtesy and causes all to exult in the wild gaiety of desires is death, then he is seized by a profound terror.

§2. ANXIETY DEFINED DIALECTICALLY AS FATE

It is usually said of paganism that it lies in sin; perhaps it might be more correct to say that it lies in anxiety. Paganism on the whole is sensuousness, but it is a sensuousness that has a relation to spirit, although spirit is not in the deepest sense posited as spirit. Yet this possibility is precisely anxiety.

If we ask more particularly what the object of anxiety is, then the answer, here as elsewhere, must be that it is nothing. Anxiety and nothing always correspond to each other. As soon as the actuality of freedom and of spirit is posited, anxiety is canceled. But what then does the nothing of anxiety signify more particularly in paganism? This is fate.

Fate is a relation to spirit as external. It is a relation between spirit and something else that is not spirit and to which fate nevertheless stands in a

spiritual relation. Fate may also signify exactly the opposite, because it is the unity of necessity and the accidental. This is something to which we have not always paid attention. People have talked about the pagan *fatum* (which is characterized differently in the Oriental conception and in the Greek) as if it were necessity. A vestige of this necessity has been permitted to remain in the Christian view, in which it came to signify fate, i.e., the accidental, that which is incommensurable with providence. However, this is not the case, for fate is precisely the unity of necessity and the accidental. This is ingeniously expressed in the saying, fate is blind, for he who walks forward blindly walks as much by necessity as by accident. A necessity that is not conscious of itself is *eo ipso* the accidental in relation to the next moment. Fate, then, is the nothing of anxiety. It is nothing because as soon as spirit is posited, anxiety is canceled, but so also is fate, for thereby providence is also posited. Therefore what Paul said about the idol may be said of fate: there is no idol in the world; nevertheless, the idol is the object of the pagan's religiousness.

Thus in fate the anxiety of the pagan has its object, its nothing. He cannot come into a relation to fate, because in the one moment it is the necessary and in the next it is the accidental. And yet he stands related to it, and this relation is anxiety. Nearer to fate than this, the pagan cannot come. The attempt of paganism to do so was profound enough to shed a new light upon fate. Whoever wants to explain fate must be just as ambiguous as fate. And this the *oracle* was. However, the oracle in turn might signify the exact opposite. So the pagan's relation to the oracle is again anxiety. Herein lies the profound and inexplicable tragicalness of paganism. However, what is tragic does not lie in the ambiguity of the utterance of the oracle but in the pagan's not daring to forbear taking counsel with it. He stands in relation to it; he dares not fail to consult it. Even in the moment of consultation, he

stands in an ambiguous relation to it (sympathetic and antipathetic). And at this point he reflects on the oracle's explanations!

The concepts of guilt and sin in their deepest sense do not emerge in paganism. If they had emerged, paganism would have perished upon the contradiction that one became guilty by fate. Precisely this is the greatest contradiction, and out of this contradiction Christianity breaks forth. Paganism does not comprehend it because it is too light-minded in its determination of the concept of sin.

The concepts of sin and guilt posit precisely the single individual as the single individual. There is no question about his relation to the whole world or to all the past. The point is only that he is guilty, and yet he is supposed to have become guilty by fate, consequently by all that of which there is no question, and thereby he is supposed to have become something that precisely cancels the concept of fate, and this he is supposed to have become by fate.

A misunderstanding of this contradiction will result in a misunderstanding of the concept of hereditary sin; rightly understood, it gives the true concept, in the sense that every individual is both himself and the race, and the subsequent individual is not essentially different from the first. In the possibility of anxiety, freedom collapses, overcome by fate, and as a result, freedom's actuality rises up with the explanation that it became guilty. Anxiety at its most extreme point, where it seems as if the individual has become guilty, is not as yet guilt. So sin comes neither as a necessity nor as an accident, and therefore providence corresponds to the concept of sin.

Within Christianity, the anxiety of paganism in relation to sin is found wherever spirit is indeed present but is not essentially posited as spirit. The phenomenon appears most clearly in a genius. Immediately considered, the genius is predominantly subjectivity. At that point, he is not yet posited as

spirit, for as such he can be posited only by spirit. As “immediate,” he can be spirit (herein lies the deception that gives the appearance that his extraordinary talent is spirit posited by spirit), but then spirit has something else outside itself that is not spirit and is itself in an external relation to spirit. Therefore the genius continually discovers fate, and the more profound the genius, the more profound the discovery of fate. To spiritlessness, this is naturally foolishness, but in actuality it is greatness, because no man is born with the idea of providence, and those who think that one acquires it gradually through education are greatly mistaken, although I do not thereby deny the significance of education. The genius shows his primitive strength precisely by his discovery of fate, but in turn he also shows his impotence. To the immediate spirit, which the genius always is, except that he is an immediate spirit *sensu eminentiori* [in the eminent sense], fate is the limit. Not until sin is reached is providence posited. Therefore the genius has an enormous struggle to reach providence. If he does not reach it, truly he becomes a subject for the study of fate.

The genius is an omnipotent *Ansich* [in-itself] which as such would rock the whole world. For the sake of order, another figure appears along with him, namely, fate. Fate is nothing. It is the genius himself who discovers it, and the more profound the genius, the more profoundly he discovers fate, because that figure is merely the anticipation of providence. If he continues to be merely a genius and turns outward, he will accomplish astonishing things; nevertheless, he will always succumb to fate, if not outwardly, so that it is tangible and visible to all, then inwardly. Therefore a genius-existence is always like a fairy tale if in the deepest sense the genius does not turn inward into himself. The genius is able to do all things, and yet he is dependent upon an insignificance that no one comprehends, an insignificance upon which the genius himself by his omnipotence bestows omnipotent significance. Therefore a second lieutenant, if he is a genius, is

able to become an emperor and change the world, so that there becomes one empire and one emperor. But therefore, too, the army may be drawn up for battle, the conditions for the battle be absolutely favorable, and yet in the next moment wasted; a kingdom of heroes may plead that the order for battle be given — but he cannot: he must wait for the fourteenth of June. And why? Because that was the date of the battle of Marengo. So all things may be in readiness, he himself stands before the legions, waiting only for the sun to rise in order to announce the time for the oration that will electrify the soldiers, and the sun may rise more glorious than ever, an inspiring and inflaming sight for all, only not for him, because the sun did not rise as glorious as this at Austerlitz, and only the sun of Austerlitz gives victory and inspiration. Thus the inexplicable passion with which such a one may often rage against an entirely insignificant man, when otherwise he may show humanity and kindness even toward his enemies. Yes, woe unto the man, woe unto the woman, woe unto the innocent child, woe unto the beast of the field, woe unto the bird whose flight, woe unto the tree whose branch comes in his way at the moment he is to interpret his omen.

The outward as such has no significance for the genius, and therefore no one can understand him. Everything depends upon how he himself understands it in the presence of his secret friend (fate). All may be lost; both the simplest and the wisest men unite in admonishing him not to undertake the fruitless venture. But the genius knows he is stronger than the whole world, provided that at this point there is found no doubtful commentary to the invisible writing by which he reads the will of fate. If he reads it according to his wish, he says with his omnipotent voice to the captain of the ship, “Sail on, you carry Caesar and his fortune.” All may be won, and in the very moment he receives the intelligence, perhaps there is uttered a word along with it, the significance of which no creature, not even

God in heaven, understands (for in a certain sense God in heaven does not understand the genius), and with that the genius collapses in impotence.

Thus the genius is placed outside the universal. He is great by reason of his belief in fate whether he conquers or falls, for he conquers by himself and falls by himself, or rather, both are by fate. Usually his greatness is admired only when he conquers, and yet he is never greater than when he falls by his own hand. This, of course, must be understood in the sense that fate does not proclaim itself outwardly. When, however, at the very moment that, humanly speaking, all is won, he discovers the doubtful writing and then collapses, one might well exclaim, "What a giant it would take to overthrow him." Therefore no one was capable of doing this except himself. The belief that subdued the kingdoms and countries of the world under his mighty hand, while men believed they envisioned a legend, is the same belief that overthrew him, and his fall was an even more unfathomable legend.

Therefore the timing of the genius's anxiety is quite different from that of ordinary men who first discover the danger in the moment of danger. Until then they feel secure, and when the danger is past, they are again secure. In the moment of danger, the genius is stronger than ever. His anxiety, on the other hand, lies in the moment before and after the danger, that trembling moment when he must converse with the great unknown, which is fate. His anxiety is perhaps greatest precisely in the moment after, because the impatience of certitude always increases in inverse ratio to the brevity of the distance to victory, since there is more and more to lose the nearer one comes to victory, and most of all in the moment of victory, because the consistency of fate is precisely its inconsistency.

The genius as such cannot apprehend himself religiously, and therefore he reaches neither sin nor providence, and for this reason the genius is

found in the relation of anxiety to fate. There has never existed a genius without this anxiety unless he was also religious.

If the genius remains thus immediately determined and turned outward, he will indeed become great and his accomplishment astounding, but he will never come to himself and never become great to himself. All his activity is turned outward, and if I may so speak, the planetarean core that radiates everything never comes into existence [*bliver til*]. The significance of the genius to himself is *nil*, or as dubiously melancholy as the sympathy with which the inhabitants of one of the Faroe Islands would rejoice if on this island there lived a native Faroese who astounded all of Europe by his writings in various European languages and transformed the sciences by his immortal contributions, but at the same time never wrote a single line in Faroese, and then at last also forgot how to speak it. In the deepest sense, the genius does not become significant to himself. His compass cannot be determined higher than that of fate in relation to fortune, misfortune, esteem, honor, power, immortal fame — all of which are temporal determinations. Every deeper dialectical determination of sin is excluded. The ultimate would be that of being regarded as guilty in such a way that anxiety is not directed toward guilt but toward the appearance of guilt, which is the category of honor. Such a state of the soul would be very appropriate for poetic treatment. What has been described can happen to every man, but the genius would at once lay hold of it so profoundly that he would not be striving with men but with the profoundest mysteries of existence [*Tilværelsen*].

That such a genius-existence is sin, despite its splendor, glory, and significance, is something that requires courage to understand, and it can hardly be understood before one has learned to satisfy the hunger of the wishing soul. It is true nonetheless. That such an existence may nevertheless be happy to a certain degree proves nothing. Talent may be

conceived of as a means of diversion, and in so doing one realizes that at no moment is it possible to raise oneself above the categories in which the temporal lies. Only through a religious reflection can genius and talent in the deepest sense be justified. Take a genius like Talleyrand. There was in him the possibility of a much deeper reflection upon life. This he shunned. He followed that constituent in him that turned outward. As intriguer, his admired genius was gloriously demonstrated; his resilience, the power of his genius to saturate (to use a term used by the chemists of corrosive acids) is admired, but he belongs to the temporal. If such a genius had disdained the temporal as immediate and turned toward himself and toward the divine, what a religious genius would have emerged! But what agonies he would have had to endure. To follow immediate qualifications is a relief in life, whether one is great or small, but the reward is also in proportion to it, whether one is great or small. And he who is not so spiritually mature as to apprehend that even immortal honor throughout all generations is merely a qualification of the temporal, he who does not apprehend that this for which men strive and which keeps them sleepless with wishes and desire is exceedingly imperfect in comparison with the immortality that is for every man and that rightly would arouse the justifiable envy of all the world if it were reserved for only one man — he will not get far in his explanation of spirit and immortality.

§3. ANXIETY DEFINED DIALECTICALLY AS GUILT

It is usually said that Judaism is the standpoint of the law. However, this could also be expressed by saying that Judaism lies in anxiety. But here the nothing of anxiety signifies something other than fate. It is in this sphere that the phrase "to be anxious — nothing" appears most paradoxical, for guilt is indeed something. Nevertheless, it is true that as long as guilt is the object of anxiety, it is nothing. The ambiguity lies in the relation, for as

soon as guilt is posited, anxiety is gone, and repentance is there. The relation, as always with the relation of anxiety, is sympathetic and antipathetic. This in turn seems paradoxical, yet such is not the case, because while anxiety fears, it maintains a subtle communication with its object, cannot look away from it, indeed will not, for if the individual wills it, repentance is there. That someone or other will find this statement difficult is something I cannot help. He who has the required firmness to be, if I dare say so, a divine prosecutor, not in relation to others but in relation to himself, will not find it difficult. Furthermore, life offers sufficient phenomena in which the individual in anxiety gazes almost desirously at guilt and yet fears it. Guilt has for the eye of the spirit the fascinating power of the serpent's glance. The truth in the Carpocratian view of attaining perfection through sin lies at this point. It has its truth in the moment of decision when the immediate spirit posits itself as spirit by spirit; contrariwise, it is blasphemy to hold that this view is to be realized *in concreto*.

It is precisely by the anxiety of guilt that Judaism is further advanced than Greek culture, and the sympathetic factor in its anxiety-relation to guilt may be recognized by the fact that it would not at any price forego this relation in order to acquire the more rash expressions of Greek culture: fate, fortune, misfortune.

The anxiety found in Judaism is anxiety about guilt. Guilt is a power that spreads itself everywhere, and although it broods over existence [*Tilværelsen*], no one can understand it in a deeper sense. Whatever is to explain it must therefore be of the same nature, just as the oracle corresponds to fate. To the oracle in paganism corresponds the sacrifice in Judaism. But for that reason no one can understand the sacrifice. Herein lies the profound tragedy of Judaism, analogous to the relation of the oracle in paganism. The Jew has his recourse to the sacrifice, but this does not help

him, for that which properly would help him would be the cancellation of the relation of anxiety to guilt and the positing of an actual relation. Since this does not come to pass, the sacrifice becomes ambiguous, which is expressed by its repetition, the further consequence of which would be a pure skepticism in the form of reflection upon the sacrificial act itself.

Thus what held true in the preceding, that only with sin is providence posited, again holds true here: only with sin is atonement posited, and its sacrifice is not repeated. The reason for this, if I may so speak, is not the outward perfection of the sacrifice; on the contrary, the perfection of the sacrifice corresponds to the fact that the actual relation of sin is posited. Whenever the actual relation of sin is not posited, the sacrifice must be repeated (thus the sacrifice is repeated in Catholicism, although the absolute perfection of the sacrifice is still recognized).

What has been indicated briefly here about the relation of the world-historical is repeated within Christianity in the individualities. Here again the genius exhibits most clearly what in less original men is present in such a way that it cannot easily be categorized. On the whole, the genius differs from every other man only in that he consciously begins within his historical presupposition just as primitively as Adam did. Every time a genius is born, existence is, as it were, put to a test, because he traverses and experiences all that is past, until he catches up with himself. Therefore the knowledge the genius has of the past is entirely different from that offered in world-historical surveys.

It has been indicated already that the genius may remain in his immediate determination, and the explanation that this is sin also implies true courtesy toward the genius. Every human life is religiously designed. To want to deny this confuses everything and cancels the concepts of individuality, race, and immortality. Herein lie very difficult problems, for which reason one could wish that more people would exercise discernment

at this point. To say that someone with a mind for intrigue ought to be a diplomat or a detective, that someone with a mimic talent for the comical ought to be an actor, and that someone with no talent at all ought to be a stoker in the courthouse is an altogether meaningless view of life, or it is rather no view at all, for it merely states what is obvious. However, to explain how my religious existence comes into relation with and expresses itself in my outward existence, that is the task. But in our time who would trouble himself to think about such things, although now more than ever the present life appears as a fleeting, transitory moment? Yet instead of learning from this how to lay hold of the eternal, we only learn how to drive ourselves, our neighbors, and the moment to death — in the pursuit of the moment. If a person could have a part just once, could lead the waltz of the moment just once — then he has lived, then he becomes the envy of the less fortunate, those who are not born but rush headlong into life, and headlong continue to rush forward, never reaching it. Then one has lived, for what is more valuable in human life than a young woman's brief loveliness, which indeed already has held up unusually well if for one night it has enchanted the lives of dancers and faded for the first time in the early morning. There is no time to consider how a religious existence pervades and interweaves the outward existence. Although one does not rush with the haste of despair, one still lays hold of what is closest at hand. In that way, a person may even become something great in the world, and furthermore, if he also attends church once in awhile, every thing will be extremely well with him. This seems to indicate that while for some individuals the religious is the absolute, for others it is not, and then goodnight to all meaning in life. Naturally the deliberation becomes more difficult the more remote the outward task is from the religious as such. What profound religious reflection would be required to reach such an outward task, for example, that of becoming a comic actor! That it can be done, I do not deny, for

whoever has some understanding of the religious knows that it is more pliant than gold, and absolutely commensurable. The fault of the Middle Ages was not religious reflection, but that it broke off too soon. Here the question about repetition reappears: to what extent can an individuality, after having begun religious reflection, succeed in returning to himself again, whole in every respect? In the Middle Ages, a break was made. Therefore, when an individuality was to return to himself, having encountered, for example, the fact that he possessed wit, a sense for the comic, etc., he annihilated all of this as something imperfect. Nowadays, this is all too readily regarded as foolishness. For if someone has wit and a sense for the comic, he is a Pamphilius of fortune. What more can he wish? Naturally such explanations have not the faintest presentiment of the problem, for although nowadays men are born more worldly-wise than in the old days, the greater number of them are born blind in relation to the religious. Nevertheless, in the Middle Ages there were also examples of carrying this deliberation further. For example, when a painter apprehended his talent religiously, but this talent could not express itself in achievements that lie closest to the religious, such an artist might have been seen piously concentrating all his ability in the painting of a Venus, and apprehending his artistic calling with all the piety of an artist who came to the aid of the church and captivated the eyes of the congregation with a vision of the heavenly beauty. However, in regard to all this, one has to wait for the appearance of individuals who, despite outward gifts, do not choose the broad way but rather the pain, the distress, and the anxiety in which they religiously call to mind what meanwhile they lose, as it were, namely, what is too seductive to possess. Such a struggle is indubitably very exhausting, because there will come moments when they almost regret having begun it and recall with melancholy, at times possibly unto despair, the smiling life that would have opened before them had they pursued the immediate

inclination of their talent. Nevertheless, in the extreme terror of distress, when it is as though all were lost because the way along which he would advance is impassable, and the smiling way of talent is cut off from him by his own act, the person who is aware will indubitably hear a voice saying: Well done, my son! Just keep on, for he who loses all, gains all.

We will now consider a genius who is religious, that is, one who does not remain in his immediacy. Whether he at any time turns himself outward remains for him a subsequent question. The first thing he does is to turn toward himself. Just as the immediate genius has fate as the figure that follows him, so he has guilt. In turning toward himself, he *eo ipso* turns toward God, and there is a ceremonial rule that says that when the finite spirit would see God, it must begin as guilty. As he turns toward himself, he discovers guilt. The greater the genius, the more profoundly he discovers guilt. To me it is a joy and a gratifying sign that to spiritlessness this is foolishness. The genius is not like most people and would not be satisfied to be so. This is not because he disdains men, but because he is primitively concerned with himself, whereas other men and their explanations are of no help to him.

The fact that he discovers guilt so profoundly indicates that this concept is present to him *sensu eminentiori* [in the eminent sense], just as its opposite, innocence, is also. So it was in the case of the relation of the immediate genius to fate, for every man has a little relation to fate, but there it ends in talk that does not notice what Talleyrand (and Young before him expressed) discovered and expressed, although not as fully as empty talk does, that the purpose of language is to conceal thought — namely, to conceal that one has none.

In turning inward, he discovers freedom. He does not fear fate, for he lays hold of no outward task, and freedom is for him his bliss, not freedom to do this or that in the world, to become king and emperor or an abusive

street corner orator, but freedom to know of himself that he is freedom. Yet the higher an individual rises, the greater is the price he must pay for everything; and for the sake of order, another figure comes into being with the *Ansich* [in-itself] of freedom, namely, guilt. Guilt in turn is what fate was, the only thing he fears, and yet his fear is not of what was the maximum in the former case, namely, fear of being thought guilty, but fear of being guilty.

To the degree he discovers freedom, to that same degree the anxiety of sin is upon him in the state of possibility. He fears only guilt, for guilt alone can deprive him of freedom. Here it is readily seen that freedom is by no means defiance, nor is it selfish freedom in a finite sense. By such an assumption, attempts often have been made to explain the origin of sin, but such efforts are only wasted labor, because the acceptance of such an assumption presents a greater difficulty than the explanation. When freedom is apprehended in this way, it has necessity as its opposite, which shows that it has been conceived as a category of reflection. No, the opposite of freedom is guilt, and it is the greatness of freedom that it always has to do only with itself, that in its possibility it projects guilt and accordingly posits it by itself. And if guilt is posited actually, freedom posits it by itself. If this is not kept in mind, freedom is confused in a clever way with something entirely different, with *force*.

Now when freedom fears guilt, what it fears is not to recognize itself as guilty, if it is, but rather it fears to become guilty, for which reason freedom, as soon as guilt is posited, returns as repentance. For the time being, freedom's relation to guilt is a possibility. Here again genius manifests itself by not side-stepping the primitive decision, by not seeking the decision outside itself with Tom, Dick, and Harry, and by not being content with the usual bargaining. Only by itself can freedom come to know whether it is freedom or whether guilt is posited. Therefore nothing is more ridiculous

than to assume that the question of whether one is a sinner or guilty belongs under the rubric: lesson to be memorized.

The relation of freedom to guilt is anxiety, because freedom and guilt are still only possibilities. However, as freedom with all its passion wishfully stares at itself and would keep guilt at a distance so that not a single particle of it might be found in freedom, it cannot refrain from staring at guilt, and this staring is the ambiguous staring of anxiety, just as renunciation within the possibility is itself a coveting.

Here it clearly appears in what sense there is a more in the anxiety of the subsequent individual than in Adam's anxiety. Guilt is a more concrete conception, which becomes more and more possible in the relation of possibility to freedom. At last it is as if the guilt of the whole world united to make him guilty, and, what is the same, as if in becoming guilty he became guilty of the guilt of the whole world. Guilt has the dialectical character that it does not allow itself to be transferred, but whoever becomes guilty also becomes guilty of that which occasioned the guilt. For guilt never has an external occasion, and whoever yields to temptation is himself guilty of the temptation.

In the relation of possibility, this appears as an illusion. However, as soon as repentance breaks forth with the actual sin, then it has the actual sin as its object. In freedom's possibility, it holds true that the more profoundly guilt is discovered, the greater the genius, because the greatness of a man depends simply and solely on the energy of the God-relation in him, even though the God-relation finds an altogether wrong expression as fate.

Just as fate at last captures the immediate genius, and this is indeed his moment of culmination, not the glittering outward realization that amazes men and even calls the artisan from his daily work to stop and take notice, but the moment when by himself he collapses for himself by fate, guilt likewise captures the genius who is religious, and this is the moment of

culmination, the moment when he is greatest, not the moment when the sight of his piety is like the festivity of a special holiday, but when by himself he sinks before himself in the depth of sin-consciousness.

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CHAPTER IV.

Anxiety of Sin or Anxiety as the Consequence of Sin in the Single Individual

BY A QUALITATIVE leap sin entered into the world, and it continually enters into the world in that way. As soon as the leap is posited, one would think that anxiety would be canceled, because anxiety is defined as freedom's disclosure to itself in possibility. The qualitative leap is clearly actuality, and so it would seem that possibility is annulled along with anxiety. However, this is not the case. First of all, actuality is not one factor; second, the actuality posited is an unwarranted actuality. So anxiety again comes into relation with what is posited as well as with the future. Yet this time the object of anxiety is a determinate something and its nothing is an actual something, because the distinction between good and evil is posited *in concreto* — and anxiety therefore loses its dialectical ambiguity. This is true of Adam as well as of every subsequent individual, for in the qualitative leap they are completely alike.

When sin is posited in the particular individual by the qualitative leap, the difference between good and evil is also posited. We have nowhere been guilty of the foolishness that holds that man *must* sin; on the contrary, we have always protested against all merely imaginatively constructed knowledge. We have said what we again repeat, that sin presupposes itself, just as freedom presupposes itself, and sin cannot be explained by anything antecedent to it, anymore than can freedom. To maintain that freedom begins as *liberum arbitrium* (which is found nowhere, cf. Leibniz) that can choose good just as well as evil inevitably makes every explanation impossible. To speak of good and evil as the objects of freedom finitizes

both freedom and the concepts of good and evil. Freedom is infinite and arises out of nothing. Therefore, to want to say that man sins by necessity makes the circle of the leap into a straight line. Such a procedure seems highly plausible to many, because to a great many thoughtlessness is the most natural thing, and in all ages their number is legion who regard as praiseworthy that way of thinking that through all centuries has in vain been labeled λόγος ἀργός [lazy reasoning] (Chrysippus), *ignava ratio* (Cicero), *sophisma pigrum, la raison paresseuse* (Leibniz).

Now psychology again has anxiety as its object, but it must be cautious. The history of the individual life proceeds in a movement from state to state. Every state is posited by a leap. As sin entered into the world, so it continues to enter into the world if it is not halted. Nevertheless, every such repetition is not a simple consequence but a new leap. Every such leap is preceded by a state as the closest psychological approximation. This state is the object of psychology. To the extent that in every state possibility is present, anxiety is also present. Such is the case after sin is posited, for only in the good is there a unity of state and transition.

§1.ANXIETY ABOUT EVIL

(a) The posited sin is indeed an annulled possibility, but it is also an unwarranted actuality, and as such, anxiety can relate itself to it. Since sin is an unwarranted actuality, it is also to be negated. This work anxiety will undertake. Here is the playground of the ingenious sophistry of anxiety. While the actuality of sin holds one hand of freedom in its icy right hand just as the Commandant held Don Giovanni, the left hand gesticulates with delusion, deception, and the eloquence of illusion.

(b) The posited sin is in itself also a consequence, even though it is a consequence foreign to freedom. This consequence announces itself, and anxiety relates itself to the future appearance of this consequence, which is

the possibility of a new state. No matter how deep an individual has sunk, he can sink still deeper, and this "can" is the object of anxiety. The more relaxed anxiety becomes at this point, the more it signifies that the consequence of sin has entered the individual *in succum et sanguinem* [in flesh and blood] and that sin has obtained a domicile in individuality.

Here sin, of course, signifies the concrete, for one never sins on the average or in general. Even that sin of wishing to go back to the time before the actuality of sin is not a sin on the average, for such a sin has never occurred. Whoever has some understanding of men knows very well that sophistry always fixes upon one particular point and continually skirts the point. Anxiety wants to have the actuality of sin removed, not entirely but to a certain degree, or to put it more exactly, to a certain degree it wants to have the actuality of sin continue — but note, only to a certain degree. Therefore anxiety is not disinclined to flirt a little with quantitative determinants. The more developed anxiety is, the further it dares to pursue the flirtation. But as soon as the jest and the diversion of quantitative determinants are about to capture the individual in the qualitative leap, which lies in wait like the larva of the ant-lion in the funnel formed in the loose sand, anxiety cautiously withdraws; then it has a little point that must be saved and that is without sin, and in the next moment another point. A consciousness of sin profoundly and seriously formed in the expression of repentance is a great rarity. However, for my own sake, as well as for the sake of thought and neighbor, I shall take care not to express it as Schelling probably would, who speaks somewhere of a genius for action in the same sense as for music etc. Thus, without being aware of it, one can at times annihilate everything with an explanatory word. If every man does not participate essentially in the absolute, then everything is over. Therefore, in the sphere of the religious, genius must not be spoken of as a special gift

that is bestowed only upon a few, for here the gift is that of willing, and whoever does not will should at least have the respect of not being pitied.

Ethically speaking, sin is not a state. The state, however, is always the last psychological approximation to the next state. Anxiety is at this point always present as the possibility of the new state. In the state described under (a), anxiety is more noticeable; whereas in (b), it disappears more and more. But anxiety is nevertheless outside such an individual, and viewed from the standpoint of spirit, it is greater than any other anxiety. In (a), the anxiety is about the actuality of sin, out of which it sophistically brings forth possibility; whereas viewed ethically, it sins. The movement of anxiety is here the opposite of the anxiety of innocence, in which, psychologically speaking, it brings forth actuality out of the possibility of sin; whereas viewed ethically, sin is brought forth by the qualitative leap. In (b), anxiety is directed toward the further possibility of sin. If at this point anxiety decreases, we explain it by the fact that the consequence of sin conquers.

(c) The posited sin is an unwarranted actuality. It is actuality, and it is posited by the individual as actuality in repentance, but repentance does not become the individual's freedom. Repentance is reduced to a possibility in relation to sin; in other words, repentance cannot cancel sin, it can only sorrow over it. Sin advances in its consequence; repentance follows it step by step, but always a moment too late. It forces itself to look at the dreadful, but like the mad King Lear (*O du zertrümmert Meisterstück der Schöpfung* [O thou ruined masterpiece of nature]) it has lost the reins of government, and it has retained only the power to grieve. At this point, anxiety is at its highest. Repentance has lost its mind, and anxiety is potentiated into repentance. The consequence of sin moves on; it drags the individual along like a woman whom the executioner drags by the hair while she screams in despair. Anxiety is ahead; it discovers the consequence before it comes, as

one feels in one’s bones that a storm is approaching. The consequence comes closer; the individual trembles like a horse that gasps as it comes to a halt at the place where once it had been frightened. Sin conquers. Anxiety throws itself despairingly into the arms of repentance. Repentance ventures all. It conceives of the consequence of sin as suffering penalty and of perdition as the consequence of sin. It is lost. Its judgment is pronounced, its condemnation is certain, and the augmented judgment is that the individual shall be dragged through life to the place of execution. In other words, repentance has gone crazy.

Life offers opportunities to observe what has been suggested here. Such a state is seldom found among altogether corrupt natures, but generally only among the deeper, for it requires considerable primitivity and endurance in man if he is not to fall under (a) or (b). No dialectic is capable of defeating the sophism that crazed repentance is capable of producing at every moment. Such a repentance has a dejection that in the dialectic and expression of passion is far more powerful than true repentance. (In another sense it is, of course, more impotent; yet, as anyone who has observed such cases no doubt has noticed, it is remarkable what persuasive powers, what eloquence such repentance possesses to disarm all objections and to convince all who come close to it, only to despair of itself again when this diversion is over.) To attempt to stop this horror by words and phrases is wasted effort, and whoever contemplates doing it may always be sure that his sermonizing will be like children’s babble when compared with the elementary eloquence that is at the service of such repentance. The phenomenon may appear in connection with the sensuous in man (addiction to drink, to opium, or to debauchery, etc.) as well as in connection with the higher (pride, vanity, wrath, hatred, defiance, cunning, envy, etc.). The individual may repent of his wrath, and the more profound he is, the more profound is his repentance. But repentance cannot make him free; in that he

is mistaken. The occasion comes; anxiety has already discovered it. Every thought trembles. Anxiety sucks out the strength of repentance and shakes its head. It is as though wrath had already conquered. Already he has a presentiment of the prostration of freedom that is reserved for the next moment. The moment comes; wrath conquers.

Whatever the consequence of sin, the fact that the phenomenon appears on a considerable scale is always the sign of a deeper nature. The phenomenon is seldom seen in life, i.e., one must be an observer to see it more often, because it can be concealed or dispelled, and men use one or another prudential device to abort this embryo of the highest life. All that is needed in order to become like most people is to seek the advice of Tom, Dick, and Harry, and one can always secure the testimony of a few respectable people to that end. The most effective means of escaping spiritual trial [*Anfægtelse*] is to become spiritless, and the sooner the better. If only taken care of in time, everything takes care of itself. And as for spiritual trial, it may be explained as nonexistent, or at the most may be regarded as a piquant poetical fiction. In the old days, the road to perfection was narrow and solitary. The journey along it was always disturbed by aberrations, exposed to predatory attacks by sin, and pursued by the arrow of the past, which is as dangerous as that of the Scythian hordes. Now one travels to perfection by railway in good company, and before he knows it, he has arrived.

The only thing that is truly able to disarm the sophistry of sin is faith, courage to believe that the state itself is a new sin, courage to renounce anxiety without anxiety, which only faith can do; faith does not thereby annihilate anxiety, but, itself eternally young, it extricates itself from anxiety's moment of death. Only faith is able to do this, for only in faith is the synthesis eternal and at every moment possible.

It is not difficult to see that all that has been presented here belongs to the realm of psychology. Ethically, the point is to get the individual rightly placed in relation to sin. As soon as this is accomplished, the individual stands repentant in sin. According to the idea, in that very moment he has been brought to dogmatics. Repentance is the highest ethical contradiction, partly because ethics requires ideality but must be content to receive repentance, and partly because repentance is dialectically ambiguous with regard to what it is to remove, an ambiguity that dogmatics for the first time removes in the Atonement, in which the category of hereditary sin becomes clear. Moreover, repentance delays action, and action is precisely what ethics requires. At last, repentance must become an object to itself, inasmuch as the moment of repentance becomes a deficit of action. It was, therefore, a genuine ethical outburst, full of energy and courage, when the elder Fichte said there was no time for repentance. By this statement, however, he did not bring repentance to the dialectical point where as posited it will annul itself by new repentance and then collapse.

What has been presented in this paragraph, as elsewhere in this work, is what psychologically may be called freedom's psychological attitudes toward sin, or psychologically approximating states. They do not presume to explain sin ethically.

§2. ANXIETY ABOUT THE GOOD (THE DEMONIC)

Rarely is anything said in our day about the demonic. The particular accounts of it in the New Testament are generally left in abeyance. Insofar as the theologians seek to explain them, they generally lose themselves in observations upon one or another unnatural sin, and they find examples where the ascendancy of the bestial over a man is such that it almost announces itself by an inarticulate animal sound or by a mimicry of animals and a brutish glance. The bestial may have acquired a pronounced form in

man (the physiognomic expression — Lavater), or it may in a flash, like a disappearing express messenger, suggest premonitions of what dwells within, just as the glance or gesture of the insane in a moment shorter than the shortest moment parodies, ridicules, and jeers at the rational, self-possessed, and clever man with whom he is talking. What theologians say in this respect may well be true, but the important thing is the point of the matter. Generally the phenomenon is described in such a way that it is clearly seen that the subject in question is the bondage of sin, a state that I cannot describe better than by recalling a game in which two persons are concealed under one cloak as if there were only one person, and one speaks and the other gesticulates arbitrarily without any relation to what is said. Similarly, the beast has taken on human form and now constantly jeers at him by gesticulations and farce. Yet the bondage of sin is not the demonic. As soon as sin is posited and the individual continues in sin, there are two formations, one of which is described in the foregoing section. If attention is not paid to this, the demonic cannot be defined. The individual is in sin, and his anxiety is about the evil. Viewed from a higher standpoint, this formation is in the good, and for this reason it is in anxiety about the evil. The other formation is the demonic. The individual is in the evil and is in anxiety about the good. The bondage of sin is an unfree relation to the evil, but the demonic is an unfree relation to the good.

The demonic therefore manifests itself clearly only when it is in contact with the good, which comes to its boundary from the outside. For this reason, it is noteworthy that the demonic in the New Testament first appears when it is approached by Christ. Whether the demon is legion (cf. Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39) or is dumb (cf. Luke 11:14), the phenomenon is the same, namely, anxiety about the good, for anxiety can just as well express itself by muteness as by a scream. The good, of course,

signifies the restoration of freedom, redemption, salvation, or whatever one would call it.

In earlier times, there was often talk about the demonic. Here it is not important to make studies or to have made studies that would enable one to recite by rote or quote from learned and curious books. It is easy to sketch the various views that are possible and at various times have been actual. This may be of significance, because the diversity of the views may lead to a definition of the concept.

The demonic may be viewed as esthetic-metaphysical. The phenomenon then will come under the rubrics of misfortune, fate, etc. and can then be viewed as analogous to being mentally deranged at birth. Then the phenomenon is approached sympathetically. However, just as wishing is the most paltry of all solo performances, so being sympathetic in the sense in which the word is usually used is the most paltry of all social virtuosities and aptitudes. Sympathy, so far from being a good to the sufferer, is rather a means of protecting one's own egotism. Not daring in the deeper sense to think about such things, one saves oneself by sympathy. Only when the sympathetic person in his compassion relates himself to the sufferer in such a way that he in the strictest sense understands that it is his own case that is in question, only when he knows how to identify himself with the sufferer in such a way that when he fights for an explanation he is fighting for himself, renouncing all thoughtlessness, softness, and cowardice — only then does the sympathy acquire significance, and only then does it perhaps find a meaning, because the sympathetic person is different from the sufferer in that he suffers under a higher form. When sympathy relates itself in this way to the demonic, it will not be a question of a few comforting words, a mite, or a shrug of the shoulder, for if a person laments, he has something to lament about. If the demonic is a fate, it may happen to anyone. This cannot be denied, even though in our cowardly time

everything possible is done to keep away lonely thoughts by diversions and the Turkish music of loud enterprises, just as in the American forests wild beasts are kept away by means of torches, shouting, and beating of cymbals. For this reason, people in our day learn to know so little about the highest spiritual trials [*Anfægtelser*], and so much more about the pandering conflicts between men and between man and woman, which a sophisticated soirée and society life bring with it. If true human sympathy accepts suffering as a guarantor and surety, then it must first of all make clear to itself to what extent it is fate or to what extent it is guilt. And this distinction must be drawn up with the concerned but also energetic passion of freedom, so that a person may dare to hold fast to it even though the whole world collapses, even though it may seem that by his own firmness he brings about irreparable harm.

The demonic has been viewed ethically, as something to be condemned. The terrible severity with which it has been persecuted, discovered, and punished is well known. In our day, we shudder at the account of it, and we become sentimental and emotional at the thought that in our enlightened age we do not act in that manner. This may be true, but is sentimental sympathy so much more praiseworthy? It is not for me to judge or condemn that behavior, only to observe it. That it was so ethically severe shows precisely that its sympathy was of a better quality. In identifying itself in thought with the phenomenon, it has no further explanation than that the phenomenon was guilt. Therefore it was convinced that when all is said and done, the demoniac himself, according to his better possibility, would in fact desire all the cruelty and severity that was used against him. To take an example from a similar sphere — was it not Augustine who recommended punishment, even capital punishment, for heretics? Was it because he lacked sympathy? Or was his behavior different from that of our own time because his sympathy had not made him cowardly, so that he would have

said about himself: God grant that if it should come to that with me, there would be a Church that would not abandon me but would use all its power. Yet in our day one fears what Socrates somewhere prescribes, to be cut and cauterized by the physician in order to be healed.

The demonic has been viewed medically-therapeutically. And it goes without saying, *mit Pulver und mit Pillen* [with powder and with pills] and then with enemas! Now the pharmacist and the physician would get together. The patient would be isolated to prevent others from becoming afraid. In our courageous age, we dare not tell a patient that he is about to die, we dare not call the pastor lest he die from shock, and we dare not tell the patient that a few days ago a man died from the same disease. The patient would be isolated. Sympathy would inquire about his condition. The physician would promise to issue a report as soon as possible, along with a tabulated statistical survey in order to determine the average. And when one has arrived at the average, everything is explained. The medical-therapeutic view regards the phenomenon as purely physical and somatic, and as physicians often do, especially a physician in one of Hoffman's short stories, takes a pinch of snuff and says: It is a serious case.

That three so different views are possible shows the ambiguity of the phenomenon and indicates that in a sense it belongs in all spheres: the somatic, the psychic, and the pneumatic. This suggests that the demonic covers a much larger field than is commonly assumed, which can be explained by the fact that a man is a synthesis of psyche and body sustained by spirit, and therefore a disorganization in one shows itself in the others. When one becomes aware of the breadth of the field of the demonic, then perhaps it will also be clear that many of those who want to deal with the phenomenon of the demonic come under the category of the demonic themselves, and that there are traces of it in every man, as surely as every man is a sinner.

Because in the course of time the demonic has denoted several different things, and at last has come to mean almost anything, it seems best to define the concept a little. Therefore, attention should be paid to the place to which we have already assigned it. In innocence there can be no question of the demonic. On the other hand, every fantastic notion of entering into a pact with evil etc., whereby a person becomes entirely evil, must be abandoned. It was because of this that the contradiction arose in the severe treatment of earlier times. People made this assumption and still wanted to punish. Nevertheless, the punishment itself was not merely a self-defense but also a means to save (either those involved by way of a milder punishment or others by way of capital punishment). But if there could be a question of salvation, the individual was not entirely in the power of evil, and if the individual was entirely in the power of evil, punishment would be a contradiction. If the question were raised as to what extent the demonic is a problem for psychology, I must reply, the demonic is a state. Out of this state, the particular sinful act can constantly break forth. However, the state is a possibility, although in relation to innocence it is an actuality posited by the qualitative leap.

The demonic is anxiety about the good. In innocence, freedom was not posited as freedom: its possibility was anxiety in the individual. In the demonic, the relation is reversed. Freedom is posited as unfreedom, because freedom is lost. Here again freedom's possibility is anxiety. The difference is absolute, because freedom's possibility appears here in relation to unfreedom, which is the very opposite of innocence, which is a qualification disposed toward freedom.

The demonic is unfreedom that wants to close itself off. This, however, is and remains an impossibility. It always retains a relation, and even when this has apparently disappeared altogether, it is nevertheless there, and

anxiety at once manifests itself in the moment of contact [with the good] (see what is said above of the accounts in the New Testament).

The demonic is *inclosing reserve* [*det Indesluttede*] *and the unfreely disclosed*. The two definitions indicate, as intended, the same thing, because inclosing reserve is precisely the mute, and when it is to express itself, this must take place contrary to its will, since freedom, which underlies unfreedom or is its ground, by entering into communication with freedom from without, revolts and now betrays unfreedom in such a way that it is the individual who in anxiety betrays himself against his will. Therefore, inclosing reserve in this case must be taken in a very distinct sense, for in the common use of the term it may signify the highest freedom. Brutus, Henry V of England as Prince of Wales, etc. were in this sense confirmed in their reserve until the time when it became evident that their inclosing reserve [*Indesluttethed*] was a pact with the good. Such an inclosing reserve was therefore identical with an expansiveness, and there was never an individuality more beautiful and noble in its expansiveness than one who is inclosed in the womb of a great idea. Freedom is precisely the expansive. In opposition to this, I maintain that κατ' ἐξοχήν [in an eminent sense] "inclosing reserve" can be used for unfreedom. Generally, a more metaphysical expression is used for evil, namely, the negative. The ethical expression for it, when the effect is observed in the individual, is precisely this inclosing reserve. The demonic does not close itself up with something, but it closes itself up within itself, and in this lies what is profound about existence [*Tilværselsen*], precisely that unfreedom makes itself a prisoner. Freedom is always *communicerende* [communicating] (it does no harm even to take into consideration the religious significance of the word); unfreedom becomes more and more inclosed [*indesluttet*] and does not want communication. This can be observed in all spheres. It manifests itself in hypochondria, in capriciousness; it manifests itself in the highest passions,

when in a profound misunderstanding they introduce the silent treatment. When freedom comes into contact with inclosing reserve, it becomes anxious. In common speech there is a very suggestive expression. It is said of a person, “He will not come out with it.” Inclosing reserve is precisely muteness. Language, the word, is precisely what saves, what saves the individual from the empty abstraction of inclosing reserve. Let *x* signify the demonic, the relation of freedom to it something outside *x*. The law for the manifestation of the demonic is that against its will it “comes out with it.” For language does indeed imply communication. A demoniac in the New Testament therefore says to Christ when he approaches: τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί [What have I to do with you], and he continues by suggesting that Christ has come to destroy him (anxiety about the good). Or a demoniac implores Christ to go another way. (When anxiety is about evil, see §1, the individual has recourse to salvation.)

Life offers abundant examples of this in all possible spheres and in all possible degrees. An obdurate criminal will not make a confession (the demonic lies precisely in this, that he will not communicate with the good by suffering the punishment). There is a rarely used method that can be applied against such a person, namely, silence and the power of the eye. If an inquisitor has the required physical strength and the spiritual elasticity to endure without moving a muscle, to endure even for sixteen hours, he will succeed, and the confession will burst forth involuntarily. A man with a bad conscience cannot endure silence. If placed in solitary confinement, he becomes apathetic. But this silence while the judge is present, while the clerks are ready to inscribe everything in the protocol, this silence is the most penetrating and acute questioning. It is the most frightful torture and yet permissible. However, this is not as easy to accomplish as one might suppose. The only thing that can constrain inclosing reserve to speak is either a higher demon (for every devil has his day), or the good, which is

absolutely able to keep silent, and if any cunning tries to embarrass it by the examination of silence, the inquisitor himself will be brought to shame, and it will turn out that finally he becomes afraid of himself and must break the silence. Face to face with a subordinate demon and subordinate human natures whose consciousness of God is not strongly developed, inclosing reserve conquers unconditionally, because the former is not able to endure and the latter in all innocence are accustomed to live from hand to mouth and wear their hearts on their sleeves. It is incredible what power the man of inclosing reserve can exercise over such people, how at last they beg and plead for just a word to break the silence, but it is also shameful to trample upon the weak in this manner. It is perhaps thought that such things occur only among princes and Jesuits, and in order to have a clear notion of this one must think of Domitian, Cromwell, Alba, or a general of the Jesuit order who has become almost a stock name for this. By no means, it occurs much more frequently. However, caution must be used in judging the phenomenon, for although the phenomenon is the same, the reason for it may be the very opposite, because an individuality who exercises the despotism and torture of inclosing reserve might himself wish to speak and might wait for a higher demon who could bring forth the revelation. However, the tormentor of inclosing reserve may also relate himself selfishly to his own inclosing reserve. About this I could write a whole book, although I have not been, according to the custom and the established convention among the observers of our day, in Paris and London, as if by such visits one could learn something great, more than chatter and the wisdom of traveling salesmen. If an observer will only pay attention to himself, he will have enough with five men, five women, and ten children for the discovery of all possible states of the human soul. What I have to say could indeed have significance, especially for everyone who deals with children or has any relation to them. It is of infinite importance that the

child be elevated by the conception of lofty inclosing reserve and saved from the misunderstood types. In an outward respect, it is easy to determine when the moment arrives that one dares to let the child walk alone; in a spiritual respect, it is not so easy. In a spiritual respect, the task is very difficult, and one cannot exempt oneself by employing a nursemaid or by buying a walker. The art is that of constantly being present, and yet not being present, so that the child may be allowed to develop himself, and at the same time one still has a clear view of the development. The art is to leave the child to himself in the very highest degree and on the greatest possible scale, and to express this apparent relinquishing in such a way that, unnoticed, one is aware of everything. If only one is willing, time for this can very well be found, even though one is a royal officeholder. If one is willing, one can do all things. And the father or the educator who has done everything else for the child entrusted to him, but has failed to prevent him from becoming closed up in his reserve, has at all times incurred a great liability.

The demonic is inclosing reserve, the demonic is anxiety about the good. Let the inclosing reserve be *x* and its content *x*, denoting the most terrible, the most insignificant, the horrible, whose presence in life few probably even dream about, but also the trifles to which no one pays attention. What then is the significance of the good as *x*? It signifies disclosure. Disclosure may in turn signify the highest (redemption in an eminent sense) as well as the most insignificant (an accidental remark). This must not disturb us, for the category remains the same; the phenomena have this in common — that they are demonic — although the difference otherwise is enormous enough to make one dizzy. Here disclosure is the good, for disclosure is the first expression of salvation. There is also an old saying that if one dares to utter "the word," the sorcery's enchantment is broken, and therefore the somnambulist wakes up when his name is spoken.

The collisions of inclosing reserve with regard to disclosure may be infinitely varied with innumerable nuances, because the exuberant growth of the spiritual life is not inferior to that of nature, and the varieties of the spiritual states are more numerous than those of the flowers. Inclosing reserve may wish for disclosure, wish that this might be brought about from the outside, that this might happen to it. (This is a misunderstanding, for it is a feminine relation to the freedom posited in disclosure and to the freedom that posits disclosure. Therefore unfreedom may still remain, though the condition of the inclosed person may become happier.) It may will disclosure to a certain degree but still retain a little residue in order to begin the inclosing reserve all over again. (This is the case with subordinate spirits, who can do nothing *en gros*.) It may will disclosure, but *incognito*. (This is the subtle contradiction of inclosing reserve, examples of which are found in poet-existences.) Disclosure may already have conquered; however, at the same momemt, inclosing reserve ventures the last attempt and is ingenious enough to transform the disclosure itself into a mystification, and inclosing reserve has conquered.

However, I dare not continue further, for how could I finish even a merely algebraic naming, let alone an attempt to describe or to break the silence of inclosing reserve in order to let its monologue become audible, for monologue is precisely its speech, and therefore we characterize an inclosed person by saying that he talks to himself. Here I shall endeavor only to give all "an understanding but no tongue," as the inclosed Hamlet admonishes his two friends.

Nevertheless, I shall suggest a collision in which the contradiction is as terrible as inclosing reserve itself. What the inclosed person conceals in his inclosing reserve can be so terrible that he does not dare to utter it, not even to himself, because it is as though by the very utterance he commits a new sin or as though it would tempt him again. In order that this phenomenon

may occur, the individual must be a mixture of purity and impurity, something that rarely occurs. It will most likely occur when the individual, in carrying out the terrible, is not master of himself. Similarly, a person in an intoxicated state may have done what he only faintly remembers, yet he knows that it was such a wild thing that it is almost impossible for him to recognize himself. The same may also be the case with someone who was once insane and has retained a memory of his former state. What determines whether the phenomenon is demonic is the individual's attitude toward disclosure, whether he will interpenetrate that fact with freedom and accept it in freedom. Whenever he will not do this, the phenomenon is demonic. This must be kept clearly in mind, for even he who wishes it is essentially demonic. He has, that is to say, two wills, one subordinate and impotent that wills revelation and one stronger that wills inclosing reserve, but the fact that this will is the stronger indicates that he is essentially demonic.

Inclosing reserve is involuntary disclosure. The weaker the individuality is originally, or the more the elasticity of freedom is consumed in the service of inclosing reserve, the more likely the secret will break out at last. The slightest touch, a passing glance, etc. is sufficient for that appalling or, in relation to the content of the inclosing reserve, that comic ventriloquism to make its beginning. The ventriloquism itself may be forthrightly declarative or indirect, as when an insane man betrays his insanity by pointing to another, saying: He is most disagreeable to me; he is no doubt insane. The disclosure may declare itself in words, as when the unhappy man ends by thrusting his concealed secret upon every one. It may declare itself in facial expression, in a glance, because there is a glance by which one involuntarily reveals what is concealed. There is an accusing glance that reveals what one is almost afraid to understand, a dejected, imploring glance that does not exactly tempt curiosity to gaze into the involuntary

telegraphy. With respect to the content of inclosing reserve, all of this may in turn be almost comic, as when ridiculous things, trifles, vanities, puerilities, expressions of petty envy, petty medical follies, etc. in this way reveal themselves in involuntary anxiety.

The demonic is the sudden. The sudden is a new expression for another aspect of inclosing reserve. When the content is reflected upon, the demonic is defined as inclosing reserve; when time is reflected upon, it is defined as the sudden. Inclosing reserve is the effect of the negative self-relation in the individuality. Inclosing reserve closes itself off more and more from communication. But communication is in turn the expression for continuity, and the negation of continuity is the sudden. It might be thought that inclosing reserve would have an extraordinary continuity; yet the very opposite is the case, although when compared with the vapid, enervating dissolution of oneself continually absorbed in the impression, it has the appearance of continuity. The continuity that inclosing reserve has can best be compared with the dizziness a spinning top must have, which constantly revolves upon its own pivot. In case the inclosing reserve does not drive the individuality to complete insanity, which is the sad *perpetuum mobile* of monotonous sameness, the individuality will still retain a certain continuity with the rest of human life. In relation to this continuity, the pseudocontinuity of the inclosing reserve will show itself precisely as the sudden. At one moment it is there, in the next moment it is gone, and no sooner is it gone than it is there again, wholly and completely. It cannot be incorporated into or worked into any continuity, but whatever expresses itself in this manner is precisely the sudden.

If the demonic were something somatic, it could never be the sudden. When the fever or the insanity etc. recurs, a law is finally discovered, and this law annuls the sudden to a certain degree. But the sudden knows no

law. It does not belong among natural phenomena but is a psychical phenomenon — it is an expression of unfreedom.

The sudden, like the demonic, is anxiety about the good. The good signifies continuity, for the first expression of salvation is continuity. Thus, while the life of an individuality goes on to a certain degree in continuity with the rest of human life, inclosing reserve maintains itself in the person as an abracadabra of continuity that communicates only with itself and therefore is always the sudden.

In relation to the content of inclosing reserve, the sudden may signify the terrible, but the effect of the sudden may also appear to the observer as the comical. In this respect, every individuality has a little of this "suddenness," just as every individuality has something of a fixed idea.

I shall not pursue this any further, but in support of my category I call attention to the fact that the sudden is always due to anxiety about the good, because there is something that freedom is unwilling to pervade. Among the formations that lie in anxiety about evil, the sudden corresponds to weakness.

If one wants to clarify in a different way how the demonic is the sudden, the question of how the demonic can best be presented may be considered from a purely esthetic point of view. If a Mephistopheles is to be presented, he might well be furnished with speech if he is to be used as a force in the dramatic action rather than to be grasped in his essence. But in that case Mephistopheles himself is not really represented but is reduced to an evil, witty, intriguing mind. This is a vaporization, whereas a legend has already represented him correctly. It relates that the devil for 3,000 years sat and speculated on how to destroy man — finally he did discover it. Here the emphasis is upon the 3,000 years, and the idea that this brings forth is precisely that of the brooding, inclosing reserve of the demonic. If one were to vaporize Mephistopheles in the way suggested above, another form of

representation might be chosen. In this case, it will appear that Mephistopheles is essentially mime. The most terrible words that sound from the abyss of evil would not be able to produce an effect like that of the suddenness of the leap that lies within the confines of the mimical. Even though the word were terrible, even though it were a Shakespeare, a Byron, or a Shelley who breaks the silence, the word always retains its redeeming power, because all the despair and all the horror of evil expressed in a word are not as terrible as silence. Without being the sudden as such, the mimical may express the sudden. In this respect the ballet master, Bournonville, deserves great credit for his representation of Mephistopheles. The horror that seizes one upon seeing Mephistopheles leap in through the window and remain stationary in the position of the leap! This spring in the leap, reminding one of the leap of the bird of prey and of the wild beast, which doubly terrify because they commonly leap from a completely motionless position, has an infinite effect. Therefore Mephistopheles must walk as little as possible, because walking itself is a kind of transition to the leap and involves a presentiment of the possibility of the leap. The first appearance of Mephistopheles in the ballet *Faust* is therefore not a theatrical coup, but a very profound thought. The words and the speaking, no matter how short when regarded *in abstracto*, always have a certain continuity for the reason that they are heard in time. But the sudden is a complete abstraction from continuity, from the past and from the future. So it is with Mephistopheles. He is not yet visible — then he stands there, large as life, hale and hearty, and the swiftness cannot be described more strongly than by saying that he stands there in a leap. If the leap turns into a walk, the effect is weakened. Since Mephistopheles is represented in this manner, his entrance gives the effect of the demonic, which comes more suddenly than a thief in the night, for one thinks of a thief as coming stealthily. But Mephistopheles reveals his essence as well, which as the demonic is precisely the sudden. Thus in

the movement forward the demonic is the sudden, thus it arises in a man, thus he himself is, insofar as he is demonic, whether the demonic has possessed him wholly or whether only an infinitesimal part of it is present in him. Thus the demonic always is, and thus unfreedom becomes anxious, and thus its anxiety moves. Hence, the tendency of the demonic toward mime, not in the sense of the beautiful but in the sense of the sudden, the abrupt, which life itself often gives opportunity to observe.

The demonic is the contentless, the boring.

In the case of the sudden, I have called attention to the esthetic problem of how the demonic may be represented. To elucidate what already has been said, I shall again raise the same question. As soon as one wants to have a demoniac speak and to have him represented, the artist who is to solve this problem must be clear about the categories. He knows that the demonic is essentially mimical; the sudden, however, he cannot achieve, because it interferes with his lines. He will not cheat, as if he were able to bring about the true effect by blurting out the words etc. Therefore, he correctly chooses the very opposite, namely, the boring. The continuity that corresponds to the sudden is what might be called extinction. Boredom, extinction, is precisely a continuity in nothingness. Now the number in the legend can be understood somewhat differently. The 3,000 years are not accentuated to emphasize the sudden; instead, the prodigious span of time evokes the notion of the dreadful emptiness and contentlessness of evil. Freedom is tranquil in continuity. Its opposite is the sudden, but also the quietness that comes to mind when one sees a man who looks as if he were long since dead and buried. An artist who understands this will see that in discovering how the demonic can be represented he has also found an expression for the comic. The comic effect can be produced in exactly the same way. When all ethical determinants of evil are excluded, and only metaphysical

determinants of emptiness are used, the result is the trivial, which can easily have a comic aspect.

The contentless and the boring again signify inclosing reserve. In relation to the sudden, the determination “inclosing reserve” reflects upon the content. When I now include the determinations “contentless” and “boring,” these reflect upon the content, and inclosing reserve reflects upon the form that corresponds to the content. Thus the whole conceptual determination is completed, for the form of the contentless is precisely inclosing reserve. It should be kept in mind constantly that, according to my terminology, one cannot be inclosed [*indesluttet*] in God or in the good, because this kind of inclosure signifies the greatest expansion. Thus the more definitely conscience is developed in a person the more expanded he is, even though in other respects he closes himself off from the whole world.

If I were now to call attention to the terminologies of the most recent philosophy, I might say that the demonic is the negative and is a nothing, like the elf maid who is hollow when seen from the back. However, I do not prefer to do this, because the terminology in and by its social intercourse has become so amiable and pliant that it may signify anything whatsoever. The negative, if I were to use this word, signifies the form of nothing, just as the contentless corresponds to inclosed reserve. But the negative has the defect that it is more externally oriented; it defines the relation to something else, which is negated, while inclosed reserve defines the state itself.

When the negative is understood in this manner, I have no objection to its use as a designation for the demonic, provided that the negative can otherwise rid itself of all the bees that the most recent philosophy has put in its bonnet. The negative has gradually become a vaudeville character, and this word always makes me smile, just as a person smiles when in real life or in the songs of Bellmann he meets one of those amusing characters who

was first a trumpeter, then a minor customhouse officer, then an innkeeper, then again a mail carrier. Thus irony has been explained as the negative. Hegel was the first to discover this explanation, but strangely enough, he did not know much about irony. That it was Socrates who first introduced irony into the world and gave a name to the child, that his irony was precisely inclosing reserve, which he began by closing himself off from men, by closing himself in with himself in order to be expanded in the divine, who also began by closing his door and making a jest to those outside in order to talk in secret — this is something no one is concerned with. On the occasion of one or another accidental phenomena, this word “irony” is brought up, and so it is irony. Then come the parrots, who despite their survey of world history unfortunately lack all contemplation, and who know as much about the concepts as that noble youth knew about raisins, who, when asked in the test for a grocer’s licence where raisins come from, answered: We get ours from the professor on Cross Street.

We now return to the definition of the demonic as anxiety about the good. If on the one hand unfreedom were able to close itself off completely and hypostatize itself, but if on the other hand it did not constantly will to do so (in this lies the contradiction that unfreedom wills something, when in fact it has lost its will), the demonic would not be anxious about the good. Therefore anxiety manifests itself most clearly in the moment of contact. Whether the demonic in the single individuality signifies the terrible or whether the demonic is present only like a spot on the sun or like the little white dot in the corn, the totality of the demonic and the partly demonic have the same qualification, and the tiniest part of the demonic is anxiety about the good in the same sense as that which is totally embraced by it. The bondage of sin is, of course, also unfreedom, but as shown above, its direction is different, and its anxiety is about evil. If this is not held fast, nothing can be explained.

Unfreedom, the demonic, is therefore a state, and psychology regards it as a state. Ethics, on the other hand, sees how out of this state the new sin constantly breaks forth, for only the good is the unity of state and movement.

Freedom, however, may be lost in different ways, and so there may also be a difference in the demonic. This difference I shall now consider under the following rubrics: Freedom lost somatically-psychically and freedom lost pneumatically. The reader will already be familiar with my extensive use of the concept of the demonic, but it is not more extensive than the concept will allow. It is of no use to make an ogre out of the demonic, at which one first shudders but afterwards ignores, since, after all, it is several hundred years since it was found in the world. Such an assumption is a great stupidity, but it probably has never been as widespread as in our times, except that nowadays it manifests itself especially in the spiritual spheres.

I. Freedom Lost Somatically-Psychically

It is not my purpose to present a pretentious and bombastic philosophical deliberation on the relation between psyche and body and to discuss in which sense the psyche itself produces its body (whether this be understood in the Greek way or in the German way) or, to recall an expression of Schelling, in what sense the psyche itself, by an act of "corporization," posits its body. Here I have no need of such things. For my purpose, I shall express myself to the best of my ability: The body is the organ of the psyche and in turn the organ of the spirit. As soon as the serving relation comes to an end, as soon as the body revolts, and as soon as freedom conspires with the body against itself, unfreedom is present as the demonic. If there should be someone who has not as yet sharply apprehended the difference between what I have developed in this section and what was developed in the former section, I shall state it again. As long as freedom does not defect to the party

of the rebels, the anxiety of revolution will still be present, not as anxiety about the good, but as anxiety about evil.

It will be easy to see what a multiplicity of innumerable nuances the demonic in this sphere comprises, some of which are so imperceptible that they are apparent only to microscopic observation, and some so dialectical that the category must be used with great flexibility in order to recognize that the nuances belong under it. A hypersensibility and a hyperirritability, neurasthenia, hysteria, hypochondria, etc. — all of these are or could be nuances of it. This makes it so difficult to talk about these things *in abstracto*, since speech itself becomes algebraic. More than this I cannot do here.

The utmost extreme in this sphere is what is commonly called bestial perdition. In this state, the demonic manifests itself in saying, as did the demoniac in the New Testament with regard to salvation: τί ἐμοὶ καί σοί [What have I to do with you]? Therefore it shuns every contact [with the good], whether this actually threatens it by wanting to help it to freedom or only touches it casually. But this is also enough, for anxiety is extraordinarily swift. Therefore, from such a demoniac is quite commonly heard a reply that expresses all the horror of this state: Leave me alone in my wretchedness. Or such a man says in referring to a particular time in his past life: At that time I could probably have been saved — the most dreadful reply imaginable. Neither punishment nor thunderous tirades make him anxious, yet every word that is related to the freedom scuttled and sunk in unfreedom will do so. In this phenomenon, anxiety expresses itself also in another way. Among such demoniacs there is a cohesion in which they cling to one another so inseparably and anxiously that no friendship has an inwardness that can be compared with it. The French physician Duchatelet gives examples of it in his work. This sociability of anxiety will manifest itself everywhere in this sphere. The sociability in itself furnishes an

assurance that the demonic is present, but insofar as there is the analogous condition as an expression of the bondage of sin, the sociability is not present, because the anxiety is that about evil.

I shall not pursue this any farther. For me the principal thing is to have my schema in order.

II. Freedom Lost Pneumatically [IV A404]

(a) GENERAL REMARKS. This form of the demonic is very widespread, and here we encounter the most diverse phenomena. The demonic is, of course, not dependent upon the variety of the intellectual content but upon the relation of freedom to the given content and to the possible content commensurate with the intellectuality, because the demonic is able to express itself as indolence that postpones thinking, as curiosity that never becomes more than curiosity, as dishonest self-deception, as effeminate weakness that constantly relies on others, as superior negligence, as stupid busyness, etc.

Viewed intellectually, the content of freedom is truth, and truth makes man free. For this reason, truth is the work of freedom, and in such a way that freedom constantly brings forth truth. Obviously, I am not thinking of the cleverness of the most recent philosophy, which maintains that the necessity of thought is also its freedom, and which therefore, when it speaks about the freedom of thought, speaks only of the immanent movement of eternal thought. Such cleverness can only serve to confuse and to make the communication between men more difficult. On the other hand, what I am speaking about is very plain and simple, namely, that truth is for the particular individual only as he himself produces it in action. If the truth is for the individual in any other way, or if he prevents the truth from being for him in that way, we have a phenomenon of the demonic. Truth has always had many loud proclaimers, but the question is whether a person will in the

deepest sense acknowledge the truth, will allow it to permeate his whole being, will accept all its consequences, and not have an emergency hiding place for himself and a Judas kiss for the consequence.

In modern times, there has been enough talk about truth; now it is high time to vindicate certitude and inwardness, not in the abstract sense in which Fichte uses the word, but in an entirely concrete sense.

Certitude and inwardness, which can be attained only by and in action, determine whether or not the individual is demonic. If only the category is held fast, everything gives way, and it will become clear, for example, that arbitrariness, unbelief, mockery of religion, etc. are not, as commonly believed, lack of content, but lack of certitude, exactly in the same sense as are superstition, servility, and sanctimoniousness. The negative phenomena lack certitude precisely because they are in anxiety about the content.

It is not my desire to use big words in speaking about the age as a whole, but he who has observed the present generation can hardly deny that the discrepancy in it and the reason for its anxiety and unrest is this, that in one direction truth increases in scope and in quantity, and partly also in abstract clarity, while in the opposite direction certainty constantly declines. What extraordinary metaphysical and logical efforts have been put forth in our time to produce a new, exhaustive, and absolutely correct proof, combining all earlier proofs, of the immortality of the soul; and strangely enough, while this is taking place, certitude declines. The thought of immortality possesses a power and weightiness in its consequences, a responsibility in the acceptance of it, which perhaps will recreate the whole of life in a way that is feared. And so one saves and soothes one's soul by straining one's mind to produce a new proof. Yet, what is such a proof but a "good work" in a purely Catholic sense! Every such individuality (to stay with the example) who knows how to set forth the proof for the immortality of the soul but who is not himself convinced will always be anxious about every

phenomenon that affects him in such a way that he is forced to seek a further understanding of what it means to say that a man is immortal. This will disturb him. He will be depressingly affected when a perfectly simple man talks quite simply of immortality. In the opposite direction, inwardness may be lacking. An adherent of the most rigid orthodoxy may be demonic. He knows it all. He genuflects before the holy. Truth is for him the aggregate of ceremonies. He talks of meeting before the throne of God and knows how many times one should bow. He knows everything, like the man who can prove a mathematical proposition when the letters are ABC, but not when the letters are DEF. So he becomes anxious whenever he hears something that is not literally the same. And yet, how he resembles a modern speculator who has discovered a new proof for the immortality of the soul and then, in peril of his life, cannot produce the proof because he does not have his notebooks with him! And what is it that both of them lack? It is certitude. — Both superstition and unbelief are forms of unfreedom. In superstition, objectivity is conceded to be a power — like that of Medusa's head — which can petrify subjectivity, and unfreedom does not will that the spell be broken. Mockery is the highest and apparently the freest expression of unbelief. However, what mockery lacks is precisely certitude, and therefore it mocks. Yet how many a mocker's existence, if only we could look into it, would recall the anxiety in which the demonic calls out: τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί [What have I to do with you]? It is therefore a remarkable phenomenon that there are perhaps few who are as vain and touchy about the applause of the moment as the mocker.

With what industrious zeal, with what sacrifice of time, of diligence, of writing materials the speculators in our time have wanted to produce a complete proof of God's existence [*Tilværelse*]! Yet to the same degree that the excellence of the proof increases, certitude seems to decline. The thought of God's existence [*Tilværelse*], when it is posited as such for the

individual’s freedom, has an omnipresence that for the prudent individuality has something embarrassing about it, even though he does not wish to do anything evil. To live in a beautiful and intimate companionship with this conception truly requires inwardness, and it is a much greater feat than that of being a model husband. How depressed such an individuality may feel when he hears a naive and simple man talk about the existence of God. The demonstration of the existence of God is something with which one learnedly and metaphysically occupies oneself only on occasion, but the thought of God forces itself upon a man on every occasion. What is it that such an individuality lacks? Inwardness. Inwardness may also be lacking in an opposite direction. The so-called pious are often the objects of the world’s mockery. They themselves explain this by saying that the world is evil. But this is not entirely true. If such a “pious” man is in an unfree relation to his piety, i.e., if he lacks inwardness, he is, from a purely esthetic point of view, simply comical. To that extent, the world is justified in laughing at him. If a bowlegged man wants to act as a dancing master but is unable to execute a single step, he is comical. So it is also with the religious. Sometimes one may hear such a pious person beating time, as it were, exactly like one who cannot dance but nevertheless knows enough to beat time, although he is never fortunate enough to get in step. Thus the “pious” person knows that the religious is absolutely commensurable, that it is not something that belongs only to certain occasions and moments in life, but that a man can always have it with him. However, just when he is about to make it commensurable, he is not free. It is apparent that he is softly beating time by himself and that in spite of everything he blunders and comes off badly with his heavenward glance and folded hands etc. For this reason, such an individuality is anxious about everyone who does not have this training, and in order to reassure himself, such an individuality must seize upon these grandiose observations that the world hates the pious.

Certitude and inwardness are indeed subjectivity, but not in an entirely abstract sense. It really is the misfortune of the most recent knowledge that everything has become so terribly magnificent. Abstract subjectivity is just as uncertain and lacks inwardness to the same degree as abstract objectivity. When it is spoken about *in abstracto*, this cannot be seen, and so it is correct to say that abstract subjectivity lacks content. When it is spoken about *in concreto*, the content clearly appears, because the individuality who wants to make himself into an abstraction precisely lacks inwardness, as does the individuality who makes himself into a mere master of ceremonies.

(b) THE SCHEMA FOR THE EXCLUSION OR THE ABSENCE OF INWARDNESS. The absence of inwardness is always a category of reflection, and consequently every form will have a double form. Because the qualifications of the spirit are usually considered altogether abstractly, the tendency is to overlook this. Usually immediacy is posited in opposition to reflection (inwardness) and then the synthesis (or substantiality, subjectivity, identity, that in which this identity is said to consist: reason, idea, spirit). But in the sphere of actuality this is not the case. There immediacy is also the immediacy of inwardness. For this reason, the absence of inwardness is due in the first place to reflection.

Every form of the absence of inwardness is therefore either activity-passivity or passivity-activity, and whether it is the one or the other, it is in the sphere of self-reflection. The form itself runs through a considerable series of nuances in proportion to the degree of the concretion of the inwardness. There is an old saying that to understand and to understand are two things, and so they are. Inwardness is an understanding, but *in concreto* the important thing is how this understanding is to be understood. To understand a speech is one thing, and to understand what it refers to, namely, the personal, is something else; for a man to understand what he

himself says is one thing, and to understand himself in what is said is something else. The more concrete the content of consciousness is, the more concrete the understanding becomes, and when this understanding is absent to consciousness, we have a phenomenon of unfreedom that wants to close itself off against freedom. Thus if we take a more concrete religious consciousness that at the same time also contains a historical factor, the understanding must stand in relation to it. Here we have an example of the two analogous forms of the demonic in this respect. When a man of rigid orthodoxy applies all his diligence and learning to prove that every word in the New Testament derives from the respective apostle, inwardness will gradually disappear, and he finally comes to understand something quite different from what he wished to understand. When a freethinker applies all his acumen to prove that the New Testament was not written until the second century, it is precisely inwardness he is afraid of, and therefore he must have the New Testament placed in the same class with other books. The most concrete content that consciousness can have is consciousness of itself, of the individual himself — not the pure self-consciousness, but the self-consciousness that is so concrete that no author, not even the one with the greatest power of description, has ever been able to describe a single such self-consciousness, although every single human being is such a one. This self-consciousness is not contemplation, for he who believes this has not understood himself, because he sees that meanwhile he himself is in the process of becoming and consequently cannot be something completed for contemplation. This self-consciousness, therefore, is action, and this action is in turn inwardness, and whenever inwardness does not correspond to this consciousness, there is a form of the demonic as soon as the absence of inwardness expresses itself as anxiety about its acquisition.

If the absence of inwardness were brought about mechanically, all consideration of it would be wasted effort. However, this is not the case, for

in every phenomenon of the absence of inwardness there is an activity, even though this begins in a passivity. The phenomena that begin with activity are more conspicuous and therefore more easily apprehended, as a result of which it is forgotten that in this activity there appears in turn a passivity, and therefore in a consideration of the demonic this contrasting phenomenon is not taken into account.

In order to show that the schema is correct, I shall now consider a few examples:

Unbelief — Superstition. These correspond completely to each other: both lack inwardness, but unbelief is passive through an activity, and superstition is active through a passivity. The one is, in a sense, the more masculine, the other the more feminine form; the content of both forms is self-reflection. Viewed essentially, both are completely identical. Unbelief and superstition are both anxiety about faith, but unbelief begins in the activity of unfreedom, and superstition begins in the passivity of unfreedom. Usually only the passivity of superstition is observed, and therefore it appears less important or more excusable, all depending upon whether esthetic-ethical or ethical categories are applied. In superstition there is a weakness that is deceptive; nevertheless, there must always be enough activity in it to preserve its passivity. Superstition is unbelieving about itself. Unbelief is superstitious about itself. The content of both is self-reflection. The comfortableness, cowardice, and pusillanimity of superstition find it better to remain in self-reflection than to relinquish it. The defiance, pride, and arrogance of unbelief find it more daring to remain in self-reflection than to relinquish it. The most refined form of such self-reflection is always the one that becomes interesting to itself by wishing itself out of this state while it nevertheless remains complacently in it.

Hypocrisy — Offense. These correspond to each other. Hypocrisy begins through an activity, offense through a passivity. Generally offense is judged

more mildly, but if the individual remains in it, there must still be enough activity so that it sustains the suffering of offense and does not want to relinquish it. There is a receptivity in offense (for a tree or a stone is not offended) that is also taken into account in the annulling of offense. On the other hand, the passivity of offense finds it more enervating just to sit and, as it were, to continue letting the consequences of the offense mount up at compound interest. Therefore hypocrisy is offense at oneself, while offense is hypocrisy to oneself. Both lack inwardness and dare not come to themselves. For this reason, all hypocrisy ends by being hypocritical to oneself, because the hypocrite is offended at himself or is an offense to himself. All offense, if it is not removed, ends in hypocrisy toward others, because the offended man, through the profound activity by which he remains in offense, has turned that receptivity into something else and therefore must now be hypocritical toward others. It has also been the case in life that an offended individuality finally used this offense as a fig leaf to cover what otherwise might have required a hypocritical cloak.

Pride — Cowardice. Pride begins through an activity, cowardice through a passivity; in all other respects they are identical, because in cowardice there is just enough activity to maintain anxiety about the good. Pride is a profound cowardice, for it is cowardly enough not to be willing to understand what pride truly is. As soon as this understanding is forced upon it, it is cowardly, disintegrates with a bang, and bursts like a bubble. Cowardice is a profound pride, because it is cowardly enough not to be willing to understand even the claims of a misunderstood pride, and it manifests its pride by shrinking, as well as by taking into account the fact that it has never suffered a defeat. Therefore it is proud of pride’s negative expression, namely, that it has never suffered a loss. It has also been the case in life that a very proud individuality was so cowardly as never to venture anything, cowardly enough to be as insignificant as possible,

precisely in order to save his own pride. If an active-proud and a passive-proud individuality were brought together precisely in the moment when the former fell, there would be an opportunity to be convinced as to how proud the cowardly one really was.

(c) WHAT IS CERTITUDE AND INWARDNESS? It is no doubt difficult to give a definition of inwardness. In the meantime, I shall at this point say that it is earnestness. This is a word that everyone understands. But strangely enough, few words have less frequently been the object of deliberation. When Macbeth murdered the king, he exclaimed:

Von jetzt giebt es nicht Ernstes mehr im Leben:
Alles ist Tand, gestorben Ruhm und Gnade!
Der Lebenswein ist ausgeschenkt.

Macbeth was a murderer; therefore the words in his mouth were a dreadful and shocking truth. Yet every individual who has lost inwardness can truly say "The wine of life is drawn," and also "There's nothing serious in mortality; all is but toys," for inwardness is precisely the fountain that springs up unto eternal life, and what issues from this fountain is precisely earnestness. When in Ecclesiastes the preacher says that "all is vanity," it is precisely earnestness that he has *in mente* [in mind]. On the other hand, when after earnestness is lost it is said that all is vanity, then this is only an active-passive expression for the same (the defiance of melancholy), or a passive-active expression (the defiance of frivolity and witticism), and so there is occasion either to weep or to laugh, but earnestness is lost.

To the extent of my knowledge, I am not aware that there exists a single definition of earnestness. If this were true, it would please me, not because I love the modern fluent and confluent thinking that has abolished the definition, but because in relation to existential concepts it always indicates a greater discretion to abstain from definitions, because a person can hardly

be inclined to apprehend essentially in the form of definition what must be understood differently, what he himself has understood differently, what he has loved in an entirely different way, and which in the form of definition easily becomes something else, something foreign to him. Whoever loves can hardly find joy and satisfaction, not to mention growth, in preoccupation with a definition of what love properly is. Whoever lives in daily and festive communion with the thought that there is a God could hardly wish to spoil this for himself, or see it spoiled, by piecing together a definition of what God is. So also with earnestness, which is so earnest a matter that even a definition of it becomes a frivolity. I do not say this because my thought is vague or because I fear that some supershrewd speculator might become suspicious of me, as if I did not quite know whereof I speak — the kind of a speculator who is as obstinate about the development of the concepts as the mathematician is about the proof, and who would say about everything else what a certain mathematician said: What does this prove? To my mind, what I say here proves much better than any conceptual development that I do know in earnest what the discussion is about.

Although I am not inclined to give a definition of earnestness or to talk about it in the jest of abstraction, nevertheless I will make a few remarks for orientation. In Rosenkranz's *Psychology* there is a definition of disposition [*Gemyt*]. On page 322 he says that disposition is the unity of feeling and self-consciousness. In the preceding presentation he superbly explains "dasz das Gefühl zum Selbstbewusztsein sich aufschliesse, und umgekehrt, dasz der Inhalt des Selbstbewusztseins von dem Subjekt als der seinige gefühlt wird. Erst diese Einheit kann man Gemüth nennen. Denn fehlt die Klarheit der Erkenntniss, das Wissen vom Gefühl, so existiert nur der Drang des Naturgeistes, der Turgor der Unmittelbarkeit. Fehlt aber das Gefühl, so existiert nur ein abstrakter Begriff, der nicht die letzte Innigheit des

geistigen Daseins erreicht hat, der nicht mit dem Selbst des Geistes Eines geworden ist" [that the feeling unfolds itself to self-consciousness, and vice versa, that the content of the self-consciousness is felt by the subject as his own. It is only this unity that can be called disposition. If the clarity of cognition is lacking, knowledge of the feeling, there exists only the urge of the spirit of nature, the turgidity of immediacy. On the other hand, if feeling is lacking, there remains only the abstract concept that has not reached the last inwardness of the spiritual existence, that has not become one with the self of the spirit] (cf. p, 321). If a person now turns back and pursues his definition of "feeling" as the spirit's *unmittelbare Einheit seiner Seelenhaftigkeit und seines Bewusstseins* [immediate unity of its sentience and its consciousness] (p.) and recalls that in the definition of *Seelenhaftigkeit* [sentience] account has been taken of the unity with the immediate determinants of nature, then by taking all of this together he has the conception of a concrete personality.

Earnestness and disposition correspond to each other in such a way that earnestness is a higher as well as the deepest expression for what disposition is. Disposition is a determinant of immediacy, while earnestness, on the other hand, is the acquired originality of disposition, its originality preserved in the responsibility of freedom and its originality affirmed in the enjoyment of blessedness. In its historical development, the originality of disposition marks precisely the eternal in earnestness, for which reason earnestness can never become habit. Rosenkranz deals with habit only in the "Phenomenology," not in the "Pneumatology" — however, habit belongs in the latter as well, and habit arises as soon as the eternal disappears from repetition. When the originality in earnestness is acquired and preserved, then there is succession and repetition, but as soon as originality is lacking in repetition, there is habit. The earnest person is earnest precisely through the originality with which he returns in repetition.

It is said that a living and inward feeling preserves this originality, but the inwardness of the feeling is a fire that may cool as soon as earnestness no longer attends to it. On the other hand, the inwardness of feeling is uncertain in its mood, i.e., at one time it is more inward than at another. To make everything as concrete as possible, I shall use an example. Every Sunday, a clergyman must recite the prescribed common prayer, and every Sunday he baptizes several children. Now let him be enthusiastic etc. The fire burns out, he will stir and move people etc., but at one time more and at another time less. Earnestness alone is capable of returning regularly every Sunday with the same originality to the same thing.

But this same thing to which earnestness is to return with the same earnestness can only be earnestness itself; otherwise it becomes pedantry. Earnestness in this sense means the personality itself, and only an earnest personality is an actual personality, and only an earnest personality can do anything with earnestness, for to do anything with earnestness requires, first and foremost, knowledge of what the object of earnestness is.

In life there is not infrequently talk about earnestness. Someone is in earnest about the national debt, another about the categories, and a third about a performance at the theater, etc. Irony discovers that this is the case, and with that it has enough to occupy itself, because everyone who becomes earnest at the wrong place is *eo ipso* comical, even though an equally comical, travestied contemporary age and the opinion of the age may be exceedingly earnest about it. Therefore, there is no measuring rod more accurate for determining the essential worth of an individuality than what is learned through the individual's own loquacity or by cunningly extracting from him the secret: What has made him earnest in life? For one may be born with disposition, but no one is born with earnestness. The phrase "What has made him earnest in life" must of course be understood, in a pregnant sense, as that from which the individuality in the deepest sense

dates his earnestness. Having become truly earnest about that which is the object of earnestness, a person may very well, if he so wishes, treat various things earnestly, but the question is whether he first became earnest about the object of earnestness. This object every human being has, because it is *himself*, and whoever has not become earnest about this, but about something else, something great and noisy, is despite all his earnestness a joker, and though he may deceive irony for some time, he will, *volente deo* [God willing], still become comical because irony is jealous of earnestness. On the other hand, whoever has become earnest at the right place will prove the soundness of his spirit precisely by his ability to treat all other things sentimentally as well as jokingly, although it makes a cold shiver run down the spines of the dupes of earnestness when they see him joke about whatever made them frightfully earnest. But in regard to earnestness he will know how not to tolerate any joking, for if he forgets this, it may go with him as with Albert Magnus when he arrogantly boasted of his speculation before the deity and suddenly became stupid, or as it went with Bellerophon, who sat calmly on his Pegasus in the service of the idea but fell when he wanted to misuse Pegasus by riding the horse to a rendezvous with a mortal woman.

Inwardness, certitude, is earnestness. This seems a little paltry. If at least I had said, it is subjectivity, the pure subjectivity, the *übergreifende* [encompassing] subjectivity, I would have said something, something that no doubt would have made many earnest. However, I can also express earnestness in another way. Whenever inwardness is lacking, the spirit is finitized. Inwardness is therefore eternity or the constituent of the eternal in man.

To study the demonic properly, one needs only to observe how the eternal is conceived in the individuality, and immediately one will be informed. In this respect, the modern age offers a great field for

observation. In our times, the eternal is discussed often enough; it is accepted and rejected, and (considering the way in which this is done) the first as well as the second shows lack of inwardness. But whoever has not understood the eternal correctly, understood it altogether concretely, lacks inwardness and earnestness.

Here I do not wish to be more explicit; nevertheless, I shall indicate a number of points.

(a) Some deny the eternal in man. At the same moment, *der Lebenswein* [*ist*] *ausgeschenkt* [the wine of life is drawn], and every such individuality is demonic. If the eternal is posited, the present becomes something different from what a person wants it to be. He fears this, and thus he is in anxiety about the good. He may continue to deny the eternal as long as he wants, but in so doing he will not be able to kill the eternal entirely. Even if to a certain degree and in a certain sense he is willing to admit the eternal, he fears it in another sense and to a higher degree. Nevertheless, no matter how much he denies it, he cannot get rid of it entirely. In our day, men fear the eternal far too much, even when they recognize it in abstract words and in words flattering to the eternal. Nowadays, the various governments live in fear of restless disturbers; there are altogether too many individualities who live in fear of one restless disturber that nevertheless is the true rest — eternity. So they preach the moment, and just as the road to hell is paved with good intentions, so eternity is best annihilated by mere moments. But why do people rush around in such a terrible haste? If there is no eternity, the moment is just as long as if there were. But anxiety about the eternal turns the moment into an abstraction. Furthermore, this denial of the eternal may express itself directly or indirectly in many various ways, as mockery, as prosaic intoxication with common sense, as busyness, as enthusiasm for the temporal, etc.

(b) Some conceive of the eternal altogether abstractly. Like the blue mountains, the eternal is the boundary of the temporal, but he who lives energetically in temporality never reaches the boundary. The single individual who is on the lookout for it is a frontier guard standing outside of time.

(c) Some bend eternity into time for the imagination. Conceived in this way, eternity produces an enchanting effect. One does not know whether it is dream or actuality. As the beams of the moon glimmer in an illuminated forest or a hall, so the eternal peeps wistfully, dreamily, and roguishly into the moment. Thought of the eternal becomes a fanciful pottering around, and the mood is always the same: Am I dreaming, or is it eternity that is dreaming of me?

Or some conceive of eternity purely and simply for the imagination without this coquettish duplicity. This conception has found definite expression in the statement: Art is an anticipation of eternal life, because poetry and art are the reconciliation only of the imagination, and they may well have the *Sinnigkeit* [thoughtfulness] of intuition but by no means the *Innigkeit* [inwardness] of earnestness. Some paint eternity elaborately with the tinsel of the imagination and yearn for it. Some envision eternity apocalyptically, pretend to be Dante, while Dante, no matter how much he conceded to the view of imagination, did not suspend the effect of ethical judgment.

(d) Or eternity is conceived metaphysically. A person says *Ich Ich* [I-I] so long that he becomes the most ridiculous of all things: the pure I, the eternal self-consciousness. He talks about immortality until at last he himself becomes not immortal but immortality. Despite all this, he suddenly discovers that he has not succeeded in having immortality included in the system, and now he is intent on assigning it a place in a supplement to the system. Considering the ridiculousness of this, what Poul Møller said is

true, that immortality must be present everywhere. But if this be so, the temporal becomes something quite different from what is desired. Or eternity is conceived metaphysically in such a way that the temporal becomes comically preserved in it. From a purely esthetic-metaphysical standpoint, the temporal is comical because it is a contradiction, and the comical always lies in this category. If eternity is conceived purely metaphysically and for some reason one wants to have the temporal included in it, then it certainly becomes quite comical that an eternal spirit retains the recollection that on several occasions he had been in financial difficulties etc. Yet all the effort expended to support eternity is wasted, is a false alarm, for no human being becomes immortal or becomes convinced of his immortality in a purely metaphysical way. However, if he becomes convinced of his immortality in quite another way, the comic will not foist itself upon him. Even though Christianity teaches that a person must render an account for every idle word he has spoken, and we understand this simply as that total recollection of which unmistakable symptoms occasionally appear already in this life, even though the teaching of Christianity cannot be more sharply illuminated by any opposite than that of the Greek conception that the immortals first drank of Lethe in order to forget, yet it by no means follows that the recollection must become directly or indirectly comical — directly by recollecting ridiculous things or indirectly by transforming ridiculous things into essential decisions. Precisely because the accounting and the judgment are essential, what is essential will have the effect of a Lethe on whatever is unessential, while it also is certain that many things will prove to be essential that one had not expected to be so. The soul has not been essentially present in the drolleries of life, in its accidental circumstances, its nooks and crannies; hence all this vanishes, except for the soul that was essentially in this, yet for him it will scarcely have comical significance. If one has reflected thoroughly upon the

comic, studying it as an expert, constantly keeping one’s category clear, one will easily understand that the comic belongs to the temporal, for it is in the temporal that the contradiction is found. Metaphysically and esthetically it cannot be stopped and prevented from finally swallowing up all of the temporal, which will happen to the person who is developed enough to use the comic but not mature enough to distinguish *inter et inter* [between one and the other]. In eternity, on the other hand, all contradiction is canceled, the temporal is permeated by and preserved in the eternal, but in this there is no trace of the comical.

However, men are not willing to think eternity earnestly but are anxious about it, and anxiety can contrive a hundred evasions. And this is precisely the demonic.

CHAPTER V.

Anxiety as Saving through Faith

IN ONE OF Grimm's fairy tales there is a story of a young man who goes in search of adventure in order to learn what it is to be in anxiety. We will let the adventurer pursue his journey without concerning ourselves about whether he encountered the terrible on his way. However, I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through — to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing in anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate.

If a human being were a beast or an angel, he could not be in anxiety. Because he is a synthesis, he can be in anxiety; and the more profoundly he is in anxiety, the greater is the man — yet not in the sense usually understood, in which anxiety is about something external, about something outside a person, but in the sense that he himself produces the anxiety. Only in this sense can the words be understood when it is said of Christ that he was anxious unto death, as well as the words spoken by Christ to Judas: What you are going to do, do quickly. Not even the terrifying verse that made even Luther anxious when preaching on it— "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" — not even these words express suffering so profoundly. For the latter signify a condition in which Christ finds himself. And the former signify the relation to a condition that is not.

Anxiety is freedom's possibility, and only such anxiety is through faith absolutely educative, because it consumes all finite ends and discovers all their deceptiveness. And no Grand Inquisitor has such dreadful torments in readiness as anxiety has, and no secret agent knows as cunningly as anxiety

how to attack his suspect in his weakest moment or to make alluring the trap in which he will be caught, and no discerning judge understands how to interrogate and examine the accused as does anxiety, which never lets the accused escape, neither through amusement, nor by noise, nor during work, neither by day nor by night.

Whoever is educated by anxiety is educated by possibility, and only he who is educated by possibility is educated according to his infinitude. Therefore possibility is the weightiest of all categories. It is true that we often hear the opposite stated, that possibility is so light, whereas actuality is so heavy. But from whom does one hear such words? From wretched men who never knew what possibility is, and who, when actuality had shown that they were not good for anything and never would be, mendaciously revived a possibility that was very beautiful and very enchanting, while the foundation of this possibility was at the most a little youthful giddiness, of which they ought rather to be ashamed. Therefore this possibility that is said to be so light is commonly regarded as the possibility of happiness, fortune, etc. But this is not possibility. It is rather a mendacious invention that human depravity has dressed up so as to have a reason for complaining of life and Governance and a pretext for becoming self-important. No, in possibility all things are equally possible, and whoever has truly been brought up by possibility has grasped the terrible as well as the joyful. So when such a person graduates from the school of possibility, and he knows better than a child knows his ABC's that he can demand absolutely nothing of life and that the terrible, perdition, and annihilation live next door to every man, and when he has thoroughly learned that every anxiety about which he was anxious came upon him in the next moment — he will give actuality another explanation, he will praise actuality, and even when it rests heavily upon him, he will remember that it nevertheless is far, far lighter than possibility was. Only in this way can possibility be educative, because

finiteness and the finite relations in which every individual is assigned a place, whether they be small, or everyday, or world-historical, educate only finitely, and a person can always persuade them, always coax something else out of them, always bargain, always escape from them tolerably well, always keep himself a little on the outside, always prevent himself from absolutely learning something from them; and if he does this, the individual must again have possibility in himself and himself develop that from which he is to learn, even though in the next moment that from which he is to learn does not at all acknowledge that it is formed by him but absolutely deprives him of the power.

However, in order that an individual may thus be educated absolutely and infinitely by the possibility, he must be honest toward possibility and have faith. By faith I understand here what Hegel somewhere in his way correctly calls the inner certainty that anticipates infinity. When the discoveries of possibility are honestly administered, possibility will discover all the finitudes, but it will idealize them in the form of infinity and in anxiety overwhelm the individual until he again overcomes them in the anticipation of faith.

What I am saying here probably strikes many as obscure and foolish talk, because they pride themselves on never having been in anxiety. To this I would reply that one certainly should not be in anxiety about men and about finitudes, but only he who passes through the anxiety of the possible is educated to have no anxiety, not because he can escape the terrible things of life but because these always become weak by comparison with those of possibility. If, on the other hand, the speaker maintains that the great thing about him is that he has never been in anxiety, I will gladly provide him with my explanation: that it is because he is very spiritless.

If an individual defrauds possibility, by which he is to be educated, he never arrives at faith; then his faith will be the sagacity of finitude, just as

his school was that of finitude. But men defraud possibility in every way, because otherwise every man, if he had merely put his head out of the window, would have seen enough for possibility to use in beginning its exercises. There is an engraving by Chodowiecki that represents the surrender of Calais as viewed by four persons of different temperaments, and the task of the artist was to mirror the various impressions in the facial expressions of the four. The most commonplace life no doubt has experiences enough, but the question is that of the possibility in the individuality who is honest with himself. It is told of one Indian hermit who for two years lived on dew that he once came to the city, tasted wine, and became addicted to drink. This story, like similar stories, can be understood in different ways. It may be regarded as comic, it may be regarded as tragic. But the individuality who is educated by possibility needs but one such story. In that very moment, he is absolutely identified with the unfortunate man; he knows no finite evasion by which he may escape. Now the anxiety of possibility holds him as its prey until, saved, it must hand him over to faith. In no other place can he find rest, for every other place of rest is mere chatter, although in the eyes of men it is sagacity. Therefore possibility is absolutely educative. In actuality, no man ever became so unhappy that he did not retain a little remnant, and common sense says quite correctly that if one is cunning, one knows how to make the best of things. But whoever took possibility's course in misfortune lost all, all, as no one in actuality ever lost it. Now, if he did not defraud the possibility that wanted to teach him and did not wheedle the anxiety that wanted to save him, then he would also receive everything back, as no one in actuality ever did, even though he received all things tenfold, for the disciple of possibility received infinity, and the soul of the other expired in the finite. In actuality, no one ever sank so deep that he could not sink deeper, and there may be one or many who sank deeper. But he who sank in possibility — his eye became dizzy, his

eye became confused, so he could not grasp the measuring stick that Tom, Dick, and Harry hold out as a saving straw to one sinking; his ear was closed so he could not hear what the market price of men was in his own day, did not hear that he was just as good as the majority. He sank absolutely, but then in turn he emerged from the depth of the abyss lighter than all the troublesome and terrible things in life. However, I will not deny that whoever is educated by possibility is exposed to danger, not that of getting into bad company and going astray in various ways as are those educated by the finite, but the danger of a fall, namely, suicide. If at the beginning of his education he misunderstands the anxiety, so that it does not lead him to faith but away from faith, then he is lost. On the other hand, whoever is educated [by possibility] remains with anxiety; he does not permit himself to be deceived by its countless falsifications and accurately remembers the past. Then the assaults of anxiety, even though they be terrifying, will not be such that he flees from them. For him, anxiety becomes a serving spirit that against its will leads him where he wishes to go. Then, when it announces itself, when it cunningly pretends to have invented a new instrument of torture, far more terrible than anything before, he does not shrink back, and still less does he attempt to hold it off with noise and confusion; but he bids it welcome, greets it festively, and like Socrates who raised the poisoned cup, he shuts himself up with it and says as a patient would say to the surgeon when the painful operation is about to begin: Now I am ready. Then anxiety enters into his soul and searches out everything and anxiously torments everything finite and petty out of him, and then it leads him where he wants to go.

When one or another extraordinary event occurs in life, when a world-historical hero gathers heroes about him and performs deeds of valor, when a crisis occurs and everything gains significance, then men want to have a part in it, because all of this is educative. Possibly so. But there is a simpler

way in which one may become more thoroughly educated. Take the pupil of possibility, place him in the middle of the Jutland heath, where no event takes place or where the greatest event is a grouse flying up noisily, and he will experience everything more perfectly, more accurately, more thoroughly than the man who received the applause on the stage of world-history if that man was not educated by possibility.

So when the individual through anxiety is educated unto faith, anxiety will eradicate precisely what it brings forth itself. Anxiety discovers fate, but just when the individual wants to put his trust in fate, anxiety turns around and takes fate away, because fate is like anxiety, and anxiety, like possibility, is a "magic" picture. When the individuality is not thus transformed by himself in relation to fate, he will always retain a dialectical remnant that no finitude can remove, just as no man will lose faith in the lottery if he does not lose it by himself but is supposed to lose it by continually losing when he gambles. Even in relation to the most insignificant things, anxiety is promptly at hand as soon as the individuality wants to sneak away from something or stumble upon something by chance. In itself, it is of no significance; from the outside, from the finite, the individual can learn nothing about it. But anxiety takes swift action, instantly plays the trump card of infinity, of the category, and the individuality cannot take the trick. Such an individuality cannot in an outward way fear fate, its vicissitudes and defeats, because the anxiety within him has already fashioned fate and has taken away from him absolutely all that any fate could take away. In the dialogue *Cratylus*, Socrates says that it is terrible to be deceived by oneself, because one always has the deceiver present; similarly, one may say that it is fortunate to have present such a deceiver who piously deceives and always weans the child before finitude begins to bungle him. Even if in our time an individuality is not educated by possibility in this manner, our age

nevertheless has an excellent characteristic for each one in whom there is a deeper nature and who desires to learn the good. The more peaceful and quiet an age is and the more accurately everything follows its regular course, so that the good has its reward, the easier it is for an individuality to deceive himself about whether in all his striving he has a beautiful but nevertheless finite goal. In these times, one does not need to be more than sixteen years old in order to recognize that whoever performs on the stage of the theater of life is like the man who traveled from Jericho and fell among robbers. Whoever does not wish to sink in the wretchedness of the finite is constrained in the most profound sense to struggle with the infinite. Such a preliminary orientation is analogous to the education by possibility, and such an orientation cannot take place except through possibility. So when shrewdness has completed its innumerable calculations, when the game is won — then anxiety comes, even before the game in actuality has been lost or won, and anxiety makes the sign of the cross against the devil, and shrewdness becomes helpless and its most clever combinations vanish like a witticism compared with the case that anxiety forms with the omnipotence of possibility. Even in the most trifling matters, as soon as the individuality wants to make a cunning turn that is merely cunning, wants to sneak away from something, and the probability is that he will succeed — because actuality is not as sharp an examiner as anxiety — then anxiety is there at once. If it is dismissed because it is merely a trifle, then anxiety makes this trifle as prominent as the little place Marengo became in the history of Europe, because there the great battle of Marengo was fought. If an individuality is not weaned away from shrewdness by himself, it will never be thoroughly accomplished, because finitude always explains in parts, never totally, and he whose shrewdness always fails (and even this is inconceivable in actuality) may seek the reason for this in his shrewdness and then strive to become still more shrewd. With the help of faith, anxiety

brings up the individuality to rest in providence. So it is also in relation to guilt, which is the second thing anxiety discovers. Whoever learns to know his guilt only from the finite is lost in the finite, and finitely the question of whether a man is guilty cannot be determined except in an external, juridical, and most imperfect sense. Whoever learns to know his guilt only by analogy to judgments of the police court and the supreme court never really understands that he is guilty, for if a man is guilty, he is infinitely guilty. Therefore, if such an individuality who is educated only by finitude does not get a verdict from the police or a verdict by public opinion to the effect that he is guilty, he becomes of all men the most ridiculous and pitiful, a model of virtue who is a little better than most people but not quite so good as the parson. What help would such a man need in life? Why, almost before he dies he may retire to a collection of models. From finitude one can learn much, but not how to be anxious, except in a very mediocre and depraved sense. On the other hand, whoever has truly learned how to be anxious will dance when the anxieties of finitude strike up the music and when the apprentices of finitude lose their minds and courage. One is often deceived this way in life. The hypochondriac is anxious about every insignificant thing, but when the significant appears he begins to breathe more easily. And why? Because the significant actuality is after all not so terrible as the possibility he himself had fashioned, and which he used his strength to fashion, whereas he can now use all his strength against actuality. Yet the hypochondriac is only an imperfect autodidact when compared with the person who is educated by possibility, because hypochondria is partly dependent upon the somatic and is consequently accidental. The true autodidact is precisely in the same degree a theodidact, as another author has said, or to use an expression less reminiscent of the intellectual, he is αὐτουργός τις τῆς φιλοσοφίας [one who on his own cultivates philosophy] and in the same degree θεουργός [one who tends the

things of God]. Therefore he who in relation to guilt is educated by anxiety will rest only in the Atonement.

Here this deliberation ends, where it began. As soon as psychology has finished with anxiety, it is to be delivered to dogmatics.

It is therefore with a higher meaning that Hamann employs the word “hypochondria” when he says: “Diese Angst in der Welt ist aber der einzige Beweis unserer Heterogeneität. Denn fehlte uns nichts, so würden wir es nicht besser machen als die Heiden und Transcendental-Philosophen, die von Gott nichts wissen und in die liebe Natur sich wie die Narren vergaffen; kein Heimweh würde uns anwandeln. Diese impertinente Unruhe, diese heilige Hypochondrie ist vielleicht das Feuer, womit wir Opferthiere gesalzen und vor der Fäulnisz des laufenden *seculi* bewahrt werden müssen” [However, this anxiety in the world is the only proof of our heterogeneity. If we lacked nothing, we should do no better than the pagans and the transcendental philosophers, who know nothing of God and like fools fall in love with lovely nature, and no homesickness would come over us. This impertinent disquiet, this holy hypochondria is perhaps the fire with which we season sacrificial animals in order to preserve us from the putrefaction of the current *seculi* (century)]

Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions (1845)

Translated by David F. Swenson, 1945

CONTENTS

PREFACE
ON THE OCCASION OF A CONFESSION
WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK GOD.
ON THE OCCASION OF A WEDDING
LOVE CONQUERS EVERYTHING.
AT A GRAVESIDE
DEATH'S DECISION.

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH THIS LITTLE book (occasional discourses, as it could be called, notwithstanding that it does not have the occasion that makes the speaker and makes him an authority or the occasion that makes the reader and makes him a learner) is entirely unsolicited and thus in its deficiency entirely unjustified, is entirely without the support of the circumstances and thus without assistance in its full development, yet it is not without hope and above all not without bold confidence. It seeks that single individual whom I with joy and gratitude call my reader, or it does not even seek him. Unaware of the time and the hour, it quietly waits for that right reader to come like the bridegroom and to bring the occasion along with him. Let each do a share — the reader therefore more. The meaning lies in the appropriation. Hence the book's joyous giving of itself. Here there are no worldly "mine" and "thine" that separate and prohibit appropriating what is the neighbor's. Admiration is in part really envy and thus a misunderstanding; and criticism, for all its justification, is in part really opposition and thus a misunderstanding; and recognition in a mirror is only a fleeting acquaintance and thus a misunderstanding — but to see correctly and not want to forget what the mirror is incapable of effecting, that is the appropriation, and the appropriation is the reader's even greater, is his triumphant giving of himself.

S. K.

ON THE OCCASION OF A CONFESSION

FATHER IN HEAVEN, how well we know that seeking always has its promise; how much the more, then, seeking you, the giver of all the promises and of all good gifts! How well we know that the seeker does not always need to wander out into the world, because the more holy that is which he seeks, the closer it is to him, and if he seeks you, O God, you are closest of all to him! But we also know that seeking always has its toil and its spiritual trial — how much more, then, the terror in seeking you, you Mighty One! If even the person who in thought puts his trust in his kinship, if even he with his thought does not without terror venture out into those decisions when he through doubt seeks your footprint in the wise order of existence, when he through despair seeks your footprint in the obedience of rebellious events to a providence; if he whom you called your friend, the one who walks in your sight, if even he does not without trembling seek friendship's encounter with you, you the only Mighty One; if the one praying, who loves you with his whole heart, if even he does not without anxiety venture into prayer's struggle with his God; if even the one dying, for whom you exchange life, if even he does not without shuddering relinquish the temporal when you call; if even the wretched one whom the world gives sheer suffering, if even he, too, does not without terror flee to you, you who do not soothe a little but are everything — how, then, does the sinner dare to seek you, you righteous God! But that is why he does not seek you as these do, but he seeks you in the confession of sins.

There is indeed a place for that, my listener, and you know where; and there is indeed an opportunity for it, my listener, and you know how; and there is indeed a moment, and it is called this very day. How still! In God's house there is peace [Fred], but deepest within the inclosure [det

Omfredede] there is a closed room. The one who goes there seeks stillness; the one who sits there is in stillness; even if there is speaking, the stillness only intensifies. How still! There is no fellowship — each one is by himself; there is no call for united effort — each one is called to individual responsibility; there is no invitation to community — each one is alone. The person who is making a confession is alone — indeed, as alone as a dying person. Whether those who were precious and dear to him and who love him are crowded in great numbers around the bed of the dying one, or whether he lies there abandoned by the world because he abandoned it or it abandoned him — the dying one is alone, they are both struggling alone. The mind strays, and thousands, ten thousands, do not restrain it if the solitary one does not know comfort.

Whether thousands were waiting and yearning for the one who in confessing seeks stillness, or whether the one leaving confession is the insignificant and wretched person no one waits for and no one troubles about, this difference is only a jest; the truth is, the earnest truth was, that they both were alone. All his friends, the world's glory, and the far-flung importance of his achievements are of no help to the powerful person — unless it would be to disturb the stillness for him, which is the greatest harm. It does not harm the poor nobody to be abandoned if it helps him to find stillness. It is difficult for a camel to go through the eye of a needle and difficult for the man of the world to find stillness; whether he is powerful or insignificant, it is difficult to find stillness in life's noise, difficult to find it where it is even when he himself does not bring the noise along with him.

How still and how earnest! Yet there is no one who accuses; who would dare to be the accuser where everyone is guilty. Yet there is no one who judges; who would dare to judge where everyone considers his own accounting. There is no one who accuses except one's thoughts, no one who judges except the one who sees into what is hidden and hears confessions in

secret. Yes, even when there is speaking, you are indeed the one who is speaking with yourself through the speaker's voice. What the speaker will say just to you, only you know; how you understand his words, he does not know — only you know that. Even if the speaker were your best friend, he still cannot know it as you know it. If you do not listen in this way, then you are not listening properly, then what he says is a noise that disturbs the stillness, and your attentiveness is a diversion that violates the stillness.

Whoever is afraid of this stillness, let him avoid it, but he does not dare to deny that it exists, because he does fear it. Whoever says that he sought stillness but did not find it is an envious deceiver who wants to frustrate others, because otherwise he would be silent and sad or he would say, "I did not seek it properly; therefore I did not find it." Nothing, nothing in the whole world, even if an earthquake shook the pillars of the church, not the most erroneous words of the most foolish of people, not the foulness of the basest hypocrite, can take the stillness away from you, but something very minor can certainly give someone the occasion to seek a false pretext. No, nothing except you yourself can take it away from you; just as little as all the world's power and all its wisdom and the united efforts of all humanity can give it to you, just as little can you yourself take it and give it away. It cannot be obtained for nothing, but it cannot be bought with gold; it cannot be taken by violence, but it does not come as a dream when you are sleeping; it does not haggle about terms, even if you wanted to benefit the whole human race. If you give everything away, that still does not necessarily mean that it is gained, but if you gain it you can then gladly possess everything as one who has nothing.

Whoever says that this stillness does not exist is merely making noise. Have you ever really heard that anyone in stillness made up his mind that it does not exist, even though you probably have heard big words and loud talk and noisy doings to get rid of stillness in order to have, instead of

conscience and stillness and God's voice delivering judgment in stillness, a nature-echo from the crowd, a confused collective scream, a general opinion in which one, out of cowardice, fearing for oneself, is not alone. But you, my listener, if you fear this stillness, even though you are doing your best to have a conscience (without stillness conscience does not exist at all) and to have a good conscience, then keep on, then endure it; this stillness is not the stillness of death in which you perish, it is not the sickness unto death — it is the transition to life.

So, then, the confessor seeks God in the confession of sins, and the confession is the road and is a biding place on the road of salvation, where one pauses and collects one's thoughts and makes an accounting. And is it not true and proper that an accounting should be without deceit — then there is stillness, then everyone's mouth is stopped, then everyone becomes guilty and cannot answer once in a thousand times. With the help of distraction one becomes less guilty, perhaps even justified. But what lamentable justification! It is not unjust for you to forgive another person for his sake if he asks your forgiveness, or if you believe that he wishes it for God's sake, who requires it, or for your own sake, so you may not be disturbed. You are not accepting a bribe because you heed the prompting to reconciliation within you; neither are you procrastinating along the way if you, although you are the injured party, seek peace with your adversary while he is still on the way. Neither are you defrauding God of what belongs to him if you sell forgiveness for nothing; you are not wasting your time or misusing it if you ponder what may well serve as an excuse; and if no excuse is to be found you are not deceived if you, by means of love's holy deceit that transforms all the world's ridicule of your weakness into heavenly joy over your victory, believe that the offense must be excusable. But when it is a matter of your own accounting, then you certainly would do wrong to forgive yourself the least little thing, because one's own

righteousness is even worse than one's own blackest private guilt. Then you would indeed be accepting a bribe if you followed the promptings of irresponsibility and craftiness in your own affairs; then you would be hindering yourself along the road and hindering the fervor of the spirit; then you would be wasting your time and misusing it in looking for escapes — indeed, then you would be deceived by a blasphemous deception, deceived precisely when you found the excuse!

Yes, alas, it is a strange transition, a change that makes the head swim! One moment ago the same person was going along, rich and powerful, and now, a moment later, although nothing has happened in the meantime, he cannot answer once in a thousand times. Who indeed is the rich and powerful one to whom the discourse refers here, who else but the injured party, the oppressed one, the one who has been treated unfairly, the one violated! Perhaps the perpetrator of violence who tramples on the oppressed, perhaps the powerful one whose path is marked by the wrongs he does, perhaps the rich whose wealth was increased by widows' tears, perhaps the despairing person who violates and mocks — perhaps all of these people cared but little about forgiveness; yet surely no king who rules over kingdoms and countries, no Croesus who possesses everything, and no philanthropist who feeds the hungry possesses anything as great or has anything as great to give away or anything as needful to give away as the person whose forgiveness someone else needs. Needs — indeed, needs it as the primary necessity. If anyone does not think so, it is still needed just as much — and the injured party possesses the most. A pagan whose name is inseparable from the idea of conquests and power said when his enemy showed the highest courage (so it seemed, alas, to the pagans) by committing suicide, "There he robbed me of my most glorious victory, because I would have forgiven him." Someone else said, "Because I love much, I will not ask for forgiveness. My wrong is perhaps not very great,

forgiveness surely a very small thing to ask, but if it is not obtained, then the wrong is infinite and the power of forgiveness an infinite superiority over me." So, then, the innocent injured party was the rich man. But a moment ago in the setting of the world he dared to say, "Go ahead and do an injustice to me; you will still lose the most, because you need my forgiveness" — and now a moment later the stillness encompasses him; he does not know what he has to forgive, and the accounting shows that he cannot answer once in a thousand times. This is how the accounting is if he has the stillness around him and does not himself bring along the disturbance. The accounting of the person who did the wrong is the same as that of the person who was purest of all, even that of the innocent injured party. For this reason someone may be afraid of this stillness and its power and the infinite nothing into which it plunges all dissimilarities, even those of wrongs and forgiveness, and of the abyss into which the solitary one sinks in stillness.

It is the same as when the person who renounces the world shudders at the emptiness that seems to manifest itself. But one moment ago he desired so much and aspired and strove and slept badly at night and asked the latest news about others and envied some and ignored others and was unobtrusive in the right place and was active in friendship and enmity and forecast the weather and knew which way the wind was blowing and changed his plans and strove again and won and lost and never grew weary and kept his eye on the reward and caught a glimpse of the profits — and now, yes, the poor deceived man! — if in this renunciation he did not find the one thing needful, the poor deceived man who deceived himself, the poor man who by his own act became the victim of life's derision, because now the great thing he desired was perhaps realized, now he became rich, right now, oh, what despair, why right now, why not yesterday, but now when he did not entirely desire but also did not entirely renounce it!

It is the same with the person who experienced that there is a stillness in which every human being becomes guilty and only learned to fear it. If he was regarded as righteous in the eyes of people, and this was what he craved, if he was the injured party but was defiantly in proud possession of forgiveness, if he was not without guilt but enjoyed some esteem in the world — alas, the poor deceived man, how indignant he must be with the person who led him into and then led him astray in that stillness — but no one can do that, and his anger is powerless. Poor deceived man, if he were given the citizens' crown of justice by the public, an accolade he coveted; if thousands agreed to call him the man of justice in the nation, something his conceited ears delighted to hear — why now, now when his ears are probably not entirely stopped up, but he has not entirely comprehended the infinite secret of stillness either! Poor deceived man, if the guilty party now came to his door, if the moment when forgiveness could be dearly purchased was there, the moment of triumph he had joyfully anticipated, why now, why not yesterday, why now, now when he indeed did not voluptuously relish the vehemence of revenge and pride, but he did not entirely comprehend the earnest message of his own guilt either! The person who comprehended this was truly not deceived. Blessed is the one who understands this. If anyone has the task of preaching, of teaching others about their guilt, of teaching — something that this discourse, which is without authority, does not do — he does have the consolation that the purest of heart is precisely the one most willing to comprehend his own guilt most deeply. When it is a matter of that greatest and most daring venture of placing everyone under guilt when one is guilty oneself, there where even the brave one's thought comes to a standstill if he does not fear to include himself, but thought offers opposition at the sight of what, humanly speaking, is pure and lovable, at the sight of the beautiful purity of young womanhood that is ignorant of the world, unfamiliar with its

incitements, and is sincerely meek and humble — there, if the task of the discourse bids him proclaim sin as the common lot of the human race, there he will find an understanding that perhaps humiliates him himself.

The confessor seeks God in the confession of sins, and the confession is the road and is a biding place on the road of salvation, where one pauses and collects one's thoughts. We shall, then, pause and on the occasion of a confession speak about:

WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK GOD.

AND WE SHALL define it more precisely by bearing in mind that without purity no human being can see God and without becoming a sinner no human being can come to know him.

If anyone feels made to pause in a wrong way at the task, then let him throw away the discourse lest the person who runs faster be detained by the slow one. The value of a meditation is, of course, always dubious; at times it can help one come to what is crucial, and at times it can also hinder — just as a short preliminary run can be of help at the crucial point of a jump but a preliminary run of several miles would even prevent it. But if anyone has frequently felt made to pause in life without, however, finding stillness, if he has sought stillness where it indeed is and yet has not really found it and reproaches himself for it, if he has fought and yet not won, then let him try again, let him move along with the discourse, but freely and voluntarily. There is nothing that binds him, no obligation; no reproach awaits him if he fails, inasmuch as the discourse is indeed without authority. But neither would he want the discourse to say of the stillness in that solemn and sacred place that it is of such a nature that if a person could remain there and did not have to go out into life's confusion again he would then always have the stillness with him, because the person who demands that demands too much of the discourse, namely, that it should deceive him, as if it were the place, externally understood, that determined the outcome, as if the very same thing would not happen to him if he remained in that solemn and sacred place as happens to him in the world, as if he would not then first and foremost be terrified by an illusion in which he had been reassured that it was the place that counted. To be sure, a poet has rightly said that a sigh to God without words is the best worship; then one could also believe that the

infrequent visit to the sacred place, when one comes from far away, would be the best worship, because both contribute to the illusion. A sigh without words is the best worship if the thought of God is only to shed a twilight glow over existence, like the blue mountains on the distant horizon, if the unclarity of the soul's condition is to be satisfied with the greatest possible ambiguity. But if God is to be present to the soul, then the sigh presumably finds the thought, and the thought presumably the words — but also the difficulty, of which one has no inkling at a distance. In our day we are told to the point of fatuousness that it is not the highest to live in stillness, where there is no danger — to the point of fatuousness, because danger is there just as much as in confusion, and, to come to the point, the great thing is neither to be in the solitude nor to be in the confusion, but the great thing is to overcome the danger — and the most mediocre thing is to work oneself weary pondering which is the more difficult, because that kind of work is futile and neither here nor there, like the worker himself, who, after all, is neither in the confusion nor in the solitude but in the busy absentmindedness of thoughts.

If, finally, anyone on account of his many enterprises and busy work thinks that he does not have time to read this kind of discourse — well, he may be entirely right in thinking that he has no time to read this discourse, which gladly waits to the last for consideration; but if that means that he has no time at all to be concerned about what is the concern of the discourse, that stillness, then the discourse, even if the busy person found amid his many enterprises a free time for making a hasty protest, the discourse will not make itself ridiculous by responding to it. The many enterprises are perhaps of dubious merit; perhaps they may also become fewer for him if he considers that stillness, and the many enterprises will above all be perceived to be one more reason for more frequently seeking the stillness of

the accounting, in which one does not reckon with dollars and cents or with distinctions and debasements and other imagined quantities.

If the seeker is seeking something outside himself as something external, as something not under his control, then what is sought is in a specific place. If he merely finds the place where it is — well, then he is helped, then he grasps it and his seeking is at an end. In the same manner everyone once knew at an early age that many beautiful things existed but did not definitely know the place. Alas, even if many have forgotten this childhood knowledge, have all in that way become truly wiser, including the one who instead of the unity of that beautiful fullness has won the duplexity of doubt and the halfheartedness of resolution!

If the seeker is assumed to be unable to do anything himself to find the place, he thinks wishfully. Everyone was once like that in early youth. Alas, even if many have changed, have all therefore also truly changed for the better, also the one who instead of the uncertain wealth of the wish won the certain misery of mediocrity!

When the person wishing sees his wish fulfilled, he wonders, just as by wishing he already was in the state of wonder. Everyone was once like that in his early youth — not, as is unjustly said of youth, good to lure into foolish endeavors, but inwardly good to lure into the unqualified blessed giving of oneself to wonder, the honest gratuity that the wishing person faithfully saves for the moment of fulfillment. Alas, even if many have lost this haste in wanting to give like for like, just as he also has learned to disparage the wish, is this haggling therefore honesty that does not really wish and does not really wonder and thus gives like for like, is this honesty therefore a gain! — The person who wishes also seeks, but his seeking is in the dark, not so much in regard to the object of the wish as in regard to his not knowing whether he is getting closer to it or further away.

Among the many goods there is one that is the highest, that is not defined by its relation to the other goods, because it is the highest, and yet the person wishing does not have a definite idea of it, because it is the highest as the unknown — and this good is God. The other goods have names and designations, but where the wish draws its deepest breath, where this unknown seems to manifest itself, there is wonder, and wonder is immediacy's sense of God and is the beginning of all deeper understanding. The seeking of the wishing person is in the dark not so much in regard to the object, because this is indeed the unknown, as in regard to whether he is getting closer to it or further away — now he is startled and the expression of his wonder is worship. Wonder is an ambivalent state of mind containing both fear and blessedness. Worship therefore is simultaneously a mixture of fear and blessedness. Even the most purified, reasonable worship is blessedness in fear and trembling, trust in mortal danger, bold confidence in the consciousness of sin. Even the most purified and reasonable worship of God has the fragility of wonder, and the magnitude of the God-relation is not directly determined by the magnitude of power and of wisdom and of deed; the most powerful person is the most powerless; the most devout person sighs out of deepest distress; the most mighty is the one who rightly folds his hands.

The wonder of the wishing person corresponds to the unknown and thus is altogether indefinable or, rather, is infinitely definable; it can be just as loathsome as it is ludicrous, just as erring as it is childish. When the forest frowns at eventide, when the night's moon gets lost in the trees, when the natural wonder in it is on the prowl for its booty and then the pagan suddenly sees the marvel of a luminous effect that grips him, then he sees the unknown, and worship is the expression of wonder. When the gnarled trunk creates an illusive figure that is unfamiliar to him, that resembles a human being and yet again, to his amazement, resembles it only larger than

life, then he stands still and worships. When he is out in the desert and sees a track that does not belong to any human being or any creature known to him, when the power of solitude impregnates his soul with wonder, then he sees in this track that the unknown has been here, and he worships. When the ocean lies deep and still and inexplicable, when wonder stares dizzily down into it until it seems as if the unknown is rising to the surface, when the waves roll monotonously against the beach and overwhelm the soul by the power of the monotony, when the rushes whisper before the wind and whisper again and therefore must want to confide something to the listener, then he worships.

If the wonder defines itself, then its highest expression is that God is the inexplicable all of existence as this is intimated to the power of the imagination everywhere in the least and the greatest. The content of paganism is experienced again in the repetition of each generation, and not until it is lived through is that which was idolatry reduced to a carefree being in the innocence of poetry. Idolatry purified is the poetic.

If the person wishing is himself assumed to be able to contribute something to finding what is sought, then he is striving. Then the wonder and the wish are in the process of undergoing their test. Often deceived, since the range of wonder, precisely because it was related directly to the unknown, was just as loathsome as it was ludicrous, just as erring as it was childish — often deluded, wonder wants to see where it is going and no longer walk in the dark. In this way the direct relation is at the outset a broken relation, yet the break is not a breakthrough. It is broken inasmuch as the road intervenes as a determinant, whereas for the person wishing there is no road. When the seeker is not walking in the dark, he is not merely wishing, he is striving, because striving is the very road to what is sought. Everyone was once like that in early youth, lofty of flight in willing — alas, even if many have now learned to keep their feet on the ground,

have they all therefore also become wiser, also the person who instead of winning the flight of the bird won the stooping gait of the four-footed! Everyone was once like that in early youth, reckless in venturing — alas, even if many abandoned that, did they all therefore also become wiser, also the person who instead of winning the race of recklessness on the course of the unknown won the security of the pedestrian on the highway of mediocrity! Everyone was once like that in early youth, aggressively challenging — alas, even if many learned to tone down their demands, did they all therefore become wiser, also the person who became surfeited through preferential treatment, or the person who learned pettiness from his environment, or the person who in the bondage of habits learned contentment with little! Oh, surely it is wisest not to speak of good fortune if we know something holier to name, but if not, then it would of course be a misfortune if good fortune vanished from life, if it became weary of giving and taking, weary of people who defrauded it out of wonder.

But in the world of freedom, where all striving indeed has its source and in which all striving has its life, there wonder appears on the road. Endeavor has various names, but that which is directed toward the unknown is directed toward God. That it is directed toward the unknown means that it is infinite. Then the striving one comes to a standstill; he sees the illusive track of an enormous being that exists when it is gone, that is and is not. And this being is fate, and his striving is akin to going astray. Worship is again the expression of wonder, and the range of worship is just as loathsome as it is ludicrous, just as erring as it is childish.

If the seeker is assumed to be able to do everything to find what is sought, the enchantment is gone, the wonder forgotten; there is nothing to wonder over. And then in the next moment what is sought is a nothing, and that was why he was capable of everything. Everyone was once like that at youth's turn of the year — then he became an eternity old. Alas, although

many console themselves over not having experienced this horror, have they all therefore become wiser, also the one who was a youth in his old age! Everyone has experienced at some time, at the departure of youth, that life stood still and he perished; and although many nevertheless boast of their youth, was that one wiser who defrauded the years and eternity of their rights, whose highest wisdom was a flippant answer to the most earnest question!

There was a time in the world when humankind, weary of wonder, weary of fate, turned away from the external and discovered that there was no object of wonder, that the unknown was a nothing and wonder a deception. What once was life's substance comes again in the repetition of the race. If anyone thinks he is wise when he says that there are bygone formations finished and done with thousands of years ago, it is not this way in life. And you certainly do not think either, my listener, that I would waste your time by telling about great events, mentioning quaint names, and becoming inanely self-important in a consideration of the whole human race! Alas, no, if it is true that the person who comes to know a little is deceived, is he not also deceived who comes to know so much that he appropriated nothing whatever! Humankind progresses slowly; even the most glorious knowledge is still only a presupposition. If one wishes to increase the presuppositions, then one is indeed like the miser who amasses money for which he has no use. Even what is deserving of being highly valued, a happy upbringing, even that is only a presupposition and appropriating it takes time, and a whole lifetime is not too much if one wants to appropriate it. Ah, if the one whose upbringing was neglected was deceived, was he not also deceived who remained ignorant of the fact that it was a presupposition, a trust, a sacred heritage that should be acquired, and who abruptly took it and thought himself to be what he had the name for being.

If at times a better one sighed because what was sought was so far away, you, my listener, certainly have grasped that there is also another difficulty, that there is a phantom of knowledge that fascinates the soul, that there is a security in which one is knowing — and yet deceived, that there is a distance from all decision where one, without dreaming it, is lost. Let terror seize its prey — ah, this security is a more terrible monster! Let the distress of want starve out — is it better to perish from superabundance? It was shocking when wonder abandoned a person and he despaired over himself, but it is equally shocking that one can know about this, know much more, and not even have experienced this, and it is most shocking that someone can know everything and not have made a beginning on the least thing. If this is the case, ah, then let me begin all over again. Turn back, you youth, with your wishing and your endearing wonder; turn back, you wild striving of youth, with your recklessness and your trembling before that unknown. Seize me, you despair, which breaks with wonder and the wonder of youth, but quickly, quickly. If it is possible, if I have wasted my best time without experiencing anything, at least teach me in so doing not to become indifferent, teach me not to seek the consolation of others in a common loss; then surely the terror of the loss may be a beginning of my healing. However late it is, this is still better than to go on living as a liar, deceived not by what could seem calculated to deceive, alas, and for this reason dreadfully deceived — deceived by much knowledge!

So the wonder was gone; it is gone. So it was once said; this is what the despairing one says and repeats in despair, repeats it mockingly, and wants to console himself by means of mockery, although this mockery wounds others, as if all mockery were not two-edged! But you, my listener, you of course know that the discourse has just now come to the true wonder. The discourse will therefore not take you by surprise; neither will it deceive you by means of an optical illusion when the lightning of thought flashes as

everything is reversed; neither will it sweep you away in startled confusion. The one who actually has experienced the above readily sees through the confused mingling of recollections, and if he has not experienced it, then hearing or reading a discourse will be of only doubtful value to him. But you who are yourself in a state of wonder, you of course know that this wonder came into existence when at some time that first wonder was consumed in despair.

But what more worthy object of wonder is to be found than the person who, seeking in wish and endeavor, perishing in despair, suddenly discovered that he has what is sought and the misfortune is that he is standing there and losing it! Take the wisher as he sits there and dreams; call to him and say, “You have what you wished for.” Stop the reckless striver as he rushes down the road; stop him and say, “You have what was coveted.” Break through the despair so that the despairing one perceives that he has what is sought. How agitated he will be when he is simultaneously overwhelmed by wonder and is overwhelmed because he in turn seems to lose what is sought! The glory of the wish and the reckless striving do not reawaken wonder; the dash [Tankestreg, thought-line] of despair prevents it. But that what is sought is given, that it is possessed by the person who in misunderstanding stands there and is losing it — that awakens the wonder of the whole person. Indeed, what more powerful expression of wonder is there than for the wonderer to become as if changed, than for the wisher to change color; what more powerful expression than this, that he actually becomes changed! And so it is with this wonder — it changes the seeker; and so it is with this change — it seeks to become something else, indeed, become the very opposite: to seek means that the seeker himself is changed. He is not to look for the place where the object of his seeking is, because it is right with him; he is not to look for the place where God is, he is not to strive to get there, because God

is right there with him, very near, everywhere near, at every moment everywhere present, but the seeker must be changed so that he himself can become the place where God in truth is.

Wonder, however, which is the beginning of all deeper understanding, is an ambivalent passion that in itself contains fear and blessedness. Or was it not fearful, my listener, that what was sought was so close to you, that you did not seek but God sought you? Was it not fearful that you could not stir without being in him, could not be still without being in him, could not be so unnoticed that you were not in him, and could not flee to the farthest limits of the world without his being there and everywhere along the way, could not hide in the abyss without his being there and everywhere along the way, and could not say to him, “In a moment,” because he also was in the moment when you said this? Was it not fearful when the jesting of youth and the immaturity of despair became earnestness, when what you had pointed to and hankered for and said did not exist came into existence, indeed, when it existed everywhere around you and surrounded you on all sides! But was it not blessed that the powerful one could confine you in the darkest nook and yet could not shut God out? Was it not blessed that you could fall into the deepest abyss where one sees neither the sun nor the stars and yet can see God? Was it not blessed that you could go astray in the lonely desert and yet immediately find the way to God? Was it not blessed that you could become an old man who had forgotten everything and yet never forget God because he cannot become something past, that you could become mute and still call to him, deaf and still hear him, blind and still see him? Was it not blessed that you dare to rely upon him, that he would not say as we human beings say, “In a moment,” because he was with you the moment he said it!

But the person who leaves out the fear, let him see to it that he does not leave out the discovery. It is so easy — or if someone prefers saying the

same thing in another way — it is so hard to find God that one even demonstrates that he exists and finds a demonstration necessary. Let the work of demonstrating be hard, let it in particular give trouble to the person who is to understand that it demonstrates something. For the one who is demonstrating it is an easy matter, because he has come to stand on the outside and is not dealing with God but is discussing something about God. If, however, seeking is to mean that one is oneself changed, then let the seeker look to himself. One learns wonder from a child and fear from an adult; this is always a preparation. Then the fear does indeed come along with God when he comes and makes demonstrations superfluous. Or is it perhaps courage to go on being thoughtlessly unaware of the danger, that the one who is demonstrating remains unchanged and demonstrates over and over that the Omnipresent One exists, the Omnipresent One who even in the moment of demonstration sees through the one doing the demonstrating — without, however, having any scholarly judgment on the merit of the demonstration. Can the Omnipresent One actually have become like a rare natural phenomenon whose existence the scientist demonstrates, or like a variable star observed at century-long intervals and whose existence therefore requires demonstration, especially during the intervening centuries when it is not seen!

But one human being cannot teach another true wonder and true fear. Only when they compress and expand your soul — yours, yes yours, yours alone in the whole world, because you have become alone with the Omnipresent One — only then are they in truth for you. If a speaker had the eloquence of an angel and if he had a countenance that could strike terror into the bravest of brave, so that you fell, as is said, into the most profound wonder at his eloquence and horror gripped you in hearing him, it is not that wonder and it is not that fear that helps. In relation to every human being, the lowliest and the greatest, it holds true that not an angel and not legions

of angels and not the horrors of the whole world can impart true wonder and true fear, but they certainly can make him superstitious. There are true wonder and true fear only when he, he himself, the lowliest or the greatest, comes to be alone with the Omnipresent One. The magnitude of the power and wisdom and deed do not define the actual magnitude of the relationship. Did not the seers in Egypt perform almost as great signs as Moses? Suppose that they had performed greater signs; what would follow from that? Nothing, absolutely nothing with regard to the God-relationship. But Moses feared God, and Moses was filled with wonder over God, and the fear and the wonder or the wonder's fear and its blessedness determine the magnitude of the God-relationship.

What the understanding says is quite true — namely, that there is nothing to wonder about, but for this very reason wonder is safeguarded — because the understanding vouches for it. Just let the understanding judge what is perishable, let it clear out the place — then wonder comes to the right place in the changed individual. The understanding is able to dispose of everything that belonged to that first wonder; let it do so in order that it can enigmatically help one to the wonder, because it is indeed enigmatic, since it directly conflicts with the understanding's judgment of itself. But if a person advances no further, then let him not accuse the understanding nor celebrate because it has been victorious. If a prince sends a captain with a battalion of soldiers against a foreign country and that captain conquers it and then takes possession of it himself as a rebel, there is no reason to accuse him because he conquered it, but neither is there reason to celebrate because he kept it for himself — similarly, if by way of his understanding a person conquers what certainly was beautiful but yet also childish, let him not accuse understanding, but if the understanding ends with inciting mutiny, then let him not celebrate. But the wonder is in the one who is changed.

What has been said here has certainly happened to everyone at some time in the moment of decision, when sickness of spirit struck inward and he felt trapped in existence, trapped forever. Alas, even if many console themselves on having avoided this danger, was that person therefore also wiser who cunningly and cravenly deceived himself when he thought he was deceiving God and life! Something like this has happened at some time to everyone when it was over with jesting and delusion and diversion. Alas, even if many boast of their freedom from care, did that person therefore also become wiser whose life grew wild as a sucker side-shoot because he was not bound! Something like this has happened at some time to everyone, alas, and even if many indulge in more advantageous conditions, did that person therefore become wiser who, unbound, did not know that for that very reason he was unfree!

If what is sought is assumed to be given, seeking means that the seeker himself is changed and becomes the place where what is sought can be present in truth. What was sought was indeed given; it was so close that it was as if lost again. Indeed, what stronger expression for consternation is there than this, that it seems to be lost without the certainty that it is lost — this, then, is how a person goes backward! What a distance since that time when he wished, when he recklessly ventured, when what was sought was far away, when the egotism challenged its nonexistence — and now it has come so close to him that it is lost, and with the loss it recedes far away into the distance!

The seeker was to be changed, and he was changed, alas — in this way it goes backward. And the change in which he is we call sin. Therefore, what was sought is; and the seeker is the place, but is changed, changed from once having been the place where the object of his seeking was. Ah, now there is no wonder, no ambivalence! The condition of the soul when it

comprehends this is fear and trembling in the guilty one; the passion is sorrow after recollection; the love is repentance in the prodigal.

My listener, was it not like that! After all, the discourse will surely not take you by surprise; it has no authority to extort any confession of sin from you. On the contrary, it willingly admits its powerlessness in this regard. Indeed, if anyone desires that, it is quite willing to tell him that all the eloquence of the world is unable to convince a person of his guilt, but then will also remind him not to fear the eloquence of sinners but the omnipresence of the Holy One, and even more to fear to avoid the Holy One. If a person is to understand his sin essentially, he must understand it because he becomes alone, he alone, just he alone, with the Holy One, who knows everything. Only this fear and trembling is the true fear and trembling, only the grief that the recollection of God awakens in a person, only the repentance his love loves forth. If a speaker had a voice like the thunder of the heavens, a countenance that struck terror, if he knew how to aim with his eyes, and now as you sat there, my listener, he pointed at you and said, "You, there, you are a sinner," and even did it with such force that your eyes dropped to the ground and the blood drained from your cheeks and you perhaps did not recover from the impact for a long time, then you certainly would realize that in so behaving he was transforming the setting into a burlesque theater, where he played the buffoon, and you would deplore his having disturbed you in finding stillness. Fear and trembling before something repulsive, before someone religiously profligate, is not true fear and trembling. Just as a person should not seek his peace through another human being and should not build upon sand, so it also holds true that he should not rely on any other person's work to convince him that he is a sinner, but rather to remind him of his own responsibility before God if he does not discover it by himself — any other understanding is diversion.

It is only a jest if I would pass judgment on you, but it is a serious matter if you forget that God will pass the judgment.

So what is sought is given. God is near enough, but no one without purity can see God, and sin is impurity, and therefore no one can become aware of God without becoming a sinner. The first is a beckoning word, and the gaze of the soul is toward the heights where the goal is, but other words that provide the beginning are immediately heard, and these are depressing words. And yet this is the way it is for the person who wants to understand sin. An unauthorized discourse cannot hope to convince anyone — indeed, it cannot even directly benefit anyone. The person who feels himself to be the stronger cannot possibly be vanquished by the discourse, and the person who lets himself be overcome shows in that very way that he was the stronger. Therefore the discourse refuses to impose upon you, my listener, or put anything over on you. On the contrary, it gives you instead a weapon to use against the speaker if you would be so foolish as to want to pass judgment on him, which would certainly be thoughtless, whereas it is a serious matter if someone forgets to accuse himself before God. For this reason, you will not learn very much from the discourse; if you come to know something about yourself from it, that is your own doing; but if someone demanded to obtain some knowledge about sin in general, he would be demanding too much from the discourse, because then he would be deceived.

So the discourse now stands at the beginning. This does not happen through wonder, but truly not through doubt either, because the person who doubts his guilt is only making a bad beginning, or rather he is continuing what was badly begun with sin. What comes with sin is accompanied by sorrow; and this certainly is true of sin itself. Therefore sorrow is the beginning, and the trembling is sorrow's vigilance. The more profound the sorrow is, the more a person feels himself as a nothing, as less than nothing,

and this happens simply because the sorrower is the seeker who is beginning to become aware of God. It has always been said, even in paganism, that the gods do not sell the highest for nothing, that a divine envy wherein divinity set a price upon itself determined the conditions of the relationship. Why, then, should not this, as an individual human being to discover God, why should not this have its requirement, and this requirement is that the person become a sinner. And yet, if I dare to say so, it is not a polite courtesy the person shows him, that his holy presence reduces the single individual to a sinner; no, the single individual was that, but became that first through his presence.

But the person seeking to understand himself in the consciousness of sin before God does not understand it as a general statement that all people are sinners, because the emphasis is not on this generality. The more profound the sorrow is, the more a person feels himself as a nothing, as less than nothing, and this diminishing self-esteem is a sign that the sorrower is the seeker who is beginning to become aware of God. In a worldly sense, it holds true that it is a poor soldier who does not hope to become commander. In a religious sense, it is the opposite; the less a person thinks of himself, not as humanity in general or as a human being, but of himself as an individual human being, and not with regard to his talents but with regard to his guilt, the more manifest God becomes to him. We do not want to increase the guilt in order that God might become greater but want to increase the acknowledgment of guilt. Just as that authority who vigilantly watches over justice sometimes uses spies who are themselves guilty, likewise everyone the Holy One uses is himself a transgressor, at times a transgressor even in the strictest sense. Accordingly, the Holy One is concerned both about the salvation of the transgressor and about saving others through him.

The more profound the sorrow is, the more profoundly the power of sin is comprehended, and the strongest expression for the most profound sorrow might seem to be to feel oneself the greatest of sinners. As a matter of fact, in times when this has been the highest expression for the highest distinction, there has in a vain way even been argument and dispute about this rank, and people have done everything to win this recognition. Any kind of mistaken effort is lamentable, of course, but the most lamentable is religious debauchery. When a youth makes a mistake in life, one hopes for the years ahead; it is even more lamentable when an adult goes astray; but when someone goes astray in the ultimate that can save, where then is salvation! But it does not follow that it would be praiseworthy to postpone godly piety and thereby avoid the error. The greatest sinner — and dispute about being that! We shall not burst into laughter despite the presence of a contradiction that justifies laughter, because even though it is laughable this is not the place to laugh at such a mixing of folly into a most serious connection.

Neither will the discourse promptly drop the expression but will dwell a little on it and ask, "How does a person get to know that he is the greatest of sinners?" If he gets to know that he is a sinner, he does so in this way, that he comes to be alone — he, he himself, alone with the Holy One. If he does not come to be alone in this way, he does not even find out that he is a sinner, to say nothing of being the greatest. What is the basis of the more or less by which he defines himself as the greatest? Does not this more come from evil; does it not come by way of fraud and deceit; is it not due to diversion from earnestness and to concentration on vanity? An unfortunate who became earnest through his suffering is promptly recognized by his judging, without being concerned whether others are suffering less: My suffering is oppressive for me — I am suffering. A true lover is recognized at once by his not defiling the lovers' tryst, which seeks solitude, by

bringing along a crowd, a flock of witnesses, who are of course present as soon as he understands that he loves more than others. No, his honest and sincere judgment is brief: I am in love. And so it is also with the consciousness of sin — the simple statement is the most earnest. All comparison is worldly, all emphasis upon it is a worldly attachment in the service of vanity. Even worse than one's own guilt is one's own righteousness, and even worse than one's own righteousness is to take in vain the ultimate and in earnest to become the greatest of sinners by conceitedly wanting to be that. But the person who comes to be alone with the consciousness of sin will certainly feel, though not comparatively, that he is the greatest of sinners, because directly before the Holy One he will be conscious of himself as the single individual and of the essential magnitude of the sin within himself. If it is diversion to want to excuse oneself because others are more guilty, then it is also diversion to want to determine one's sin by its relation to the sin of others, which, however, no one knows. But when you fast, my listener, anoint your head and wash your face; then for diversion you will not see either that others are more guilty or that others are less guilty; and you do not do on the street something that is not a joint enterprise but do it properly in secret.

Ah, it is much easier to look to the right and to the left than to look into oneself, much easier to haggle and bargain just as it is also much easier to underbid than to be silent — but the more difficult is still the one thing needful. Even in daily life everyone experiences that it is more difficult to stand directly before the person of distinction, directly before his royal majesty, than to move in the crowd; to stand alone and silent directly before the sharp expert is more difficult than to speak in a common harmony of equals — to say nothing of being alone directly before the Holy One and being silent.

People see God in great things, in the raging of the elements and in the course of world history; they entirely forget what the child understood, that when it shuts its eyes it sees God. When the child shuts its eyes and smiles, it becomes an angel; alas, when the adult comes to be alone before the Holy One and is silent — he becomes a sinner! First of all, be alone; then you will indeed learn the proper worship of God, to think highly of God and lowly of yourself — not more lowly than your neighbor, as if you were the distinguished one (but remember that you are before God) — not more lowly than your enemy, as if you were the better one (for remember that you are before God); but lowly of yourself.

Anyone who thinks of his sin in this way and wishes in this stillness to learn an art — something you, my listener, do not disdain, the art of sorrowing over his sins — will certainly discover that the confession of sin is not merely a counting of all the particular sins but is a comprehending before God that sin has a coherence in itself. But here again he will pay attention to the narrow way, because the way of the solitary one is narrow and inclosed, but everywhere there are blind doors. He needs only to say a word and one of them opens — and the prisoner breathes in the open; so it seems to him for a moment. For example, if he begins to talk about the universality of sin, not in him but in the whole human race, if he snatches at this thought, a door opens — alas, and how easily he now breathes, he whose breathing was so labored; how easy now his escape, he whose gait was so arduous; how free he now becomes, he who was hard-working — because he has become an observer. And many are very eager to hear his observations. In this way the matter becomes something different, so easy, so changed — indeed, changed in the way the earnest one among us says it, that the issue becomes the justifying of God before the world, not a concern about justifying oneself before God. To confess one’s sin in general is easier, but from the particular sin, which is precisely and definitely

apprehended, meticulously as an impartial judge draws it up, from this particular or these particular sins to discover a coherence is a hard course and a mandatory course, but the hard course is still the right course, and the mandatory course is the beneficial one.

There is a quality that is highly praised but not easily acquired: it is honesty. I am not talking about that charming honesty of children, which is certainly to be found also in some adults, because to praise that, my listener, would deceive you with the discourse. If it is found in you, the discourse would then become almost flattering, even if your childlikeness would prevent you from understanding it as such. And if it is not found, then it would mock you. The discourse will therefore not make distinctions and pander to you and pretend that honesty is a fortunate gift to the infant in the cradle that only few receive. Such a discourse belongs where fortune separates people, not where the God-relationship recognizes equality. No, honesty is a duty, and everyone is supposed to have it. But it is difficult to acquire it amid much diversion. I do not mean that a person is therefore promptly a liar, but he does not gain the time and the collectedness to understand himself. Is not this the way it is? A person wishes something, fervently wishes it, or so he thinks; meanwhile much happens before the wish is fulfilled, or fulfillment does not come at all, and he has changed. It is certainly possible that he has become wiser, but his wisdom still lacks one thing, a definite impression that he once wished it, and not a fanciful piece of information about his having wished it a few years ago but now he does not. For the two states of mind to be reconciled beautifully and harmoniously in the unity of the same soul, it is necessary that they have a little meeting in which they make themselves understandable to each other.

Wisdom is perhaps all right, but perhaps the wise person lacks a little sorrow over himself. A person now resolves something definite, but time haggles and he is changed, and it becomes a half-measure. Perhaps the

resolution was actually too ambitious for his capacities. Well, but a little something is still lacking here, a little distress, a little clarity as to whether it was time that had given the person the appearance of wisdom or whether he actually had become wiser. And now guilt and error and sin! Ah, how many there are who years later know definitely what they wished, what they resolved, what they reproached themselves for, what offense they had committed! And God can certainly require honesty of a person. How much more difficult this becomes! A person can actually strive in all honesty to become more and more transparent to himself, but would he dare to present this clarity to a knower of hearts as something positively trustworthy between himself and him? Far from it! Even the person who inwardly strives honestly, even that person, and perhaps he most of all, will always have an outstanding account that he is not confident of being able to settle, whether he did not actually have a greater, at times in particular instances perhaps a smaller, debt than he thinks. And this is probably the best. A person still has only one God, and if he does not get along with him, to whom shall he go? Note here the necessity of understanding from the particular sin and error that there is a coherence, an unfathomable coherence.

If someone were to say to you, my listener, that it may be utterly useless to want to achieve honesty, because even the person who is trying most honestly always remains somewhat hazy to himself, then do as the speaker does — be as one who has not heard it at all. The speaker is certainly no sprinter, but neither is he about to let himself procrastinate because of cowardice or because of cowardly envy that wants to have equality in mediocrity and to have spiritual fervor transformed into somnolence and to have enthusiasm that serves without pay transformed into an association of plain profit. You are well aware, my listener, that there is this miserableness that cannot tolerate anything better, that there is this perfidious friendship

that wants to procrastinate; but do not struggle with them. That is still not the place where you are to struggle — to struggle with them is already a victory for them. Seek instead the forgetfulness of silence; in it you will come to know something entirely different about your own guilt!

Thus honesty is difficult. It is easier to hide in the crowd and to drown one's guilt in that of the human race, easier to hide from oneself than to become open in honesty before God. As said earlier, this honesty is certainly not a perpetual enumerating, but neither is it the signing [Underskrift] of a name on a piece of white paper, a signed confession to an empty generality; and a confessor [Skriftende] is not a co-signatory in the human race's enormous account book.

But without honesty there is no repentance. Repentance is nauseated by the empty generality, but it is not a petty arithmetician in the service of faintheartedness — rather an earnest observer before God. To repent of a generality without substance is a contradiction, akin to inviting the most profound passion to dine on superficiality, but to tie one's repentance to a particular is to repent on one's own responsibility and not before God, and to vitiate the intention is self-love in depression. Is it so easy to repent: to love and to feel one's wretchedness ever more deeply, to love while the punishment is being suffered, to love and not want to falsify the punishment as divine dispensation, to love and not want to hide secret resentment as if one suffered an injustice, to love and not want to stop seeking the sacred source of this pain!

Anyone who thinks about his sin also knows that there is a difference between sins. This, of course, he knows from what he learned from his catechism, and everyone thinks best about this by himself. It has surely happened in this world that through a discourse that described sin in general in dreadful colors one recognized a dreadful connection with a particular sin. But religious debauchery is still the most dreadful of all. A discourse of

that kind may have scared the more pure and created an anxiety, a continuing anxiety, in the soul of the more innocent. But what is the point of the speaker's terrifying — only the person himself understands that he is guilty. The person who does not understand it this way still misunderstands; and the person who does understand it will find the harsh or gentle or quickly sympathizing explanation, according to what he has deserved.

But it is still detestable if anyone, because he must personally bear the heavy punishment for the more terrible sin, would want to derive advantage from this for a new sin: to be able to terrify. Alas, the indulgence of light-mindedness is certainly a new sin, but the ungodly imposition of dark passions is surely also a new sin! And you, my listener, you of course know that earnestness is to be alone before the Holy One, whether it is the world's applause that is shut out or whether it is the world's accusation that withdraws. Did the woman who was a sinner feel her guilt more deeply when the scribes were accusing her than when there was no accuser anymore and she stood alone before the Lord! But you also realize that the most dangerously deceived person is the one who is self-deceived, that the most dangerous condition is that of the one who is deceived by much knowledge, and, furthermore, that it is a lamentable weakness to have one's consolation in another's light-mindedness, but it is also a lamentable weakness to have one's terror from another's heavy-mindedness. Leave it solely to God — after all, he knows best how to take care of everything for one who becomes alone by seeking him.

— And there is indeed a place for this, my listener, and you know where; and there is indeed an opportunity, my listener, and you know how; and there is indeed a moment, and it is called: this very day.

Here this discourse ends — in the confession of sin. But can it really be an end? Is joy not to be victorious now; is sin to walk only with sorrow; is

the soul to sit oppressed but is the harp of joy not to be tuned? You perhaps are accustomed to hearing much more; you probably know much more yourself — so look for the shortcoming in the discourse and the speaker. If you actually are further along, then do not let yourself be delayed, but if not, then consider that one is dreadfully deceived if one is deceived by much knowledge. Let us imagine a first mate and assume that he has passed with distinction all the examinations but as yet has not been out to sea. Imagine him in a storm: he knows exactly what he has to do, but he is unacquainted with the terror that grips the sailor when the stars disappear into the pitch darkness of the night; he is unacquainted with the sense of powerlessness the pilot feels when he sees that the helm in his hand is only a plaything for the sea; he does not know how the blood rushes to the head when in such a moment one must make calculations — in short, he has no conception of the change that takes place in the knower when he is to use his knowledge. What fair weather is for the sailor, going on living at the same pace with others and with the generation is for the individual person, but the decision, the dangerous moment of collecting himself when he is to withdraw from the surroundings and become alone before God and become a sinner — this is a stillness that changes the ordinary just as the storm does. He knows it all, knows what is to happen to him, but he did not know the anxiety that grips him when he feels himself abandoned by the multiplicity in which he had his soul; he did not know how the heart pounds when the help of others and the guidance of others and the standards of others and the diversions of others vanish in stillness; he did not know the shuddering when it is too late to call for human help, when no one can hear him — in short, he had no conception of how the knower is changed when he is to appropriate his knowledge.

Is it perhaps also the case with you, my listener? I certainly do not judge you; I merely ask. Alas, although there come to be more and more who

know so very much, experienced people are becoming more and more rare! But it was exactly that kind of person you once wished to be. You surely have not forgotten what we said about honesty toward oneself — that one distinctly remembers what one once wished to be; and you yourself surely intended to be honest before God in the confession of sins. What was it you wanted then? You wanted to strive for the highest, to grasp the truth and be in it; you wanted to spare neither time nor effort; you wanted to renounce everything, including also every deception. Even if you did not grasp the highest, you still wanted to be sure that you were clearly aware of what you hitherto had understood its attainment to be. Even if this were ever so little, you still would rather be faithful over little than faithless over much. Even if it were one single thought and you became the poor one among the rich who know everything, you still would rather be true as gold — and indeed everyone can be that if he so wishes, inasmuch as gold does indeed belong to the rich, but the poor can also be true as gold. The person who was faithful over little, faithful on that day of distress when the accounting is made, faithful in understanding his debt, faithful in the stillness in which no reward beckons but the guilt becomes clear, faithful in the honesty that acknowledges everything, even that this honesty is deficient, faithful in penitent love, the humble love whose claim is self-accusation — he will certainly be placed over more.

Was not this the way you wanted it? We do agree, do we not, that in regard to what is essential to be able essentially means to be able to do it. The child thinks differently, and when the little fellow is learning what has been assigned to him and then perhaps asks his big sister to hear him recite it but she is busy and answers, “No, my dear boy, I do not have time now, but read the lesson five times or read it ten times and sleep on it, and tomorrow you will know it perfectly,” the child believes it, does as he is told, and the next day knows it perfectly. But the more mature person learns

in another way. If someone were to memorize the Bible, there could be something beautiful inasmuch as there was something childlike in his behavior, but essentially the adult learns only by appropriating, and he essentially appropriates the essential only by doing it.

Oh, in the midst of all the distress, what beautiful joy in life, in the human race, in being human oneself! Oh, in the stillness, what beautiful harmony with everyone! Oh, in this solitude, what beautiful fellowship with everyone! It is not true that one human being does not have the same essential task as another human being, any more than one human being's outward appearance is essentially different from another's, but each one does understand it a bit differently and in his own way. There are not, as in confusion, different roads and different truths and new truths, but there are many roads leading to the one truth and each person walks his own. The distinctiveness [Eiendom-melighed] arises when the essential becomes the possession [Eiendom] of the single individual and this distinctiveness is conditioned by doing the essential and is discovered in that way. Is it the aim of this discourse to be divisive? Far be it from this discourse to mention the distinctiveness for which there is struggling in the world, just as for other gifts of fortune. No, everyone who possesses something essential by having done it has possession and distinctiveness.

So also, to recall the subject of the discourse, to understand that stillness means to be able to become still. Where does one become still? Well, there is a place for that, but not in the external and direct sense, because the place is of no avail if one does not bring stillness along. In a certain sense, then, there is no place — ah, is not this "in a certain sense" already disquieting! When does one most need this stillness? When one is most powerfully moved. Is not this thought capable of driving the stillness away? Where, then, does one flee [flye] in order to escape [undflye] from oneself? Indeed, if one wishes to flee, one escapes this very stillness! Is there nothing at all

to do, then? Well, if one wishes to do nothing at all, one again escapes from the stillness into the stillness of spiritual death. Is it so easy to be able to become still! Now security tempts, because there is of course plenty of time; now impatience, because it is too late; now a beckoning hope, now a lingering recollection; now a wild resolution, now an echo of public opinion that mockingly overtakes you as if you were going down this road of stillness into the desert of illusion, where the solitary one perishes; now an echo from the selfishness in you that disturbs with self-admiration; now a comparison that diverts; now an estimate that diverts, now a little forgetfulness with the help of thoughtlessness; now a little advance payment with the help of self-confidence, now a fanciful notion of God's infinitude; now dejection over having to confide to the All-knowing One what he knows anyway, now a light-minded leap that avails nothing; now a heavy-minded sigh that feeds the heavy-mindedness, now a little sadness that anesthetizes; now a clarity that amazes, now a stillness by means of plans and ideas and daydreams and flights of fancy instead of a stillness by means of guilt and an accounting and intention's covenant with the obvious guilt and the omniscient God.

Is it so easy to become still! To have been so very close to it and yet to have grasped an illusion and to have to begin again and therefore with more unrest! To have found consolation with another and then to discover that it was a self-deception, a fraudulent stillness, and therefore to have to begin with more unrest! To have been disturbed by the world, by an enemy, by a friend, by a false teacher, by a hypocrite, by a mocker, and then to discover that it is a self-deception to want to shove the guilt upon someone else, and therefore to have to begin with more unrest! To have struggled, to will with all one's power, and then to discover that one is capable of nothing, that one cannot give oneself this stillness because it belongs to God! If someone declares that this is the correct expression, that one cannot do it, then

perhaps let him consider carefully whether it is laziness that is speaking here. Indeed it is true; yes, even an apostle witnesses to it, but was this testimony a whim, a hasty general comment, or was it not so difficult to understand this human nothingness and to have one's consciousness in it that even he, the authoritative one, the eternally resolved one, was not alone in it but needed a helper, namely, a Satan's angel, who by means of daily experiences and daily pain helped him out of illusion, out of having his wisdom in rote learning, his peace in general assurances, his trust in God in a saying. Or had someone taught the apostle this, so he could repeat it? We certainly have heard before in the world that the wise man had an angel who guided or warned him. If Paul had spoken of this, it could have been by rote, but that the wise man needs a Satan's angel for his daily use, that certainly has taken a long time to learn.

Yet the discourse must not be divisive. What God requires of each one is best left to God. When the poor person or the person who works like a slave for a miserable living for himself and his family, and when the servant, most of whose time belongs to someone else, when these — alas, as it perhaps seems to them — have little opportunity to be able to consider the concerns of the soul, who could doubt, who would be brash and presumptuous enough, instead of having sympathy for this dissimilarity in earthly life, even to want to introduce it into the religious; who would dare to deny — that the blessing, like all God's blessings, is in abundance! But, my listener, if anyone, attacked by that fashionable sickness, had a loathing for existence and in intellectual pride disdained the simple and feared lest there not be tasks enough for his many thoughts, do you not think then that the wondrousness of truth is that the simple person understands it and the wisest person cannot wholly fathom it, and he does not become lazy on account of this thought but enthusiastic. Indeed, in this we are again agreed,

inasmuch as this, too, is understood in stillness, where everyone has enough to think about by becoming guilty.

ON THE OCCASION OF A WEDDING

INEXPLICABLE MOODS SEEM to rest in the depths of the soul alongside the beautiful assurance of erotic love [Elskov]; the organ music has now stopped; only the echo again stirs the soul in mood and wants to transfigure the beautiful assurance into a sacred mood — now is the time for speaking! The voice of an individual must be heard. How poor the word from the individual's lips might seem here in comparison with the beautiful and sacred emotion of rich moods. Might not the word at this point be disturbing, the well-intentioned word inopportune, the instructive even ominous! Yet it must be said — and it must be spoken with definiteness. The indefinable wealth of mood must be indicated; the word must be named; clarity, even if it has no desire to disturb anything, demands the word to the very end. What a change, what a relation in this misrelation! What is so plain and precise and distinct as a person's duty is and ought to be, and what is so puzzling as the prompting of love [Kjærlighed] — and yet here love is to become a duty! What is more transparent and intended for the future than a sacred promise, and what is less preoccupied with the future than the presence of erotic love in the lovers — and yet here a promise is required of love. What is so terrible to name as a curse, and what is so remote from this as the sheer joy of erotic love — and yet the word must be named in connection with love!

But it is a free matter, and just as the lovers were set free by belonging to each other, so also is this step a resolution in freedom. There must, therefore, be joy with the joyful ones whom love made free in union, but there must be no speaking about the wedding with half words or scant words, as if it were something insignificant, because it belongs to freedom;

accordingly, it is on the contrary the one thing needful in connection with the most beautiful happiness.

So now these two whom life united in the happiness of love have made a resolution, and now a covenant is to be made. A covenant for eternity. For eternity — is not this phrase so strong that it is almost ominous, because it is as if death intervened, and out there on the grave one lays eternity's wreath. Far from it, inasmuch as the prophetic word is the beautiful word of announcement. Indeed, the wedding ceremony is like a wreath of eternity, but love weaves it, and duty says it must be woven; and love's delight is to weave it, and duty says it must be woven — every day from the flower of the moment. Here eternity is not finished with time, but the covenant is eternity's beginning in time; the eternal resolution and the duty for eternity must remain with the wedded pair in the union of love through time, and there is to be celebration at its remembrance and power in its recollection and hope in its promise.

With definiteness, then, the word is to be spoken, and so it is to be spoken with authority. And the discourse will address itself to you, honorable bridegroom; it will not be congratulatory but will question with earnestness, and the speaker has the authority to require an earnest answer. The discourse will not ask about your happiness but will ask whether you have consulted God and your conscience. It will not scare your joy away — no more than it is indifferent toward it. No, it wants only to safeguard the joy for you if you answer with deliberation, and for your own sake it will earnestly ask that you do not answer light-mindedly. And even if it seems to you to be so natural, so altogether right that you be united to the one with whom your parents and family initially wished you to be united, to whom you belonged in a presentiment that quietly became certainty, to whom you were drawn in so many ways until love explicitly showed itself to be the foundation and took your readiness into its transfiguring possession, the

earnest question here, far from desiring to stop an impetuous decision of surprise, which too often results later in regret, will stop you in order to place, with the responsibility of duty, the emphasis of choice upon the quiet event.

Then the discourse will address itself to you, honored bride. It will not make you uneasy with its questions or disquiet you by awakening difficult thoughts, but it will ask with the same earnestness — as required by the equality of the covenant — whether you have consulted God and your conscience. Ah, the question does not desire to make happiness precarious for you, make you weak. It wants to make you in the freedom of earnestness just as strong as the husband to whom you as wife are to be compliant. And even if you feel with joyous confidence and absolute reliability that happiness for you could not be otherwise or that it could not be in any other way than that you were united with him to whom you are linked by your life situation and close affinity and the sharing of so much in mutual understanding, until love explained the preceding as a beautiful introduction, as a dowry of security, as a wealth of happiness — the earnest question here, far from interrupting your many thoughts, will place for you, with the responsibility of duty, the emphasis of choice upon the quiet event's almost unnoticeable transition.

Thus a promise must be required, and the speaker has authority to demand it. Yet, for all its earnestness, the requirement is an invitation to the lovers; it wants to give the worthy ones the solemn occasion to express freely and before God what is difficult for the lovers to keep silent about with each other, what is delicious to confide to the confidant, what here pronounced is sanctified.

When this has happened, the authorized person will unite the married couple and make earnestness out of what is an earnest matter. It has its own earnestness, and when the bridal pair lack earnestness the act is debased,

because the marriage ceremony is no temporal event. But when this earnestness is present, the authorized person makes earnestness of it — and the covenant is made.

An unauthorized discourse, however, has no lovers to unite. But despite that, my listener, you can readily heed it. As stated earlier, the act has its own earnestness, and the earnestness is not that something external takes place, that a few inquisitive people are eyewitnesses, that the life situation of two human beings is externally changed. And that earnestness indeed presupposes the authority in the married couple and that it is mature. If it first came into existence at that moment, who then would dare to answer the question that asks about something past, although it is also present? Or if the speaker was supposed to create the earnestness in the two lovers at that moment, he certainly would have to speak in a different way. He surely would have to say much that is risky to say now at the last moment, difficult to say to these two particular people, although it would have been beneficial if the two had thought about it. So there is a deliberation that in the earnestness of thought is now before the altar. To such a deliberation, then, I invite you, my listener, and with the wedding ceremony in mind I shall speak on the theme that, considered as the resolution of marriage,

LOVE CONQUERS EVERYTHING.

YOU, MY LISTENER, will of course also give thought to that earnest moment and not occupy your mind with the deliberation in any way except as it pertains to you, no matter whether your marriage covenant is something future or something past, inasmuch as it is of no concern only to a fool. On this we surely do agree, that a discourse about godly things should never be divisive or at odds with anything except what is ungodly. Therefore when someone who is poor or earns his living in a menial job, without, of course, being excluded from the happiness of love, when he must glean laboriously and make many a burdensome attempt to gather the necessities, while the master or foreman perhaps understands all too well that the job has to be tended to first and foremost, when as a consequence there is only a snatched moment, a scrimpy time, for devoutly considering the affairs of the heart upon which the privileged and the pampered sometimes wisely, sometimes foolishly, spend so much time — therefore when these two lovers finally stand before the altar and in all brevity are pronounced legally married, ah, my listener, we certainly do agree that the God who is present in the covenant not merely to witness but also to bless, that his blessing does not make the distinction that human discourse makes. Because he is the only rich one, he has only one blessing, and the price is the same for everyone, whether the believer is powerful or insignificant, wise or simple, dressed in gold or in coarse linsey-woolsey, rich in ideas or poor in spirit. But if anyone, man or woman, in the grip of that fashionable sickness, were so inhuman as to find this sacred practice along with its sacred rules too simple, if anyone has in mind the invention of something new, then we of course agree, my listener, that the wonder of this godly design is that the simple person finds everything in it and the wise person

more than he can fathom if he earnestly thinks of himself in this relationship and thinks earnestly about himself.

An ancient saying states that love [Kjærlighed] is older than everything else, and many a beautiful and many a profound thought is linked to this saying in order with its assistance to explain existence. But just as this saying is true in major matters, so is it also true wherever love is present: it is older than everything else. For example, in the life of the individual, when love awakens, it is older than everything else, because when it exists it seems as if it has existed for a long time; it presupposes itself back into the distant past until all searching ends in the inexplicable origin. Whereas all beginnings are ordinarily said to be difficult, this does not hold true of love's beginning. Its happy awakening is unacquainted with work, and there is no advance preparation. Even if love can give birth to pain, it is not brought forth in pain; lightly, jubilantly, it bursts forth in its enigmatic coming into existence. What a wonderful beginning!

But the life of freedom requires a beginning, and here a beginning is a resolution, and the resolution has its work and its pain — thus the beginning has its difficulty. The one making the resolution has, of course, not finished, because in that case he would have experienced that of which the resolution is the beginning. But if no resolution is made, the same thing can happen to such a person as sometimes happens to a speaker who only when he has finished speaking knows how he should have spoken: only when he has lived, only then does he know how he should have lived (what a sorry yield from life!) and how he should have made the beginning with the good resolution — what bitter wisdom now that a whole life lies between the beginning and the one who is dying!

Therefore the saying declares that love conquers everything, and this is why the wedding ceremony, which is no festive offering of congratulations but a godly invitation, does not greet the lovers as conquerors but invites

them to conflict, fences them in the God-pleasing battleground of the state of marriage, encourages them to fight the good fight, strengthens the contenders by means of the covenant, promises them victory as it accepts their promise, gives them the blessing for the long journey — but then also informs them that the conflict exists: a conflict that must be fought to the finish, toil that must be endured, danger that must be encountered, a curse if it is not jointly borne as a blessing.

But is this really the right place to evoke such sad observations, which will surely come soon enough along with the dark thoughts and the distressing experiences — in this moment of joy to call to mind the days that have no pleasure? But is it sad, then, that this noble saying actually means something, that it is not sounding brass, not the words of exultation over an imagined victory that is badly won, or at least badly won if it is already supposed to be won, but is the assurance of an actual victory that is to be won gloriously! Is the place so wrong, then? This holy place. Is it so inopportune for joy to think about the danger; is this perhaps not the time for it — in the rush of danger there surely will be less time! Alas, time comes and time goes, it subtracts little by little; then it deprives a person of a good, the loss of which he indeed feels, and his pain is great. Alas, and he does not discover that long ago it has already taken away from him the most important thing of all — the capacity to make a resolution — and it has made him so familiar with this condition that there is no consternation over it, the last thing that could help gain new power for renewed resolution!

No, the saying means very much in earnest, yes, everything for the duly married couple. But it wants to be understood in earnest. It does not want to visit the bridal couple as an unexpected guest who graces the wedding day with his lofty presence, but it desires to settle down with the couple; it wants to be given the test of time, wants to guarantee everything. This is how it wants to be understood, and this is also the only way it can be said: it

must be said by a beginner, but by the one who begins with the good resolution. The person who grew old in the faithful service of love, tested as gold and found true — the noble poet somewhat amorously says of the slip of a girl that her young soul was tested gold, but time and danger, after all, are really the test — the venerable one who over the years won the rich and incorruptible beauty of faithfulness, faithful to his commitment according to the dictates of his own conscience, faithful with masculine courage and feminine tenderness, with masculine fortitude and feminine sympathy, with composure of understanding in inwardness of heart, offers the gentle, friendly, humble counsel of old age: My children, love conquers everything. And he stirs the young people — alas, yes, he almost deceives them, because, when he says it, it seems so easy and the young people would like to hear him say it again. But if the young people take the saying in vain and light-mindedly and want to weave a wedding wreath from it, then experience of the struggles in life steps between the young people and the venerable one, saying, "Step aside, veneration for the venerable, first come to know the difficulties" — and then experience points to him and says, "See here, love has conquered everything!"

How beautiful to be an old man; compared with such a witness, what is all eloquence but deceit! Has conquered everything! This is the final word, and it is indeed different and separate from the first. Oh, stop, you who are passing by, and consider this difference. When you grasp it, you will indeed become one who makes a resolution! Has conquered — yes, this is what experience of struggles in life says with veneration of the one who has completed his service, whom the covenant of marriage called to the good fight, whose life leaves no irregularity because he, having loved much, became no one's debtor. In civil life, of course, when someone wants to travel to a foreign country and is in debt to someone, his adversary applies to the authorities who administer justice, and his journey is halted. Ah, if

the commitment to a sacred covenant is left unfulfilled or dubiously fulfilled, is this not like an objection that makes the last journey into a swindler's flight — but no, what is the use of fleeing the justice that, judging, watches over existence — no one escapes that.

Therefore has conquered everything! But the saying declares: Love conquers everything. This is how it ought to sound at the beginning and be duly said by the one making the resolution. But the person who is ignorant of the danger, who excludes the danger and does not include an actual conception of it in the resolution, whose courage therefore has lost the victory, just as good deeds miss the reward because the victory has been enjoyed in advance — that person is not resolved. Neither is that person resolved who runs aimlessly and definitely misses the mark because he believes he is near it. Neither is that person resolved who improvidently and relying on an enigmatic power ventures out on the road and does not include in his resolution an actual conception of God's help, of the necessity for it and of its sufficiency. Neither is it a joint resolution, because at that very moment the two are of one mind and both are without resolution.

Does life reveal only one kind of unhappy love in marriage, when death separates and the sorrowing one is left alone? Ah, but death does not have this power to create unhappiness; if nothing else separates them, they are united! However, someone perhaps says, "I know very well what you mean and what the discourse is aiming at, but such things happen only to those who have never been in love; the one who actually loves does conquer everything." It is undeniable, of course, that the person who actually loves does as the saying declares, but does it follow that the one speaking even has a clear conception of what it is actually to love and of life and of the others? A clear conception of what change takes place in the lover when he is actually to conquer everything and this everything is to be actual? What a difference between youthfully wanting to change the whole world and then

discovering that it is oneself who must be changed and that the requirement is that this is to inspire, or that the task is to keep oneself unchanged while, alas, everything changed! What a difference between being in the surprise of novelty as the first inventor of everything and then, when laboriousness comes, to discover that it is the monotonous repetition of what has been experienced thousands and thousands of times by the others! What a difference between youthfully wanting to struggle and the explanation that there must be suffering and that this is what is to inspire! Wanting to conquer, well, one scales down, thus is willing to fall before a superior force, but with the consciousness of being the stronger compared with the individuals — and now the explanation that it is one's own weakness that one must struggle with, and the requirement, not sympathizing and deploring but cruel, that one is to be inspired by this struggle! Then when the huge requirement of the imagined task does not provide the imagined power, but in actuality it is the insignificant, disdained task; when one is not defying a world that betrayed one's expectation but sits abandoned by one's great expectation regarding oneself and robbed of every excuse; when no vast prospect tempts one to want to venture but one sits idle, discouraged by the paltry task of patience, which becomes even poorer because time is wasted on wanting to dream youth's dream all over again — yes, then there is the opportunity to show that one actually loves or, rather, that the occasion has waited much too long and that it should not have come to this; and if the beginning had commenced with a resolution, then one would have understood in time that it can come to such a pass.

Look at the one who does indeed resemble the lover — look at the enthusiast! Does life show only one instance of half-finished work, of interrupted plans, of a sad and miserable outcome of a brilliant beginning; is this the one and only instance, that the striving person is prevented by death from finishing the work, from executing the plan, from reaching the goal? O

death, you are, for all that, powerless; do you really presume to want to mock an enthusiast! No, the brief unhappiness of the moment of death is soon over, and the one who dares truthfully to say, “It was death that prevented me,” truly does die with honor, indeed, has gloriously completed his task! “But,” perhaps the young enthusiast, that is, every young enthusiast, says, “I know very well what you are suggesting; you do not even need to name it; I do not wish to be frustrated and delayed and discouraged.” But this does not happen with the real enthusiast. That is indeed undeniable, but does the one speaking therefore have even a clear conception of what it is to be actually inspired, what it means when it is no longer a matter of leaping like a lion but of remaining on the spot and despite all effort seeming not to move from the spot; when it is not a matter of crossing the whole world in easy flight but of enduring a dead calm in which the enthusiasm will expire; when it is a matter of perceiving the powerlessness and yet not relinquishing the enthusiasm, of hoping against hope; when it is a matter of the long, tedious work that is inseparable from any and every enthusiastic undertaking; when the abandoned one must defend himself even against a sympathy that is the downfall of enthusiasm, although it seems so comforting, and he may be misjudged because he does it; when it is not a matter of reckless impulse but of putting on a straitjacket and of being enthusiastic in it — yes, then there is an opportunity to show that one is actually inspired. And if one has begun with a resolution, it will certainly become apparent what benefit there is in it, because with the resolution one did not take in an invigorating breath of youth but a mistrust of oneself that at a distance knows about the danger.

The first condition for a resolution is to have, that is, to will to have a true conception of life and of oneself. What is here sown with tears is harvested with songs of joy, and one does recover from the sorrow because the first loss is the best, and the first pain is the one that saves, and the

rigorous upbringing is the beneficial one, and the early discipline the strengthening one, and the shudder of the resolution gives courage, and the trembling of the resolution toughens one, and the chastisement of the resolution makes one attentive, and to conquer in the end is the main issue, and the final honor is the only true one!

Ah, death has no power to set up lamentable signs along marriage's road through life. Yet these signs are there. What, then, do they mean? In the customs of a people, there is many a quaint practice connected with a wedding, many a teasing jest that still has its significance, many a roguish prank that is not without beauty, but would it not also be an agreeable practice for the bridal couple, before going to the house where the wedding reception is being held, to go to the house of sorrow, that is, to the earnest consideration from which one does not obtain the bridal veil but the resolution. Let the bride, then, come to the altar in all her loveliness, let the crown of myrtle adorn the beloved — yet it is only the humility of the resolution that makes her pleasing in the eyes of God, and only the actual conception of the resolution makes her strong in holy weakness — to conquer everything.

It is not the purpose of the discourse, even if it were capable of it, to want to terrify with shocking descriptions, to want to evoke dread — to which only the earnest person, when he speaks with authority, can give the sure effect of earnestness and prevent discouragement and dejection, indeed, almost aversion, from interfering with the impression. Ah, are the divorced the only separated married people for whom the binding covenant has become a curse. Are they alone unworthy of the married state who made a wretched beginning by regarding the covenant as a secular arrangement for earthly gain and ended as they began or for whom the marriage tie did not become a deliverance but a trap that incited the sensual desires. Was he alone a bad husband who cravenly and in an unmanly way

adoringly wooed a woman's beauty and then in a servile spirit cravenly ruled over a slave, to whose loveliness he in jealousy was a slave — until he ended with the ingratitude of a villain because the years had taken away the youth and beauty of the one to whom he was wedded?

Ah, no, here it goes as with death in life. Not only those are death's plunder who lie on the sickbed and whom the physician has given up; many whom death has marked walk around among us. Likewise there is among us many a marriage that divorce has marked. See, it has not come between the married couple, but an indifferent exclusiveness separates and alienates each from the other — and yet (and this is why we speak of it), and yet perhaps their old feelings have not become completely extinct. There is no strife between the married couple, no hostile unsettled accounts, but feeling seems to have withdrawn from their life together. Yet they perhaps love each other but await an event that will tighten the bow of resolution and lure forth feeling to expression, inasmuch as the everyday life is not enough; before each other they are almost ashamed of this sequence of trifles. They perhaps long for an understanding but cannot really speak with each other precisely because there is an opportunity every day; as a consequence, the opportunity is not used and it becomes more difficult to become open to each other. They were once so happy — oh, so happy — and this consciousness that ought to strengthen them, that at least ought to be always clear, weakens them. They lose the desire and courage to venture, and that vanished happiness acquires an exaggerated unhealthy glamor for the two lonely people. Time goes so slowly; a whole life lies before them. They are afraid to make the first confession to each other that could unite them in powerful resolution. Boredom takes the place of unity, and yet they shun a divorce as a sin, but life is so long. Then the thought of death sneaks in, because death, after all, dissolves all bonds. One hardly dares to admit it, and yet it is so, one wishes oneself dead, as if this were not unfaithfulness

— and yet they perhaps love each other and death perhaps would bring them to sense this. Then the one seeks the flaw in the other, and instead of an honest exchange, misunderstanding transacts its sorry business and estranges each from the other in suspicion and mistrust, through ungentleness and impatience, and through flash reconciliations that nourish the sickness, although they perhaps still love each other.

Was it always poverty and straitened circumstances and life's adversities that caused this? Ah, a marriage is sometimes maintained in wealth and abundance when the brief honeymoon is over, in all abundance although on bread and water! — Was it always only sorrow over wayward children that ultimately estranged the parents? Ah, how often we see that rare good fortune in this regard was of no help to the parents. — Was it always the years that brought this sorrow along? Ah, how brief a period was sometimes needed before this change had already occurred. — Was it always an original misrelation in age, in education, in social class, that sooner or later was bound to create misunderstanding? Ah, sometimes the two were so perfectly well suited to each other that all they lacked was gratitude in order to be happy. — Was it always environment and family relationships and connections that corrupted a marriage well begun? Alas, what is the use of placing the blame on others — the weed of corruption has the characteristic that all weeds have: it sows itself. The good seed requires care and work, and if that is lacking the good seed perishes — and then the weeds come by themselves.

Now let the observer who includes himself, who in a critical moment calls forth these thoughts, let him put the question to himself: Do I dare to say that all these married people did not at one time begin with what is called "really being in love with each other," so that they felt the sweetness of surprise when love awakened, felt the restlessness of longing, found time to disappear when they were together and time to be so long when they

were apart, found themselves glowing at the thought of wanting to be everything for each other. Let him put the question to himself: Do I dare to deny that the sorry outcome may also have its basis in this, that in the time of youth and hope and surprise and rashness one lacked the direction or earnestness to renounce sentimentality and the lure of the moment and the illusion of fancy in order to subject oneself to the rigorous upbringing of resolution.

What, indeed, does it want, this resolution that is the rebirth of erotic love [Elskov]? Does it want to stifle the joy because it wants to save it? Is its solicitude a false friendship because it perhaps is not immediately understood? Is it sheer pain because its beginning is not without pain? Is it perpetual imprisonment because it binds two lovers together in earnest and forever? But its beginning is not without pain and not without a shudder. Think of an enthusiast. Filled with noble intentions, he wants to accomplish so very much, but look at him; in the work of the resolution, the conception of life and of his own weakness so overwhelms him that he sinks in powerlessness, and only the conception of duty holds him in the work in order to win the resolution. What a change! Now he is struggling, weary under the rigorous supervision of duty. Every day he does the little assigned to him, but to the letter as duty bids, and he is still enthusiastic inasmuch as he realizes that whether it is little or much, when duty bids it, it is always much. See, now it succeeds, and the resolution is won, and the work is begun with the genuine criterion. See, it succeeds, and work progresses; see, it succeeds and succeeds beyond expectation, and that first enthusiasm awakens to a renewed and stronger life. See, his enthusiasm was not a rash intention or a perpetual rashness. Neither was it ablaze in youth, then dimly burning in adulthood, and like a smoking candlewick in the evening of life. No, that first enthusiasm went out, as it were, in the night when the resolution came into existence, but then he gained a new enthusiasm and the

blessed surprise of wonder from year to year, even in the evening of life. In the same way, through the rigorous upbringing of the resolution, marriage will take away the romantic fancies and illusions and provide a secure abode for erotic love within the impregnable fortress of duty and give the resolved one new enthusiasm and in the course of time daily wonder over his happiness.

But perhaps someone says, "It is insulting to speak to lovers this way, enviously and depressingly to throw suspicion on that happiness instead of admiring and eulogizing, yes, and regarding erotic love's rare happiness with respect." Well, to want to show respect for a rare happiness, be it ever so rare, seems frivolous in an upbuilding meditation that is not assigned to find upbuilding in the divisiveness of happiness in this life. Would not that objection be an outburst of erotic love's seductive persuasiveness, this dangerous power that fosters rashness in the listener?

We are willing to show respect to the poet's rare gift if he uses it well, but the erotic love that inspires the poet to song, is it always to be found like that in life and in every couple united by the covenant of marriage? After all, the poet himself says that it is rare, and the poet's happy gift is in turn a rarity like that erotic love: a supreme wish for a more perfect existence — but no, rather a most beautiful dream arising from a less perfect view of life. That is why the poet explains nothing. He seeks that recollected rarity in the sadness of song; he seeks it flaming in the craving of the wish; he fervently plucks the strings to its honor, as if it were found; he sits weak in the whispering of longing; with the power of his imagination he creates in thought what is sought. We praise him, and a nation is appropriately proud when it is proud of outstanding poets. But the poet cannot help us ordinary people, because he cannot tell us how to act in order to become the rarity. Therein is the poet's sorrow. The poet is not a proud and haughty man, but his soul has stretched into the infinite; and when he must say to the single

individual or of the single individual, “No, he is not that,” or “She was not that,” he does not wish to insult; himself distressed, he seeks the consolation of song. Therefore we must not be angry with the poet; he loves existence and perhaps feels the pain most because that single individual was not the rarity. Yet no one, says the poet, can provide himself with that rarity; it is an original, and therein is the marvelousness.

Now, if that rare person existed and one wanted to speak to him about what this discourse is reflecting upon, he would not understand it at all, nor would he respond as that objection responded, because no discourse can disturb an originality such as that. But a deceptive echo of a poetic song, a poor repetition of a poetic work — that can be disturbing. The person, however, who feels within himself that he is not the rare one is indeed concerned. He is not disturbed because the discourse reminds him of his concern — instead he seeks what is upbuilding in the godly meditation. The discourse will go no further than this in order to remove such an objection. But now, my listener, consider the marriage ceremony yourself. Who is performing it? Is it a poet? No, it is someone authorized. The marriage ceremony places everything under sin, and the authorized one conveys the earnestness of it to the single individual and places under sin every person bound by it. Would it then be insulting if the discourse reminded us of the importance of the resolution and that only the resolved person dares to say at the beginning that love conquers everything. To me it seems insulting to assume of anyone that he has not considered this. Even the happiest earthly love needs the resolution’s rebirth, needs the rigorous discourse of the marriage ceremony, needs the marriage ceremony’s strengthening for the struggle, needs the marriage ceremony’s blessing upon the way.

Therefore, in seeking to clarify the holy resolution of marriage, the discourse certainly has reminded you, my listener, of what you yourself have often thought, because the discourse is far from being didactic. You

are, then, in agreement with it, and yet you perhaps say, “The discourse is right, but much earnestness is required for such a discourse to produce the right impression, lest it foster impatience or disturb in dejection.” You are certainly correct that it requires much earnestness. Indeed, to be a good reader or a good listener is just as great as to be a good speaker, and it is very great when, as here, the discourse is imperfect and without authority. Was not this what you meant, because in making that objection you of course did not want to shove guilt upon the speaker, as if you gained something by accusing him? Let us consider this a bit more closely. Just as a true conception of life is required for making a resolution, so also a true conception of oneself — something implied in what was said — is required. There may have been someone who sent out his spying thoughts to get diversified impressions of life but who could not take himself back, who abandoned himself — and, alas, lost himself. But the person who by marriage binds another person’s life to his own, who by marriage makes a commitment that no time will dissolve and every day will require to be fulfilled, from that person a resolution is required, and in this resolution, therefore, a true conception of oneself. And this true conception of oneself, the inwardness of this conception, this is the earnestness.

Now, just as it is true that in everyone’s soul there is a longing like that erotic love the poets celebrate, so there is also in everyone a longing, a wish, that craves what might be called a guide and teacher in life, the tested person whom one can trust, the wise person who knows how to counsel, the noble person who encourages by his own example, the gifted person who has the power of eloquence and the substance of conviction, the earnest person who safeguards the appropriation. For a child it is so easy. One is free from the burden of choice; yes, even if a father were not what he ought to be, the respect the child has, the unconditional obedience, helps it at times to learn the good even from such a father. But then comes the time of

youth and of freedom, the time when he, along with his beloved, seeks a guide like that. The point, then, is that freedom and choice are not to become a snare. The sought-after guide of that longing is a rarity. Sometimes he is not even found in every generation, and although you are contemporary with such an eminent person, someone to whom you dare to give yourself entirely, he may not be in the same place as you are, or he was there but must leave it, or you must leave it — and then, yes, then you have to be satisfied with less — that is, you must see to taking care of yourself.

There is confusion enough in life. The most diverse things are proclaimed and recommended and disdained and repeated; the most diverse prototypes appear and disappoint and reappear; the most diverse guidance is offered, and there are always fellow travelers; consolations and evasions and cheers and warnings and victory songs and lamentation are all heard in a confused jumble. Alas, erotic love and marriage are, of course, something in which everyone is tested and about which everyone, therefore, has an opinion and indeed can in truth have if he earnestly wishes to. Everyone, also the unmarried, ought to have an abiding place, and yet there perhaps is many a marriage that does not have it but is tossed about by every breeze. Misled by a chance experience, the young man may think that when external circumstances of affluence and fortunate living conditions favor erotic love it is safeguarded, and he perhaps does not consider how the latitude that his states of mind acquired in that way can foster his difficulties. One person has an exaggerated idea of the complicated task of the spiritual care of a person in love and cannot stoop to the simple task of making a living. Someone else becomes too absorbed in his brimming-over feelings and distaste follows. One of the partners still has some composure and wants to use it, but the other partner misinterprets it and thinks it is coldness and indifference. One partner wishes to economize and be frugal, and the other one does not understand it and thinks it is lack of a sense for

something higher. One person is despondent because the repetition around him makes him bored with what he has. Someone else's first happiness makes him impatient; now he compares, now he recalls, now he suffers a loss. Indeed, who could ever finish naming everything; no discourse is able to do so, and it makes no difference, after all. But no human being can do it, and that is the terrible thing; only one power is able to do it, and that is the resolution, which sees to it in time.

Where, then, is earnestness learned? In life. Most certainly, and the God-pleasing state of marriage indeed provides a rare opportunity. So earnestness is learned — if one takes the resolution along and within it a true conception of oneself. The resolution itself is the earnestness. In order to learn earnestness from what is called the earnestness of life, earnestness is already presupposed. The earnestness of life is not like a schoolteacher in relation to the learner, but in a certain sense is like an indifferent power in relation to the person who must himself be something of a teacher in relation to himself as the learner. Otherwise one can learn indifference to everything even from the earnestness of life. One does indeed wish for guidance, and yet also in this connection it holds true that one must have earnestness oneself in order to be helped by the guidance. Or has it not happened that even when that rare guide stood among us, we hit upon all kinds of things to weaken his influence, as if he himself lost thereby and not we ourselves, as if it were the wisdom of the years to become more and more fastidious, more and more proficient in rejecting, instead of becoming more and more discerning.

And now if there is no such person, what then? Well, the world never seems to be short of guides. Sec, now one person wants to guide everyone and cannot help himself; then another is hailed as wise, and admiration recognizes him by his not even being able to understand what the simple person understands. Now someone has the power of persuasion and leads

astray, has the powerful works of falsehood; now what one learned in childhood is supposed to be obsolete and one has to learn all over again. Now someone wants to tear the husband from his wife's side and make him important through his participation in great enterprises, wants to teach him to look down on the sacred calling of marriage; now someone tempts the wife and teaches her to sigh under the yoke of marriage. Now they want to dangle before the husband and wife a joint effort in achievements that make the marriage relationship unimportant; now they want to teach married people enjoyment, want to take their children from them and at the same time their cares so that the parents are able to live for higher pursuits. Then an expectation of something extraordinary is intensified, a new order of things that is coming, and we all, both the married and the unmarried, get a vacation, like schoolchildren, because the schoolteacher is going to move, have a vacation until he gets settled again — but we are not schoolchildren any longer, and everyone must make his own accounting to God, and marriage's sacred commitment will indeed assign its task and its responsibility every day.

So where does a person find guidance if he himself does not work out his own soul's salvation in fear and trembling; then he does indeed become earnest. Otherwise it will turn out that he cannot follow the one guide, because even though he means so well he still is weak; and he cannot follow the other one, because, as people say, although he has power and pith in what he says, he does not mean it; or the one is too old to satisfy the times, and the other is too young. Yes, how would a discourse ever come to an end if it were to describe this confusion in life. But what do you think, my listener, of the kind of person who certainly had the appearance of earnestness in rejecting everything but not a trace of its power in possessing the least thing; what do you think of such a one if he were a married man and thus had become married without resolution and therefore went on

living unconcerned about the most sacred commitment, that is, without earnestly caring about it. Has not divorce put its mark also on that kind of marriage, a marriage in which the married couple indeed belong to each other but not in earnest!

No, the earnestness is within a person, and only a dupe chases after it, and only a coward buys the indulgence of mediocrity by being as most people are and scouting around for it, and only the timorous one is disturbed in a more noble striving by paying attention to the opinion of others. If there is no guide in life, the earnest person still does not walk in the dark. Ah, my listener, even if the appointed guide in the place where you live were incompetent, well, if you so choose, be the good listener who still benefits from his mediocre discourse. And if the person speaking here is perhaps too young or perhaps expresses himself unclearly or his thought is unclear — well, my listener, then put the discourse aside or, if you choose, do the great thing, be the good reader who benefits even from an inadequate discourse. As a matter of fact, just as there is supposed to be a power of discourse that can almost work miracles, so there is also a listener's power that can work miracles if the listener so chooses. That kind of listener is the earnest listener. He says, "I want to be built up," and so he is built up.

But the earnestness lies in a resolution. If anyone is afraid of it, no wonder that he seeks consolation in others' being trapped in the same difficulty and scouts to the right and to the left. If anyone thinks that a resolution is a fragile thing and that the person who has made a resolution is skating on thin ice — well, no wonder, then, that he must always have a lot of people around him in order to find the courage to live. But you, my listener, you do indeed think that the resolution is the highest blessedness, that even if erotic love's richest happiness could in any way be guaranteed to you for your whole life, you would still choose the dangers of the life of resolution and marital life together. The resolution performs the miracle at

weddings just like that at the wedding in Cana. It offers the poor wine first and keeps the best for last; erotic love is the beloved's best adornment, but the resolution is a power in the heart of the imperfect one. The resolution of marriage is that love [Kjærlighed] conquers everything. Yes, it conquers everything, but it does perish in adversity if no resolution holds it firm, it perishes in prosperity if no resolution holds it firm, it degenerates in the everyday if no resolution encourages it, it is stifled in imagined importance if no resolution humbles it. Erotic love remains, but the resolution is its abiding place, whereby it has its continuance; erotic love is the refreshing volatile element, but the resolution is the vessel in which it is sustained. Erotic love remains; it guides through life when the resolution accompanies it, but it goes astray when the resolution does not guide; it gives life meaning when the resolution interprets it day after day; it suffices for a whole life when the resolution exercises a restraining influence; it grasps the eternal when a resolution has prepared a place there; it conquers everything when the resolution accompanies it on the day of battle — and the final honor is the one and only honor.

Is this discourse envious? Is it envious to say to the happy person, "I know where you should hide your happiness in order to keep it secure"? A little flattering sadness, which of course would simply be envy, might titillate the senses of a happy person. Is this discourse insulting? Is it insulting to say to someone, "I am convinced that you yourself know and have considered this matter, and therefore I only remind you of it"? Is the speaker obtrusive who stands apart and speaks rather softly with himself?

So, then, a true conception of life and of oneself is required for the resolution of marriage; but this already implies the second great requirement, which is just like the first: a true conception of God. The one entirely corresponds to the other, because no one can have a true conception of God without having a corresponding conception of life and of oneself, or

a true conception of oneself without a corresponding conception of God, or a true conception of life without a corresponding conception of oneself. A poetic creative fancy, or a conception at the distance of indifferent thought, is not a true conception. Neither does the conception of God come as an incidental addendum to that conception of life and of oneself. On the contrary, it comes and penetrates and crowns everything and was present before it became clear.

The lovers are certainly happy, and on the day of happiness one is surely closest to God. But a true conception of God is required; an understanding between God and the happy one is required, and thus a language is required in which they talk with each other. This language is the resolution, the only language in which God will involve himself with a human being. Even if the happy one were ever so enthusiastic in his expressions of thanksgiving for his happiness (and where, indeed, would there be a happy person who did not feel this need to be thankful!), and even if he mentioned God's name, it would not follow that he spoke with God, had a true conception of him, made himself understood to him, and had the benefit of the understanding. The thanksgiving for the happiness, however exceptional it is, however deeply emotional the expression, however fervent the soul, God will not understand — only the resolution that takes over the happiness. Even if God's name is mentioned first and last, one still is not speaking with God if the conception in which the worshiper expresses his thanks is not of God but of happiness, fate, the great prize, and the like, or of an enigmatic power, whose intervention prompts one to be amazed — and to idolize.

The resolution certainly should not make the happy one ungrateful; on the contrary, it should make him worthy, and the earnestness of thankfulness is only in the resolution. Therefore the resolution's thanksgiving is conscious that this happiness is a task, and that the person giving thanks is now standing at the beginning. Therefore the resolution's thanksgiving is

thoughtful; it understands that in the happiness God has spoken to the resolved person, but also understands that this is the beginning of the conversation.

Is this thinking poorly of the happiness? Is it not rather thinking worthily of God! If someone spoke with a wise person and then, immediately upon hearing the wise person's first words, which shed the light of truth in his soul, interrupted him with his thanksgiving because now he needed no more help, what else would this show except that he was not speaking with a wise person but with a wise person whom he himself transformed into a fool? Now, a wise person is a human being, and as such also something external; to that extent someone may indeed truthfully say, even though he spoke foolishly, that he had spoken with a wise person. But God is only in the internal. Therefore the one who speaks with him as that man spoke with the wise person does not actually speak with him. Just as there is an immature love that says, "The real lover conquers everything," yet without having a true conception of the struggle, and just as there is an immature enthusiasm that says the same thing with similar rashness — so also there is an immature thanksgiving that wants to thank God and yet only deceives itself by thinking that it is thanking God and defrauds God of the thanksgiving.

The resolution's thanksgiving is earnest and therefore well pleasing to God; its thanksgiving is also the good beginning by which half is won, and with God the resolution will surely conquer everything. It does not give thanks once and for all, nor with earthly and fraudulent self-conceit or unwisdom. No, the resolution is the beginning, and the resolution's thanksgiving is the beginning of the thanksgiving, the beginning of the solemnity that will hold at bay many a needless danger, give strength in actual danger, echo in the hymn of thanksgiving on the day of victory. It is the beginning of the vigilance that will find the married couple constant in the evening of life, as expectant after the wedding as the wise bridesmaids

were before the wedding, the vigilance that will make the final thanksgiving the most beautiful, make the final response to God's speaking, the beginning of which was that happiness, the well-pleasing and true thanksgiving of gratitude.

If anyone thinks that this would be disturbing, would he, without wanting to understand himself properly, muddleheadedly dare to think poorly of God? Would anyone believe that the happiness would be lost by becoming earnest, that the happiness would be depreciated by being the beginning of happiness — would it then be more beautiful, would it be wiser, would it better stand the test in life if there were a beginning without a resolution? Would it be more beautiful if the happiness promptly separated, so to speak, the two who are joined; would it be more beautiful if a vain feminine heart voluptuously heard the praises of an adorer when he believed that he owed everything to her and when, muddleheaded but grateful for his happiness, he did not know anyone else to thank? Or would it be more beautiful if the proud head bowed to hear voluptuously the adoration of someone who is weak, when she, glad in her happiness, humble in gratitude, did not know to whom she should go except to him, to him to whom she indeed owed everything and her happiness — to him who defrauded her of the best? Would it be more beautiful, would it be wiser? Would it stand its test better — also when at some time the yoke had to be cast off and the struggle begin, or if that did not happen, when the poor wretch never did become a man but, devoid of manly courage, went through life tied to a woman's apron strings, or if the pitiable faithful one slaved life away, not as a wife, but abjectly loved her master, and this master was her husband? Or is idolatry initially indeed more beautiful, basically wiser, and as life progresses more reliable than a reasonable worship of God?

If anyone thinks that the resolution's conception of God is a halt from which the happiness would rather be excused — would it then be more

beautiful, would it be wiser, would it better stand the test in life if the two, without the resolution, rushed away with each other in the transitory moment of infatuation's dream, if they danced away the soundness and health of love on the wedding day? Would it be more beautiful, would it be wiser, would it bear up better in life — also when they wearily stood at the beginning of the road, and behold, the fun was over, and behold, it was not earnestness that remained but loathing and boredom and a confused awakening from a confused youthful dream to a long life ahead — would the brief pleasure of a couple of idol-worshipers actually be more beautiful and wiser and more reliable in life than the humble beginning of a true marriage?

Does anyone think that the resolution can come later, when it is really needed? Then it is not yet needed, not on the wedding day, when the eternal commitment is made? But then later? Would he think that there is no thought of abandoning each other but of enjoying the first delight of the union — and then, united, to support each other by means of the resolution? So when trouble and hardship come, and distress, whether earthly or spiritual, stands at the door — then that is the time? Yes, indeed, then that is the time — for the resolved one to collect himself in his resolution, but it is definitely not the time to put together a resolution. It is true that distress and adversity can help a person to seek God in a resolution, but the question is whether the conception is always the right one, whether it is joyful, whether it does not have a certain wretchedness, a secret wish that it not be needed, whether it is not harmful or envious or depressed and therefore is no ennobled rendering of the adversities of life. There is a government loan office where the poor can go. The indigent person is helped, but do the poor have a joyful conception of this loan office? Likewise, there perhaps are marriages that seek God only in adversity, alas, and seek him as a loan office; and anyone who only then seeks him always runs this danger. Would

such a late resolution, which even though worthy is still not bought at the last moment without shame and without great danger — would it be more beautiful and wiser than the first resolution of marriage?

But perhaps no distress and no adversity at all comes in life, and then of course the resolution is not needed. Far be it from the aim of the discourse to terrify childish people, and even further to recommend the resolution as a means that is supposed to serve something inferior. So, then, you childish one who does not want to become acquainted with spiritual dangers, so things are going well. See, here is a marriage that life pampers and good fortune smiles upon unceasingly — what then? Then this childish marriage has still lost the very best, because the resolution itself is the glorious thing. It is not a wretched invention against the wretchedness of life but is the garment of salvation, and the resolved one is adorned with it to bear worthily the days of prosperity, and the resolved one is powerfully armed in it to conquer on the evil day, and yet the attire is the same.

Alas, how utterly different married life and marriage conditions are in this world, and yet there is one resolution common to each and every one or can be so: that love [Kjerlighed] conquers everything. This resolution is the beginning, and in this resolution is contained a true conception of life and of oneself and hence of God — then the end indeed becomes like the beginning: that love has conquered everything.

But think of two marriages, my listener. The one must laboriously make its hard way through many adversities; the other is carried through life as if on the hands of good fortune. Now they have both arrived at the boundary of life, and love has conquered everything. Of the first marriage it may be said that the married couple learned much from the rigorous school of life, but when it also may be said that in the evening of life they still had not become essentially different in their earnestness than when they in the beginning won earnestness in the rigorous upbringing of the resolution —

would this not be very beautiful? And if it may be said of the other couple that in the evening of life the married people were not essentially different in earnestness but throughout their long life had been essentially just as earnest as on that happy day when the resolution matured them in earnestness — would this not be very beautiful? The resolution's earnestness of youth is not formed piecemeal but is formed by God from the conception of life and of oneself and of God and therefore is an eternal healthiness and perhaps is never gained in this way later.

AT A GRAVESIDE

THEN ALL IS over! — And when the person stepped up to the grave first because he was the next of kin, and when after the brief moment of the speech he was the last one at the grave, alas, because he was the next of kin — then all is over. If he remained out there, he still would not learn what the deceased is doing, because the deceased is a quiet man; if in his trouble he called out his name, if in his grief he sat listening, he still would learn nothing, because in the grave there is quiet, and the deceased is a silent man; and if recollecting he visited the grave every day, the one dead would not recollect him — .

In the grave there is no recollection, not even of God. See, the man did know this, the one of whom it must now be said that he no longer recollects anything, to whom it would now be too late to say this. But because he knew this, he acted accordingly, and therefore he recollected God while he was living. His life was passed in honorable obscurity; not many were aware of his existence; among those few only one or two knew him. He was a citizen of the town here; a hard worker in his modest occupation, he disturbed no one by disregarding his civic obligations, disturbed no one by misplaced concern about the whole. So it went year after year, uniformly but not emptily. He grew up, he grew old, he became aged — his work was and remained the same, the same occupation in the different periods of his life. He leaves behind a wife, happy to have been united with him in the past, now an old woman who grieves for the lost one, a true widow who, forsaken, has her hope in God. He leaves behind a son who learned to love him and to find contentment in his situation and his father's work. At one time as a child joyful in his father's house, as a youth he never found it too cramped; now it is a house of mourning for him.

Not many inquiries are made about the death of such an obscure man, and if anyone shortly thereafter walks past the house where he lived in lowliness and reads his name over the door, because the little business is continued under his name, it will indeed seem as if he were not dead. Just as he slept gently and peacefully away, so in the surrounding world his death is a departure in silence. Respectable as a citizen, honest in his business, thrifty in his household, charitable according to his means, sincerely sympathetic, faithful to his wife, a father to his son — all this and all the truth with which this can be said do not raise expectations for a momentous ending; here it is a life's activity to which a quiet death became a beautiful ending.

Yet he still had one more work; in simplicity of heart it was performed with the same faithfulness: he recollected God. He was a man, old, he became aged, and then he died, but the recollection of God remained the same, a guide in all his activity, a quiet joy in his devout contemplation. Indeed, if there were no one at all who missed him in death, yes, if he were not with God now, God would miss him in life and know his dwelling and seek him there, because the deceased walked before him and was better known by him than by anyone else. He recollected God and became proficient in his work; he recollected God and became joyful in his work and joyful in his life; he recollected God and became happy in his modest home with his dear ones; he disturbed no one by indifference to public worship, disturbed no one by untimely zeal, but God's house was to him a second home — and now he has gone home.

But in the grave there is no recollection — therefore it remains behind, remains with the two who were dear to him in life: they will recollect him. And now when the person who stepped up to the grave first because he was the next of kin and after the brief moment of the speech was the last one at the grave because he was the next of kin, when he, recollecting, departs, he

goes home to the sorrowing widow — and the name over the door becomes a recollection. Now and then for a time there will come a customer who casually or more solicitously asks about the man, and when he hears of his death the customer will say, "Well, so he is dead." When all the old customers have done that once, the life of the locality has no longer any means of preserving the recollection of him. But the old widow will need no reminder in order to recollect, and the busy son will not find it a hindrance to recollect. When no one asks about him anymore, then the name over the door — when the house is no longer visibly a house of sorrow, when also the grief in the house has abated and the daily loss has with consolation practiced recollection — then the name over the door will signify to the two that they also have one additional work: to recollect the one who is dead.

Now the speech is over. Just one act remains — with the three spadefuls of earth to commit the deceased, like everything that has come from the earth, to earth again — and then all is over.

The unauthorized discourse cannot carry this out in earnest as here described; there is no death waiting for it so that all can be over. But despite this, you, my listener, can pay heed to the discourse. Death itself certainly has its own earnestness. The earnestness lies not in the event, not in the external situation that now another person has died, no more than the difference in earnestness lies in the number of carriages, indeed, no more than the mitigated mood that only wants to speak well of the dead is earnestness or could in the remotest way satisfy the person who thought earnestly about his own death. Death can expressly teach that earnestness lies in the inner being, in thought, can teach that it is only an illusion when the external is regarded light-mindedly or heavy-mindedly or when the observer, profoundly considering the thought of death, forgets to think about and take into account his own death. If someone wants to name a proper object of earnestness, one names death and "the earnest thought of

death," and yet it seems as if there is a jest underlying death, and this jest, varied in dissimilarity of mood and expression, is essential to every contemplation of death in which the contemplator himself is not alone with death and does not think of himself and death at the same time. A pagan has already declared that one ought not to fear death, because "when it is, I am not, and when I am, it is not." This is the jest by which the cunning contemplator places himself on the outside; but even if the contemplation of death uses pictures of horror to describe death and terrifies a sick imagination, it is still only a jest if he merely contemplates death and not himself in death, if he thinks of it as the human condition but not as his own. The jest is that this unyielding power cannot, as it were, get at its victim, that there is a contradiction, that death, as it were, tricks itself.

Sorrow — if you wish to compare it to death and want to call sorrow an archer, as death is — sorrow does not miss its mark, because it hits the living, and when it has hit him, only then does the sorrow begin; but when death's arrow has hit, then indeed it is over. And sickness, if you want to compare it to death and if you want to call sickness a snare, as death certainly is a snare in which life is caught — sickness actually does catch, and when it has caught the healthy the sickness begins. But when death tightens the snare it has indeed caught nothing, because then all is over.

But the earnestness lies in just this, and just this differentiates the earnestness of death from the earnestness of life, which so easily allows one to deceive oneself. When someone goes his way bowed low in adversity, sufferings, sickness, lack of appreciation, hardship, and wretched prospects, he draws the wrong conclusion if on the basis of that he directly concludes that he is earnest, because earnestness is not the direct version but the ennobled one — that is, here again it is the inner being and the thinking and the appropriation and the ennobling that are the earnestness.

If someone is occupied in a complex undertaking, perhaps is in command of many soldiers, perhaps writes many books, perhaps holds high positions; if one perhaps has many children, or frequently must be in mortal danger, or has the sober job of dressing corpses, he draws the wrong conclusion if on the basis of that he straightway concludes that he is earnest — because earnestness is in the impact; earnestness is the earnestness of the inner being, not of the job. In this sense, however, death is not something actual, and as soon as one is dead it is too late to become earnest. If someone meets sudden death, something a more earnest age regarded as the greatest misfortune (which is why it is mentioned in the ancient prayer) but which a later age regards as the greatest good fortune, then one is indeed helped. Life's earnestness is earnest, and yet there is no earnestness unless the external is ennobled in one's consciousness; in this lies the possibility of illusion. The earnestness of death is without deception, because it is not death that is earnest but the thought of death.

Therefore if you, my listener, will fix your attention on this thought and concern yourself in no other way with the consideration than to think about yourself, then this unauthorized discourse will become an earnest matter also with you. To think of oneself as dead is earnestness; to be a witness to the death of another is mood. There is the light touch of sadness when the passerby is a father who carries his child for the last time, carries it to the grave; or when the indigent hearse drives by and you know nothing about the dead person except that he was a human being. There is a sadness when youth and health become death's booty, when many years later the image of the beautiful one appears on the crumbling monument on the grave, surrounded by weeds; there is an earnestness in mood when death intrudes into the vain pursuits and snatches the foolish girl dressed in her most vainglorious finery, snatches the fool in his most vainglorious moment; there is a sigh over life's mockery when the dead person had made the

certain promise and without fault became a deceiver, because he had merely forgotten that death is the only certainty; there is a longing for the eternal when death took and took again and now took the last outstanding person you knew; there is a fever heat or cold fire of soul illness when someone becomes so familiar with death and the loss of next of kin that life becomes soul-destroying for him; there is sheer sorrow when the dead person was one of yours; there are the labor pains of immortal hope when it was your beloved; there is the jolting breakthrough of earnestness when it was your one and only guide and loneliness overwhelms you — but even if it was your child, even if it was your beloved, and even if it was your one and only guide, this is still a mood; and even if you would willingly die in their place, this also is a mood, and even if you think that this is easier, this also is a mood. Earnestness is that you think death, and that you are thinking it as your lot, and that you are then doing what death is indeed unable to do — namely, that you are and death also is.

Death is the schoolmaster of earnestness, but in turn its earnest instruction is recognized precisely by its leaving to the single individual the task of searching himself so it can then teach him earnestness as it can be learned only by the person himself. Death minds its own business in life; it does not run around, as the timorous think, and sharpen its scythe and scare women and children — as if this were earnestness. No, death says, “I exist; if anyone wants to learn from me, then let him come to me.” Only in this way does death occupy one in earnestness — otherwise only in mood through the ingenuity of thought, through its profundity, or jestingly in elated fancy, or bowing in deep sorrow that in its most suffering expression still is not earnestness, because earnestness would expressly teach one to be moderate in sorrow and lamentation.

A poet has told of a youth who on the night when the year changes dreamed of being an old man, and as an old man in his dream he looked

back over a wasted life, until he woke in anxiety New Year's morning not only to a new year but to a new life. Likewise, to be wide awake and to think death, to think what surely is more decisive than old age, which of course also has its time, to think that all was over, that everything was lost along with life, in order then to win everything in life — this is earnestness. There was an emperor who had himself buried in accordance with all the formal customs. His action was perhaps only a mood, but to witness his own death, to witness the closing of the casket, to witness that everything that fills the senses in a worldly and mortal way ceases in death — this is earnestness. To die is indeed the lot of every human being and thus is a very mediocre art, but to be able to die well is indeed the highest wisdom of life. Wherein lies the difference? In this, that in the one case the earnestness is the earnestness of death, in the other it is the earnestness of the mortal being. And the discourse that makes the distinction cannot, of course, address itself to the dead but to the living.

The discourse will therefore be about:

DEATH'S DECISION.

WE SURELY DO agree, my listener, that a godly discourse ought never be divisive or be at odds with anything except what is ungodly. For example, when the poor man, the servant who must use sparingly the few hours of his infrequent time off, goes to visit a grave in order to recollect someone who is dead and also to think about his own death, when someone like that has to make the most of his meager opportunities, the walk out there also becomes a pleasure, the visit out there also becomes a joyful and salutary diversion from the many days of work — so that the time out there is spent now in remembering the one dead, now in thinking earnestly about himself, and now in being delighted with his freedom and the surroundings, as if one were seeking recreation in a beautiful region, as if the walk were only for pleasure and thus food was brought along for combined delight. We surely do agree that in his noble simplicity such a person beautifully unites contradictions (which, according to the words of the wise, is the ultimate difficulty), that his recollecting is precious to the deceased, is received with joy in heaven, and that his earnestness is just as laudable, just as well-pleasing to God, just as serviceable to him as that of someone who with rare talent used day and night in practicing in his life the earnest thought of death, so that he was halted and halted again in order to renounce vain pursuits, was prompted and prompted again to hasten on the road of the good, now was weaned of being talkative and busy in life in order to learn wisdom in silence, now learned not to shudder at phantoms and human inventions but at the responsibility of death, now learned not to fear those who kill the body but to fear for himself and fear having his life in vanity, in the moment, in imagination. We laud him for so magnificently using the opportunity granted him; if, however, he occasionally took time off from

this magnificent daily task in order to be entertained by the thought that he was better than the simple person who had neither such time nor such talents more pleasing to God, as if God were utterly unjust and denied the time and talent to the one, that is, the gift of good fortune, and then in turn, as people sometimes in thoughtlessness act cruelly, made the lack of them a guilt — alas, what a difference between his rare time off and the simple man's time off, when he forfeits everything and the simple man gains everything! No, all comparison is only a jest and a conceited comparison a dismal jest.

Even if that favored one had plenty of time, earnestness and death would still teach him that he had no time to waste [spilde] and even less to forfeit [forspilde] everything. If, however, someone were speedily to finish with the thought of death just as with all other thoughts and perhaps haughtily worried that there would not be enough in this poor and monotonous life for such a speedy thinker to think about, then we surely do agree, my listener, that it is the characteristic of every object when it becomes an object of godly contemplation that the simple person is quickly helped to a beneficial understanding and that the most gifted person gladly uses a whole lifetime, even if he admits that he has neither completely understood it nor perfectly practiced the thought in his life. The person who is without God in the world soon becomes bored with himself — and expresses this haughtily by being bored with all life, but the person who is in fellowship with God indeed lives with the one whose presence gives infinite significance to even the most insignificant.

Concerning death's decision, the first thing to be said is that it is decisive. The repetition of the word is significant, and the repetition itself reminds us of how sparing of words death is. There is many another decision in life, but only one is decisive the way death's decision is. All the forces of life are incapable of resisting time; it sweeps them along with

itself — even recollection is in the present. One who is living does not have it in his power to stop time, to find rest outside time in the perfect conclusion, in a conclusion of joy as if there were no tomorrow, in a conclusion of sorrow as if it could not be a drop more bitter, in a conclusion of the contemplation as if meaning were entirely finished and the contemplation were not in turn a part of the meaning, in the conclusion of accounting as if the moment of settling an account did not also take on its own responsibility. Death, however, has this power; it does not dabble with the decision as if there were still a little left over; it does not chase after the decision as the living person does — it carries it out in earnest. When death comes, the word is: Up to here, not one step further; then it is concluded, not a letter is added; the meaning is at an end and not one more sound is to be heard — all is over. If it is impossible to unite all the sayings of the countless living in one saying about life, all the dead are united in one saying, in one single saying to the living: Stand still. If it is impossible to unite all the sayings of the countless living in one saying about the endeavors of their lives, all the dead are united in one, in one single saying: Now all is over.

See, death is able to do this. But it is no inexperienced youth who has not learned to use the scythe, so that someone would be able to dumbfound him. Have any notion you wish, fanciful or true, about your life, about its importance for everybody, about its importance for yourself — death has no notion and pays no attention to notions. Ah, if anyone ought to be tired of repetition, death certainly ought to be, which has seen everything and the same thing again and again. It has seen many times even the death uncommon for centuries; yet no dying person has ever seen death change color, has seen it shaken by the sight, has seen the scythe tremble in its hand, has seen a hint of a change of countenance in its calm face. Neither has death now become an old man who, debilitated by age, gropes around

vaguely, does not exactly know what time it is, or has become compassionate out of weakness. Ah, if anyone dares to compliment himself on being unchanged, death certainly does — it does not become paler or older.

But the discourse is not to eulogize death, no more than it will occupy the imagination. That death can make a finish is indeed certain, but the challenge of earnestness to the living is to think it, to think that all is over, that there comes a time when all is over. This is the difficult thing, because even in the moment of death the dying person thinks that he still might have some time to live, and one is even afraid to tell him that all is over. And now the living, as long as he is living perhaps in health, in youth, in happiness, in power — that is, safeguarded, yes, well safeguarded if he is not willing to shut himself in with the thought of death, which explains to him that this security is false. There is a consolation in life, a false flatterer; there is a safeguard in life, a hypocritical deceiver — it is called postponement. But it is seldom called by its proper name, because even when one wants to say it, it insinuates itself into the word and the name becomes somewhat toned down, and of course the toned-down name is also a postponement. On the other hand, there is no one who can teach us to loathe the flatterer and to see through the deceiver as the earnest thought of death can. Death and postponement are irreconcilable and they are mortal enemies, but the earnest person knows that death is the stronger.

So all is over. If it was a child with a claim to an entire life, if it wept for itself — all is over now, not a moment is conceded. If it was a youth with his beautiful hopes, if he pleaded for himself, for just one single hope — all is over now, not a penny is paid to him for his claim to life. If a little was lacking of a man's renowned work, and if this work was a wonder of the world and all humankind would misunderstand it because the conclusion was lacking — all is over now, the work is not completely finished. If it was

a single word that had been the meaning of his life and if he would give a whole life to dare to say it — all is over now, the word was not said.

So by death's decision all is over; there is rest. Nothing, nothing disturbs the dead. If that little word or that lacking moment made the death struggle agitated, now the dead one is not disturbed; if the suppression of that little word disturbed the lives of many of the living, if that enigmatic work engaged the researcher again and again, the dead one is not disturbed. Death's decision is like a night, the night that comes when one cannot work; indeed death has been called a night, and the conception has been mitigated by calling it a sleep. It is supposed to be mitigating for the living one when, sleepless, he futilely seeks rest on his bed at night, when, fleeing from himself, he futilely seeks a hiding place where consciousness cannot discover him, when the tormented one, weary in body and soul from intense suffering, futilely seeks a position in which there is relief, when he cannot stand still because of the pain and cannot walk because of exhaustion, until he collapses and then in a new effort futilely seeks a restful position, futilely seeks coolness in this heat. It is supposed to be mitigating to think that there is still one position in which the exhausted one finds rest. It is the position of death, one bed on which he rests quietly, the bed of death; one sleep that does not run away, the sleep of death; one cool place, the grave; one hiding place where consciousness stands outside, the grave, where recollection itself remains outside like a light breeze in the trees; one quilt the quiet man cannot throw off, under which he sleeps quietly, the quilt of green grass! It is supposed to be mitigating, if in youth one has already grown weary and sadness wants to nurse the child, then to consider that in the womb of the earth one lies comfortably; it is supposed to be so mitigating to consider this consolation and to think of it in this way, that the eternal finally becomes the unfortunate one who, like a night nurse, does not dare to sleep while all the rest of us fall asleep!

But, my listener, this is a mood, and to think about death in this way is not earnestness. To long for death in this way is depression's escape from life, and in this way to be unwilling to fear death is rebellion. It is the fraudulence of sadness to be unwilling to understand that there is something else to fear than life, and therefore a consoling wisdom other than the sleep of death must be found. Truly, if it is weak to fear death, then it is a prinked-up courage that fancies itself not afraid of death when the same person fears life; it is an indulgent lethargy that wants to go to bed — that is, indulgently wants to sleep itself into consolation, indulgently wants to sleep itself away from suffering.

Yes, admittedly death is a sleep, and thus we want to say that everyone resting in death is sleeping, we want to say that a silent night is shading the dead and that nothing disturbs their peace. But is there no difference between life and death? The living person who is thinking about his own death views it otherwise. What if you yourself, you were the living one, who saw it! Look at the one who is sleeping in death; he is not flushed like a child in sleep; he is not gathering new strength like the man who is being reinvigorated; the dream is not paying him a visit in friendliness the way it visits the old man in his sleep! When you see someone who looks more dead than alive, what do you do? You call to the person who has fainted because this condition makes you shudder — that is, when the condition of death is that of a living person; is it comforting, then, that the reason you do not call to the dead person is that it cannot help! But you are indeed not dead, and if depression wants to brace you by means of an epileptic seizure, if sadness wants to make you faint in deathly exhaustion that finds its only consolation in the sleep of death, then call out, then shout to yourself; do for yourself what you would do for anyone else and do not seek deceptive comfort in wishing all was over! Whatever the fanciful or true conception you have of the singularity of your suffering — ah, if anyone must be weary

of the repetition of the mournful scream, death certainly must be; even the unfortunate one for centuries unmatched in suffering, even his mournful scream death has heard many times, but no one, no one has hinted that it moved death to come more swiftly! Even if your scream could move him — is that really your intention, or is it not rather the contradiction, that he does not come because you call, that fortifies the egotism of defiance; is it not the contradiction that helps the timorous ones play the brave game with the terror. If, then, your scream and your longing did move him, are you not deceiving yourself even if we were to forget momentarily the responsibility that always remains? What was it that gave relief; was it this, that all was over, or was it not the idea of this, as this was still in the power of depression and sadness and in the power of a living person — a diversion, a plaything! See, the person who sleeps in death does not move, and even if the coffin clothes are not too tight he still does not move; he becomes dust. The thought that all is over, which in the idea's most fanciful advance payment depressingly refreshed him in defiant weakness or flirtatiously soothed him in sadness, that thought is not present in him. Therefore he has no joy in its being over — why, then, did he desire it so much? What a contradiction! Say then that it is so comforting to rot in the ground. But if you know something else about death, you also know how to fear something else than life.

Earnestness certainly understands the same about death but understands it differently. It understands that all is over. Whether this, mitigated in mood, can be expressed by saying that death is a night, a sleep, is of minor concern to it. Earnestness does not waste much time in guessing riddles; it does not sit sunk in contemplation, does not rewrite expressions, does not think about the ingeniousness of imagery, does not discuss, but acts.

If it is certain that death exists, which it is; if it is certain that with death's decision all is over; if it is certain that death itself never becomes

involved in giving any explanation — well, then it is a matter of understanding oneself, and the earnest understanding is that if death is night then life is day, that if no work can be done at night then work can be done during the day; and the terse but impelling cry of earnestness, like death's terse cry, is: This very day.

Death in earnest gives life force as nothing else does; it makes one alert as nothing else does. Death induces the sensual person to say: Let us eat and drink, because tomorrow we shall die — but this is sensuality's cowardly lust for life, that contemptible order of things where one lives in order to eat and drink instead of eating and drinking in order to live. The idea of death may induce weakness in the more profound person so that he sinks relaxed in mood, but the thought of death gives the earnest person the right momentum in life and the right goal toward which he directs his momentum. No bowstring can be tightened in such a way and is able to give the arrow such momentum the way the thought of death is able to accelerate the living when earnestness stretches the thought. Then earnestness grasps the present this very day, disdains no task as too insignificant, rejects no time as too short, works with all its might even though it is willing to smile at itself if this effort is said to be merit before God, in weakness is willing to understand that a human being is nothing at all and that one who works with all one's might gains only the proper opportunity to wonder at God.

Indeed, time [Tid] also is a good. If a person were able to produce a scarcity [Dyrtid] in the external world, yes, then he would be busy. The merchant is correct in saying that the commodity certainly has its price, but the price still depends very much on the advantageous circumstances at the time — and when there is scarcity, the merchant profits. A person is perhaps not able to do this in the external world, but in the world of spirit everyone is able to do it. Death itself produces a scarcity of time [Dyrtid

paa Tid] for the dying. Who has not heard how one day, sometimes one hour, was jacked up in price when the dying one bargained with death! Who has not heard how one day, sometimes one hour, gained infinite worth because death made time dear! Death is able to do this, but with the thought of death the earnest person is able to create a scarcity so that the year and the day receive infinite worth — and when it is a time of scarcity the merchant profits by using time. But if public security is unsettled, the merchant does not carelessly pile up his profits but watches over his treasure lest a thief break in and take it away from him; alas, death also is like a thief in the night.

Is this not true, my listener; and have you yourself not experienced this? And when the thought of death visited you but made you inactive, when it sneaked in and beguiled your life force into romantic dreaming, when death's despondency would make your life a vanity, when that seducer, sadness, prowled around you, when the idea that all was over would anesthetize you into the sleep of depression, when you lost yourself in absentminded preoccupation with the symbols of death — then you did not lay the blame on death, because all this was indeed not death. But you said to yourself, "My soul is in a mood, and if it continues this way, then there is in it a hostility toward me that can gain domination." Then you did not flee death, as if that would be the cure. Far from it. You said, "I will summon the earnest thought of death." And it helped you, because the earnestness of death has helped to make a final hour infinitely meaningful; the earnest thought of it has helped to make a long life as meaningful as in a time of scarcity, as watchful as if sought by thieving hands.

So, then, let death keep its power, "that all is over," but let life also keep the right to work while it is day; and let the earnest person seek the thought of death as an aid in that work. The vacillating person is only a witness to the continual boundary struggle between life and death, his life only doubt's

statement of the situation, the ending of his life an illusion, but the earnest person has made friends with the contenders and in the earnest thought of death he has the most faithful ally. Even though the equality of all the dead is that now all is over, there is still one difference, my listener, a difference that cries aloud to heaven — the difference of what that life was that now in death is over. So all is not over, and despite all death's terror — no, supported by the earnest thought of death, the earnest person says, "All is not over." But if this bright prospect is tempting, if he once again merely glimpses it in the half-light of contemplation, if it puts distance between him and the task, if time does not become a scarcity, if the possession of it is secure for him — then again he is not earnest. If death says, "Perhaps this very day," then earnestness says, "Let it perhaps be today or not," but I say, "This very day."

Concerning death's decision, the next thing that must be said is that it is indefinable. By this nothing is said, but this is the way it must be when the question is about an enigma. Death does indeed make all equal, but if this equality is in nothing, in annihilation, then the equality is itself indefinable. If there is to be further discussion of this equality, it can be done only by citing life's dissimilarity and denying this in regard to death's equality. Here in the grave the infant and the person who transformed a world are equally inactive; here the rich man is just as poor as the poor man; here poverty does not beg, the rich man has nothing to give, and the most contented person and the most insatiable person need just as little; here the voice of the ruler is not heard, nor the cry of the oppressed; here the arrogant and the injured are equally powerless. Here they lie, grave by grave, and tolerate one another, those whom enmity separated by a whole world; here lies the beautiful one and here the wretched one, but beauty does not separate them; here they both lie, the one who was on the lookout for death as for a hidden

treasure, and the one who had forgotten that death existed, but the difference is undetectable.

Because of its equality, death's decision is like an empty space and like a silence in which nothing is heard, or it is toned down like a silence that is not disturbed. And in this silent kingdom, death is the ruler. Although one against all the living, it is still powerful enough to make them his subjects and to command silence. Whatever conception you want to have of your life, yes, even of its significance for the eternal, you do not talk yourself out of death, you do not make the transition to the eternal in the course of a speech and with one breath — they have all been obliged to be silent. Even if generation noisily united with generation in one common task and if the single individual forgot himself and found himself very secure under the cover of the crowd — behold, death takes each one separately — and he becomes silent. Whatever difference you want to imagine in the one living, death makes him just like the person whose dissimilarity did not make him distinguishable. To the vain person, the mirror of life sometimes depicts his dissimilarity with flattering faithfulness, but the mirror of death does not flatter; its faithfulness shows all to be identical; they all look alike when death with its mirror has demonstrated that the dead person is silent.

Death's decision is therefore not definable by equality, because the equality consists in annihilation. And pondering this is supposed to be alleviating for the living! When the spirit, weary of dissimilarity, which goes on and on and never ends, proudly withdraws into itself and in the defiance of powerlessness accumulates anger over its inability to check the life force of dissimilarity — then it is supposed to be alleviating to consider that death has this power, then this conception is supposed to fan that enthusiasm of annihilation into a glow in which there is supposed to be heightened life. — When the poor wretch sighs in his corner because life, like a stepmother, has done him wrong, when he, so deformed he does not

even dare to show himself because even the best of people involuntarily smile at his excruciating, alas, and yet ludicrous misery, when he, cut off in this way, does not love because in him no one finds a match, which he is futilely seeking in others — then it is supposed to be as alleviating as the cooling of snow for the hidden fire of resentment to consider that death makes all equal! — When someone violated smarts under the injustice of the powerful and in powerlessness the hate despairs of revenge — then it is supposed to be a welcome consolation that almost restores the joy of life to think that death makes all of them equal. — When the pampered wishful thinker sits idle and flirts with his wishes' great ideas of himself but only sees that others strive and achieve great things, when he can scarcely breathe because of his furious impatience — then it is supposed to be alleviating, it is supposed to give air, to consider that death crosses out everything and makes all equal. — When the loser realized that now the struggle was over and that he was the weaker one, but also realizes that all is not over yet, that his defeat gave the momentum of good fortune to the victor, that his suffering is every day in consequence of the defeat but the report of the other's ascent at a distance is more and more remote — then it is supposed to be mitigating to consider that death will fetch him and make the separation into a nothing! — When sickness becomes a daily visitor and time passes, the time of joy, and even those closest become weary of the suffering one and many an impatient word wounds, when the sufferer himself feels that his mere presence is disturbing to the joyful, and so he must sit far away from the dance — then it is supposed to be a relief to reflect that death invites him also to the dance, and in that dance all become equal.

But, my listener, this is a mood; and actually it is cowardice, which by a counterfeit, clad in poetic form, wants to think itself superior, although in essence it still is just as paltry. If the simple person is perhaps not able to

grasp this kind of mood, is this exclusiveness in itself a decisive value, is it not decisive only in making the mood more responsible? It is a cowardly craving of depression to want to become dizzy in the emptiness and to seek the final diversion in this dizziness; it is envy in rebellion against God to want to damage one's soul, wounded by dissimilarity; it is self-denunciation in powerlessness to want to hate; it betrays that one simply lacks power when one makes dreadful use of powerlessness. It is a contemptible shortcut to a groundless complaint against life for someone merely to wish and then to complain against life because he did not become what he wished and never becomes proficient in anything but wishing and finally becomes wretched enough to wish everything away. It is self-tormenting doggedness for the vanquished to refuse to understand anything higher than the conflict between you and me and the downfall of both; it is a still more terrible sickness to refuse to comprehend which physician the sick one needs. Truly, if it is cowardly and voluptuous pampering not to dare even in thought to relinquish the advantageous dissimilarity and having one's life wrapped up in it, then it is a prinked-up courage that wants to experiment with the idea of death's equality when the same person sighs or gasps under life's dissimilarity.

If it actually were anyone's idea to want to be consoled in this way by the equality of death — would it not be the contradiction of continuing to live that would give the presumptuous daring deed its allure? Did his conception of death prove true in death, that is, when the intellectual pursuit no longer entertained his passion? The dead one has, of course, forgotten the dissimilarity; and even if he was determined to recollect it all his life in order to have the pleasure of seeing it taken away from someone else in death, this thought is certainly not with him in death, even if we momentarily want to forget the responsibility that awaits. This is the lie and the deception in the presumptuous defiance that wants to conspire with

death against life. It is forgotten that death is the strongest; it is forgotten that it has no preferences, that it does not make a pact with anyone, so that in death he acquires a free pass and latitude for the enjoyment of being annihilated. Only when the living person’s conception of death roams around in fantasy in the silent kingdom of the dead, itself playing that it is death, and vanishes in death; only when the living person’s conception impersonates death, summons the person it envies, divests him of all his glory and delights in his powerlessness; only when the conception goes out to the graves, presumptuously shoves the spade into the ground, violates the peace of the dead by its defiant desire that the remains of one dead individual look exactly like another’s — only then is there relief.

But all this is not earnestness; however dark its nature and however somber the attraction, that still does not make it earnestness. Earnestness does not scowl but is reconciled with life and knows how to fear death.

Earnestness, then, understands the same thing about death but understands it in a different way. It understands that death makes all equal, and this it has already understood, because earnestness has taught it to seek before God the equality in which all are able to be equal. In this endeavor the earnest person discovers a dissimilarity, namely, his own dissimilarity from the goal that is assigned to him, and discovers that a condition most distant from this goal would be like the equality of death. But every time earthly dissimilarity wants to tempt, wants to delay, the earnest thought about the equality of death intervenes and again impels.

Just as no evil spirit dares name the holy name, so every good spirit shudders before the empty space, before the equality of annihilation, and this shudder that is productive in the life of nature is impelling in the life of spirit. Ah, how often, when death came to a person, the equality of annihilation taught him to wish the most oppressive dissimilarity back again, taught him to find the terms desirable now when the terms of death

were the only ones! In this way the earnest thought of death has taught the living person to permeate the most oppressive dissimilarity with the equality before God. No comparison has that impelling power and so reliably gives the urgent person the true direction as does the comparison the living person makes between himself and the equality of death. If the most conceited of all comparisons is the one made when a person disdains all other comparisons in order to compare himself with himself in self-satisfaction; indeed, if perhaps no vain woman ever stood so vain, surrounded by admiration, as when she stood alone before her mirror — ah, then no comparison is as earnest as the comparison of the one who, alone, compares himself with the equality of death. Alone, because that is indeed what death makes him when the grave is closed, when the cemetery gate is shut, when night falls and he lies alone, far away from all sympathy, unrecognizable in the shape that can only evoke a shudder, alone out there where the multitude of the dead do not form any kind of society. Behold, death has been able to overthrow thrones and principalities, but the earnest thought of death has done something just as great; it has helped the earnest person to subordinate the most advantageous dissimilarity to the humble equality before God and has helped him to raise himself above the most oppressive dissimilarity into the humble equality before God.

Is it not true, my listener, have you not experienced something like this yourself? When your soul went astray in preferential treatment and you could scarcely recognize yourself for all the glory, the earnest thought of the equality of death made you unrecognizable in another way and you learned to know yourself and to want to be known before God. Or if your soul sighed under the severe limitations of suffering, adversity, insults, and depression and, alas, it seemed to you as if the limitations would last a lifetime, then when the tempter also came to your house (you know him, the tempter one has in one's own inner being and who deceptively brings

greetings from others) and when he at first dangled before you the good fortune of others until you became dejected and he then wanted to give you compensation — then you did not surrender to mood. You said, "It is rebellion against God, enmity against myself"; and then you said, "I will summon the earnest thought of death." And it helped you to surmount the dissimilarity, to find the equality before God and to want to express this equality. The equality of death is terrifying because nothing can withstand it (how disconsolate!), but the godly equality is blessed because nothing can prevent it unless the person himself wills to do so. Would life's dissimilarity be so great then!

Take the joyful one, let him rejoice in his good fortune — if you, the unfortunate one, were joyful again over his good fortune, would you not then both be joyful? Take the person of distinction, let him delight in his advantages — if you, the insulted one, had forgotten the affront and now saw his excellence, would the difference indeed be great? Take the youth, let him hurry on with the confidence of hope — if you, although disappointed by life, perhaps even assisted him secretly, would the difference then be so great? Ah, good fortune and honor and wealth and beauty and power — these do indeed constitute the dissimilarity. But if the only difference is that one person's good fortune and honor and wealth and beauty and power are a field plant and the other's a grave flower that is cultivated in the sacred soil of self-denial — is the difference then so great; after all, they are both fortunate and honored and rich and beautiful and powerful. Alas, no, then a person needs no compensation, least of all the kind that deceitfully suppresses the fact that he himself becomes nothing. However oppressive the dissimilarity was, the earnest thought about the equality of death, like the strict upbringing, did help to renounce worldly comparison, to understand annihilation as something even more terrible, and to want to seek the equality before God.

The equality of death was not permitted to enchant you with its sorcery — after all, there is no time for that either. Just as death's decision is not definable by equality, so it is likewise not definable by inequality. Who has not frequently heard it said that death makes no distinctions, that it recognizes neither status nor age. Who has not himself often pondered that when he named the most varied circumstances of a living person and then wanted to think of death in relation to them, the conclusion was that death could just as well seek its booty here as there, just as well, because in death no consideration is shown, whereas all dissimilarity involves showing consideration. So death is not definable by its inequality. It almost steals a march on life, and the baby is born dead; it lets the old man wait year after year. When someone says peace and security, death stands over him, and in mortal danger death is sometimes sought futilely, while it finds the person who is hiding in an out-of-the-way place. When the barns are full and there are provisions for a long life, death comes and demands the rich man's soul; when there is want, it stays away. When the hungry person worries about what he will have to eat tomorrow, death comes and takes away from him his worry about making a living; when the sated voluptuary worries about what he will have to eat tomorrow, death comes in judgment and makes his worry superfluous.

So death is indefinable — the only certainty, and the only thing about which nothing is certain. This conception lures thought out into the shifting of the indefinable in order to try its hand at this shuddering as in a game, in order to guess at this amazing enigma, in order to indulge in the inexplicable disappearance and the inexplicable eruption of the sudden. It is supposed to be mitigating to think about this coincidence, this like and unlike, this law intimated in the lawless, which is and is not, which stands in relation to everything living and which is indefinable in every one of its relations.

When the soul becomes weary of compulsion and constraint, of the definable and of the meager daily measure of the definable task and of the consciousness that more and more is being neglected; when the power of the will has served its time and the enervated one has become just like dry-rot wood; when curiosity, weary of life, seeks a more diverse task for its curiosity — then it is supposed to be entertaining to consider the indefinability of death and in a mitigating way to become familiar with that thought. Now one is surprised at a particular death, now at another; now one talks oneself giddy by talking in general terms about what eludes general definition; now one is in one mood, now in another, now sad, now undaunted, now mocking, now connecting death to the happiest moment as the greatest good fortune, now as the greatest misfortune, now wishing for a sudden death, now a slow one; now one is made weary in the discussion about which death is the most desirable, now one becomes bored with the whole deliberation, forgets death, until the wheel of contemplation is again set in motion and shakes the details of the contemplation into new patterns for new amazement — alas, yes, until the thought of one's own death evaporates in a fog before the eyes and the reminder of one's own death becomes an indefinite buzzing in the ears. This is the mitigation of familiarity in the dulled one's view that for better or for worse this is the way it is, in the elevating impersonal forgetfulness that forgets itself over the whole or, rather, forgets itself in thoughtlessness, whereby one's own death becomes a droll instance in all these manifold unpredictable instances, and the ending of one's time of service becomes a preparation that makes the transition of one's own death easy.

But even if a life such as this experienced all possible moods by contemplating the singularity of death, is the contemplation therefore earnestness? Does the prolixity of moods always end in earnestness; should not the commencement of earnestness rather be the prevention of that

prolixity in which the contemplator neglects his life and becomes like the person addicted to gambling when he ponders and ponders and dreams about numbers in the night instead of working during the day. The person who views death in this way is in a drugged condition with regard to his spiritual life; he weakens his consciousness so it cannot endure the earnest impression of the inexplicable, so he cannot in earnestness submit to the impression but then also represses the enigmatic.

Yes, death certainly is a singular enigma, but only earnestness can define it. Indeed, from what does that confusion of thoughtlessness come but from this, that the individual's thought ventures, observing, out into life, wants to survey the whole of existence, that play of forces that only God in heaven can view calmly, because in his providence he governs it with wise and omnipresent purpose, but which weakens a human being's mind and makes him mentally deranged, causes him misplaced care, and strengthens with regrettable consolation. Misplaced care, namely in mood, because he worries about so much; regrettable consolation, namely in slack lethargy, when his contemplation has so many entrances and exits that it eventually wanders. And when death comes, it still deceives the contemplator, because all his contemplation did not come a single step closer to the explanation but only deceived him out of life.

Earnestness, then, understands the same thing about death, that it is indefinable by inequality, that no age or circumstance or life situation is a safeguard against it, but thereupon the earnest person understands it in another way and understands himself. See, the axe already lies at the root of the tree; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down — no, every tree will be cut down, also the one that bears good fruit. The certainty is that the axe lies at the root of the tree. Even if you do not notice that death is passing over your grave and that the axe is in motion, the uncertainty is still there at every moment, the uncertainty when the blow

falls — and the tree. But when it has fallen, then it is decided whether the tree bore good fruit or rotten fruit.

The earnest person looks at himself. If he is young, the thought of death teaches him that a young person will become its booty here if it comes today, but he does not dally in ordinary talk about youth as death's booty. The earnest person looks at himself; so he knows the nature of the one who would become death's booty here if it were to come today; he looks at his own work and so he knows what work it is that would be interrupted here if death were to come today. Thus the game ends, the enigma is solved. The ordinary view of death only confuses thought, just as wanting to experience in general does. The certainty of death is the earnestness; its uncertainty is the instruction, the practice of earnestness. The earnest person is the one who through uncertainty is brought up to earnestness by virtue of certainty.

How does a person learn earnestness? Is it by having an earnest person dictate something to him so that he can learn it? Not at all. If you have not yourself learned in this way from an earnest man, then imagine how it goes. See, the learner concerns himself (without concern there is no learner) about some object with his whole soul, and in this way the certainty of death becomes an object of concern. Now the concerned person turns to the teacher of earnestness, and thus death is indeed not a monster except for the imagination. The learner now wants this or that; he wants to do it thus and so and under these assumptions— "And it is bound to succeed, is it not so?" But the earnest person answers nothing at all, and finally he says, yet without mockery but with the calmness of earnestness, "Yes, it is possible!" The learner already becomes a little impatient; he suggests a new plan, changes the assumptions, and concludes his speech in a still more urgent way. But the earnest person is silent, looks calmly at him, and finally says, "Yes, it is possible!" Now the learner becomes passionate; he resorts to pleas or, if he is so equipped, to clever locutions — indeed, he perhaps even

insults the earnest person and becomes totally confused himself and everything around him seems to be confusion. But when with these weapons and in this condition he charges at the earnest person, he has to endure his unaltered calm gaze and put up with his silence, because the earnest person merely looks at him and finally says, “Yes, it is possible.”

This is the way it is with death. The certainty is the unchanging, and the uncertainty is the brief statement: It is possible. Every condition that wants to make the certainty of death into a conditional certainty for the wisher, every agreement that wants to make the certainty of death into a conditional certainty for the person making up his mind, every arrangement that wants to condition the certainty of death as to time and hour for the one who is acting, every condition, every agreement, every arrangement runs aground on this statement; and all passionateness and all cleverness and all defiance are rendered powerless by this statement — until the learner sees the error of his ways. But the earnestness lies in just this, and it was to this that certainty and uncertainty wanted to help the learner. If certainty is allowed to leave open the question of what it can be, like a universal caption over life, instead of being like the endorsement of the particular and the daily by usage, as happens with the help of uncertainty — then earnestness is not learned. Uncertainty lends a hand and, like the teacher, points steadily to the object of learning and says to the learner, “Pay close attention to the certainty” — then earnestness comes into existence. No teacher is able to teach the pupil to pay attention to what is said the way the uncertainty of death does when it points to the certainty of death; and no teacher is able to keep the pupil’s thoughts concentrated on the one object of instruction the way the thought of the uncertainty of death does when it practices the thought of the certainty of death.

The certainty of death determines the learner once and for all in earnestness, but the uncertainty of death is the daily or at least the frequent

or necessary surveillance that watches over the earnestness — only this is earnestness. No supervision is so meticulous, not the father's over the child, not the teacher's over the pupil, indeed, not the warden's over the prisoner; and no surveillance is so ennobling as the uncertainty of death when it examines the use of time and the nature of the work, that of the one making up his mind or of the one acting, that of a youth or of an old man, that of a man or of a woman. With regard to well-spent time in relation to the interruption of death, it is not essential whether the time was long or short; and with regard to the essential work in relation to the interruption of death, it is not essential whether the work was finished or only begun. With regard to the accidental, the length of time is the decisive factor, as with happiness, for example — the end alone decides whether one has been happy. With incidental work, which is in the external, it is essential that the work be finished. But the essential work is not defined essentially by time and the external, insofar as death is the interruption. Earnestness, therefore, becomes the living of each day as if it were the last and also the first in a long life, and the choosing of work that does not depend on whether one is granted a lifetime to complete it well or only a brief time to have begun it well.

Finally, it must be said of death's decision that it is inexplicable. That is, whether or not people find an explanation, death itself explains nothing. If you were able to catch sight of him, the pale, grim harvester, where he stood idle, leaning on his scythe, and if you would then go up to him, whether you thought your boredom with life might curry favor with him or that your burning longing for the eternal might move him if you laid your hand on his shoulder and said, "Explain yourself, just one word" — do you think he would reply? I think he would not even notice that you put your hand on his shoulder and spoke to him. Or if death came, alas, so opportunely, alas, as the greatest benefactor, as a rescuer; if it came and saved a person from

incurring the guilt that is not repented in life because the guilt puts an end to life; if the unhappy person were now to thank death for bringing him what was sought and for preventing him from becoming guilty — do you think that death would understand him? I think that death would not hear a word of what he said, because it explains nothing. Whether it comes as the greatest benefaction or the greatest misfortune, whether it is hailed with jubilation or with desperate opposition, death knows nothing about that, because it is inexplicable. Death is the transition; it knows nothing about the circumstances, nothing at all.

See, this inexplicableness certainly needs an explanation. But the earnestness lies in just this, that the explanation does not explain death but discloses the state of the explainer's own innermost being. What an earnest warning to be slow to speak! Even if one must smile upon seeing thoughtlessness putting its hand in support under the pondering head that is supposed to fathom the explanation, even if one must smile again when this thinker comes out with the explanation; or when, as if it were a universal summons, even the most frivolous thoughts are in passing ready with a notion, a comment, as an explanation, and make use of the rare opportunity, inasmuch as death is indeed an inexplicable enigma for everyone — alas, the judgment earnestness pronounces upon such behavior is that the explainer is informing against himself, is betraying how thoughtless, how poor, his life is. Therefore, reticence about the explanation is already an indication of some earnestness, which at least understands that death, just because it is nothing, is not some sort of strange inscription that every passerby is supposed to try to read or a curiosity that everyone must have seen and have an opinion about. What is decisive about the explanation, what prevents the nothingness of death from annihilating the explanation, is that it acquires retroactive power and actuality in the life of the living

person; then death becomes a teacher to him and does not traitorously assist him to a confession that denounces the explainer as a fool.

As the inexplicable, death might seem to be the supreme good fortune. An explanation such as that betrays a life of childishness; the explanation is like the final fruit of that life: superstition. The person with this explanation had a child's and adolescent's conception of the pleasant and the unpleasant. Life went on, and he found himself deceived; he became older in years but not in mind; he grasped nothing of the eternal. Then the childishness within him concentrated in an exaggerated notion that death would come and bring everything to fulfillment. Death now became the friend sought for, the beloved, the rich benefactor who had everything to give that his childishness had futilely sought to have fulfilled in life. At times this good fortune is spoken of frivolously and recklessly, at times sadly; sometimes the explainer even pushes forward vociferously with his explanation and wants to help others, but the explanation merely betrays the state of the explainer's own inner being, betrays that he did not perceive the retroactive effect of earnestness but is childishly hurrying ahead, childishly pinning his hopes on death as he did on life.

As the inexplicable, death may seem to be the greatest misfortune. But this explanation indicates that the explainer is cowardly clinging to life, perhaps cowardly to its favor, perhaps cowardly to its suffering, so that he fears life but fears death even more. Death does not acquire retroactive power, that is, not by virtue of the conception, because otherwise it is retroactive and makes the favor of good fortune joyless for the one and makes the earthly suffering hopeless for the other.

Then, too, the explanation has used other descriptive names and has called death a transition, a transformation, a suffering, a struggle, the last struggle, a punishment, the wages of sin. Each one of these explanations contains a whole life-view. What an earnest challenge to the explainer! It is

easy to recite them all by rote, easy to explain death when it costs no effort to refuse to understand that the discourse is about the acquiring of retroactive power in life through the explanation. Why does anyone want to transform death into a mockery of himself? Death has no need of an explanation and certainly has never requested any thinker to be of assistance. But the living need the explanation — and why? In order to live accordingly.

If someone thinks, for example, that death is a transformation, this may indeed be quite true. But just suppose that the uncertainty of death, which walks around like a teacher and watches every moment to see if the pupil is paying attention, just suppose it discovered that the explainer's interpretation was something like this: I have a long life ahead of me, thirty years, yes, perhaps forty, and then death will come sometime as a transformation — what would the teacher think of this pupil who had not even grasped the idea of the uncertainty of death? Or if someone thinks that it is a transformation that will intervene at some time and death's uncertainty now makes an inspection and discovers that he, not unlike a gambler, is waiting for death as an event that will happen sometime, what would the teacher think of this pupil who was not even aware that in death's decision all is over and that the transformation cannot fall in line with other events as a new event — because in death it is finished?

See, one can have an opinion about remote events, about a natural object, about nature, about scholarly works, about another human being, and so on about much else, and when one expresses this opinion the wise person can decide whether it is correct or incorrect. No one, however, troubles the opinion-holder with a consideration of the other side of the truth, whether one actually does have the opinion, whether it is just something one is reciting. Yet this other side is just as important, because not only is that person mad who talks senselessly, but the person is fully as mad who states

a correct opinion if it has absolutely no significance for him. The one shows the other the confidence, the acknowledgment, of assuming that he means what he says. Alas, yet it is so easy, so very easy, to acquire a true opinion, and yet it is so difficult, so very difficult, to have an opinion and to have it in truth.

Now, inasmuch as death is the object of earnestness, here again earnestness is: that we should not be overhasty in acquiring an opinion with regard to death. In all earnestness the uncertainty of death continually takes the liberty of making an inspection to see whether the opinion-holder actually does have this opinion — that is, makes an inspection to see whether his life expresses it. With regard to something else, one can express an opinion and then if one is required to act by virtue of this opinion, that is, show that one has it, innumerable escapes are possible. But the uncertainty of death is the pupil's rigorous oral examiner, and when the pupil recites the explanation, uncertainty says to him, "Well, now I will make an inquiry as to whether this is your opinion, because now, right now at this moment, all is over, for you all is over; no escape is thinkable, not a letter to be added; so I will find out whether you actually meant what you said about me." Alas, all empty explaining and all verbiage and all embellishing and all concatenating of earlier explanations in order to find an even more clever one, and all the admiration for this and all the trouble with it — all this is merely diversion and absentmindedness in intellectual abstraction — what does the uncertainty of death think about that?

Therefore, the discourse will refrain from any explanation. Just as death is the last of all, so this will be the last thing said about it: It is inexplicable. The inexplicability is the boundary, and the importance of the statement is simply to give the thought of death retroactive power and make it impelling in life, because with the decision of death all is over, and because the uncertainty of death inspects every moment. Therefore, the inexplicability

is not a request to solve enigmas, an invitation to be ingenious, but is death's earnest warning to the living: I need no explanation; but bear in mind, you yourself, that with this decision all is over and that this decision can at any moment be at hand; see, it is very advisable for you to bear this in mind.

My listener, it perhaps seems to you that you learn very little from this discourse; you perhaps know much more yourself, and yet it may not have been futile if the conception of death's decision has been the occasion to remind you that knowing a great deal is not an unconditional good. Perhaps it seems to you that the thought of death has only become terrifying, and that it still has also a gentler, a more friendly side for consideration, that the weary laborer's longing for rest, the tired traveler's hastening toward the exit, the concerned one's trust in the pain-stilling sleep of death, and the misunderstood person's sad urge to sleep in peace are also a beautiful and legitimate explanation of death. Undeniably! But it is not learned by rote, it is not learned by reading about it, it is acquired slowly, and it is acquired only by the person who worked himself weary in the good work, who walked himself tired on the right road, who bore the concern for a just cause, who was misunderstood in a noble striving, and not until it is well gained in this way is it in the right place and a legitimate discourse in the mouth of the Very Reverend.

But the youth does not dare to speak this way lest the beautiful explanation, just like the wise saying in the mouth of a fool, become an untruth in his mouth. To be sure, I have heard that a child's and adolescent's earnest teacher later became the mature adult's friend, but I have never heard, at least not from anyone from whom I wished to learn, that it began with the teacher's promptly becoming a playmate or the child's becoming an old man, nor that this friendship in truth commenced then. This is the way it is with the thought of death. If it has never with terror halted the

young person's life and used the earnestness only to moderate the terror; if the uncertainty of death has not had its time of instruction in which it taught him with the rigorousness of earnestness — then I have never heard, at least not from anyone whose knowledge I would want to share, I have never heard from such a person that there was any truth in it if someone called death his friend, inasmuch as he had never had him as anything but a playmate, if, already weary of life in his youth, he spoke fraudulently about death's friendship in order to deceive life, if, without having enjoyed life as an old man, he spoke fraudulently about death's friendship in order to deceive himself.

The person who has spoken here is young, still at the age of a learner; he comprehends only the difficulty and the rigorousness of the instruction — oh, would that he might succeed in doing it in such a way that he would become worthy of daring at some time to rejoice in the teacher's friendship! The person who has spoken here is, of course, not your teacher, my listener; he is merely letting you witness, just as he himself is doing, how a person seeks to learn something from the thought of death, that teacher of earnestness who at birth is appointed to everyone for a whole lifetime and who in the uncertainty is always ready to begin the instruction when it is requested. Death does not come because someone calls it (for the weaker one to order the stronger one in that way would be only a jest), but as soon as someone opens the door to uncertainty, the teacher is there, the teacher who will at some time come to give a test and examine the pupil: whether he has wanted to use his instruction or not. And this testing by death — or with a more commonly used foreign word to designate the same thing — this final examination [Examen] of life, is equally difficult for all. It is not as it usually is — namely, that the fortunately gifted person passes easily and the poorly gifted person has a hard time — no, death adapts the test to

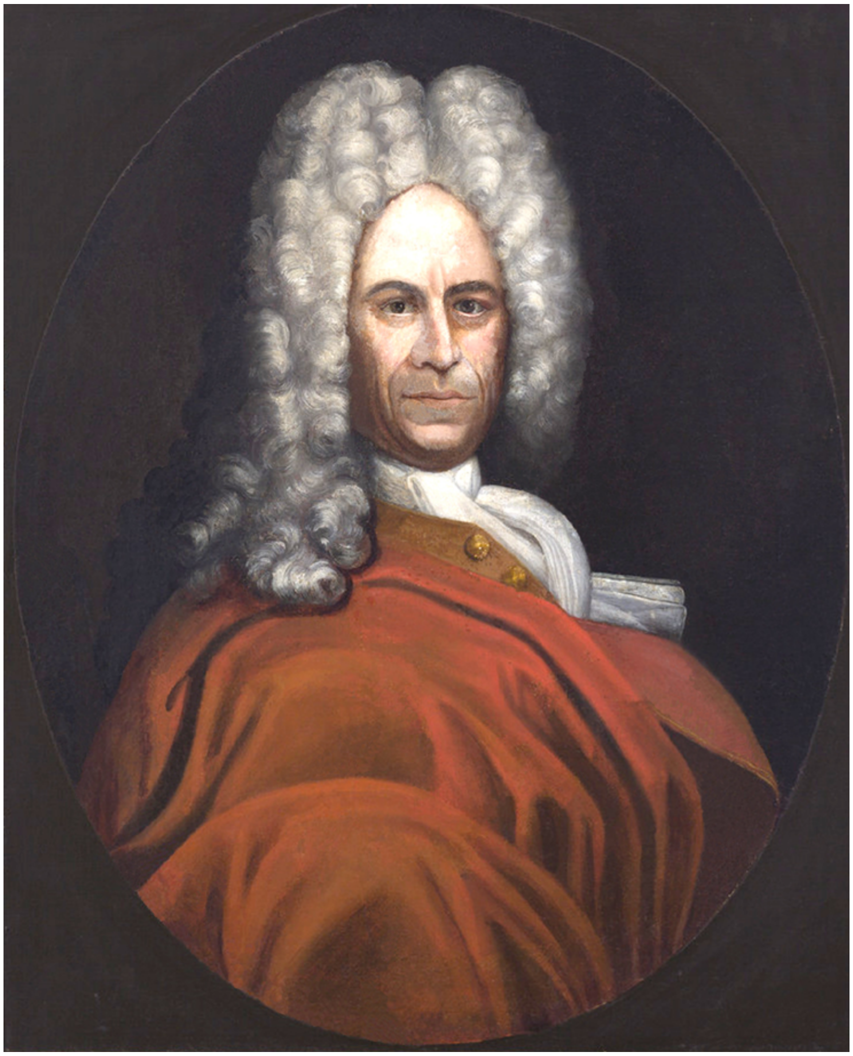
the ability — oh, so very accurately, and the test becomes equally difficult because it is the test of earnestness.

Stages on Life's Way (1845)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1940

Stages on Life's Way was written as a continuation of *Either/Or*. However, as the previous work is about the aesthetic and ethical realms, this treatise continues with the consideration of the religious realms. Kierkegaard seeks to present the various stages of existence in "one work if possible". His father Michael Pedersen had encouraged him to read Christian Wolff and Søren himself was influenced by both Wolff and Kant to the point of using the structure and philosophical content of the three special metaphysics as the scheme or blueprint for building the ideas for this book.

The book is divided rather sharply into sections, the first, *In Vino Veritas* being the equivalent of the first part of *Either/Or* and concerns *religiousness A*. Kierkegaard explains, "Religiousness A is the dialectic of inward deepening; it is the relation to an eternal happiness that is not conditioned by something but is the dialectical inward deepening of the relation, consequently conditioned only by the inward deepening, which is dialectical." This is the individual who is living in an esthetic way — a young man or woman that is still maturing and seeking the highest good. They have found love of a woman to be the highest, but none have had any experience except for the seducer — who may or not be telling the truth. Kierkegaard explains "Even "The Seducer's Diary" was only a possibility of horror, which the esthete in his groping existence had conjured up precisely because he, without actually being anything, had to try his hand at everything as possibility."



Christian Wolff (1679-1754) was one of the most eminent German philosophers between Leibniz and Kant. His life work spanned almost every scholarly subject of his time, according to his demonstrative-deductive, mathematical method, which represents the peak of Enlightenment rationality in Germany.

CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE
INTRODUCTION

STAGES ON LIFE'S WAY

LECTORI BENEVOLO!

PART I. IN VINO VERITAS: A RECOLLECTION

PREFATORY NOTE

PART II. VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE IN REPLY TO OBJECTIONS BY A MARRIED MAN

PART III. "GUILTY?"/ "NOT GUILTY?" A PASSION NARRATIVE

ADVERTISEMENT
THE QUIET DESPAIR
EPISTLE TO THE READER from Frater Taciturnus
CONCLUSION

APPENDIX

ORATORY; OR, SOMETHING ABOUT THE OCCASIONAL ADDRESSES OF THE CLERGY
THREE DISCOURSES ON IMAGINED OCCASIONS
PREFACE
WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK AFTER GOD

Stadier paa Livets Vei.

Studier af Forskjellige.

Sammenbragte, befordrede til Trykken og udgivne

af

Hilarius Bogbinder.

Kjøbenhavn.
Hos Universitetsboghandler C. A. Reitzel.
Trykt i Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri.
1845.

The first edition's title page

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

WHEN I HAD done all I set out to do by way of making Kierkegaard known or at least available to the English-speaking world, having produced a big biography of "that tremendous little Dane," which comes as near as possible to being his autobiography, and having translated a full dozen of his works, big and little, everything in fact which belongs to the last phase of his authorship, except the little book entitled The Sickness unto Death, which to my chagrin another had pre-empted, in short, when I was ready to write Finis to this undertaking, I was almost as far out in my calculation as was S.K. when he used the title Concluding Postscript to indicate that with this his whole authorship was concluded. All the works I have translated hitherto were written after that "conclusion." Perhaps it was chiefly by the momentum acquired during four years of labor on this theme that I was carried beyond the limit I had set. And since there was no place forward to go beyond the trenchant religious works of the last period (unless I were to publish prematurely the pamphleteering attack upon the Established Church in the midst of which S.K. died), I was carried backward to the "aesthetic" stage, thus inverting the direction of S.K.'s movement, which was from the aesthetic to the religious. Perhaps it was in part the force of suction which drew me into the enterprise of translating the Stages on Life's Way. For here I sensed a vacuum: no one so far as I knew had undertaken or was likely to undertake the translation of this big book. I should have preferred to deal with Either/Or, S.K.'s first and most popular work, and to the reader it would have been an advantage to read this first; and though it is a bigger book, it is an easier task for the translator. But Mr. Dru had given me to understand that he was translating it; and the other aesthetic works have already been translated in England, though because of the war they have not

yet been published. The only other conspicuous vacuum is the collection of religious discourses entitled The Works of Love; but I felt that in the way of "discourses" I had for the time being done enough. In other countries the "Discourses" have been translated last, if they have been translated at all.

This work makes a far broader appeal than do the religious works of Kierkegaard with which I have been engaged hitherto; for the author properly describes it as "aesthetic" literature. It may be supposed to attract not only poets and playwrights but the immensely larger circle which professes to be interested in such things. And yet, though certainly all can understand much that is said here, and will surely derive pleasure from it, I wonder if the analysis is not too subtle for the majority of aesthetic connoisseurs, and whether the real readers, though not reduced to the "single individual" whom Kierkegaard hailed as his reader, may not be few. It may be that only religious readers will read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the last section of the book in which Frater Taciturnus gives a report of his experiment. For such readers, if they are also astute, this book, and particularly the last section of it, may prove even more illuminating than the Edifying Discourses.

When I undertook this work Professor Swenson had already been at work for some years upon the bigger and more important task of translating the Concluding Postscript, which is the keystone of S.K.'s whole authorship, revealing the deeper significance of all the books which preceded it, and supporting the religious works which followed. David F. Swenson was incomparably the most competent man for this task, inasmuch as he was not only profoundly versed in philosophy, but for thirty-five years had been absorbed heart and soul in the works of S.K., which were his reintroduction into Christianity. Alas, he died — on the 12th of February of this year, just a fortnight after I had completed this translation. His widow committed to me the task of finishing his work, which proved to be more

nearly completed than I had hoped, and it will be published early next year by the Princeton University Press. It is ready now for the printer; but, apart from certain reasons which compel postponement, it is appropriate that it should follow the *Stages,* as it did in the development of S.K.'s authorship. Not until it appears will the readers of this book be in a position to see clearly whither the author of the *Stages* was tending.

In this instance I am under more obligation than usual for permission to make use of the notes which accompany the Danish edition; for the "Discourses," naturally enough, were not so full of literary allusions. I acknowledge also my obligation to Professor Hollander for the permission I can assume he gives me to use the notes which accompany his translation of "In Vino Veritas." To Professor Hollander will always belong the distinction of being the first to translate into English any part of S.K.'s works.

WALTER LOWRIE

Princeton April 26,194.0

INTRODUCTION

BY THE TRANSLATOR

WRITING AN INTRODUCTION to the *Stages* I am not unmindful of the lines which scathingly denounce That mighty scholiast whose unwearied pains Made Horace dull and humbled Virgil's strains.

The Stages is clearly a work of genius. Brandes says of the first part, which evidently was modelled after the Symposium of Plato, "one must recognize with amazement that it holds its own in this comparison as well as any modern composition could." Yet this work of genius, because it is the work of a strange genius, who sometimes exerted the utmost ingenuity to hide his thought, imperatively requires an introduction, and I must acknowledge with shame that what I said about the Stages in a few pages of my book on Kierkegaard (pp. 282-5) is not only inadequate but in one respect misleading.

But apart from these few pages which deal expressly with the *Stages* there is of course in my voluminous account of S.K.'s life (and in the briefer biographies which are available in English) a great deal that is serviceable, indeed necessary, as an introduction to an author of whom it may be said more justly than of any other, not only that his literary work was his life, but that his life provided the material for his works. The *Stages* need such an introduction as much as any of his earlier works, and more than any that followed. Quidam's Diary, for example, will not at once be intelligible to a reader who is unacquainted with the love-story which can be reconstructed from the Journal; and some general acquaintance with the character of the earlier pseudonymous works is necessary if one would understand this work as a "repetition" of the others. In this sense, and even in a larger sense, my

book on *Kierkegaard* constitutes an introduction to this volume on a scale which exceeds the physical possibility of binding it here in the same boards.

It of course would have been absurd for S.K., who published his works pseudonymously, and was committed to the principle of "indirect communication," to accompany them with an introduction over his own name which would explain to his readers what he was trying to teach. Yet in 1846, only a year after the *Stages* was published, he was acutely aware that his pseudonymous works stood in need of an explanation, and he proceeded to give it in the *Postscript,* through the mouth of the pseudonymous author of that book, Johannes Climacus. In 1848, when he had become aware that his use of "indirect communication" was a daimonia, he endeavored earnestly in *The Point of View* to make clear what his purpose was in all these productions. It seems to me absurd therefore that his works are now reprinted in Denmark without any introduction and without interpretative notes, and that in German they are entirely without notes and without an interpretative introduction. For it cannot be said that either in Denmark or in Germany S.K.'s works are commonly understood without such aids. If this omission is not due to slothfulness, it must be ascribed to a humble sense of incapacity — of which I think the principal German translator, Christoph Schrempf, incapable. Remembering my own futile efforts, first in German and then in Danish, to understand without such helps what it was all about, I am convinced that guidance is needed, and that even a poor guide is better than none. For although there is much in the "aesthetic" works from which one can immediately derive pleasure, the reader who is unprepared and unintroduced cannot but be haunted painfully by the suspicion that under it all there is something he cannot understand. It is notorious that very few of S.K.'s contemporaries understood him, or understood even that there was anything of importance in his books which they didn't understand. In a way they were better off than we are who have been told that there is a great deal

of wisdom in his works and consequently may be perturbed when we fail to discover it. The Germans are inclined to say complacently that if he had written in German or in any well known European tongue, he would have been understood and appreciated in his lifetime. Perhaps, but the immense German literature which has grown up about Kierkegaard in the last twenty years, proves, if it proves anything, that very few have taken the pains to understand him. Very few have even taken the pains to learn Danish.

The Stages (published on April 30, 1845, and for the most part written during the preceding year) was the last of the six works which S.K. was wont to describe as "aesthetic." He expressly excludes the Postscript from this category. Johannes Climacus, the reputed author of this work and also of the Scraps, more nearly represented S.K.'s position at the moment than did any of the earlier pseudonyms, who represented an experience and point of view already transcended and merely recollected, whereas Climacus is almost in advance of S.K. when he formulates "deliberations" (this is S.K.'s own word) about the Christian faith which were to be, but were not yet, S.K.'s sure possession and de fide. Either/Or was published in February 1843, and the other "aesthetic" works followed in quick succession: Repetition and Fear and Trembling, with Three Edifying Discourses as their "accompaniment," on October 16 of the same year; The Concept of Dread and Prefaces, on August 17, following the second series of Three Edifying Discourses (which appeared on June 8, as the accompaniment of the Fragments which was published on June 13), and followed by the Four Edifying Discourses of August 31; the Stages, on April 30, closely accompanied by Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions, which were published on the preceding day. The Concluding Unscientific Postscript (which S.K. thought of as the conclusion of his whole authorship) was published on February 27, 1846, and was without accompaniment because it was itself so evidently an introduction to profound religious problems.

Although the Postscript was written not many months after the publication of the Stages, S.K. had already become aware, as I have said, that the purpose of his “aesthetic” works could not be understood without an explanation, and he forthwith proceeded to give it, in the indirect way which I have alluded to. In a note at the end of the Postscript S.K. acknowledges the pseudonymous works as his own. But before he had done this (perhaps before he had resolved to do it) he allowed Johannes Climacus to appraise and criticize all the earlier works, in an Appendix to Part II, Chapter II, which is entitled “A Glance at a Contemporary Movement in Danish Literature.” Of the fifty-one pages of this comment, seventeen are devoted expressly to the *Stages,* and being S.K.’s own explanation of his work they are the most authentic introduction one could have. This will be available to English readers when the *Postscript* is published early in the coming year.

In 1848, when S.K. had abandoned “indirect communication” in practice and only with half a heart continued to defend it as a principle, he felt still more poignantly the need of making his earlier works understood, and in *The Point of View* he made a desperate effort to explain his purpose. It has been said, justly enough, by Professor Hirsch, that Johannes Climacus discovered in the pseudonymous works a clearer purpose than S.K. was conscious of when he was writing them. But that is only what he himself affirms in *The Point of View,* where he ascribes to divine governance responsibility for the order in which he brought these several works to light and for the design of the whole which he himself could perceive only in retrospect. I have recently published *The Point of View* through the Oxford Press, and that too will serve as an introduction to the *Stages.*

In The Point of View S.K. lays the utmost emphasis upon the fact that in a sense he provided almost all these works with an introduction over his own signature, namely, the little volume of Edifying Discourses with which

he scrupulously accompanied them. In the main, this accompaniment was meant merely to call attention to the fact that the author of the pseudonymous works was a religious man. But the Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions which accompanied the Stages mean more than that. I cannot see as clearly as Professor Hirsch does that each of these discourses corresponds in detail with the thoughts presented in the three parts of the Stages, but clearly they correspond in general (though in an inverse order), and if the reader wonders what S.K. himself thought of the lurid speeches at the Banquet (where, as Brandes says, one can almost see the blue flames issuing from the speakers' mouths), he has only to turn to the last of the Three Discourses which is entitled, "Beside a Grave." The conclusive answer to the voluptuary's mockery of death is death's visible reality. Before assuming, as Schrempf does, that the words put into the mouth of Judge William express completely S.K.'s own view about marriage, one would do well to note that what the Judge says in the Stages is not so distinctly ethical as was his defense of marriage in Either/Or, that it was in fact a retrogression to the aesthetic sphere, that his eudaimonistic contentment in a happy marriage made him blind to the difficulties S.K. was aware of, and which he had in mind when he let the Frater say of the Judge, "I could whisper a little secret in his ear." Above all one would do well to consult the "accompanying" discourse "On the Occasion of a Marriage Ceremony," from which it appears indeed that the moral resolution upon which the Judge lays so much stress was also regarded by S.K. as essential to a marriage, but with the understanding that it has to be renewed again and again to the end of a man's life. And if anyone is inclined to protest, as Schrempf does, that the quidam of the experiment is not a fit paradigm for the religious stadium, seeing that in his Diary (which, be it noted, reflects only the memory of an experience long ago transcended) he had hardly even reached the point of repentance (which

S.K. places within the ethical stadium), he would do well to consult the discourse “On the Occasion of a Confession,” where one has proof of the astonishing progress in religion made by this young man since the last glimpse we get of him in the Diary, from which even the Frater can only surmise a daimonia “in the *direction* of the religious.” Although these *Three Discourses* were evidently meant as an introduction to the *Stages,* nobody took any notice of them. S.K. said, “With my right hand I held out the Edifying Discourses and with my left the aesthetic works, but all grasped eagerly with the right hand what I held in my left.” Eventually these *Three Discourses* must be published in English, but to add them to this introduction would mean adding a hundred pages. I am strongly tempted to publish them as a separate volume along with this — but no, for the moment I must compromise, and I content myself with printing here a mere sample, one-third, but the most important third, of the first discourse, which I place in the Appendix, to make clear that it is not a part of this book.

But that is not all. Once yielding to temptation, my resistance is weakened, and I yield again. Among S.K.’s Papers we find the unfinished draft of an introduction which he thought of printing on the dustcover (*Smudstitel*) of the Occasional Discourses. The theme it deals with is quite as actual in our day as in his, a theme upon which S.K. wrote much (as his Papers show) but published little. In the year 1850 he wrote in his Journal: “The ‘theological professor’ indicates a point of view in Christendom: in the degree that ‘the professor’ is regarded as the highest thing, in that very degree is one most thoroughly disoriented in Christendom; from the way ‘the professor’ is judged one can see the status in Christendom and how Christianity is judged.” For the sake of the theme I have been tempted to translate a large part of this “introduction” and to place it immediately before the title-page of the Occasional Discourses. But apart from the importance (or unimportance) of the theme it is well that the reader who has

not access to the Journals and the Papers should get some notion of how much more copious S.K. was than is revealed even in his published works.

It must be obvious to every reader that there is a great deal of meaning in the Stages; but what S.K. personally means is not so obvious; it may seem as if he effectually precludes us from apprehending his meaning when, in the note appended to the Postscript, he affirms absolutely, "In the pseudonymous books there is not a single word of mine, I have no opinion about them except as a third person, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader, not the remotest private relationship to them." This is a sweeping affirmation; in view of the fact that many personal opinions registered in the Journal reappear in these works, the affirmation may appear too sweeping, but at least it prescribes the utmost caution. And in truth it is not this warning which precludes us from understanding S.K., rather it helps us to avoid misunderstanding; and one who, like Schrempf, ignores this warning can of course get no coherent meaning out of the many contrasted pseudonyms. It is evident that neither the Seducer nor the Judge represents S.K.'s position at any period of his life; they are not even his "shadows" or fractions of his personality, but like the Ladies' Tailor they are typical characterizations carried to a logical extreme. Constantine, as I have said, represents one side of his character, but it was a side which never predominated. The "young man" who spoke at the Banquet and professes his ignorance of the other sex, and a short while later as the *quidam* of the experiment had learned so much, and yet in the eyes of the Frater was still so ignorant of women, represents S.K. more essentially; but the Banquet is called expressly "a recollection," to denote that it belonged to a past so remote that it could be idealized, and the Diary is just as definitely a memory, denoting a stage which had been definitely transcended, into which no item of S.K.'s present experience was permitted to enter.

About the composition of the book as a whole we are not left without hints. The fact that the production of it was ascribed to a bookbinder, who stitched together disparate manuscripts which had accidentally come into his possession, suggests that it was not originally planned as a whole. The title first proposed was “Right Hand and Left Hand.” This expresses an either/or which applies aptly to the first two parts: the Judge’s “Remarks about Marriage” are obviously a “reply” to the dissolute speeches at the Banquet. The Banquet represents the aesthetic life at the extremist limit of its possibility, where it must either end in despair or in a change for the better, a “leap” into the ethical sphere or across it into the religious. The Ladies’ Tailor is a dangerous fanatic, the Seducer, who in *Either/Or* might still seem salvable, is here manifestly a lost soul. The fact that the Judge does not represent unequivocally the ethical sphere is not strange in view of the fact that S.K. regarded the ethical as “a transitional stadium.”

With this the book was to have ended. It would have been a small book like most of S.K.’s publications. It became a big book when “Guilty?”/”Not Guilty?” was added to it, accounting for two-thirds of its present bulk. To include this the title was changed to *Stages on Life*’*s Way.*

“Stages” (Stadier) was a good word for the title, but though it is only twice used in the course of the book it has led to a general misunderstanding. It does not so well express S.K.’s meaning as does the word “spheres” or “existence-spheres,” words which are used more frequently in the Stages and still more frequently in the Postscript. Professor Hirsch wrote to chide me, more gently than I deserved, for ignoring the account he had given of the origin of the Stages, i.e. of the motives which prompted S.K. to write this “repetition” of Either/Or, and the specific difference which distinguishes this work from the earlier one and unites it with the Postscript. We need in fact to be warned not to regard the three stages as a prescribed curriculum which one must pass through in

advancing from youth to age. Such is not S.K.'s meaning. He is not so foolish as to think that one must be an unhappy exception like Quidam (or like himself) in order to attain the religious stage — any more than one must first be a seducer in order to become a proper married man like the Judge. Neither does he represent that one stage must be definitely left behind before a man enters upon the next. He affirms in fact of the aesthetic that it is never superseded but only "dethroned." We have seen that the Judge had by no means superseded it, although he is here presented as an example of the ethical; and we have seen that the ethical is described as a transitional stage, that is, one in which a man's position is not consolidated; one might almost venture to think of it as a line across which one steps in the act of repentance. But apart from that line there is no definite delimitation of the spheres, and in "existence" they overlap. S.K. defines the three spheres only in the briefest and most general terms, but he is copious in depicting the characters who exemplify them. They do not exemplify any stage purely, as a logical system would require, for they represent the existential possibilities which lie between immediacy and spirit. The logical delimitation of the spheres is confounded by the movement in which each individual is involved, the *direction* of this movement is the prime consideration, and this is aptly indicated by the word "stages."

"There are many ways which lead to the same truth, and each man takes his own." So said S.K. in the first of the Three Discourses which accompanied this book. How different were the ways represented by the Judge, and Quidam, and Frater Taciturnus — and the five speakers at the Banquet. Although we are not apprised of the result, it seems plausible to expect that the first three would break through to the religious life, and this possibility is not excluded in the case of the men who are represented as

exponents of the aesthetic stage. Such is S.K.'s existential method of propounding his philosophy.

The profoundest motive which impelled S.K. to write this "repetition" of *Either/Or* becomes apparent when we note that in the process of clarifying his position over against Hegel's *Logic* he found in the notion of "existence" (as the *locus* of subjectivity, freedom, inwardness) the most important concept. The Judge and the Frater use this word frequently, and it was to be used more frequently and emphatically by Johannes Climacus in the *Postscript.* In correspondence with this he perceived that the choice (*Valg*) which he required in the face of an either/or needed in every important choice to be expressed by the more decisive word "resolution" (*Beslutning*) which he uses in this book. So we are not to think that by enumerating *three* stages he mitigated the rigor of his either/or. He says expressly: "THERE ARE THREE STAGES AND YET AN EITHER/OR."

"There are three stages," says Johannes Climacus, "an aesthetic, an ethical, and the religious, yet not abstract like the immediate, the mediate, the unity of the two [to use the language of the speculative philosophers], but concrete in the existential factors: pleasure — perdition; action — victory; suffering. Yet in spite of this triple division the book is all the same an either/or, for the ethical and religious stages stand in an essential relationship to one another. The trouble with *Either/Or* was that the work concluded ethically. In the *Stages* the situation has been clarified, and the religious is given its rights."

This last is an affirmation which might seem to have perhaps more truth than evidence on its side, for actually *Either/Or* concludes with a sermon by a country parson, and on the other hand there is nothing so ostensibly religious about the conclusion of the *Stages.* The author must have been conscious of something the reader cannot see — conscious of a conclusion which lies beyond the last line of the Diary, and beyond the vision of Frater

Taciturnus, who regards the salvation of Quidam merely as a possibility, and who, though he displays a profound knowledge of the religious, knows it only from the outside, as an observer. In fact S.K. did know more than the *quidam* of that moment, and more than the Frater, for in the *Point of View* he definitely ascribes his religious conversion to the experience recounted in the Diary. But, faithful to his principle of not providing the reader with "results," he does not divulge the outcome of this experience. The title ("Guilty?"/"Not Guilty?") employs, as he says, the terms of the court room, but the question-marks indicate in advance that no verdict will be pronounced. One must be satisfied with the Frater's reiterated assertion that this young man's daimonia was "in the direction of the religious." But the Frater actually gets him no farther than to humor — which according to S.K. (or Johannes Climacus, who develops the thought later in the *Postscript*) is "the last *confinium* before the religious," and not something that comes after faith, as the speculative philosophy taught. "Humor is the starting-point for the religious beginning." But when S.K. called this story of unhappy love "a passion narrative" he meant to stamp it as the religious stage; for this title could not be used without recalling "the Passion" of Christ, and yet for every Dane (as for every German) it was the word for any suffering. It must be remembered that for S.K. suffering is the religious category — not accidentally (as when suffering occurs in the aesthetic sphere and mars pleasure, or in the ethical sphere and obstructs striving) but essentially, and that not only in the beginning but throughout. Thus in a passage quoted in the preceding paragraph the reader may have been surprised at seeing the word "suffering" used simply to indicate the religious stage. Hence when the *quidam* of the experiment is depicted in the throes of suffering — and is simply left there — it is not indeed a foregone conclusion that he will be saved, but it is a plausible possibility, indeed a not unreasonable presumption, since man's extremity is God's opportunity.

The Frater’s profound cogitations about religion seem to require a sequel, and they were soon to have it in the *Concluding Postscript,* which, though it is expressly a postscript to the *Philosophic Fragments* by the same pseudonym, is really a postscript to all of S.K.’s pseudonymous works to date, and is more particularly a continuation of the *Stages* which immediately preceded it.

At this point I would call attention to the profound observations about religion in general which Climacus makes in the Fragments under the rubric: “The Self-Ironizing of the Understanding.” In my book on Kierkegaard (pp. 326 ff.), I said of this short passage that “there is enough here to establish a new school of ‘comparative religion’ — perhaps several.” It is evident that Carl Barth was impressed by S.K.’s characterization of God as “the Unknown,” but for the most part this passage is completely ignored. When I was making an address in Copenhagen before the Theological Association, the members of which might be presumed to be well acquainted with Soren Kierkegaard, I mentioned as the most natural thing in the world “the self-ironizing of the understanding” — and I was discomfited by observing that nobody knew what I meant. Therefore it seems to me important to call attention to the few passages in which S.K. deals with religion in general — which he so seldom considers because he was so much concerned about the specifically Christian. But in these few passages I find more of real value than in the whole literature I have read upon this enticing subject. S.K.’s perception, for example, that religious wonder is “an ambiguous state of mind which comprises fear and bliss” is more informing (as Professor Hirsch recognizes) than Rudolf Otto’s *tremendum* and *fascinans.* It is to be found in the passage about “Seeking God” which I have been tempted to append to this work as S.K.’s accompaniment to the *Stages.*

I turn now to the more superficial questions with which an introduction is bound to deal.

Many a reader will ask, perhaps petulantly, what prompted S.K. to write this book. First of all it was an inner compulsion. As S.K. said in The Point of View, “the poetical had to be evacuated.” This applies to the Stages as well as to the earlier works, and it applies most of all to “Guilty?”/”Not Guilty?”, for that had been striving to find vent since some time before the date when Either/Or was finished. In that first work he had thought of including “a story of unhappy love,” but could not do it because, as he said, in Part I there was no place for a story of true love. One might think that it might have found a place at the conclusion of Part II, where it would have served as a counterpart to “The Diary of the Seducer” which concludes Part I. But it was left out — S.K. says that this omission was like the unfinished window in Aladdin’s otherwise perfect palace. It is to be understood that a good Moslem is cautious not to make any work perfect for fear of inciting the jealousy of Allah. But only three months after the publication of Either/Or, when S.K. was for the second time in Berlin, he wrote in his Journal under the date of May 17, 1843:

I have begun a new story entitled Guilty/Not Guilty. It will of course contain things capable of astonishing the world, for during a year and a half I am experiencing more poetry than there is in all romances put together.

What came of this was the book called *Repetition,* which presumably did not exhaust the original purpose. S.K. said at this time that he could not poetize his relationship with Regina because he had not given up the hope of recovering her by a “repetition.” This story therefore could not be told as it is told here in any of the three books which were written “for Regina”; but when the *Stages* was written she was already engaged to Schlegel and therefore definitely lost to him. To suppose, as Schrempf does, that this book was written with the hope of detaching her from Schlegel has not the

least plausibility, and such a notion cannot be entertained by anyone who knows S.K.'s exquisite delicacy of feeling about such matters of honor. It was written "for Regina" only in the sense that incidentally, as he himself says, he would give her a little hint that she was not altogether free from blame for the desperate situation which developed, and therefore he inserted verbatim the letter he wrote in sending back the ring.

It is astonishing to learn from the Journal that at the time S.K. began this story in Berlin he was also engaged upon the plots of several of the stories which were ultimately incorporated in the *Stages,* namely "The Two Lepers,"

"The Ladies' Tailor,"

"Nebuchadnezzar," and "The Mad Accountant." And with all these redundant themes surging in his mind he was writing on other themes and producing two of his most brilliant books in an incredibly short space of time.

Quidam's Diary is in every detail the story of S.K.'s unhappy love. Was it an offense against the canons of good taste for him to publish it? There is hardly a reader who will not raise that query. I will answer it only so far as to say that, strangely enough, there is no evidence that Regina ever resented it. In her latter years she voiced her objection only to the fact that she was represented as being in a deeper sense without religion. She protested that as a child her mother often took her to the meetings of the Moravian Brethren, and that when she grew up she was fond of reading Thomas à Kempis — meaning the *Imitation of Christ.* Presumably her husband did not resent it, for he always held S.K. in the highest esteem as an author and thinker. Of the reading public it may be said that, if it had a notion that the story had any relation to his own experience, it could not know that it was an exact transcript of it. It must be remembered that S.K. beguiled himself by the belief that he covered his traces by writing pseudonymously, and it

may be observed that he sought with childlike roguishness to cover them still more effectually by telling the fantastic story of fishing the Diary from a solitary lake — and then inconsistently allowing the Frater to represent it as his own invention. That was a cunning way of doubling back upon his track.

S.K. may have thought this a way of "taking her with him into history"; but it was a way that did her scant honor. The Frater admits that in the Diary she is not depicted as a person but is used only as a foil for Quidam.

I will say for my own part that I heartily wish S.K. had never written this Diary — nor written the hundreds of pages on the same theme which he confided to his Journal. I am tired of reading it all, and find it still more tiresome to translate it. The Frater had good reason to expect that the reader would be weary of the book before he was half through with it, and would cast it away petulantly. S.K. made a bad impression by writing this thing, and it may be said that in the Diary he did not seek to represent himself in an agreeable light. So his contemporaries thought. The cruellest caricature which appeared in the *Corsair* represented a young girl going on all fours with S.K. sitting astride of her and wielding a whip. The inscription beneath it read: "Frater Taciturnus chastises his girl." Cruel as this was, I cannot think that it was undeserved.

The most generous critic among my reviewers, Professor Wilhelm Pauck, expressed the wish (referring to me), "that he might have attempted to be a more historical biographer than he has chosen to be." I do not know what to make of this judgment of an historian, unless it means that I have felt, and have been ingenuous enough to show, an admiration and sympathy, and occasionally pity, for the subject of my biography, which is far from being in the fashion with modern biographers. That is true. I wrote as "a lover," and I acknowledged it. But unfortunately the one time when I lost patience with the object of my pity and almost broke into abuse I was justly

rebuked by Professor Swenson (who is only a philosopher) for being unhistorical. For in fact, upon seeing in the Journal one of the longest and most dreadful accounts of the engagement entitled "Something Poetical" I was indignant. But really it was not meant as a title, it was S.K.'s own condemnation of the entry, written at a later time when he realized that he had not been honest enough to set down the crude facts but had tried to embellish them. Only in that sense was it "rather poetic," as the phrase *(noget poetisk*) must in this case be rendered. Yet for what S.K. has written about his engagement I am still indignant with him, and I still pity him, and I bow low before him in admiration nevertheless. If this be unhistorical, make the most of it!

Taking the book as a whole, it is the supreme example of S.K.'s love for mystification, and of his cleverness in constructing, as he put it, "Chinese puzzles, box within box." Almost all of the characters and pseudonymous authors of the previous works reappear in this book. Only the Bookbinder, the Ladies' Tailor, and Frater Taciturnus are altogether new, along with William Afham, the name which conceals rather than discloses the secret that the feast was arranged and paid for "by him" (af ham), i.e. by S.K. Even the unnamed "young man" of the Banquet, who is doubtless the same as the *quidam* of the experiment, is no other than the young man who was the hero of the *Repetition* and before that was the young friend of the Judge in *Either/Or.* So in a way the whole book is a repetition of the earlier works, more especially of *Either/Or.* The speech of the Seducer corresponds of course to "The Diary of the Seducer," and Judge William again defends marriage, though from a different angle. In the *Postscript* S.K. (or rather Johannes Climacus) points out these and other resemblances and admits that in the realm of literary art repetition is a difficult and hazardous venture, sure to disgust the reading public, which demands at least a change of names and costumes and scenery ("and then some cows"), and would prefer

that an author who has already tried his hand at love stories should attempt a new *genre,* like a story of robbers, for example. But S.K. for his part was content, like Socrates, “to say always the same thing about the same,” though always with a difference.

Frithiof Brandt’s recent book about S.K. as a youth is an excellent introduction to S.K.’s works, and to the Stages especially, but I cannot introduce his 460 big pages here, neither can I summarize them. I have heard serious people deplore the fact that Brandt, in spite of the fact that he is Professor of Philosophy in Copenhagen, does not employ his ingenuity to delve deep into S.K.’s essential thought, but is content with discovering external facts about his life. For my part I am grateful to him for bringing to light so many interesting details while others are working as laboriously and with an air of greater seriousness to obscure S.K.’s thought or to exhibit it in a false light.

Starting with the plausible hypothesis that in his university days S.K. was for a time a member of a group, including the poet Hertz and Hans Christian Andersen, which dined together at a boarding-house table, he discovers among S.K.’s companions several of the characters who figure in the Stages: P. V. Jacobsen as the prototype of Judge William; P. L. Miller as the Seducer; and a business man of sorts, incongruously associated with these intellectual men, as the Ladies’ Tailor. Brandt did not have to seek far to discover who is represented by the other figures at the Banquet, for J. L. Heiberg had already recognized that they are personifications of different sides of S.K.’s own personality: William Afham, who “recollects” the affair and was mysteriously present without taking part; Victor Eremita; and Constantine Constantius. Victor Eremita, who was the pseudonymous author of Either/Or, appears here as an independent character. So also does Constantine Constantius, the pseudonymous author of the Repetition, who in both cases is a personification of the unswerving constancy of purpose

(note that this word occurs twice in the name) which was indeed a trait of S.K., though not so predominant a trait that it made him a hard man like Constantine.

Brandt has taken pains to identify the house in which the banquet was held. For he believes that there was a real basis for this story, a feast which S.K. himself had lavishly prepared for his companions; and in vindication of this faith he can point triumphantly to the prodigious bill of a caterer which the elder Kierkegaard paid when he settled the outstanding debts of his wayward son.

I have already admitted that these results of patient and cunning investigation throw little or no light upon the meaning of this book, but for all that, they throw light upon the youth who was “the father of the man” who wrote it.

It must surely be superfluous to say that what I have written here I do not regard as an exposition of S.K.’s thought, nor even as an adequate introduction. I have merely set down such hints for the reader as I would have been glad to have when I was a beginner, and I have not presumed to tell more than I have yet learned to understand.

STAGES ON LIFE’S WAY

STUDIES BY SUNDRY PERSONS

Collected, forwarded to the press and published by Hilarius Bookbinder
Copenhagen 1845

[April 30]

CO55NTENTS

I. “In Vino Veritas,” a recollection subsequently related by William Afham

II. Observations about Marriage, in reply to objections, by a married man

III. “Guilty?”/”Not Guilty?” A passion narrative, a psychological experiment by Frater Taciturnus

LECTORI BENEVOLO!

FORASMUCH AND WHEREAS there ought to be honesty in all matters and more especially in the realm of truth and in the book-world, considering also that some eminent professor or a man of high station might take umbrage if a bookbinder, instead of sticking to his trade, were to mingle without justification in the ranks of the literati, which effrontery moreover could only occasion severe condemnation of the-book, and possibly have the effect that many, ashamed of the bookbinder, would not even read the book — therefore there follows here the book's veracious history.

Several years ago a literatus well known to me sent a considerable number of books to be bound, *item* several quires of manuscripts which were to be stitched in quarto. As this was in the busy season of the year, and as the literary gent did not press for them, being as he always was a kind and accommodating person, the books, to my shame be it said, remained in my shop well on to half a year. And since it is as the German says, "*Heute roth morgan todt,*" and as the parson says, "Death has no respect for class or age," and as my deceased wife put it, "We must all take that road, but the good Lord knows best when it is needful, and then it comes to pass by God's help, as it also comes to pass that even the best men must go hence," so in the meantime the literatus died, and his heirs, who were in foreign parts, received the books through the probate court, and through the same court I got payment for my work.

As a hard-working man and a good citizen who honestly gives to everyone his due, it never occurred to me but that I had sent back everything to the literary gent, when one day I find a small packet of manuscript papers. I vainly pondered over who could have sent them to me, what was to be done with them, whether they were to be bound, in short

over all such thoughts as can occur to a bookbinder on such an occasion, or whether the whole thing was a mistake. Finally there comes an illumination to my poor wife now deceased, who was always a rare and faithful helper and support in the business, that the packet must have lain in the big basket in which the books of the literary gent came. I myself also came to this opinion, but now so long a time had elapsed, no one had thought of requiring the return of the packet, so, thought I, it surely cannot contain anything of great value, and I left the papers lie, after I had bound them in colored boards, so that they might not "lie and fly about the shop," as my poor wife used to say.

In the long winter evenings when I had nothing else to do I sometimes took up the book and read parts of it for pleasure. But I cannot say that the pleasure was great, but I had my pleasure in sitting and speculating what it might all be about. And since a great part was written in a well practised calligraphy, I had my children transcribe a page of it now and then, so that by imitating the fine characters and the swing of it they might get practice in handling the pen. Sometimes, too, they had to read it aloud for practice in reading handwriting, which very inconceivably and inexplicably is entirely neglected in school instruction, and presumably would long continue to be neglected were it not that now Mr. J. Levin, as one reads in the newspapers, has sought to supply this need and has taught me to verify my poor wife's saying, that "the reading of handwriting is necessary in various situations in life and ought never to be neglected in schools," and indeed what is the use of one being able to write when one cannot read what one writes, as Henrich says in the comedy, that he can write German well enough but cannot read it.

My elder son had now reached his tenth year when last summer I thought of having him enter upon a more serious course of instruction. And by a respectable man there was recommended to me as especially capable a

personally not unknown to me seminarist and candidate in philosophy whom I often had heard to my genuine edification in the Church of our Saviour at evensong. Although he had not passed his examination and had entirely given up the thought of being a parson from the time he discovered he was a finely fibered soul and a poet (to use his own words), he nevertheless had a deal of learning and delivered good sermons, but in particular he had a splendid voice for the pulpit. Our agreement was that in return for the midday meal he should instruct the boy in the most important branches of learning for two hours daily.

It was a real bit of good luck for my humble house that the aforesaid seminarist and candidate in philosophy became teacher to the boy, for not only did he make great progress, but I came to be indebted to that worthy man for something much more important, as I shall now relate. One day he noticed the book bound in colored boards which I had used for the instruction of my children, he read a little of it, and thereupon he begs the loan of it. I say to him just what I meant: “You may quite well keep it, for since the boy now has one who is himself able to write copy for him, I do not need it.” But this he was noble enough, as I now perceive, not to want. So I lent it to him. Three days later (I remember this as if it was yesterday), it was the 5th of January of this current year, he comes to our house and desires to speak with me. I thought that possibly he wanted to open a little loan, but no! he hands me the well-known book and says: “Dear Mr. Hilarius, you presumably did not know what a glorious gift and boon providence bestowed upon your house in this book which you so recklessly would give away. Such a book is worth its weight in gold when it gets into the right hands. It is by the printing of such useful books that one contributes to good and profitable advancement in learning among the children of men in these times when not only money but faith becomes scarce among folks. And not only this, but you, Mr. Hilarius, whose desire

it has always been to benefit your fellowmen also in some other way than as a bookbinder, and to honor as well the memory of your departed wife by some good deed or another of unusual merit, you to whose happy lot it has fallen to be able to do this, will by this undertaking be able to earn a sum by no means inconsiderable when the book is disposed of." I was deeply moved and became still more so when he lifted up his voice, and with uplifted voice continued: "For my part I desire nothing, or next to nothing; in consideration of the expected capital gain I require only $10 down and a half-pint of wine at midday on Sundays and holidays."

So then it has been done as the worthy seminarist and candidate in philosophy counselled me — if only I were as sure of the large capital as he is of the $10 I gladly paid him, so much the more as he pointed out that my merit was the greater for the fact that it was not one book but several books I published, presumably by several authors. For my learned friend supposes that there must have been a brotherhood, a society, a club, of which the caput or leader was the literatus, who for this reason preserved the writings. About this I myself have no opinion.

That a bookbinder should desire to be an author could only awaken justifiable resentment in the literary world and contribute to bring the book into discredit; but that a bookbinder stitches, forwards to the press and publishes a book, that he "also in another way than as a bookbinder seeks to benefit his fellowmen," no sensible reader will take amiss.

And herewith be the book and the bookbinder and the undertaking humbly recommended.

Christianhavn, January 1845.

Your obedient humble servant,

Hilarius Bookbinder.

PART I. IN VINO VERITAS: A RECOLLECTION

Subsequently related by William Afham

SUCH WORKS ARE mirrors: when a monkey peers into them, no Apostle can be seen looking out.

Lichtenberg

PREFATORY NOTE

[*Forerindring* means no more than prefatory note; but *Erindring* is recollection, and thus the title is linked with the subject of the following disquisition.]

WHAT a pretty employment it is to prepare for oneself a secret, how seductive the relish of its enjoyment, and yet how dubious an advantage it sometimes is to have enjoyed it, how readily it may disagree with one! For if anyone thinks that a secret is personal property, belonging exclusively to the depository, he is in error, for here applies the saying, "Out of the eater comes forth meat"; but if anyone thinks that in enjoying it one is only exposed to the difficulty of not betraying it, he is in error too, for one is at the same time under obligation not to forget it. It is even more distasteful, however, to recollect partially and turn one's soul into a depot for damaged wares. So in relation to others let forgetfulness be the silk curtain which is drawn in front of the stage, and recollection the vestal virgin which retires behind the curtain. Behind the curtain too there is forgetfulness, if it is not recollection of the right sort, for with that all forgetfulness is excluded.

Recollection must not only be exact, it must also be happy; on being sealed, the wine of recollection must have conserved the bouquet of the experience. As the grape may not be pressed at every season, since the weather at the time of the vintage has a great effect upon the wine, so neither may an experience be recollected or recalled at every season and under all conditions.

Recollection is not by any means identical with remembrance. Thus one can remember an occurrence with precision without recollecting it. Memory is merely a minimal condition. By means of memory the experience presents itself to receive the consecration of recollection. The distinction is

discernible in the difference so easily observed between youth and old age. The old man loses his memory, generally it is the faculty which is lost first. Yet the old man has a poetic quality, in the estimation of primitive peoples he is prophetic, God-inspired. But recollection indeed is his best faculty, his consolation which consoles him with poetic far-sight. On the other hand, childhood has memory and retentive apprehension in a high degree, with no recollection whatever. Instead of saying that old age does not forget what childhood apprehends, one might perhaps say that what the child remembers the old man recollects. The old man's spectacles are ground for seeing near at hand. When youth wears spectacles the lens is ground for seeing at a distance, for youth lacks the power of recollection, which consists in removing, putting at a distance. However, the happy recollection of old age, like the happy apprehension of childhood, is the gracious gift of nature, which encompasses with partiality the two most helpless, yet in a certain sense the happiest, periods of human life. But for this reason recollection also, as well as memory, is sometimes only the depository of casual occurrences.

Although the difference between memory and recollection is great, they are often confused. In human life this confusion gives opportunity for studying the depth of the individual. For recollection is ideality, but as such it involves effort and responsibility, which the indifferent act of memory does not involve. Recollection seeks to assert man's eternal continuity in life and to insure that his earthly existence shall be *uno tenore,* one breath, and capable of being expressed in one word. Hence he declines to have his tongue compelled to engage again and again in the tittle-tattle which apes the tittle-tattle of life's content. This is the condition for immortality, that life be *uno tenore.* Strangely enough, Jacobi is the only one, so far as I know, who has remarked upon the dreadfulness of thinking oneself immortal. It seemed to him at times as if the thought of immortality, if he

were to hold on to it for more than a single instant, must cause him to lose his mind. Was this because Jacobi was nervously weak? A strong man whose hands have become thick-skinned merely from pounding the pulpit or the professor's desk every time he advanced a proof for immortality feels no such dreadfulness, and yet he understands all about immortality, for to have a thick skin signifies in Latin to understand something thoroughly. However, when one confounds memory and recollection the thought is in fact not so dreadful. First of all, because one is courageous, manly, robust, and in the second place, because one does not really think the thought. Thus there is certainly many a man who has written recollections of his life in which there is not a trace of recollection. And yet the recollections would be his investment for eternity. In recollection a man draws a check upon eternity. Eternity is humane enough to honor every draft and to regard everyone as solvent. But eternity is not responsible if a man makes a fool of himself and remembers instead of recollecting, and consequently forgets instead of recollecting, for what is remembered is also forgotten. But again memory makes life unconcerned. Unconcernedly one passes through the most ludicrous metamorphoses; even at an advanced age one still plays blindman's-buff, still takes risks in life's lottery and can still become what one is due to become, notwithstanding one has already been an incredible number of different things. Thereupon one dies — and so one becomes immortal. And, after all, by having lived in such a way should not one have insured oneself of possessing abundant material for recollection throughout a whole eternity? Yes, if eternity's ledger were not quite different from a scrapbook in which one scribbles whatever comes into one's head. But eternity's accounting is of a very particular sort. One might adduce several examples of it as a school exercise — not, however, as a way of reckoning with a view, to social advantage. One man talks day in and day out in Parliament, always about what the age requires, yet not tiresomely like

repetitious Cato, but interestingly and piquantly, keeping abreast of the instant and never saying the same thing, *item* in society he draws upon his resources and deals out from the store of his eloquence, now with scant measure, now with a liberal hand, being applauded constantly with clapping, once a week at least there is something to be read about him in the daily paper, even at night he profits somebody (his wife, namely) by talking in his sleep about what the age requires, as if he were speaking in Parliament; another man keeps silent before he speaks and carries the thing so far that he never comes to the point of speaking — they live the same length of time, and here the question is in order about the answer to the problem: who has the most to recollect?

A man pursues one thought, one only, occupied with that alone; another is an author in five sciences and "is interrupted in his important activity [it is a journalist who is speaking] just when he was about to reform veterinary science" — they live the same length of time, and here the question is in order about the answer to the problem, who has the most to recollect?

Properly speaking, only the essential is the object of recollection, although, as was remarked, the recollections of old age are sometimes fortuitous, and the same observation applies to analogous instances of recollection. The essential is not simply essential in itself, but it is such by reason of the relation it has to the person concerned. He who has broken with the idea cannot act essentially, cannot undertake anything essential — unless it be to repent, which is the only new ideality open to him. Outward criteria notwithstanding, everything he does is unessential. To take a wife is indeed something essential; but he who has once dabbled in love can smite his forehead and lay his hand upon his heart, or upon his r — , as an expression of sheer seriousness and solemnity, it nevertheless is only tomfoolery. Although his marriage might be important to a whole nation and was rung in with the pealing of bells, and although the Pope were to

perform the ceremony, it nevertheless is nothing essential to him but is essentially tomfoolery. The outward rumpus has nothing to do with the case, any more than the fanfare and the presentation of arms can make the drawing of the lottery an essential act on the part of the boy who draws the lots. For the blowing of trumpets has nothing to do with acting essentially. — But neither can one forget what has been recollected. What is recollected is not indifferent to recollection as what is remembered is indifferent to memory. What is recollected one may throw away, but it comes back like Thor's hammer, and not only so but it has a longing for recollection, like a dove which however often it is sold to another can never remain in the possession of the other, because it always flies home. [But the analogy with the bird goes further,] for the thing recollected was hatched by recollection, and this is a secret and hidden brooding, in complete solitude, undisturbed therefore by any profane cognizance — so it is that the bird will not brood over its egg when any stranger has touched it.

Memory is immediacy and comes immediately to one's aid, whereas recollection comes only by reflection. Hence it is an art to recollect. Like Themistocles I wish to forget, as the opposite of remembering. But to recollect and to forget are not opposites. The art of recollecting is not an easy one, because at the instant recollection is taking shape it may assume a great variety of forms, whereas memory merely fluctuates between remembering right and remembering wrong. Take homesickness for example. What is it? It is due to recalling something which is remembered. It is brought about most simply by being away. The art would be to be able to feel homesick notwithstanding one is at home. Expertness in the use of illusion is requisite for this. To live on in an illusion where it is ever twilight and never dawns [is only too easy], and to reflect oneself out of all illusion is not so difficult as to reflect oneself into illusion, allowing it to affect one with all of illusion's power, in spite of the fact that one does it knowingly.

To bring back to oneself the past by enchantment is not so difficult as to remove from oneself by enchantment the object nearest to one for the sake of recollecting it. This properly is the art of recollection, employing reflection raised to the second power.

To achieve a recollection requires acquaintance with contrast in moods, situations, environments. An erotic situation in which the snug aloofness of country life is the essential point may sometimes be best recollected or recalled in a theater, where the environment and the noise force the contrast into evidence. Not always, however, is the direct contrast the most favorable. If it were not in bad taste to use a human being as a means to an end, a favorable contrast for recollecting an erotic relationship might perhaps be found by getting oneself into a new love affair — just for the sake of recollecting. — The contrast can be carried out to the extremest limit in reflection. The extremest point of the reflection-relationship between memory and recollection is attained when memory is used against recollection. Two people might for opposite reasons be unwilling to see again a place which recalls an event. The one does not remotely suspect the existence of anything called by the name of recollection, but he is afraid merely of memory. Out of sight, out of mind, thinks he; if only he does not see, he has forgotten. The other definitely desires to recollect, hence he does not want to see. Only for disagreeable recollections does he make use of memory. He who, though he may be expert in memory, does not understand this truth, may still have ideality, but he lacks experience in using consilia evangelica adversus casus [sic] conscientiae. He would regard such counsel as a paradox and shrink from enduring the first pain, which nevertheless is always to be preferred, just as is the first loss. When memory is again and again revived it enriches the soul with a mass of detail which distracts recollection. Thus repentance is recollection of a fault. Regarding the thing from a purely psychological point of view, I really believe that the police

help the criminal not to come to repentance. By dint of the continual recording and repeating of his life history the criminal attains such dexterity in recounting his story by rote that the ideality of recollection is extruded. It requires great ideality to repent really, and especially to repent straightway; though nature may also help a man, and the tardy repentance, which has little to do with memory, is often the most real and profound. — The condition of all productivity is to be able to recollect. If one would be productive no longer, one has only to remember the very things the recollection of which would make him productive, and with that production is rendered impossible, or will become so distasteful that one gives it up the sooner the better. Fellowship in recollection, properly speaking, does not exist. A kind of quasi-fellowship is a species of contrast which the recollector employs in his own interest. The recollection is sometimes most effectually enticed to come forth when one appears to confide in another, merely to harbor behind this confidence a new reflection wherein the recollection comes into being for one's own delectation. So far as memory is concerned, people can well unite for mutual assistance. In this respect banquets and birthday celebrations, love-tokens and dear keepsakes, are serviceable, like turning down the corner of a page in order to remember where one left off and to be able by means of the dog-ears to be sure of having read the whole book through. The wine press of recollection every man must tread alone. In and for itself this is far from being a curse. Inasmuch as one is always alone with one's recollections, every recollection is a secret. Even though several persons were interested in that which for the recollector is the object of his recollection, he is still alone with it, the apparent publicity is merely illusory.

What I am propounding here serves to recall to me the recollection of thoughts and thinking processes which many a time and in many ways have preoccupied my soul. The reason for making these remarks here is that I

now feel in the mood to desire to set free for recollection an event one time experienced, the desire to record what already has been lying perfected in memory for some time and partially so in recollection. What I have to remember amounts to little, and to that extent the labor of memory is light; but on the other hand I have had difficulty in getting it in shape for recollection, just for the reason that for me it had become something quite different than for the gentlemen who took part in it, who presumably would smile at seeing any importance whatever attributed to such an insignificance, a frolicsome whim, a wild idea, as they themselves would have called it. How small a part my memory has in the matter I can perceive from the fact that I sometimes feel as though I had not experienced it, but had poetically invented it.

I know full well that I shall not soon forget that banquet, in which I participated without being a participator; but nevertheless I cannot make up my mind to let it go without having assured myself of a careful απομνημονευμα of that which for me was really *memorabile.* — I have sought to promote the erotic understanding of recollection, while on the other hand I have done nothing for memory. The situation for recollecting is formed by contrast, and already for a considerable time I have sought to weave the object of my recollection into the contrasted environment. In the splendidly illuminated hall in which the banquet was held the inebriating sea of light with its many reflections produced a fantastic effect. Recollection, however, craves a contrast which is not fantastic. The exalted mood of the participants, the noise of the festivity, the foaming delight of the champagne, are recollected best in a place which is quiet, remote and forgotten. The exuberance of expression which swelled to expression in the moods of the speakers is recollected best in peaceful security. Every attempt to come to the aid of memory directly could only be amiss and would punish me with the disagreeable tang of mimicry. — So I have chosen an

environment well calculated for contrast. I have sought the solitude of the forest, but not at a time when it too is fantastic. Thus the stillness of night would not have been favorable, for that also is under the dominion of the fantastic.

I sought the peace of nature at just that time when it is least emotional. Hence I chose the illumination of late afternoon. If the fantastic is present at that hour, the soul has only a remote presentiment of it, and on the other hand there is nothing milder, more peaceful and more quieting than the feeble glow of late afternoon. As a sick man who has been won back to life seeks preferably this assuaging refreshment, and as one spiritually exhausted from much suffering seeks preferably this relief, so did I for an opposite reason seek to achieve the opposite.

In Gribs-Forest there is a place called the Nook of Eight Paths; he alone finds it who worthily seeks it, for it is not indicated upon any map. The very name seems to involve a contradiction. For how can the junction of eight paths constitute a nook? how can that which implies travel in all directions accord with what is lonely and concealed? And what the solitary man shuns is named after the junction of only three paths: triviality — how trivial then must be the junction of eight paths! And yet it is so: there actually are eight paths, but very solitary paths. Though it is apparently remote, hidden and lonely, one is quite near the hedge of the enclosure, which is called Hedge of Ill Luck. So the contradiction in the name merely makes the place more solitary, as contradiction always does. The eight paths, the much traffic, are merely a possibility, a possibility for thought, since no one frequents these paths except a tiny insect which hurries across them *lente festinans;* no one frequents them except that cursory traveller who is continually looking about him on all sides, not in search of anyone but with the aim of avoiding everyone, that fugitive whom only the death-dealing bullet overtakes — which explains indeed why the stag now is still, but not why it was so

restless; no one frequents them except the wind, of which no man knows whence it cometh and whither it goeth. Even the man who lets himself be deceived by the beguiling suggestion wherewith morbid reserve seeks to capture the wayfarer, even he who followed the narrow footpath which entices one into the recesses of the forest — even he is not so solitary as one is on the eight paths along which no one travels! It is in fact as if the world were extinct and the survivor confronted by the embarrassment of having no one to bury him; or as if the whole tribe had wandered away by the eight paths and left one of the members behind. — If it is true as the poet says, *bene vixit qui bene latuit,* then I have lived well, for my nook was well chosen. Certain it is too that the world and all that therein is never appears to better advantage than when it is seen from a nook and one must take a look at it by stealth; certain it is too that all one hears in the world or is able to hear sounds most enchanting and delicious when heard from a nook where one give ear to it by stealth. So I often have resorted to my retired nook. I knew it before, long before, but now I have learned not to need the night in order to find quiet, for here it always is quiet, always beautiful, but most beautiful, as it seems to me, now when the harvest sun holds a vesper service, and the sky turns a languishing blue; when the creatures take breath after the heat, when coolness is released, and the leaves of the meadow shiver voluptuously, while the forest rustles; when the sun thinks of the evening when it will cool itself in the ocean, when the earth prepares itself for repose and thinks of thanksgiving, when before their parting the two come to an understanding with one another in the tender fusion which darkens the forest and makes brighter the green of the meadows.

O friendly spirit which inhabitest these places, thanks be to thee for always protecting my quietness, thanks for those hours passed in serious recollection, thanks for thy hiding place which I call mine! There quietness increases as the shadows lengthen, as the silence grows — what a formula

of enchantment to conjure with! How inebriating is quietness! For hastily as the drinker may raise the cup to his lips, his inebriation does not increase so rapidly as that of quietness, which grows every second! And what is the mere drop contained in the intoxicating cup in comparison with the infinite sea of silence from which I drink! And what is the seething of wine in contrast with the spontaneous ebullition which seethes more and more powerfully! But also what vanishes so quickly as this inebriation, if someone is merely heard to speak! And what more vexatious than the situation when suddenly one is wrested out of it — worse than the awakening of the drunkard it is when in silence one has forgotten speech, become shy at the sound of words, stammering like one the ligament of whose tongue has never been loosed, rendered weak like a woman who is taken by surprise, too faint to be able at the instant to be capable of deceiving with language! Thanks be to thee then, thou friendly spirit, who didst keep away surprise and interruption, for the excuses of the intruder help but little. — How often have I reflected upon this! In the human swarm no one is guilty who is innocent; but the quiet of solitude is holy, hence whatever disturbs it is guilty, and the chaste companionship of silence when it is violated brooks no excuse nor is helped by it, any more than offended modesty is helped by explanations. How it has smarted when it has happened to me and I see one standing there with a gnawing pain in his soul, ashamed at the offense of disturbing a solitary! In vain will penitence seek to fathom what it is — the guilt is ineffable like silence. Only he who has unworthily sought solitude can be profited by a surprise, as when a loving pair lacks even the power to shape a situation. If such is the case, one may do a service to Eros and to the lovers by showing oneself, although his service is a riddle to the lovers, as their debt to him is: that they put their heads closer together in wrath at the intruder, to whom, however, they owe it that they do so. But if it is two lovers who worthily seek solitude, how

bitter an experience it is to surprise them, how justly might a man curse himself, as every beast was accursed which came near to Sinai! Who does not have this feeling, who is there, when he sees while remaining himself unseen, who might not wish to be like a bird which soars voluptuously over the heads of the lovers, to be like a bird whose screech is an omen for love, to be like a bird which glides through the bushes, beguiling to behold, to be like nature's solitude which tempts Eros, like the echo which confirms the feeling that one is alone, like the distant noise which gives security that the rest are going away and leaving the lovers behind! Oh, the best wish is surely this last, for one becomes solitary on hearing the others vanish. The most solitary situation in Don Juan is that of Zerline: it is not that she is alone; no, she becomes alone; one hears the chorus vanishing, and with the notes which die away at a distance solitude become audible, and solitude comes into being. Ye eight paths, ye have led all men away from me and brought back to me only my own thoughts.

So hail to thee in parting, thou delightful forest; hail to thee, thou unappreciated hour that makest no pretension for thyself, unlike the early morning, unlike the evening, unlike the night, but art humbly content to be thyself, content with thy rustic smile! As the labor of recollection is always blessed, it has in addition this blessing, that it becomes a new recollection which in its turn enthralls; for he who has once understood what recollection is, is caught for all eternity and at the same time captivated; and he who possesses a recollection is richer than though he were in possession of the whole world; and not only the woman with child, but above all the person with a recollection, has the blessing of being in an interesting situation.

IT was about ten o'clock in the evening of one of the last days of July when the participators assembled for that banquet. I have forgotten the day of the month and even the year; such things are the concern of memory, not

of recollection. The only thing that properly concerns recollection is mood and what pertains to mood; and just as a generous wine gains by passing over the line because the watery particles evaporate, so too does recollection gain by losing the watery particles of memory — yet by this the recollection no more becomes a mere fancy than does the generous wine.

The men who participated in the banquet were five in number: Johannes, nicknamed the Seducer, Victor Eremita, Constantine Constantius, and two more, whose names I cannot precisely say I have forgotten, but whose names I never learned to know. It was as though these two possessed no proper name, for they were constantly indicated by an epithet. One was called the "young man." He was certainly not over twenty-some years of age, slenderly built and graceful, with a decidedly dark complexion. The expression of his face was thoughtful, but even more pleasing was his amiable and attractive bearing which gave evidence of a purity of soul in perfect harmony with the almost womanly and vegetative softness and transparence of his whole figure. But this outward beauty one would be inclined to forget, or to keep it merely in mente, when contemplating a youth who, being brought up — or, to employ a more tender expression, coddled up — exclusively by thought, nourished by the content of his own soul, had had nothing to do with the world, had neither been aroused and inflamed, nor rendered disturbed and uneasy. Like a sleep-walker he had within himself the law of his behavior, and his amiable, kindly attitude was not concerned with others, but merely reflected the fundamental disposition of his soul. The other was called the "Ladies' Tailor," that being his occupation. Of him it was impossible to get an integral impression. He was dressed in the very latest fashion, curled and perfumed and odorous of eau de Cologne. At some moments he did not lack an air of solid assurance, but the next moment he assumed in his gait a certain dancing air of festiveness, a certain hovering motion, which was definitely limited, however, by the

robustness of his figure. Even when he was most malicious in his speech, his voice constantly had something of the ingratiating tone of the shopkeeper, the sweetishness of gallantry, which I am sure was highly distasteful to him and only gratified his spirit of defiance. When I think of him now I understand him better than when I saw him alight from the carriage and found myself unable to suppress a laugh. Some contrariety, however, is still left unresolved. He has enchanted and bewitched himself, by the sorcery of his will he has transformed himself into a figure almost foolish, but with it he is not entirely content, and hence reflection now and then peeks out.

When I think of it now it seems to me almost absurd that five such men should be able to arrange a banquet. Presumably nothing would have come of it if Constantine had not been one of the party. At a coffee-house where they sometimes met in a private room the matter had once been broached, but the proposal had completely fallen through when the question was raised as to who should take the lead. The young man declared himself unqualified, the Ladies' Tailor had no time. Victor Eremita excused himself, not indeed by saying that he had married a wife or that he had bought a yoke of oxen and must go to prove them, yet even though he was ready to make an exception and come, he would decline the honor of taking the lead, being able to "show just cause why...." Johannes regarded this as the right word spoken in good season, for to his mind there was one only able to serve a banquet, and that was the magic cloth which spreads itself and serves the dinner when one merely utters the word, "Spread!" It was not always, he said, the most correct thing to enjoy a young girl in haste, but a banquet he could not wait for, and generally he was tired of it a long while in advance. However, if this were to be taken seriously, he proposed one condition, that it should be so arranged as to be accomplished all of a sudden. To this all were agreed. The surroundings should be fashioned

anew, and everything subsequently destroyed, indeed one might well be pleased on rising from the table to hear the preparations for destruction. Nothing should remain over; “not so much,” said the Ladies’ Tailor, “as there remains of a gown when it is made over into a hat”; “nothing at all should remain,” said Johannes, “for nothing is more unpleasant than a piece of sentimentality, and nothing is more disgusting than to know that somewhere or other there is an external setting which directly and impertinently gives itself out to be a reality.”

When the conversation had thus become animated, Victor Eremita suddenly arose, struck an attitude beside the table, making a gesture of the hand like one in command, stretching out his arm like one who lifts a goblet, and as though flourishing the goblet he said: “With this goblet, the fragrance of which already befuddles my senses, the cooling heat of which already inflames my blood, I hail you, dear pot-companions, and bid you welcome; and with the same goblet I drink to your health after eating, being assured that everyone is sufficiently sated merely by the talk about the banquet, for the good Lord satisfies the stomach before the eye is satisfied, but imagination acts inversely.” Thereupon he thrust his hand into his pocket, brought out a cigar-case, took out of it a cigar and began to smoke.

When Constantine Constantius protested against his highhandedness in thus transforming the projected banquet into a sheer illusion, Victor declared that he did not in the least believe it could be carried out, and in any case a mistake had been made in talking about it in advance. “To be good, a thing must be at once, for ‘at once’ is the most divine of all categories and deserves to be honored as in the Latin language is the word *ex templo,* because it is the starting point of the divine in life, so that what does not occur at once is of the evil.” However, he did not care to dispute about it; if the others were inclined to speak or act differently, he would not say a word, if they wanted him to develop his views further, they must give

him leave to make a set speech, for to occasion a discussion he regarded as ungracious.

Accordingly the permission was granted, and as the others exhorted him to begin “at once,” he spoke as follows: “A banquet in and for itself is a difficult business, for even though it be arranged with all possible taste and talent, there is still something else essential to it, namely, luck. By this I do not mean what the anxious housewife might be most likely to think about, but something else which no one can absolutely make sure of: a happy concord of moods and of the subordinate features of the banquet, that fine ethereal touch upon the chords, that inward music, which one cannot bespeak in advance from the town band. Hence it is a risk to begin, for if the thing goes wrong, maybe from the very beginning, it is possible at one banquet to start off in such a way that it will take a long time to recover. Habit and thoughtlessness are the only fathers and godfathers of most banquets, and it is due to a lack of critical sense that the absence of idea is not noticed. For the first thing, there ought never to be women present at a banquet. Parenthetically be it said that I never have liked the word ‘ladies,’ and now since Grundtvig in his most Grundtvigian fiddle-faddle has *grundwichtiglich* employed this word — but that has nothing to do with this subject. Only in the Greek fashion can women be employed as a chorus of dancers. Since at a banquet the essential business is to eat and drink, woman ought not to be included in the company, for she cannot acquit herself properly, and if she does, it is exceedingly unaesthetic. Where a woman is present the business of eating and drinking ought to be reduced to insignificant proportions. At the very most the eating and drinking must be a little feminine occupation just to give the hands something to do. In the country more especially such a small repast (which may even be appointed at another hour than that of the important meals) may be extremely charming, and, if so, this is always attributable to the other sex. To do as the

English do and let the other sex retire before the real drinking begins, is neither one thing nor the other, for every constructive plan ought to be a whole, and the very way I seat myself at the table and take hold of the knife and fork stands in relation to the totality. So too a political banquet is unaesthetic because of its ambiguity. One wants to reduce the essential elements of the banquet to an insignificance, and again one would not have it thought that the speeches are delivered *inter pocula.* So far we are doubtless in agreement, and our number — in case anything should come of the banquet — is well chosen, in accordance with the fine rule: neither more than the Muses, nor less than the Graces. I require now the richest abundance of everything that can be thought of. Even though not everything is actually present, the possibility of it, which is more seductive than the sight, must be immediately at hand, hovering over the table. From banqueting off matches, or, like the Dutch, off a loaf of sugar which all lick by turns, I beg to be excused. My requirement, on the other hand, is difficult to satisfy, for the meal itself must be calculated to awaken and incite that inexpressible desire which every worthy member of the party brings with him. I require that the fruitfulness of the earth shall be at our service, as though everything were sprouting the very instant when appetite desires it. I require a more exuberant abundance of wine than Mephistopheles procured by boring holes in the table. I require an illumination more voluptuous than that of the gnomes when they heave up the mountain upon pillars and dance in a sea of flame. I require what most excites the senses, I require that delicious refreshment of perfumes which is more glorious than anything in the Arabian Nights. I require a coolness which voluptuously kindles desire, and then appeases the desire already satisfied. I require the ceaseless animation of a fountain. If Maecenas could not sleep without hearing the splash of a fountain, I cannot eat without it. Do not misunderstand me: I can eat stockfish without it, but I cannot eat at a banquet without it; I can drink

water without it, but I cannot drink wine at a banquet without it. I require a staff of servants, well chosen and good looking, as though I were seated at the table of the gods; I require chamber-music, strong and subdued, and I require that at every instant it shall be an accompaniment to me; and as for you, my friends, the requirements I make in this respect are incredible. Behold! By reason of all these requirements, which are just as many reasons against it, I hold that a banquet is a *pium desiderium,* and, regarding it in this light, I am so far from being inclined to talk about a repetition that I assume the thing cannot be achieved in the first instance."

The only one who had taken no real part in this conversation or in defeating the banquet was Constantine Constantius. But for him the whole thing would have ended in mere talk. He had reached a different conclusion and believed that, if one were to take the others with a trump, the idea might well be realized. Then some time elapsed and both the banquet and the talk about it were forgotten, when suddenly, one day, the participants received from Constantine a card of invitation to a banquet that very same night. As the password for the occasion he fixed upon *In vino veritas,* because, though speeches were to be allowed as well as conversation, no speeches might be made except *in vino,* and no truths were to be heard except such as are *in vino,* when wine vindicates the truth and the truth vindicates the wine.

The place was chosen in a wooded region a few miles from Copenhagen. The hall where they were to eat was newly decorated and rendered entirely unrecognizable. A small room separated from the hall by a corridor was arranged for the orchestra. Shutters and curtains were disposed at every window, and behind them the sashes were thrown open. Constantine had it in mind that driving thither in the dusk of the evening they might get an inkling of what was coming. Even though one knows that one is driving to a banquet and imagination endeavors for an instant to deal with the voluptuous thought, the impression made by natural surroundings is so

powerful that it must prevail. That this might occur was Constantine's only fear; for while there is no power which knows so well how to beautify all things as does imagination, neither is there any power which can so profoundly disturb everything when it fails one upon coming into contact with real life. Driving on a summer evening does not deflect imagination from luxurious thoughts, but has exactly the contrary effect. Even though one may not see or hear it, imagination spontaneously constructs a picture of the evening's longing for cosiness, thus one sees men and maidens making their way home from labor in the field, hears the hurried clatter of the hay wagon, and interprets the faraway lowing from the meadows as longing. Thus it is the summer evening elicits an idyllic mood, refreshes even the aspiring mind by its quietude, induces even the fleeting fancy to abide with autochthonous nostalgia upon the earth as the place from which it came, teaches the insatiable mind to be satisfied with little, making a man content, for in the evening hours time is standing still and eternity is lingering.

So the invited guests arrived in the evening, for Constantine had come out somewhat earlier. Victor Eremita, who was dwelling in the country not far off, came on horseback, the others in a carriage; and just as their carriage drew up, a Holstein wagon swung through the gate, bearing a jolly crew of four mechanics, who were entertained in the common-room, to be ready to act at the decisive moment as a demolition corps — just as in the theater, for an opposite reason, the firemen are on hand to extinguish a fire at once.

So long as one is a child one has sufficient imagination, though it were for an hour in the dark room, to keep one's soul on tiptoe, on the tiptoe of expectation; but when one is older imagination easily has the effect of making one tired of the Christmas tree before one has a chance to see it.

The folding doors are thrown open; the effect of the radiant illumination, of the coolness which encountered them, of the infatuating fragrance of perfume, of the elegance of the table-arrangement, overwhelmed for an instant the guests who were on the point of entering the room, and when at the same moment strains from the ballet of Don Juan reached them from the orchestra, they were transfixed and for an instant stood still as if in reverence before an invisible spirit which encompassed them, like a man whom admiration has awakened and who has risen to his feet to admire.

Who is there that knows the happy instant, who has comprehended the delight of it and has not sensed that dread lest something might suddenly occur, the most insignificant thing, yet with power to disturb it all! Who has held in his hand the magic lamp and yet has not felt that swooning of delight at the thought that one only needs to wish? Who has held in his hand that which beckons and has not learned to keep his wrist supple so as to let it go at once?

Thus they stood close to one another. Only Victor stood somewhat apart, absorbed in his own thoughts; a shudder passed through him, he almost trembled; then, collecting himself, he saluted the prognostication in these words: "Ye secret, festive, seductive strains which tore me from the cloistered seclusion of my tranquil youth and beguiled me by a sense of loss, like a recollection, most terrible, as if Elvira had not been seduced at all but only desired to be! Immortal Mozart, to whom I owe all! But, no, not yet do I owe thee all; but when I have become an old man, if ever I do, or when I am ten years older than now, if ever I come to that, or when I shall die, for of this at least I am certain, then I will say, Immortal Mozart, to whom I owe all! Then the admiration which is the first and only one I have known I will suffer to break out with all its might, suffer it to slay me, as it often has threatened to do. Then I have set my house in order, then I have remembered my beloved, then I have confessed my love, then I have

completely verified the fact that I owe thee all, then I belong to thee no more, no more belong to this world, but only to the solemn thought of death!"

Just then the orchestra played that invitation in which pleasure exults most prodigiously, storming the very heavens as it soars triumphantly above Elvira's sorrowful words of thanksgiving; and then with a quick apostrophe Johannes repeated the words, "Vivalaliberta"— "*Etveritas,*" adjoined the young man; "But above all," said Constantine, interrupting them, "above all *in vino,*" thereupon taking his seat at the table and inviting the others to do likewise.

How easy it is to give a banquet, and yet Constantine has affirmed that he would never again take the risk! How easy it is to admire, and yet Victor has affirmed that he will never again give word to his admiration, because a discomfiture is more dreadful than to be invalided in war! How easy it is to desire when one has a wishing-rod, and it is sometimes more dreadful than to perish from want.

They took their seats at the table. That same instant the little group was launched half-way out upon the endless ocean of enjoyment, as though with a single bound. Everyone had all his thought, all his desire, set upon the banquet, his soul freely afloat for the enjoyment which was proffered overflowingly and with which the soul overflowed. The practised driver is recognized by the fact that he knows how to let the champing team start with a single bound, and how to hold them evenly together; the well-trained steed is recognized by the fact that by a single leap he rises with absolute decision. If one or another of the guests was perhaps not quite on a par, Constantine proved himself a good host.

So then they dined. Soon conversation had woven its beautiful garland about the guests, so they sat there crowned with it. At one moment the conversation seemed to be in love with the food, then with the wine, then

again with itself; at one moment it was as though it was on the point of signifying something, then again it meant nothing at all. Now a fanciful notion came to development, that gorgeous fancy which blooms but once, that tender fancy which straightway closes its petals; then there was heard an outburst from a banqueter, “These truffles are superb!” then a shout to the host, “But this Château Margaux!” Now the music was drowned by the noise, now it was heard again. For one instant the company of servants stood still *in pause* at the important moment when a new course was to be served or a new wine was ordered by the name of its vintage; and then they were all busy again. Now silence intervened for a second, then the reanimating spirit of the music descended upon the guests. Now an individual with an audacious thought threw himself in front of the other talkers, and they all followed him as their leader, almost forgetful of the food, and the music followed in their rear as it follows an exulting host; then in turn there was heard only the tinkling of glasses and the clinking of plates, and the work of eating proceeded in silence, supported only by the music, which joyously took the lead and again recalled conversation. — So they dined.

How poor a thing is language compared with the unmeaning yet significant combination of clangorous sounds in a battle or at a banquet, which not even a theatrical rendering can reproduce, and for which language possesses but a few words! Yet how rich is language in the service of the wish, compared with its use for the description of reality!

Only once did Constantine abandon the rôle of omnipresence in which his presence was hardly noticed. At the very beginning he got them to sing one of the old drinking-songs, “to recall the pleasant times when men and women banqueted together.” The effect of this proposal was sheer burlesque, as perhaps Constantine intended; but that spirit almost got the upper hand, for the Ladies’ Tailor wanted them to sing “The Night I get into

the Bridal Bed, falderi, faldera." After a few courses had been served Constantine proposed that the banquet should be concluded by every man making a speech, with the precaution, however, that the speakers be not permitted to flutter around too indefinitely. Accordingly, he made two conditions: first, that there were to be no speeches till after the meal; second, that no one might speak until he had drunk so much that he could perceive the power of the wine or was in that state in which one says much which in other conditions one would rather not say — without implying that the coherence of the speech or of the thought needed to be interrupted constantly by hiccups. Hence before speaking everyone should solemnly declare that he was in this state. It would not be possible to prescribe the precise quantity of wine required, seeing that the saturation point might be so different. Against this Johannes made a formal protest. He never could get drunk, and when he had reached a certain point he became more and more sober the more he drank. Victor Eremita was of the opinion that the experimental reflection involved in watching how drunk one got would prevent one from getting drunk. If one were to get drunk, it must be accomplished by "immediacy." Then there was divers talk about the diverse effect of wine upon consciousness, noting in particular that in the case of very reflective individuals the consumption of a great deal of wine might be expressed, not by any strange impetus but, on the contrary, by cool discretion. As for the content of the speeches, Constantine proposed that they should deal with love, or with the relationship between man and woman. No love-experiences, however, might be told, though such affairs might perfectly well lie at the basis of the particular view one maintained.

The conditions were accepted. All the just and reasonable demands a host makes upon his guests were fulfilled: they ate and "they drank and they drank largely," as the Hebrew tongue expresses it — which being translated means that "they made merry."

The desert was served. If Victor had not yet found his requirement fulfilled of hearing the splash of a fountain (which fortunately for him he had forgotten again since that conversation), at least champagne now sparkled abundantly. The clock struck twelve. Then Constantine enjoined silence, drank to the young man with these words, "*Quod felix sit faustumque,*" and bade him speak first.

The young man arose and declared that he perceived the power of the wine, a fact which was also partly visible, for the blood throbbed violently at his temples, and his outward appearance was not so beautiful as before the meal. He spoke as follows:

"If there be truth in the words of the poets, dear boon companions, unhappy love is indeed the bitterest grief. If any proof be needed, listen to the tale of the lovers. They say that it is death, certain death, and the first time they believe it as long as a fortnight; the second time they say that it is death, the third time they say that it is death, and finally some day they die... of unhappy love. For that it is love they die of there can be no doubt, and that it takes love three times to take the life out of them is just like a dentist taking three times to get a firm molar pulled out. But if unhappy love is certain death, how happy I am then who have never loved and may manage presumably to die some day... not of unhappy love. But perhaps this is precisely the greatest misfortune — how unhappy then I must be! The significance of love must presumably (for I speak as a blind man about colors), must presumably be its bliss, and this is expressed again by saying that the cessation of love is the death of the lover. That I can understand as a thought-experiment which sets life and death in relationship with one another. But if love is to be regarded merely as a thought-experiment, the lovers are ridiculous who go ahead and actually fall in love. If on the contrary it is to be regarded as something real, then reality must corroborate what the lovers say about it. But who ever heard or perceived in real life

that such things came to pass, though one may hear it said that they do? In this I already perceive one of the contradictions wherein love involves a person; for whether to the initiates it seems different I do not know, but to me it seems to involve a man in the strangest contradictions. No other relationship between human beings demands so much ideality as love, and yet it is never discernible. This already is enough to make me afraid of love, because I am afraid it might have power to make me too talk into the air about a bliss I do not feel and about a pain I do not feel. I say this here because I have been bidden to talk about love, in spite of the fact that I am not versed in it, I say it here in an environment which is as congenial to me as a Greek symposium; for otherwise I have no desire to speak about it, no desire to disturb anyone in his happiness. Perhaps in the eyes of the initiated these thoughts are mere foolishness and cobwebs of the brain, perhaps my ignorance is to be accounted for by the fact that I have never learned nor wished to learn from anyone how one gets to be in love, and that I have never, because it was smart, challenged a woman by a glance, but I have cast my eyes down, unwilling to abandon myself to an impression before I have clearly made out what is the significance of that power under the dominion of which I am about to let myself fall."

Here he was interrupted by Constantine, who remonstrated that by admitting he never had had any love-experience he debarred himself from making a speech. The young man declared that at any other time he would gladly comply with a command enjoining silence, since he had often enough been sensible of the tedium of talking, but here he would stick up for his rights. Precisely the fact of having no love-experience was also a love-experience in a way, and he who could affirm this of himself was especially entitled to talk about Eros, because he could be said to have, through his thoughts, a relation to the sex as a whole and not merely to

particular individuals. He was given permission to talk, and he continued as follows:

"Since my right to speak has now been put in doubt, this doubt may well serve to exempt me from your laughter, for I know very well that among rustics no one is considered a proper man who hasn't a tobacco-pipe, so among males no one is considered a real man who has not been tried in love. If anyone wants to laugh, let him laugh — to me the thing of chief importance is thought. Or has love perhaps the privilege of being the only thing one is not to think about in advance but only afterwards? If so, what would happen in case I, the lover, were to begin afterwards to reflect that it was too late? This, you see, is the reason why I choose to think about love beforehand. Lovers also, it is true, will say that they have thought about love beforehand, but it is not so. They assume that it is essential to man to fall in love; but this is not to think about love, but to assume it for the sake of bethinking themselves how to find a sweetheart.

"Whenever my reflection seeks to grasp love, all I retain in my hand is contradiction. Sometimes indeed I feel as if there were something I had missed, but I cannot tell what it is, and on the other hand my reflection here again shows me at once the contradiction. So then, to my way of thinking, love is the greatest contradiction it is possible to think of, and at the same time it is comic. The one corresponds to the other. The comic is always implied in the category of contradiction — a theme which I cannot develop here. But what I would point out here is that love is comic. By love I understand here a relationship between man and woman, and I am not thinking of Eros in the Greek sense, as it is so beautifully extolled by Plato; but he has so little to say of love for women that it is mentioned only in passing, and it is regarded even as imperfect in comparison with love for young men. I say that love is comic for a third party — more than that I do not say. Whether it is for this cause lovers always hate a third party, I do not

know; but this I know, that reflection always is a third party, and hence I cannot love without at the same time being myself in reflection a third party. This surely cannot seem strange to anybody, seeing that everybody has in fact doubted everything, and for my part I only try to doubt about everything that has to do with love. But on the other hand it does seem to me strange that people have doubted everything and again found certitude, yet never whisper a word about difficulties which have been shackles to my thought, so that I have sometimes wished longingly for liberation — by help of him, be it noted, who first has thought these difficulties, and has not had it suggested to him in sleep to doubt and to have doubted everything, and again I say, had it suggested to him in sleep to explain and to have explained everything. So give me your attention, dear boon companions, and if you yourselves are lovers, do not interrupt me and do not hush me up because you don't want to hear the explanation; rather turn away and hear with averted face what I have to say, what I now desire to say, once I have begun.

"In the first place, I find it comical that all men are in love and want to be in love, and yet one never can get any illumination upon the question what the lovable, i.e. the proper object of love, really is. I make no attempt to define the word love, for with that we get nowhere, but no sooner is the subject broached than we are confronted by the question what it is one loves. To this no other answer is forthcoming than that one loves the lovable. For if one answers with Plato that one should love the Good, one has overstepped with a single stride the boundary of the erotic. But then perhaps one gives answer that one should love the Beautiful. If I were to ask whether 'to love' means to love a beautiful landscape or a fine painting, one would perceive at once that the erotic is not related as a species to the genus which comprises universally everything that can be loved, but that it is something entirely sui generis. Accordingly, if a lover, wishing to express

adequately how much love there dwelt in him, were to talk in this fashion, ‘I love beautiful landscapes and my Lalage and the beautiful dancing girl and a beautiful horse, in short I love all that is beautiful,’ then Lalage, if in other respects she was content with him, would certainly not be content with his panegyric, even if she was beautiful; and suppose now that Lalage was not beautiful, though he loved her nevertheless. Again, if I were to bring the erotic into relation with that differentiation of which Aristophanes talks when he says that the gods divided man into two parts, as one serves a flounder, and that these separated parts yearningly seek one another, there again I stumble upon a difficulty I cannot fathom: namely, how far I am justified in appealing to the authority of Aristophanes, who in the continuation of his address thought further, and, because there is no reason for stopping there, thinks it might occur to the gods, for their still greater amusement, to divide man into three parts. ‘For their still greater amusement’ — is it not true, as I say, that love makes a man ridiculous, if not in the eyes of others, at least in the eyes of the gods? However, I will assume that the erotic has its potency in the relationship between the masculine and the feminine — what then? If the lover were to say to his Lalage, ‘I love thee because thou art a woman, I could just as well love every other woman, just as well love the ugly Zoe,’ the beautiful Lalage would be insulted. What then is the lovable? That is my question, but the fatality is that no one has been able to tell me. The individual lover stoutly believes for his part that he knows the answer, but to another man he is not able to make himself intelligible, and he who listens to the talk of several lovers will ascertain that no two of them say the same thing, although they all talk about the same thing. I need say nothing of the perfectly foolish explanations which end by letting a man run his nose against the door, that is to say, end by saying that it is the sweetheart’s pretty feet or the beloved man’s much admired mustache which properly is love’s object; but even

when one hears a lover talk in a lofty style, he hears him first recount several particulars, but finally he says, ‘her whole lovable nature,’ and when his declamation has reached its climax he says, ‘that inexplicable something which I do not know how to account for’ — and this sort of talk is supposed to be especially pleasing to the beautiful Lalage. But it does not please me, for I don’t understand a word of it, but find that it contains a double contradiction: first, because it ends with the *inexplicable*; and second, because it *ends* there. For he who would end with the inexplicable had best begin with it and say not a word more, so as not to become an object of suspicion. If he begins with the inexplicable and says not a word more, this is no proof of his impotence, for in a negative sense this after all is an explanation; but if he begins with something else and ends with the inexplicable, this is proof of his impotence.

“So then we have love — to this corresponds the lovable, and the lovable is the inexplicable. That goes in one ear and out of the other, it can no more be understood than the inexplicable way love has of seizing its prey. Who would not be alarmed if all around one, time and again, people were suddenly falling down and dying, while no one was able to account for it? But this is precisely the way love pounces down in the midst of life — only no one is alarmed by it, since the lovers regard it as the greatest happiness, but rather one is prompted to laugh, for there is a correspondence between the comic and the tragic. Today one talks with a man and can understand him fairly well; tomorrow this man speaks ‘with tongues’ and with strange gestures — he is in love. In case the purport of love were to fall in love with the first corner, it would be easy to understand why no one could explain it more exactly; but since the purport of love is to fall in love with one only, the one only person in the whole world, it seems as if such a prodigious act of segregation and choice must contain in itself a dialectic of reasons which one might decline to hear, not because it explained nothing, but because it

would be too prolix to listen to. But, no, the lover is not able to explain anything. He has seen hundreds and hundreds of women, he perhaps has reached a certain age, he has felt nothing, suddenly he sees her, the only one, Catherine! Is it not comic that this thing, love, which is to transform and beautify the whole of life is not like a grain of mustard seed from which there grows a great tree, but is even smaller than that, is at bottom nothing at all; for there is not a single antecedent criterion that can be alleged (as if, for example, there was a certain age at which the phenomenon occurred), and there is not a single reason that can be alleged why he chose her, her alone in the whole world — and this not at all in the same sense in which 'Adam chose Eve, because there was no other.' Or is not the explanation which the lovers give equally comic, or rather does it not serve precisely to throw into sharp relief the comic character of love? They say that love makes blind, and by this they explain the phenomenon. In case a man going into a dark room to fetch something were to reply to my advice that he carry a light by saying, 'The thing I am seeking is only a trifle, therefore I carry no light' — ah, then I could understand him perfectly. On the other hand, when the same man takes me aside and confides to me in a mysterious manner that the thing he went to fetch was of the utmost importance, and therefore he could do it blindly — ah, I wonder how my poor mortal head might be able to follow the high flight of this speech. Even if for fear of offending him I might refrain from laughter, as soon as his back was turned I could not help laughing. But at love nobody laughs; for I am prepared to encounter the same embarrassment as the Jew who after he had concluded his story said, 'Does nobody laugh?' However, I have not, like the Jew, left out the point, and though I myself laugh, my laughter is far from meaning offense to anybody. On the contrary I despise the fools who imagine that they have such good reasons for their love they can afford to laugh at other lovers; for since love never can be explained, the one lover is as ridiculous

as the other. Moreover, I find it just as foolish and supercilious for a man to look around proudly upon a group of girls in order to find one who is worthy of him, or for a girl to toss her head proudly and sort out the men; for such people are busying themselves merely with finite thoughts within an unexplained hypothesis. No, what engages my thought is love as such, it is that which appears to me ridiculous, and hence I fear it, lest I become ridiculous to myself or ridiculous in the eyes of the gods who fashioned man thus. For if love is ridiculous, it is equally ridiculous whether I get a princess or a serving-maid, for the lovable, as we have seen, is the inexplicable. Hence it is I fear love, but in this again I see another proof that love is comic, for my fear is of such a strangely tragic sort that it is a precise illustration of the comic. When men are tearing down a wall they hang out a sign of warning, and I keep out of the way of it; when a fence is being painted they put up a notice; when a coachman is about to run over a man he shouts, ‘Look out!’; when there is a case of cholera a soldier is stationed in front of the house, etc. What I mean is, that when there is danger, the danger can be pointed out, and one happily avoids it by giving heed to the signs. So as I am afraid of becoming ridiculous by falling in love, I naturally regard it as dangerous — what am I to do then to avoid it, or what am I to do to avoid the danger that a woman might fall in love with me? Far from me be the proud thought that I am an Adonis with whom every woman falls in love (relata refero, for I don’t understand what it means), the gods preserve me! But since I do not know what the lovable is, I cannot possibly know how to behave in order to avoid this danger. Moreover, since qualities which are precisely opposites may constitute the lovable, and since in the last resort the inexplicable is the lovable, I am in the same situation as that man about whom Jean Paul tells that when he was standing on one foot he read a sign saying, ‘Fox-traps set here!’ — and now the poor fellow does not dare to raise the one foot or to put the other down. I will not love

anybody before I have fathomed the thought of love, and that I am not able to do; on the contrary, I have reached the conclusion that love is comic. So I am unwilling to love; but, alas, by this precaution the danger has not been avoided, for since I do not know what the lovable is, how it attacks me, or how it attacks a woman with reference to me, I cannot be sure of knowing whether I have avoided the danger. This is tragic, in a sense it is profoundly tragic, even though no one is concerned about it or is concerned about the contradiction so bitter to a thinker, that there is something which exercises its power everywhere and yet cannot be grasped by thought, something which is capable of attacking from behind the man who is vainly trying to think it. But the tragic aspect is deeply grounded in the comic traits which I have pointed out. Perhaps everybody else will invert the thing and will not find comic what I find comic, but rather will find the comic in what to me is tragic. But even this shows that I am in the right to a certain degree, and that the reason why, if I am to become a sacrifice, I must be a comic or a tragic sacrifice is sufficiently clear, viz. my resolution to reflect about everything I do, and not to imagine I am reflecting upon life when what I say of the most significant problem is 'Never mind.'

"Man consists of soul and body — about this the wisest and best of men are agreed. If then we assume that the potency of love is discoverable in the relationship between the feminine and the masculine, the comic will appear again in the reversal which takes place for the fact that the loftiest psychic experience expresses itself in the most sensuous terms. I am thinking here of all the exceedingly strange gesticulations of love and of its mystic tokens, in short of all the freemasonry which is in perfect continuity with that primary incomprehensibility. The contradiction in which love here involves a man is this, that the symbolism signifies nothing whatever, or, what comes to the same thing, that no one can tell what it is supposed to signify. Two loving souls assure one another that they will love one another

to all eternity; thereupon they embrace one another and seal with a kiss the eternal covenant. I ask any thinker whether such a thing as that has ever entered his mind. And such a confusion is constantly occurring in love. The loftiest psychic experience finds its expression in the extremest contrary, and the sensuous is supposed to indicate the loftiest psychic feeling. Suppose that I were in love. It would then be of the utmost importance to me that the loved one should belong to me for all eternity. That I can understand, for essentially what I am speaking of here is the Greek erotic, the love of beautiful souls. So when the loved one has assured me of this, I would believe it, or insofar as there was any doubt left I would endeavor to combat it. But what happens? For if I were in love, I would doubtless behave like the others, I would seek some other assurance than that of believing her word, which after all is clearly the only assurance. Here again I am confronted by the inexplicable. When Cockatoo, clinging to his perch for all he is worth, begins to believe he is a duck that has swallowed the wrong way and regurgitates the word 'Mariana,' then everybody laughs. Perhaps the spectators discover the comic trait in the fact that Cockatoo, who doesn't love Mariana, should be on such terms with her. But suppose now that Cockatoo was in love with Mariana, would not then that be comic? To me it appears equally comic and that the comic element consists in the fact that love has become commensurable and is to be regarded as commensurable with such an expression. Though such an incommensurable expression had been customary from the beginning, the case is not altered, for the comic has from eternity a prescriptive right to consist in contradiction, and here is a contradiction. There is not anything really comic in a marionette, for there is no contradiction in the fact that it makes extraordinary movements, since in fact someone pulls the strings. But to be a marionette in the service of some inexplicable power is comic. The contradiction is that no one sees any rational reason why it should get a

twitch now in one leg, now in the other. When I cannot explain to myself what I am doing, I don't want to do it; when I cannot understand the power to whose sway I am about to commit myself, I don't want to commit myself to its sway. And if love is an enigmatic power of this sort which binds together the extremest opposites, who guarantees me that it may not suddenly result in confusion? However, I am not so much concerned about this. But I have already referred to the fact that some lovers find that other lovers behave ridiculously. What their laughter really means I am unable to conceive; for if love obeys a law of nature, it is surely the same for all lovers; and if it is a law of freedom, those laughing lovers must be able to explain all their actions, which, however, they are not able to do. To some extent I can understand it better as a general principle that the one lover regularly laughs at the other, finding the other ridiculous but not himself. If it is ridiculous to kiss an ugly girl, it also is ridiculous to kiss a pretty one, and the notion that doing a thing one way is any justification for laughing at a person who does it another way is nothing more than superciliousness and a complot, which does not, however, avail to set such a snob outside the category of the ridiculous, which is determined by the consideration that nobody can say what it means to kiss, although it is assumed to mean that the lovers desire to belong to one another for all eternity, yea, what is still more amusing, it is supposed to give them assurance of this. In case a man sitting at his ease were to lay his head on one side, or shake his head, or kick out his foot, and were to answer the query why he did it by admitting, 'I don't really know myself, I just happened to do it, another time I do it differently, for it is involuntary' — ah, then I would understand him. But in case he were to say, as in fact the lovers say about those gesticulations, that perfect bliss consisted in this, how could I not find it ridiculous, as I found also the other case ridiculous, though in another sense, to be sure, until the man checked my laughter by explaining that his movements did not signify

anything. Thereby the contradiction which is of the essence of the comic is resolved; for it is not ridiculous to explain that the insignificant has no significance, but to explain that it has the utmost significance surely is ridiculous. With regard to involuntary actions there is primarily present the contradiction that involuntary actions are not expected in a free rational being. Thus if one were to suppose that the Pope at the instant when he was about to place the crown upon Napoleon's head was seized with a cough, or that the bride and groom at the solemn moment of the wedding began to sneeze, the comic element emerges clearly. The more any given occasion accentuates the freedom of a rational being, the more comic the involuntary becomes. So it is in the case of the erotic gesticulations, where the comic element comes to the fore a second time, owing to the fact that the lovers would explain the contradiction by attributing to it absolute significance. It is well known that children have a great sense for the comic, as is proved by the fact that children always respond to this appeal. Now children as a rule will always start to laugh at lovers, and if they are induced to recount what they saw, surely nobody can help laughing. Perhaps this is because the children have left out the point. It is strange then that when the Jew left out the point nobody would laugh, whereas here, conversely, when one leaves out the point everybody laughs. But since no one can tell where the point is, it is naturally left out. The lovers explain nothing, the people who praise love explain nothing, they are intent only, as the Constitution of the Realm commands, to say everything that might be pleasant and lovable. But the man who thinks accounts for his categories, and the man who thinks about love thinks also at once of the categories. However, in the case of love people do not do that, and we still lack a bucolic science, for though in a pastoral lyric the poet may make an attempt to let love come into existence spontaneously, the conventions are all smuggled in again by means of a person who teaches the lover how to love. — So then I found the comic

element in the erotic reversal whereby the loftiest experience in one sphere does not find its expression in this sphere but in the polar opposite of another sphere. It is comic that the high flight of love (the desire to belong to one another for all eternity) constantly ends like Saft in the pantry; but still more comic it is that this conclusion of the affair is supposed to be its highest expression.

"Wherever there is contradiction the comic is also present. This is the cue I am constantly following. If it should prove disconcerting to you, dear boon companions, to follow me on this path, then follow with averted face, in fact I myself am speaking like one with a veil before his eyes, for as I see only enigmas, I am unable to see, or rather I see nothing. What is a consequence? In case it cannot in one way or another be brought under the concept of identity along with that whereof it is a consequence, it becomes ridiculous, notwithstanding it is currently regarded as a consequence. So for example when a man would take a bath, jumps into the tub and while he is still a bit confused comes out of the hot water, gropes for the bath-rope to steady himself, but makes a mistake and grasps the cord which releases the cold shower, which now with obvious motivation and with the readiest possible compliance descends upon him in a cold stream — the consequence then is thoroughly correct. The ridiculous thing is that he grasped the wrong rope, but there is nothing ridiculous in the fact that a shower operates when one pulls the cord. Rather it would be ridiculous if the shower were to fail — as if for example (to prove the correctness of my proposition about the contradictory), as if a man were to nerve himself in preparation for enduring the shock, and with the ardor of bold resolution were to pull the cord... and no shower came! The lovers want to belong to one another for all eternity. They give expression to this in that strange way they have of embracing one another with the intensity of the instant, and all the pleasure of the bliss of love is supposed to consist in this. But all

pleasure is selfish. The pleasure of the lover, to be sure, is not selfish with respect to the loved one, but in union they are both absolutely selfish, inasmuch as in union and in love they constitute one self. And yet they are deceived, for at the same instant the genus triumphs over the individual, the genus is victorious whereas the individuals are reduced to the position of being in its service. This I find is more ridiculous than what Aristophanes found so ridiculous. For the ludicrous aspect of the halving of man consists in the contradiction which Aristophanes does not sufficiently emphasize. In looking at a man one would surely think that he was a whole, all by himself, and that indeed is what one thinks, until one sees that under the obsession of love he is only a half which runs after its other half. There is nothing comic in half an apple, the comical would only emerge if a whole apple were a half apple; in the first case there is no contradiction, but surely there is in the latter. If people took seriously the saying that woman is only man's half, she would not be comic in love. The man, however, who has enjoyed civic prestige as a whole man becomes comic when he begins to run about and thereby betrays that he is only half a man. The more one thinks of it, the more laughable it becomes; for if the man actually is a whole, he does not become a whole in love, but he and the woman make one and a half. What wonder then that the gods laugh, and that they laugh especially at man! I return, however, to my consequence. Now when the lovers have found one another, one would surely suppose that they were a whole, and herein should be manifested the truth that they desire to live for one another to all eternity. But, behold, instead of living for one another, they begin to live for the race, and they have no suspicion of it! — What is a consequence? In case a consequence when once it has resulted cannot be traced back into that out of which it resulted, it is a ludicrous sort of consequence, and they to whom it occurred are ridiculous. Now in case those separated halves have found one another, this surely should mean perfect satisfaction and

repose, and yet there ensues upon this a new existence. That the finding of one another should constitute a new existence for the lovers is comprehensible, but not that from them there dates also a new existence for another being. And yet this resulting consequence is greater than that whereof it is a consequence, and yet the conclusion such as this the lovers attained in finding one another must surely be an indication that no further consequence was thinkable. Does any other pleasure supply an analogy to this? On the contrary, the satisfaction of every other pleasure denotes a point of rest, and even though there supervenes a *tristitia*i which indicates that all desire is comic, yet such a *tristitia* would be a simple consequence, although no *tristitia* witnesses so powerfully to the antecedent comic as does the *tristitia* of love. On the other hand, it is an entirely different question in the case of such a prodigious consequence as that about which we are here speaking, a consequence about which no one knows whence it comes or whether it comes, whereas if it comes it comes nevertheless as a consequence.

"Who is able to comprehend this? And yet for the initiates what is the highest pleasure is at the same time the thing of greatest moment; it is so momentous that the lovers even assume new names which are derived from the consequence — which, strangely enough, has retroactive force. The lover is now called Father, and the loved one, Mother; and to their ears these two names are the most beautiful. And yet there is one to whom these names are even more beautiful. For what is so beautiful as filial piety? To me it seems the most beautiful thing of all, and fortunately I am able to understand the thought involved in it. We are taught that it behooves a son to love his father. That I understand, I do not even suspect any contradictions, I feel myself blissfully bound by the beautiful ties of filial piety. I believe that to owe life to another is the highest debt, I believe that this debt can neither be settled nor fathomed by any reckoning, and hence I

find that Cicero is right in saying that as against the father the son is always in the wrong, and it is filial piety precisely that teaches me to believe this, teaches me not even to wish to penetrate the hidden, but rather to remain hidden in the father. It is quite true, I am glad to be another man's greatest debtor, but conversely, before I resolve to make another my greatest debtor, I would want to be clear about the thing myself, for to my thinking there is no comparison between being another man's debtor and making a debtor of another man so that in all eternity he is not able to liberate himself from the debt. So then what filial piety forbids the son to consider, love bids the father to consider. And here a contradiction again emerges. If the son is an eternal being like the father, what does it mean to be a father? I may indeed smile to myself at the thought of being a father, whereas the son is most profoundly moved when he thinks of his relationship to the father. I understand perfectly what Plato so well said, that an animal will produce an animal of the same species, a plant, a plant of the same species, and so a man will give birth to a man; but by this nothing is explained, thought is not satisfied, only a vague feeling is aroused; for an eternal being cannot be born. Whenever the father regards his son in the aspect of his eternal essence, which is the essential way of regarding him, he cannot but smile at himself, not being able to conceive in any way all the beauty and significance he has for his son in filial piety. If on the other hand he regards his son in the aspect of his physical nature, he must again smile, because the notion of fatherhood is altogether too lofty an expression for this. Finally, if it were thinkable that the father had influence upon the son, that the father's nature was a postulate from which the son's nature could not liberate itself, the contradiction comes from another side; for then the thought is so dreadful that there is nothing on earth so dreadful as to be a father. There is no comparison between putting a human being to death and giving life to a human being; the first merely decides his fate in time, the other, in eternity.

So here then there is a contradiction, one fit both to laugh and to weep over. Is paternity an imagination (though not in the sense in which Magdalene says this to Jeronymus), or is it the most dreadful of all realities? Is it the greatest benefaction, or is it the highest enjoyment of pleasure? Is it something that merely comes about, or is it the loftiest task?

"Behold, for this reason I have renounced love, for to me my thought is all in all. If love be the most blissful pleasure, then I renounce the pleasure, without wishing to offend anyone or to envy him; if love constitutes the condition for performing the greatest benefaction, then I disavow all claim to such an opportunity, but my thought is safely preserved. I am not without an eye for the beautiful, my heart is not unmoved when I read the songs of the poets, my soul is not untouched by sadness when I dreamily reflect upon those conceptions of love, but to my thought I will not be unfaithful, and what would it avail anyway, when for me there is no blessedness where my thought is not safely preserved to me, where I, if I were in such a place, would yearn in desperation for my thought, which I dare not desert to cling to a wife, since to me it is my eternal essence, and so is of still greater value than father and mother and of still greater value than a wife. I perceive indeed that if anything can be holy, it is love, that if in any circumstances unfaithfulness is base, it is in love, that if any deceit is detestable, it is in love; but my soul is pure, I have never looked upon any woman to desire her, I have not fluttered about undecidedly until I blindly plunged or swooned away into the most decisive relationship. In case I knew what the lovable is, I should know to a certainty whether I had been at fault by tempting anyone, but as I do not know that, I can only say definitely that I am not conscious of having willed it. Suppose I were to let myself go, suppose I fell to laughings or suppose I drooped under the dreadfulness of it — for it is impossible for me to find the narrow way which the lovers tread so easily, as if it were the broad way, undeterred by trying doubts, which

they surely have thought of, since our age has in fact thought everything through, and consequently can easily understand my assertion that to act ‘immediately,’ i.e. unreflectively, is nonsense, and so that one must have thought all possible reflections through before acting — suppose I were to let myself go. Have I then irretrievably offended the loved one if I laughed, or cast her immediately into despair if I drooped? For I comprehend very well that a woman cannot be so thoroughly reflective, and a woman who found love comic (as only gods and men can find it, and hence woman is a temptation which is meant to entice men to be ridiculous), such a woman would betray a suspicious amount of antecedent knowledge and would understand me least of all, but a woman who comprehended the dreadfulness would have lost her lovableness and still would not understand me, she would be annihilated, as I by no means am so long as my thought preserves me.

“Does nobody laugh? When I began by wanting to talk about the comic side of love, you perhaps expected to have a laugh, for you are a laughing lot, and I myself am a friend of laughter, and yet perhaps you are not laughing. The effect was a different one, and yet it proves precisely that I have talked about the comic. If nobody laughs at my speech — very well, dear boon companions, then laugh a little at me, it will not surprise me; for what I have occasionally heard you say about love I do not understand — presumably you are initiates.”

Thereupon the young man sat down. He had become almost more beautiful than before the meal. Now he sat gazing in front of him without concerning himself with the others. Johannes the Seducer wanted at once to make objections to the young man’s speech but was interrupted by Constantine, who warned against discussions and ruled that now only speeches were in order. This again gave rise to a discussion about what order they were to speak in, which Constantine again checked by inviting

himself to speak, in consideration that they would recognize his competence to command the others to speak in turn.

Constantine spoke as follows:

"There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak, and now, it seems to me, is a time to speak briefly, for our young friend has spoken very long and very strangely. His *vis comica* has brought us to the pass of fighting *ancipiti proelio*, for his speech was of as doubtful a character as he is himself, whom you now see sitting there, a puzzled man, not knowing whether he ought to laugh or weep, or whether to fall in love. Indeed, if I had had foreknowledge of his speech, such as he insists upon having about love, I would have forbidden him to speak, but now it is too late. So now I bid you, dear boon companions, "that ye merry and jovial here shall be"; and if this is not a mood that S.K. is obviously reflecting here upon his experience with Regina — for the first time it is obvious in this book, but by no means for the last time. At this point the reader may be apprised that this "young man" is the same "young man" that appears later in "Guilty?"

"Not Guilty?" The first "young man" is S.K. before he had fallen in love, the other "young man" is in the throes of breaking his engagement comes by bidding, I bid you then to forget each speech as soon as it is delivered, washing it down with a single gulp.

"And now for woman, the subject on which I would speak. I too have pondered, and I have fathomed her category; I too have sought, but I have also found, making a peerless discovery which I impart to you herewith. She can only be rightly construed under the category of jest. It is man's part to be absolute, to act absolutely, to give expression to the absolute; woman has her being in relationships. Between two such different beings no genuine reciprocal action can take place. This incongruity is precisely what constitutes jest, and it is with woman jest first came into the world. It follows, however, as a matter of course that man must know how to keep

himself under the category of the absolute, for otherwise nothing comes of it, that is to say, there comes of it something only too universal, that man and woman tally with one another, he as a half-man and she as a half-man.

"Jest is not an aesthetic but an imperfect ethical category. Its effect upon thought is like the effect upon one's frame of mind at hearing a man who begins a speech, and after reciting a phrase or two with the same eloquence, says, 'Hm' — and then dead silence. So it is with woman. One aims at her with the ethical category, one shuts one's eyes, one thinks of the absolute in the way of requirements, one thinks the thought of man, one opens one's eyes, one fixes one's glance upon the demure little miss upon whom one is experimenting to see if she meets the specifications; one becomes uneasy and says to oneself, 'Ah, this surely is jest.' For the jest consists in applying the category, in subsuming her under it, because with her the serious never can become serious; but precisely this is jest, for if one might require seriousness of her, it would not be jest. To put her under a vacuum pump and pump all the air out of her would be cruel and would not be in the least amusing, but to pump air into her, to pump her up to supernatural size, to let her suppose she has attained all the ideality a little miss of sixteen years can imagine she wants to have — this is the beginning of the performance, and the beginning of a highly entertaining performance. No young man has half so much imaginary ideality as a young girl. But 'there is a rebate on that,' as said the tailor, for all her ideality is illusion.

"If one does not regard woman in this way, she may do irreparable harm; with my interpretation she becomes harmless and amusing. There is nothing more dreadful for a man than to catch himself in the act of twaddling. With this all genuine ideality is brought to naught; for to have been a knave is a thing one can repent of, not having meant one word of all one said one can regret, but to have meant all one said, and lo, it turned out to be twaddle — even repentance turns away from that in disgust. It is different with woman.

She has a prescriptive right to be transformed in less than twenty-four hours into the most innocent and pardonable galimatias; far be it from her candid soul to want to deceive anyone, she meant all she said, now she says the contrary, but with the same lovable frankness, for she is ready to die for the contrary. In case a man in all seriousness surrenders himself to love, he can say that he has lots of assurance, if only he can get any assurance company to take the risk, for a material so inflammable as woman must always make the insurer suspicious. What has he done? He has identified himself with her: if on New Year's Eve she goes off like a rocket, he goes with her, or if that does not occur, he has nevertheless come into pretty close affinity with danger. And what does he stand to lose? He can lose everything; for there is only one absolute opposite to the absolute, and that is twaddle. He is not to seek asylum in a society for persons morally depraved, for he is not morally depraved, far from it, he is merely reduced *in absurdum* and rendered beatific by nonsense, he has made a fool of himself. Between man and man this situation can never occur. If in this fashion a man fizzles out in nonsense, I despise him; if he dupes me by his shrewdness, I have merely to apply to him the ethical category and the danger is very insignificant; if the thing is carried too far — well, then I put a bullet through his head. But to challenge a woman to a duel — what is that? Who does not know? It is jest — as when Xerxes gave orders to have the sea scourged. When Othello murders Desdemona, he gains nothing, even assuming that she really had been guilty; he had made a fool of himself in the first instance, and he remains a fool. For even in murdering her he only draws attention to the consequence of an act which originally makes him ridiculous, whereas, on the contrary, Elvira can always be pathetic when armed with a dagger to revenge herself. Shakespeare's interpretation of Othello as tragic (even without regard to the unfortunate catastrophe that Desdemona was innocent) is only to be explained, but at the same time is absolutely

justified, by the fact that Othello was a colored man. For a colored man, dear boon companions, who cannot be supposed to represent *esprit,* dear boon companions, who also becomes green in the face when he is angry (which is a physiological fact), a colored man can well become tragic when he is betrayed by a woman, just as the woman has the whole pathos of tragedy on her side when she is betrayed by her husband. A man who becomes red in the neck might perhaps become tragic, but a man of whom one ventures to require *esprit* either doesn't become jealous, or he becomes comic when he does, and most of all when he comes running up with a dagger. What a pity that Shakespeare has not produced a play on such a theme, where the challenge implied in a woman's unfaithfulness was rejected by irony; for not everyone who can perceive the comic aspect of this situation or even can describe it is endowed with the talent for dramatizing it. But one has only to imagine Socrates accidentally discovering Xanthippe *in flagrante* — I say "accidentally" because it would be essentially unsocratic to imagine Socrates being profoundly concerned about Xanthippe's fidelity, or that he might even spy upon her. I believe that the subtle smile which changed the ugliest man in Athens into the handsomest must for the first time have been transformed into a roar of laughter. It is inconceivable that Aristophanes, who sometimes liked to hold Socrates up to ridicule, never thought of letting him run out upon the stage shouting, 'Where is she? where is she? that I may murder her,' viz. Xanthippe, the unfaithful Xanthippe. For whether Socrates was made cuckold or not is a question of no importance, for anything Xanthippe would do in that respect would be labor lost, like snapping one's fingers in one's pocket, and Socrates remains the same intellectual hero even with the horn upon his forehead. But that he might become jealous, that he might want to murder Xanthippe — alas, then would Xanthippe have power over him as the entire Greek state and the death-sentence did not have... to make

him ridiculous. Hence a cuckold is comic in relation to his wife, but can be regarded as tragic in relation to other men. The most obvious illustration of this is the Spanish notion of honor. However, the tragic element here is essentially this, that the injured husband can get no real satisfaction, and that the smart of his suffering is meaningless — and that is dreadful enough. To shoot a woman, to challenge her to a duel, to show contempt for her, only makes the poor man more ridiculous, for woman is the weaker sex. This consideration is brought forward everywhere and brings everything to confusion. If she does something great she is more admired than a man would be, because people did not suppose they might venture to require it of her; if she is deceived, she has all the pathos in her favor, whereas when a man is deceived, people have a little sympathy and a little patience so long as he is present, only to laugh at him when he is gone.

“One had better be prompt, therefore, to regard woman as a jest. The entertainment is peerless. Let one regard her as a fixed quantity and make a relative quantity of oneself. One is not to contradict her, far from it, that would only be to play into her hands. Just because she is unable to set limits to herself, she shows off to the best advantage, seriously speaking, when one contradicts her a bit. One is never to doubt what she says, far from it, every word must be believed. With a rapturous look of blissful intoxication one must dance attendance upon her with the mincing step of an idolatrous worshipper — one falls upon one’s knees, one pines, one raises one’s eyes to her, one pines, one breathes again. One is to do everything she says, like an obedient slave. Now comes the spice of it. It requires no proof that a woman can talk, i.e. *verba facere.* Unfortunately, she does not possess sufficient power of reflection to insure her against self-contradiction for any considerable time, say a week at the maximum, if the male does not help her regulatively by contradicting her. So the consequence is that in a short while the confusion is in full swing. If one had not done what she told one

to do, the confusion would have passed unnoticed, for she forgets again as promptly as she is prompt to talk. But since her adorer has done everything she wanted and been entirely at her service, the confusion is palpable. The more gifted a woman is, the more amusing. The more gifted, so much the more imagination has she. The more imaginative, so much the more potent is she at the instant, and so much the more does confusion reveal itself the next instant. This amusement is rarely witnessed in life because such blind obedience to a woman's whim is very rare. If it is to be found in the languishing shepherd, he hasn't wit enough to perceive the amusement.

"The amusement, as I have said, is priceless; indeed I know that, for sometimes I have not been able to sleep at night, merely for thinking what new confusions I might live to see, wrought by my lady and by my humble zeal to serve her; for no one who bets on the lottery can have experience of more extraordinary combinations than the man who has a passion for this game. For one thing is certain, that every woman possesses this possibility of flying up and being transfigured into nonsense, with an amiability, a nonchalance, an assurance, befitting the weaker sex. As a true lover one discovers in one's lady every imaginable charm. Thereupon finding that one has some talent for this, one does not let it lie fallow as a mere possibility but develops it into virtuosity. I need say no more, nothing more can be said in general terms, everybody understands what I mean. Just as one man finds his amusement in balancing a cane upon his nose, in swinging a glass of water in a circle without its contents flying out, or in dancing among eggs, and other similar exercises which are as entertaining as they are profitable — so and not otherwise has the lover in commerce with his lady the most incomparable amusement and the most interesting study. With respect to erotic situations one is to believe her absolutely — not only that she is faithful, for one soon tires of that game, but one is to believe absolutely in all those outbursts of indefeasible romanticism from which presumably she

would perish if one did not apply a safety-valve through which the sigh and the smoke (which is the air of romanticism) stream forth to the delectation of the adorer. One has to raise her to the pinnacle of a Juliet — the only difference being that no one has thought of touching a hair of Romeo's head. With respect to intellect one has to credit her with everything, and if one has been fortunate enough to find the right woman, in a trice he has on his hands a brooding authoress, and one must admiringly shade one's eyes with the hand to see what the little black hen is going to lay next. It is inconceivable that Socrates did not choose this part instead of scolding Xanthippe — well, after all, he wanted to keep in practice, like the horse-trainer who, though he has the best trained horse, knows how to tease it in such a way that there may be reason sufficient for breaking it in again.

"I should like to speak a little more concretely in order to illuminate a special and rather interesting case. Much is said about woman's fidelity, but not often wisely. Regarded from a purely aesthetic point of view, it belongs among the theatrical properties of the poet, as a phantom which crosses the stage in search of the loved one, or the phantom which sits by the spinning-wheel awaiting the loved one — for when she has found him or he has come, then aesthetics has lost interest in it. Her unfaithfulness, which can be brought into the closest connection with her foregoing faithfulness, is essentially regarded from an ethical point of view, and then jealousy makes its appearance as a tragic passion. There are three cases, and the situation is favorable to woman, inasmuch as two of them are instances of faithfulness and only one of unfaithfulness. Inconceivably great is her faithfulness so long as she is not sure of the loved one, and just as inconceivably great when he declines her fidelity. The third case would be that of infidelity. Now if only one has enough esprit and detachment to think, one will find in what has already been said ample justification of the category 'jest.' Our young friend, the very beginning of whose speech misled me for a moment,

made as if he wanted to start out with this theme but sprang back affrighted at the difficulty. Yet the explanation is not difficult if one really is serious in putting death and unhappy love in conjunction, if one has seriousness enough to hold this thought fast — and one ought to have at least as much seriousness as that... for the sake of the jest. All this sort of talk originates of course with a woman or with a womanish male. One recognizes it at once, for it is one of those absolute outbursts which, uttered with aplomb at the instant is sure of great applause at the instant; although it is a matter of life and death, it is intended for instant enjoyment, like an omelet soufflé; although it concerns a whole lifetime, it lays no obligation whatever upon the dying person but only obliges the auditor to hasten that very instant to the aid of the dying. If a man were to deliver such a speech, it would not be in the least amusing, for he would be too despicable for anybody to laugh at him. Woman, on the other hand, is a genius, she is lovable for that quality, and is amusing from first to last. So then the lady dies of love. That is certain — for has she not said she would? Here lies her pathos; for woman is man — at least she is man enough to say what hardly any man is man enough to do. She is a real man! When I say this I have passed upon her an ethical judgment. Do ye likewise, dear boon companions, and thus understand Aristotle. He remarks justly that woman cannot well be used in tragedy. That indeed is obvious, she belongs in the pathetic and serious divertissement, in the half-hour farce, not in the five-act drama. Accordingly she dies. But for all that, might she not be able to love again? Why not? — in case anyone can bring her to life again. If she comes again to life she is in fact a new person, and a new person, another person, begins anew, loves for the first time, there is nothing remarkable in that. O death, great is thy power! Not the most violent emetic, not the strongest laxative could effect so clean a sweep.

“The confusion is marvellous, if only one is on the lookout and does not forget. A deceased person is one of the most amusing figures one can encounter in life. How strange that it is not more frequently employed on the stage, in real life one now and then sees such a thing. Even a man who has one time been taken for dead is essentially a comic object of interest, but a person actually deceased contributes to our amusement all that one can reasonably require. Be on the lookout. The fact is, my attention was first drawn to this one day when I was walking in the street with an acquaintance. A pair passed us by. Judging from the look of my acquaintance I inferred that he knew them and asked if it were so. ‘By Jove,’ he replied, ‘right well do I know them, especially the lady, for she was my deceased.’

‘Your deceased what?,’ I enquired. ‘By Jove, my deceased first love. Yes, it’s a strange story. She said, ‘I am dying,’ that very instant she departed — in death of course, I hadn’t even time to take out insurance on her life, it was too late; dead she was and dead she remained; and now I rove about, as says the poet, seeking in vain the loved one’s grave to offer her the sacrifice of a tear.’ So spake that dejected man who was left behind in the world all alone, though it comforted him nevertheless to find that his deceased love had got so far along, if not by the help of another, at least in the company of another. It is a good thing for the girls, thought I, that they don’t have to be buried every time they die. In that case too the parents, who hitherto have regarded male children as the most expensive luxury, might easily find the girls still more expensive. A simple case of infidelity is not nearly so amusing — I mean, when a young woman falls in love with another man and says to her husband, ‘I cannot help it, save me from myself.’ But to die of sorrow because she cannot endure to have her lover separated from her by a journey to the West Indies, to have to put up with his departure, and then upon his return not only not to be dead but to be

joined forever to another — that is really a strange fate for a lover. What wonder then that this dejected man sometimes comforted himself with the refrain of an old song: Hurrah for me and you, I say, that day is ne'er forgotten!

"Forgive me now, dear boon companions if I have spoken too long, and now drain a glass to love and woman. Fair is she and lovely when regarded aesthetically — that no one can deny. But since it so often is said, I too will say: one should not remain standing, but 'go further.' So regard her ethically, and the thing becomes a jest. Even Plato and Aristotle take it that woman is an incomplete form, that is, an irrational quantity, which perhaps some time in a better existence might be brought back to the male form. In this life one must take her as she is. What this is will soon appear, for she too is not satisfied with the aesthetic sphere, she 'goes further,' she would be emancipated — that she is man enough to say. Let that come to pass, and the jest will be beyond all bounds."

When Constantine ceased speaking he instantly commanded Victor Eremita to begin. He spoke as follows:

"Plato, as you know, gave thanks to the gods for four things, and the fourth was that he was contemporary with Socrates. An earlier Greek philosopher had already expressed his gratitude for the first three of them, so I conclude that they were worth it. But I, alas, supposing I were desirous of expressing my gratitude like those Greeks, cannot very well give thanks for privileges which are denied me, and so I will muster all the powers of my soul to express gratitude for the one boon which was accorded me: that I became a man and not a woman.

"To be a woman is something so strange, so mixed, so complex, that no predicate expresses it, and the many predicates one might use contradict one another so sharply that only a woman can endure it, and, still worse, can enjoy it. The fact that she actually has less significance than man is not

what constitutes her misfortune, even if she were to come to know it, for after all this is something that can be endured. No, the misfortune is that, owing to the romantic way in which she is regarded, her life has become meaningless, so that one moment she has the utmost significance and the next moment none whatever, without ever coming to know what her significance really is — yet this is not the whole of her misfortune, for the worst of it is that she can never come to know it because she is a woman. For my part, if I were a woman, I had rather be a woman in the orient where I would be a slave, for to be a slave, neither more nor less, is at any rate something definite, in comparison with being hurrah boys and nothing whatever.

"Even if the life of a woman did not present such contrasts, the distinction which she enjoys and which is rightly assumed to belong to her *qua* woman, a distinction which she does not share with man, already indicates the meaningless of her life. This distinction is that of gallantry. Now gallantry consists quite simply in construing by means of fantastic categories the person towards whom one is gallant. Hence gallantry showed toward a man is an insult, for a man deprecates the application of fantastic categories to him. On the other hand it is a tribute to the fair sex, a distinction essentially due to her. Alas, alack! If it were only a single cavalier that was gallant, it would not be so serious a matter, after all. But such is by no means the case. At bottom every man is gallant, he is instinctively gallant. Accordingly, this signifies that nature itself has bestowed this perquisite upon the fair sex. On the other hand, woman instinctively accepts this homage. Once more a misfortune; for if only one woman here and there were to accept it, a different explanation might be given. So here again we have the irony of life. If there is to be truth in gallantry, it must be reciprocal, and gallantry would then be the current rate quoted on the bourse for the difference between beauty and strength,

cunning and might. But this is not the way of it, gallantry is essentially woman's due, and the fact that she accepts it instinctively may be explained as an instance of nature's tender care for the weak, for those who have had a hard deal, to whom an illusion gives more than adequate compensation. But this illusion is precisely the calamity. Not infrequently nature comes to the aid of an ill-favored man by consoling him with the belief that he is the most beautiful. Thus nature has made good the deficiency, the man possesses in fact even more than he could reasonably desire. But to possess this in a vain conceit, not to be enslaved to wretchedness, but to be fooled into a conceit, is in fact a still worse mockery. In the sense of being ill-favored it cannot be said that woman suffers from nature's neglect, yet she does suffer in another sense, inasmuch as she never can free herself from the illusion with which life has consoled her.

"If one will analyze a feminine existence in its entirety so as to bring out the decisive factors, every feminine existence must make a perfectly fantastic impression. Woman has turning-points in her life of a sort entirely different from those man may be said to have, for her turning-points are in every case ups and downs. In Tieck's romantic dramas one sometimes runs across a character who aforetime was a king in Mesopotamia and now is a green-grocer in Copenhagen. Precisely as fantastic is every feminine existence. If you will call the girl Juliana, then her life is as follows: 'aforetime Empress in love's far-reaching realm of exorbitant speech, and titular Queen of all the exaggerations of tomfoolery — now Madam Petersen at the corner of Bathhouse Street.' A girl when she is a child is considered of less account than a boy. When she is a little older one does not quite know what can be made of her. Finally there comes the decisive period which makes her a sovereign despot. — Man approaches her adoringly, he is a suitor. Adoringly — for every suitor is an adorer, it is not the device of an artful deceiver. Even Jack Ketch, when he lays aside the

fasces to go a-wooing, even he bows the knee, notwithstanding he has it in mind at the earliest possible opportunity to play the part of private executioner at home, which he takes so much for granted that he does not think of making the excuse that public executions are becoming so rare. The man of culture behaves in the same way. He kneels, he adores, he construes the beloved in the most fantastic categories, and thereupon he very quickly forgets his kneeling posture, and even whilst he knelt he knew full well that it was fantastic. If I were a woman, I had rather be sold by my father to the highest bidder, as in the orient; for a bargain has some sense in it. What a misfortune to be a woman! And yet the misfortune essentially is that when one is a woman one doesn't comprehend this. If she laments, it is not over the former situation but over the latter. If I were a woman, I would first of all decline to be wooed and would resign myself to being the weaker sex, if that is what I am; but I would take heed, as the thing of chiefest concern to a proud person, that one does not go beyond the bounds of truth. This is of small concern to her. Juliana is in the seventh heaven, and Madam Petersen puts up with her fate.

"So I thank the gods that I became a man, not a woman. And yet how much I forego! Poetry, from the drinking-song to the tragedy, is the deification of woman. All the worse for her, and for him too who admires, for if he doesn't take care, he will suddenly, just as sure as he stands there, draw a long face. The beautiful, the sublime, man's noblest exploits, are due to woman, for she inspires him, woman is the inspirer. How many a lovelorn shepherd has played this theme upon his flute, and how many a shepherdess has harkened to it! Verily my soul is devoid of envy and is only grateful to the gods; for after all I had rather be a man, and be a little less exalted, and be that in reality, than be a woman, and be an indeterminate quantity, and be made blissful by a vain conceit; I had rather be a concretion which means something than an abstraction which means everything. It is

quite true therefore, as I said: through woman ideality came into the world — what would man be without her. Many a man became a genius through a girl, many a man became a hero through a girl, many a man became a poet through a girl, many a man became a saint through a girl — but he didn't become a genius through the girl he got, for through her he became only Privy-Councillor; he didn't become a hero through the girl he got, for through her he only became a general; he didn't become a poet through the girl he got, for through her he only became a father; he didn't become a saint through the girl he got, for he didn't get any, and he wanted only the one he didn't get, just as each of the others became a genius, became a hero, became a poet, through the girl he didn't get. If the ideality of woman were in itself inspiring, then surely the inspiration must be the woman to whom a man is united for life. But actual existence gives a different account of it. That is to say, in a negative relationship woman makes a man idealistically productive. So understood, she is inspiring, but to assert this directly and without qualification is to be guilty of a paralogism which one would have to be a woman to overlook. Or who has ever heard of anyone becoming a poet through his wife? So long as the man does not have her she is an inspiration. This is the residual truth in the imaginary conceit of poetry and of woman. The fact that he does not possess her denotes perhaps that he is still fighting for her. In this way a girl has inspired many a man and made him a knight. But who has ever heard of anyone becoming valiant through his wife? Or else the fact that he does not possess her means that he cannot get her. In this way a girl has inspired many a man and awakened his idealism, in case she happened to have something worth while to contribute. But a wife who has ever so much to contribute hardly awakens idealism. Or else the fact that he does not possess her means that he is in pursuit of the ideal. He perhaps loves many, and to love many is also an unhappy love affair of a sort, and yet his soul's ideality consists essentially in this striving

and yearning, not in the fractions of lovableness which taken all together constitute the *summa summarum* of the contributions of the several individuals.

"In fact the highest idealism a woman can awaken in a man is the consciousness of immortality. The force of the proof which she gives consists in what one might call the necessity of a rejoinder. As one says of a theatrical piece that it cannot end without one or another making a rejoinder, so, says ideality, life cannot be all over at death, I require a rejoinder. This proof is often employed directly in obituary notices. That seems to me as it should be, for if it is to be used in obituary notices, it must be used positively. For example: Madam Petersen has lived a certain number of years, until in the night between the 24th and the 25th 'it pleased providence' etc. On this occasion Mr. Petersen is seized with an attack of reminiscences of the period of courtship — to express myself very concisely, nothing but *Wiedersehen* consoles him. In the mean while, for this blessed *Wiedersehen* he prepares himself by taking a second wife, for maybe the second marriage is not anything like so poetic as the first, but at any rate it is a good reprint. This is the positive proof. Mr. Petersen is not satisfied with requiring a rejoinder; no, *Auf Wiedersehen* in the other world. It is well known that a spurious metal sometimes assumes the luster of the genuine article; this is the brief glamor of silver plate. For the spurious metal this is tragic, for the spurious metal must resign itself once of all to being spurious. It is not so with Mr. Petersen. Ideality is every man's due by right. When I laugh at Mr. Petersen it is not because he, being the true metal, had only a single glint of silver, but because this silver glint betrays the fact that he has become spurious metal. So it is that Philistinism looks most ridiculous when it is arrayed in idealism and affords an apt occasion to say with Holberg, 'Isn't the cow, too, all dolled up?' The fact is that if a woman awakens in man ideality and therewith the consciousness of

immortality, she always does it negatively. The man who actually became a genius, became a hero, became a poet, became a saint, through a woman, grasped at the same instant immortality. If the idealizing inspiration were positively present in woman, it must be the wife, and only the wife, who awakens the consciousness of immortality in the man. Actual existence expresses exactly the opposite. If she is really to awaken ideality in the husband, she must die. In Mr. Petersen she does not awaken it, for all that. If then by her death she actually awakens ideality in the man, she does in fact perform all the great things poetry tells of her — but note well that what she did in a positive way did not awaken ideality. Meanwhile, the longer she keeps on living, the more doubtful does her significance become, for she actually has begun to want to be something positive. The more positively the proof is presented, the less does it prove, for then the longing will be for something experienced, the content of which may be assumed to be drained off, inasmuch as it has been experienced, lived through. The proof becomes most positive when the object of longing is the marital cooing in corners— 'that time when we were in the Deer Park together.' In the same way one can also get a longing for an old pair of slippers in which one used to be so comfortable, but this longing is no proof of the immortality of the soul. The more negatively the proof is presented, so much the better; for the negative is higher than the positive, it is the infinite, and so the only really positive proof.

"Woman's significance is wholly negative, as compared with that her positive significance is nil, indeed it is even pernicious. This is the truth which existence has hidden from her, while it consoles her with a vain conceit which surpasses everything that can enter into any man's brain, and with fatherly care has so arranged it all that language unites with everything else to confirm her in the conceit. Even when she is conceived of as the very opposite of inspiring, as the one from whom all depravity issues —

whether it be that sin came into the world through her, or that it is her infidelity which is the ruin of everything — the conception is always gallant. For on hearing such talk one might think that woman was capable of becoming infinitely more guilty than man — which after all is a prodigious appreciation of her. Alas, the situation is in reality quite different. There is a secret way of reading this verdict which woman does not understand; for the very next instant existence as a whole accepts the very same conclusion as the state, which makes man responsible for his wife. People condemn her in a way they never have condemned any man, for he gets only a real sentence, and with a woman the thing ends, not with getting a milder sentence (for then her life would not be all illusion), but by quashing the case, leaving the public, i.e. existence, to pay the costs. At one instant she is supposed to be in possession of all possible cunning, the next instant they laugh at the man she deceived, which surely is a contradiction, and even over Potiphar's wife there hovers the possibility of being able to give the impression that she was seduced. Thus woman has a possibility such as no man has, a prodigious possibility, but her reality is in inverse proportion to that, and the most dreadful thing of all is the sorcery of illusion in which she feels happy.

"So let Plato thank the gods that he was contemporary with Socrates, I envy him; let him give thanks for being a Greek, I envy him; but when he gives thanks that he became a man, not a woman, I join in that with my whole heart. If I had become a woman and could understand what I now understand — how dreadful! If I had become a woman and consequently could not even understand that — how much more dreadful!

"But if such be the case, it follows that one had better keep out of any positive relationship with her. Wherever woman is involved one has that inevitable hiatus which renders her blissful because she does not notice it, but kills a man if he discovers it.

“A negative relationship to a woman may exalt a man to infinity. Let that always be said in honor of woman, and it may be said without any qualification; for essentially it does not depend upon any particular quality of the woman, upon her loveliness, or upon the lasting quality of her loveliness; it depends upon the fact that she appears at the right instant, when ideality is acquiring the power of vision. It is a brief instant, and then she would do well to vanish again. For a positive relationship to woman reduces a man to finiteness in the greatest conceivable degree. The highest thing, therefore, a woman can do for a man is to come within his range of vision at the right instant, but that, after all, she cannot do, it is the kindness of fate — but then comes the greatest thing she can do for a man, and that is, to be unfaithful to him, the sooner the better. The first ideality will assist him to reach an ideality of a higher power, and then he is succored absolutely. It is true, this second ideality is bought with the sharpest pain, but it is also the greatest bliss; it is true, he cannot by any means wish it before it has come to pass, but afterwards he thanks her for it; and since after all, humanly speaking, he has no great reason for being so very grateful, all is for the best. But woe unto him if she remains faithful.

“So I thank the gods for the fact that I became a man, not a woman; then in the next place I thank the gods that no woman with a lifelong tenure constrains me constantly to think too late.

“What a strange invention marriage is! And what makes it still stranger is the fact that it is regarded as an ‘immediate’ step. And yet there is no step so decisive, for there is nothing so self-willed and domineering in relation to a human life as is marriage. A thing so decisive as that, one is to do, not reflectively, but ‘immediately’! And yet marriage is not a simple thing but something extremely complex and ambiguous. Just as the meat of the turtle savors of all kinds of meat, so has marriage a savor of everything; and as the turtle is a slow-moving beast, so also is marriage. A love affair is a

simple thing after all — but marriage! Is it something pagan or something Christian or something pious or something worldly or a little of everything, is it the expression of that inexplicable erotic sentiment, that concordant elective affinity of souls, or is it a duty or a partnership or expediency or use and wont in certain lands, or is it a little of all that; is one to engage the town band to play the music, or the organist, or a little of both; is it the parson or the police magistrate who is to make the address and inscribe their names in the book of life — I mean the parish register; does marriage play raucous music upon a comb, or does it listen to that whisper which sounds like the whisper of 'fairies from the caves of midsummer-night?' And such a complex piece of music, such a complicated passage, more involved than any other, every Benedick thinks he has performed when he got married, and thinks he is performing it when he lives as a married man! My dear boon companions, should we not, in default of other wedding gifts and congratulations, should we not give to each married couple one NB as a demerit for repeated inattention, and two NB's to marriage? It can be fatiguing enough to give expression to one simple idea, but to think something so complex and bring unity out of it, to express something so complex in a way that gives each individual element its due and so that everything is present at the same time — yes, verily, he is a great man who can do that. And yet every Benedick does it, and he does it, as he says, 'immediately,' without the need of reflection. If it is to be done 'immediately,' it must be by virtue of a 'higher immediacy,' as they call it, which has permeated reflection entirely. But about this there is not a whisper. To ask any married man about it is a waste of time. The man who once has perpetrated a folly is pursued by the consequences. The folly is to have got into all this, the revenge is that now when it is too late he perceives what he has done. One moment he struts, becomes pathetic, and thinks that he has done something extraordinary in getting married, now he puts his tail

between his legs, now it is in self-defense he praises marriage, but a thought-unity which holds together the *disjecta membra* of the most heterogeneous conceptions of life I wait for in vain.

"To be an upright Benedick is fudge, to be a seducer is also fudge, to want to experiment with a woman for the sake of amusement is also fudge. The two latter methods essentially imply on the part of man just as big a concession to woman as does marriage. The seducer wants to avenge himself by deceiving, but the fact that he deceives, that he wants to deceive, that he likes to deceive, is also an expression of his dependence upon woman, and the same is true also of the experimenter.

"If any positive relationship to woman is to be thought of, it must be so thoroughly reflected that by reason of so much reflection it would not become any relationship to her. To be an excellent husband, and yet in secret to seduce every girl; to seem to be a seducer, and yet to cherish secretly within one's heart all the glow of romanticism — that would be something, and in such a case the concession made in the first potency would be obliterated by the second. Man, however, possesses his true ideality only in a reduplication. Every immediate existence must be annihilated, and the annihilation must constantly be insured by a false expression. Such a reduplication woman is unable to grasp, to her it makes man's nature unpronounceable. If a woman could live and move and have her being in such a reduplication, no erotic relationship with her would be thinkable, and her nature being what it notoriously is, the erotic relationship is disturbed by man's nature, which constantly lives and moves in the annihilation of the very thing in which she lives.

"So I perhaps am preaching the monastic life and am called with good reason Eremita? Not a bit of it. Away with the cloister. After all, that too is only an 'immediate' expression for spirit, and spirit cannot be expressed 'immediately.' It is a matter of indifference whether somebody uses gold or

silver or paper money, but the man who never pays out a farthing unless it is false will understand what I mean. The man for whom every direct expression is only a *falsum* is better insured than if he entered a monastery, he continues to be a hermit even though he rides day and night in an omnibus."

Hardly had Victor finished than the Ladies' Tailor sprang to his feet, upset a bottle of wine standing in front of him and began as follows:

"Well-spoken, dear boon companions, well-spoken, the more I hear you talk, the more I am convinced that you are co-conspirators; I hail you as such, I understand you as such, for conspirators understand one another from afar. And yet what do you know? What is your bit of theory worth to which you give the semblance of experience, your bit of experience which you revamp into a theory? And after all, you now and then believe in her for an instant and are captivated for an instant. No, I know woman on her weak side, that is to say, I know her. I shun no terror in the pursuit of my studies and shun no measures calculated to confirm what I have understood. For I am a madman, and one must be mad in order to understand her, and if one was not mad before, he must be so when he has understood her. As the robber has his haunt near the noisy highway, and the ant-lion his funnel in the loose sand, and the pirate his hiding-place near the roaring sea, so have I my *maison* of fashion in the midst of the human swarm, seductive, irresistible to a woman, as the Venusberg is to man. Here in a *maison* of fashion one learns to know her practically and from the bottom up, without any theoretical fuss. Oh, if fashion meant nothing more than that a woman in the heat of desire were to throw off all her clothes, well, that would be something. But that is not all of it, fashion is not undisguised sensuality, not tolerated debauchery, but a contraband trade in indecency licensed as decorum. As in heathen Prussia a marriageable girl wore a bell which served as a signal to the men, so likewise is the existence of a woman of

fashion a perpetual bell-ringing, not for debauchees but for lickerish voluptuaries. It is believed that fortune is a woman — oh, yes, it is changeable, to be sure, but it is changeable in something, for it is able to give much, and to that extent it is not a woman. No it is fashion that is a woman, for fashion is changeable in nonsense, is logically consistent only in becoming more and more crazy. One hour in my *maison* is worth more than a year and a day outside of it, if one wants to learn to know woman. I say in my *maison,* for it is the only one in the capital of Denmark, no one thinks of competing. Who would dare to risk competition with one who has sacrificed himself completely and continues to sacrifice himself as high priest of this idolatrous worship? No, there is not a distinguished company where my name is not mentioned first and last, there is no middle-class company where my name when it is mentioned does not inspire holy awe like the name of the King, and there is no costume so crazy that, when it is from my *maison,* it is not accompanied by whispers as it walks through the salon; and there is not one lady of gentle birth who dares to pass by my *maison,* and not a single girl of the bourgeois class who passes it by without sighing and thinking, 'If only I could afford it!' Well, she was not in the least deceived. I deceive no one; I furnish the finest, the most costly stuff at the lowest prices, indeed I sell below cost, so I am not eager to win a profit, no, I lay out large sums yearly. And yet I will win, I *will* to win, I am ready to spend my last farthing in bribing and underselling the organs of fashion so that my game may be won. To me it is a rapture beyond compare to bring out the most costly fabrics, to cut them up, to clip pieces out of genuine Brussels lace to make a fool's motley; I sell at the cheapest prices genuine material of the latest fashion. You think perhaps that it is only at particular instants she wishes to be in the fashion; far from it, that is what she wants all the time, and that is her one and only thought. For woman has spirit, but it is about as well employed as was the fortune of the Prodigal Son; and

woman possesses reflection in an indescribably high degree, for there is nothing so sacred but in the same breath she finds it commensurable with finery in dress, and the proudest expression of finery is fashion. What wonder she finds it commensurable, for indeed fashion is the holy, and there is no detail so insignificant that she does not know how to relate it to finery in dress, and the most senseless expression of finery is fashion. And there is nothing, nothing whatever in all her attire, not the least ribbon, concerning which she has not a definite view of its relation to fashion and does not instantly detect whether the lady who passed her has noticed it. After all, for whom does she dress, unless it is for other ladies? Even in my *maison,* where she comes indeed to be shown what fashion is, even there she is in fashion. Just as there is a special bathing-costume and a special riding-habit, so also there is a particular kind of dress which it is *moderne* to wear in my *maison.* This costume is not so careless as the négligée in which a lady likes to be surprised early in the forenoon. The point then is her femininity and the coquetry involved in letting herself be surprised. The costume at the tailor's, on the other hand, is calculated to be careless and a bit frivolous without her seeming to be embarrassed by it, because the fashion tailor stands to her in a different relation than the cavalier. The coquetry now consists in displaying herself thus before a man who by reason of his position dare not claim the lady's feminine favor, but must be content with the chance perquisites, which accrue to him abundantly, but without her thinking of it, and without it ever occurring to her to want to be a lady in the eyes of a dressmaker. The point therefore is this, that femininity is in a way left out, and coquetry is nullified by the patronizing superiority of the distinguished lady, who would smile if anyone were to hint at the possibility of such a relationship. In her négligée on the occasion of a social visit she makes an attempt to conceal herself and betrays herself by the concealment; in my *maison* she exposes herself with the utmost nonchalance, for it is only

a tailor — and she is a woman. Now her shawl drops a little and exposes her a little — in case I don't know what that means and what she wants, my renown is in jeopardy. Now she purses up her lips aprioristically, now she gesticulates aposteriorically, now she sways on her hips, now she looks at herself in the mirror and sees my admiring phiz behind her, now she lisps, now she minces, now she hovers, now she trails her foot lightly, now she sinks languidly into the armchair, while I in a humble posture offer her a flask of salts and by my adoration cool her heat, now she strikes at me roguishly with her hand, now she drops her handkerchief, without the slightest motion she lets her arm hang indolently, while I bow deeply and pick it up and tender it to her and receive a little patronizing nod. So it is a woman of fashion behaves when she is in my *maison.* Whether Diogenes made any impression upon the woman who in a rather indecent position was lying prostrate in prayer when he enquired whether she supposed the gods could not see her from behind, I do not know; but this I know, that if I were to say to her kneeling ladyship, 'The folds of your gown do not fall in a fashionable way,' she would be more afraid of this than of offending the gods. Woe to the scum, the Cinderella, who does not understand this. *Pro dii immortales,* what then is a woman when she is not in the fashion? *Per deos obsecro,* what is she when she is in the fashion?!

"You wonder whether it is true? Well, just put it to the test: at the moment his sweetheart sinks blissfully upon his breast and whispers incoherently, 'Thine forever,' as she hides her face against his bosom, let the lover say to her, 'Dear Kitty, your curls are not in the fashion.' Perhaps men don't think about this, but the man who knows it and has the reputation of knowing it is the most dangerous man in the kingdom. What blissful hours the lover passes with his sweetheart before the wedding, I do not know, but the blissful hours she passes in my *maison* he has no inkling of. Without my royal license and sanction a wedding is an invalid act, or at

least it is a very plebeian affair. Suppose the moment has already arrived when they are about to meet in front of the altar, suppose she is marching up with the best conscience in the world, knowing that everything was bought in my place and was tried on in my presence, and I rush up and say, 'But, my God! gracious lady, the myrtle wreath is all awry!' — perhaps then the ceremony would be postponed. But men know nothing about this sort of thing, one must be a *modiste* to know it. It requires such prodigious reflection to keep track of a woman's reflection that only a man who sacrifices himself to that task is sufficient for it, and then only in case he has a native gift. A man is fortunate therefore if he never takes up with any woman, in any case she doesn't belong to him, even if she doesn't belong to any other man, she belongs to that phantom which is formed by the unnatural intercourse of feminine reflection with feminine reflection, i.e. fashion. For this reason a woman ought always to swear by fashion, then her oath would have some force, for fashion after all is the one thing she is always thinking about, the one thing she is able to think together with and in everything else. From my *maison de mode* has gone out to the world of elegance the glad tidings for every lady of distinction that fashion commands the use of a special sort of headdress when one goes to church, and again that the headdress must be somewhat different for high mass and for evensong. When the bells are ringing the equipages begin to draw up at my door — for it has also been proclaimed that nobody can properly adjust the headdress but me, the arbiter of fashion. I rush out to meet her with a low bow and lead her into my salon. While she vegetates languidly I adjust everything as it should be. The work is finished, she has looked at herself in the glass. Swift as a messenger of the gods I hasten on before her, I have opened the door of the salon and bowed, I hasten to the door of the *maison,* I fold my arms upon my breast like an oriental slave, but encouraged by a gracious curtsy I venture even to throw her an adoring and admiring kiss —

she takes her seat in the carriage, ah! she has forgotten her prayer-book, I make haste and hand it to her through the window, permitting myself to remind her once more to hold her head a little to the right and to rearrange things herself a little if in alighting her headdress should become a trifle disordered. She drives away and is edified.

"You think perhaps that only ladies in high society do homage to fashion. Far from it. Just look at my seamstresses, upon whose toilet I spare no pains in order that the dogmas of fashion may be emphatically proclaimed from my *maison.* They compose a chorus of nitwits, and I the high priest go before them as a shining example, prepared to squander everything if only by the help of fashion I may make every woman ridiculous. For when a seducer boasts that the virtue of every woman is vendible to the right bidder, I don't believe him, but I do believe that before long every woman will be satanized by the crazy and defiling self-reflection of fashion, which depraves her more thoroughly than if she were to be seduced. I have put it to the proof more than once. If I am not able to accomplish it by myself, I egg her on by the help of the female slaves of fashion who belong to her own class. For as one can train rats to bite rats, so is the bite of a satanized woman like that of a tarantula, and it is dangerous above all when a man takes part in it. Whether I am serving the devil or serving God, I do not know, but I am in the right, I will be in the right, I will it, I will it as long as I have a single farthing left, I will it until the blood spurts from my fingers. The physiologist draws the form of a woman to show the dreadful effect of corsets, and alongside of this he draws the normal form. That's all very well, but only the one drawing has the validity of truth — for they all wear corsets. Describe in this way the miserable stunted extravagance of the fashion-mad woman, describe the insidious self-reflection which consumes her, and describe the womanly modesty which knows about itself last of all; do this well, and with that thou hast passed judgment upon woman, and in

reality hast passed a damning judgment. If ever I discover such a girl, contented and humble, who is not yet depraved by indecent intercourse with women, she shall fall nevertheless. I entangle her in my toils, now she stands at the place of sacrifice, i.e. in my *maison.* With the most disdainful look a haughty nonchalance can arm itself with I take her measures, she is ready to perish with fright, a peal of laughter from the adjoining room where my trained assistants sit annihilates her. Dressed up in the fashion she looks as crazy as a lunatic, as crazy even as one who could not be admitted into a lunatic asylum. Then she departs from me full of bliss, no man, nor even a god, could terrify her, for she is indeed in the fashion.

"You understand me now, you understand why I call you co-conspirators, though at a great distance from me. You understand now my interpretation of woman. Everything in life is a matter of fashion, the fear of God is a matter of fashion, and love, and hoop-skirts, and a ring in the nose. So with all my might I will abet the lofty genius who desires to laugh at the most ludicrous of all animals. Since woman has reduced everything to fashion, I by the aid of fashion will prostitute her as she deserves. I give myself no rest, I, the Ladies' Tailor; my soul chafes when I think of my task, she must yet come to the point of wearing a ring in her nose. Therefore seek no sweetheart, forego love as you would shun the most dangerous neighborhood, for also your sweetheart would have to come to the point of wearing a ring in her nose."

Thereupon Johannes the Seducer spoke as follows:

"Esteemed boon companions, is Satan plaguing you? You talk like undertakers, your eyes are red with tears and not with wine. You move me almost to tears, for an unfortunate lover is very sadly situated in life. Hinc illae lacrymae. Now I am a fortunate lover, and my only desire is to remain such constantly. Perhaps this is a concession to woman, which Victor is so much afraid of? Why not? It is a concession. The fact that I undo the wire

of this champagne bottle is also a concession, that I let its foam spurt into the goblet is also a concession, that I raise the goblet to my lips is also a concession — now I have drained it — concedo. Now, however, the goblet is empty, so I make no more concessions. Thus it is with the girls. If some unlucky lover has bought a kiss too dearly, that only proves to me that he knows neither how to help himself to a dish nor to abstain from it. I never buy it too dearly, I leave that to the girls. What is the meaning of this? To me it means the most beautiful, the most delicious, and pretty nearly the most persuasive argumentum ad hominum; but since every woman at least once in her life possesses this primitive power of argumentation, why should I not let myself be persuaded? Our young friend would like to think the thing. In fact he can buy what the confectioner calls a 'kiss,' just to look at it. I want to enjoy. No nonsense! Hence an old song says about a kiss, Es ist kaum zu sehen, es ist nur für Lippen, die genau sich verstehen — which understand one another so perfectly that reflection is impertinence and folly. The man who is twenty years old and does not comprehend that there is a categorical imperative: Enjoy thyself — that man is a fool. And he who does not seize the opportunity is a Wesleyan Methodist. But you are unfortunate lovers, hence you want to remodel woman. God forbid it. I like her as she is, exactly as she is. Even Constantine's notion that she is a jest implies a secret wish. I, on the other hand, am gallant — and why not? Gallantry costs nothing and brings in everything and is the condition of all erotic enjoyment. Gallantry is the Freemasonry of sensuousness and sensuality as between man and woman. It is a primitive language of nature, like love's language in general. It is not made up of sounds but of masked desires which are constantly changing their rôles. I can understand very well that an unfortunate lover is ungallant enough to want to convert his deficit into a bill of exchange on eternity. Yet at the same time I do not understand it, for to me woman possesses abundant intrinsic value. That I

will assert of every woman, and it is true, but it is certain also that I am the only one not deceived by this truth. As to whether a deflowered woman is worth less than man is an item not to be found in my price list. I do not pluck broken flowers, I leave that to married men for a decoration at Shrovetide. Whether Eduard, e.g., would think it over and fall in love again with Cornelia, or would recite his love affair by heart, I leave to him. Why should I get mixed up in other people's affairs? What I thought of her I explained to her at the right time, and she truly has convinced me, convinced me to my absolute satisfaction, that my gallantry was well placed. *Concedo. Concessi.* If a new Cordelia comes under my eye, I shall enact comedy 'Ring No. 2.' But you are unfortunate lovers and conspirators and are more deceived than the girls, in spite of the fact that you have abundant talents. But resolution, the resolution of desire, is the gist of living. Our young friend always remains on the outside, Victor is an unpractical enthusiast, Constantine has purchased his common sense too dearly, the Ladies' Tailor is a madman. What's the good of all that? Though the four of you were after one girl, it would come to nothing but wind. Let one have enthusiasm enough to idealize, taste enough to take part in the festive enjoyment of clinking the glasses, sense enough to break off, to break off as absolutely as death, madness enough to want to enjoy again — then one is the darling of the gods and of the girls. But what's the use of talking here? I don't want to make proselytes, nor is this the place for it. I enjoy wine, to be sure, and I enjoy the abundance of the banquet, but let me have a girl for my company, and then I talk. So I thank Constantine for the banquet and the wine and the excellent appointments, the speeches, however, were not much to boast of. But in order that it may not end thus I will speak in praise of women.

"As he who is to speak about the divine must be inspired by divinity in order to speak worthily, so that divinity itself teaches what one is to say, just

so it is with women. For woman is further even than the deity from being the whim of a man's brain, a day-dream, something one happens to think of all by oneself and can dispute about *pro et contra.* No, only from her does one learn how to talk about her. And the more women one has learned from, so much the better. The first time a man is simply a learner, the second time he has already been coached, just as in a learned disputation one can use the last opponent's complements against the next. Nevertheless there is no lost time. For the notion that a kiss is a smacking of the lips, that an embrace is an exertion, is no more absurd than that this lesson is exhausted like the proof of a proposition in geometry which remains the same though the letters are altered. Such notions only apply to mathematics and ghosts, not to love and to women, where every new experience is a new proof and demonstrates in another way the truth of the same proposition. It is my joy that the female sex, far from being more imperfect than man, is on the contrary the most perfect. However I will clothe my speech in a myth, and for woman's sake whom you have so unjustly offended I shall be glad if it may prove a judgment upon your souls for the fact that sensual pleasure is brought before your eyes but flees from you like the fruits from Tantalus, because you have fled from it and have offended woman. For only thus is she offended, though she is exalted high above offense and everyone is punished who ventures to offend her. I do not offend anyone. The idea that I do is the invention of married men and is a slander, whereas on the contrary I appreciate her much more than does the married man.

"Originally there was one sex, that of the man — so the Greeks report. Gloriously endowed was he, so that he reflected honor upon the gods who created him, so gloriously endowed that the gods were in the position in which a poet sometimes finds himself when he has expended all his forces upon a poetic creation: they became envious of man. Yea, what was worse, they feared him, lest he might bow unwillingly to their yoke. They feared,

though it was without reason, that he might cause heaven itself to totter. So then they had conjured up a power they hardly thought themselves capable of curbing. Then there was concern and commotion in the council of the gods. Much had they lavished upon the creation of man, that was magnanimous; now everything must be risked, for everything was at stake, this was self-defense. So thought the gods. And it was impossible to revoke him, as a poet may revoke his thought. By force he could not be compelled, or else the gods themselves might have compelled him, but it was precisely about this they had misgivings. He must then be taken captive and compelled by a power which was weaker than his own and yet stronger, strong enough to compel. What a marvellous power that must be! Necessity, however, teaches the gods to surpass themselves in inventiveness. They sought and pondered and found. This power was woman, the miracle of creation, even in the eyes of the gods a greater miracle than man, a discovery for which the gods in their naïveté could not help patting themselves on the back. What more can be said in honor of her than that she should be able to do what even the gods did not think themselves capable of doing, what more can be said than that she was able? How marvellous she must be to be capable of it! This was a ruse of the gods. Cunningly the enchantress was fashioned; the very instant she had enchanted man she transformed herself and held him captive in all the prolixities of finiteness. This is what the gods wanted. But what can be more delicious, more pleasurable, more enchanting, than this which the gods as they were fighting for their own power devised as the only thing that could decoy man? And verily it is so, for woman is the unique and the most seductive power in heaven and on earth. In this comparison man is something exceedingly imperfect.

“And the ruse of the gods succeeded. However, it did not always succeed. In every generation there were some men, individuals, who

became aware of the deception. They perceived her loveliness, it is true, more than did any of the others, but they had an inkling what it was all about. These are what I call erotics, and I reckon myself among them; men call them seducers, woman has no name for them, such a type is for her unmentionable. These erotics are the fortunate ones. They live more luxuriously than the gods, for they eat constantly only that which is more precious than ambrosia and drink what is more delicious than nectar; they dine upon the most seductive fancy which issued from the most artful thought of the gods, they dine constantly upon bait. Oh, luxury beyond compare! Oh, blissful mode of living! They dine constantly upon bait — and are never caught. The other men set to and eat bait as the vulgar eat caviar, and are caught. Only the erotic knows how to appreciate bait, to appreciate it infinitely. Woman divines this, and hence there is a secret understanding between him and her. But he knows also that it is bait, and this is a secret he keeps to himself.

"That nothing more marvellous, nothing more delicious, nothing more seductive can be devised than a woman, the gods vouch for, and the necessity which sharpened their invention; and in turn it vouches for them that they risked their all and in the forming of her nature set heaven and earth in commotion.

"I leave for a moment the myth. The concept of man corresponds exactly to the idea of man. One therefore can think of a single man existing and nothing more than that. On the other hand, the idea of woman is a generality which is not exhaustively exemplified in any single woman. She is not *ebenbürtig* with man but is later, is a part of man, and yet more complete than he. Whether it be that the gods took part of him while he slept (fearful of awakening him if they took too much), or that they divided him in equal parts so that woman is a half — in any case it is man that was divided. So it is only as a subdivision she is related to man as his mate. She is a deception,

but that she is only in her second phase and for him who is deceived. She is finiteness, but in her first phase she is finiteness raised to the highest power in the delusive infinity of all divine and human illusions. Not yet is the deception — but one more instant and a man is deceived. She is finiteness, and so she is a collective term, to say one woman means many women. This the erotic alone understands, and hence he is so prompt to love many, never being deceived, but sucking up all the voluptuous delights the cunning gods were capable of preparing. Therefore woman cannot be exhaustively expressed by any formula but is an infinity of finitudes. He who is bent upon thinking her idea is like one who gazes into a sea of nebulous shapes which are constantly forming, or like one who is bewildered by looking at the billows with their foaming crests which constantly elude him; for her idea is only a workshop of possibilities, and for the erotic these possibilities are the never-failing source of enthusiasm.

"Thus the gods fashioned her, delicate and ethereal as the mists of a summer's night and yet plump like a ripened fruit, light as a bird in spite of the fact that she carried a world of craving, light because the play of forces is unified at the invisible center of a negative relationship in which she is related to herself, slim of stature, designed with definite proportions and yet to the eye seeming to swell with the wave-lines of beauty, complete and yet as if only now she were finished, cooling, delicious, refreshing as new-fallen snow, blushing with serene transparency, happy as a jest which causes one to forget everything, tranquilizing as the goal Whereunto desire tends, satisfying by being herself the incitement of desire. And this is what the gods had counted upon, that man upon catching sight of her should be amazed as one who gets a sight of himself in the glass, and yet again as if he were familiar with this sight, amazed as one who sees himself reflected in perfection, amazed as one who sees what he never had an inkling of and yet sees, as it appears to him, what must necessarily have occurred to him,

what is a necessary part of existence, and yet sees this as the riddle of existence. Precisely this contradiction in his amazement is what elicits his desire, while amazement eggs him on nearer and nearer, so that he cannot desist from looking, cannot cease to seem familiar with this sight, without, however, quite daring to approach, although he cannot cease to desire.

"When the gods had thus forecast her form they were fearful lest even they might not be able to express it. But what they feared most was woman herself. They did not dare to let her know how beautiful she was, fearing that she might spoil their ruse if she were cognizant of it. Then was the crown placed upon the work. The gods made her perfect, but then they hid all this from her in the ignorance of innocence and hid it from her once more in the impenetrable mystery of modesty. She was perfect, and victory was assured. An enticing thing she was, at one moment she enticed by avoiding a man and betaking herself to flight, she was irresistible for the fact that she herself was resistance. The gods were jubilant. And indeed no allurement has been discovered in the world equal to woman, and there is no allurement so absolute as that of innocence, and no temptation so fascinating as that of modesty, and no deception so incomparable as woman. She knows nothing, and yet modesty contains an instinctive presentiment, she is separated from man, and the wall of modesty is a more decisive separation than the sword of Aladdin which separated him from Gulvare — and yet the erotic, who like Pyramis lays his ear against the separating wall of modesty, has a presentiment, remotely sensed, of all the lust of desire behind it.

"So it is that woman tempts. As food for the gods men present the most glorious things, they have nothing more glorious to offer. In the same manner woman is show-fruit, the gods know nothing to compare with it. She *is,* she is here, present, and yet she is infinitely remote, hidden in modesty, until she betrays her hiding place, by what means she does not

know, nature itself is the sly informer. She is roguish as a child at play who peeks from his place of concealment, and yet her roguishness is inexplicable, for she herself is not aware of it and is always inscrutable, inscrutable when she hides her eyes, inscrutable when she emits a glance as her messenger, which no thought, still less a word, is able to follow. And yet a glance is the interpreter of the soul — where then is the explanation when even the interpreter speaks unintelligibly? Placid is she as the stillness of the evening hour when no leaf is stirring, placid as a consciousness which is not yet aware of anything, the movements of her heart are as regular as if it did not exist, and yet the erotic who listens with stethoscopic precision discovers the dithyrambic beat of passion as an unconscious accompaniment. Careless as a puff of wind, content like the deep sea, and yet full of longing, as the inexplicable depths always are. Brothers, my mind is assuaged, indescribably assuaged; I conceive that my life too expresses an idea, even if you do not comprehend me. I too have found out the secret of existence, I too am in the service of something divine, and to a certainty I do not serve for naught. As woman is a deception on the part of the gods, this is the true expression of the fact that she wants to be seduced, and as woman is not an idea, therefore the truth is on the side of the erotic who wants to love as many as possible.

"What rapture it is to relish the deception without being deceived, only the erotic understands. How blissful it is to be seduced, only woman knows. I know it from women, though I have never given time to anyone to explain this to me, but have taken my revenge and served the idea by a breach as abrupt as death; for a bride and a breach correspond to one another as female and male. Woman only knows this, and knows it by means of her seducer. No married man comprehends such a thing; she never speaks to him about it. She puts up with her fate, she has a presentiment that thus it must be, that only once can she be seduced. Hence she is never really angry

with her seducer. That is, if he actually did seduce her and expressed the idea. A broken marriage vow and things like that are of course galimatias and no seduction. So it is not so great a misfortune for a woman to be seduced, and she is lucky to be so. A girl who is admirably seduced may make an admirable wife. If I were not so good at seducing (though I feel deeply my inferiority in this respect), and if I wanted to be a married man, I would always choose a seduced woman, so that I might not have to begin by seducing my wife. Marriage also expresses an idea, but in relation to this idea that particular thing [i.e. innocence] is a matter of complete indifference which in relation to my idea is the absolute. A marriage therefore ought never to be planned to begin as if it were the beginning of a story of seduction. This much is certain, that for every woman there is a corresponding seducer. Her good fortune consists in encountering precisely him.

"By means of marriage, on the other hand, the gods conquer. Then the aforetime seduced woman walks through life by the side of her husband, looks sometimes longingly backward, puts up with her fate until she has reached life's limit. She dies, but not in the same sense that men die; she is volatilized and resolved again into the inexplicable element from which the gods formed her, she vanishes like a dream, like a provisional form the time for which is past. For what is woman but a dream? — and yet she is the highest reality! So it is the erotic understands her and leads her and is led by her at the moment of seduction — outside of time, where she belongs as an illusion. With a husband she becomes temporal, and he through her.

"Oh, marvellous Nature, if I did not admire thee, she would teach me to do so, for she is the *venerabile* of existence. Gloriously hast thou fashioned her, but still more glorious for the fact that thou didst never make one woman like another. In the case of man the essential is the essential and therefore always the same; in the case of woman the accidental is the

essential, hence the inexhaustible variety. Brief is her glory, but the pain I quickly forget as if I had not even sensed it, when the same glory is proffered to me again. Yes, I too perceive the uncomeliness which may make its appearance later, but she is not thus with her seducer."

They rose from the table. Only a hint from Constantine was needed; the participants understood among themselves with military punctuality when it was time for "Right about! Face!" With the invisible wand of command, which in his hand was as elastic as a wishing-rod, Constantine touched them once again in order by a fleeting reminiscence to recall the banquet and the mood of sheer enjoyment which had been in a measure suppressed by the reasoning processes of the speakers, and in order that, as in the phenomenon of resonance, the tone of festivity which had vanished might return again to the guests for the brief instant of an echo, he gave the parting salute with a full glass, he emptied it, he flung it against the door in the wall behind him. The others followed his example and performed this symbolic act with the solemnity of initiates. The pleasure of breaking off was thus given its rights, this imperial pleasure which, though briefer than any other, is yet emancipating as no other is. With a libation every enjoyment of the table ought to begin, but this oblation wherewith one flings the glass away into annihilation and oblivion and tears oneself passionately away from every remembrance as if one were in mortal danger, this libation is made to the gods of the underworld. One *breaks* off, and it requires strength to do it, greater strength than to cut a knot with the sword, because the difficulty of the knot bestows passion, but the strength required for breaking off one must bestow upon oneself. In a certain outward sense the result is the same, but in an artistic respect there is a heaven-wide difference whether one leaves off (comes to an end) or breaks off by an act of freedom, whether it is an accident or a passionate decision, whether it is all over like the ballad of the schoolmaster when there is no more of it or is brought to an end by

the imperial sword-stroke of pleasure, whether it is a triviality everybody has experienced or that mystery which escapes the majority.

It was a symbolic act of Constantine's when he threw away the goblet, and in another sense this throw was a decisive blow, for at the last blow the doors were thrown open and one saw, like him who has presumptuously knocked at the portal of death and sees when it is opened the puissance of annihilation, so one saw that crew of destruction prepared to lay everything waste — a memento which in a second changed the participants into fugitives from that place, and in the same second transformed as it were the whole environment into a ruin.

A carriage stood ready at the door. At Constantine's invitation they took their places and drove away in good spirits, for that tableau of destruction in the background had imparted a new elasticity to their souls.

A mile from the starting-place the carriage halted. Here Constantine took leave of them as host, informing them that there were five carriages at their service, so that each might follow his own inclination, drive whither he would, alone, or, if he would in company, and with whomsoever he would. So it is that a rocket by the force of powder rises as a single shoot, stands for an instant still, collected as one entity, then disperses to all the winds.

While the horses were being hitched the nocturnal guests strolled a little way along the road. The fresh morning air purified their hot blood by its coolness, to the refreshment of which they abandoned themselves completely, whereas upon me their figures and the groups they formed made a fantastic impression. For that the morning sun shines upon field and meadow and upon every creature which at night found rest and strength to arise jubilant with the sun — with this we have a sympathetic and wholesome understanding; but a nocturnal party beheld by morning illumination, in the midst of a smiling rustic environment, makes an almost uncanny impression. One begins to think of ghosts which are surprised by

the dawn of day, of elves which cannot find the crevice through which they are accustomed to vanish because it is visible only in the dark, of unfortunates for whom the difference between day and night has become obliterated by the monotony of their suffering.

A footpath led them through a bit of field to a hedged garden, behind which a modest country house betrayed itself in the distance. At the end of the garden next the field there was an arbor formed by trees. Noticing that there was someone in the arbor, they all became curious, and with the searching look of observers the besiegers closed in around this friendly hiding-place, looking as tense as the emissaries of the police when they are bent on outwitting somebody. Like emissaries of the police — well, I must confess that their outward appearance made possible the confusion that the emissaries of the police might be seeking them. Each had taken up his position to peek in, when Victor drew back a step and said to his neighbor, "Why, my God! it's Judge William and his wife!"

They were surprised — I do not mean the two whom the foliage concealed, that happy pair, too much absorbed in domestic pleasures to be observers, too confident of their security to believe themselves the object of anyone's attention, except that of the morning sun which peeked in upon them with delight, while a gentle breeze rocked the boughs above them, and while the rural peace like everything else around them protected this little arbor. The happy married couple were not surprised and noticed nothing. That they were married people was clear enough, it was to be seen at a glance, alas, when one stands in a relation of consanguinity with an observer. Although nothing, nothing in the wide world, nothing evident, nothing hiddenly evident, nothing hidden, has any notion of wanting to disturb the happiness of the lovers, nevertheless when they are sitting alongside of one another they do not feel themselves thus secure; blissful they are, and yet it is as though there were some power that wished to

separate them, so closely do they cling to one another, and yet it is as though there were an enemy at hand against whom they must protect themselves, and yet it is as though they never could be sufficiently assured. It is not thus with married people, and not thus with that married couple in the arbor. How long they had been married it was not possible, however, to determine precisely. The way the wife busied herself with the tea-table did seem to indicate the assurance acquired by long practice, and yet she showed an almost childish eagerness in this occupation, as if she were a recently wedded woman in that intermediate state where she does not yet know definitely whether marriage is play or earnest, whether being a housewife is a business or a game or a pastime. Perhaps she may have been married for a considerable time but did not as a rule preside at the tea-table, perhaps she did so only here in the country, or perhaps she did it only that morning, which may possibly have had a special significance for them. Who can decide? All reckoning is to a certain extent futile when it has to do with one who possesses originality of soul, for this prevents time from leaving its mark. When the sun shines in all its summer splendor, one thinks at once that it must be to celebrate some solemn occasion or another (it cannot surely shine thus for daily use), or that this is the first time it shines so brightly, or at least one of the first times (it surely could not be repeated during a long course of time). So thinks he who sees it only once, or sees it for the first time — and it was the first time I saw the Judge's wife. He who sees this sight every day may think differently — supposing he really sees the same thing. However, that is properly the Judge's business.

So then our amiable housewife was occupied: she poured boiling water into two tea cups (presumably to warm them thoroughly), she emptied that out, set the cup on a tray, poured in the tea, served the condiments, so all was ready — was this play or earnest? In case someone is not ordinarily a tea-lover, he ought to have sat in the Judge's place, for at that moment this

drink seemed to me most inviting, and only the inviting look of the kind lady herself seemed more inviting.

Presumably she had not had time to talk until this moment, now she broke the silence, and as she passed the tea she said, “Be quick now, dear, and drink while the tea is hot; after all, the morning air is rather cool, and so the least thing I can do is to be a little careful of you.”

“The least?” rejoined the Judge laconically. “Well, or the most, or the only thing.” The Judge looked at her inquiringly, and while she was helping herself she continued, “You interrupted me yesterday when I was about to say this, but I have thought it over again, many a time I have thought it over, and especially now — you know well enough what has suggested it to me — anyway it is certainly true that if you hadn’t married you would have become a much greater person in the world.” With the cup still on the tray the Judge sipped the first mouthful with obvious delight and felt refreshed — or was it perhaps joy in the lovely woman. I believe it was that, but she seemed only to rejoice that it tasted so good to him. Then he put the cup on the table beside him, took out a cigar and said, “May I light it at your samovar?”

“With all my heart,” she replied, taking a glowing coal with the teaspoon and handing it to him. He lit his cigar and put his arm about her waist while she leaned against his shoulder, he turned his head the other way to blow out the smoke, then his eyes rested upon her with all the devotion a look can express; he smiled, but this smile of joy had a little ingredient of sad irony; finally he said, “Do you really believe that, my girl?”

“Believe what?” said she. He was silent again, the smile predominated, yet his voice was perfectly serious when he said, “Then I forgive your former foolishness since you yourself have forgotten it so quickly, for you speak like one of the foolish women — what sort of a great person would I have become in the world?” His wife seemed for an instant embarrassed by

this rejoinder, but she promptly collected herself and elaborated her point with feminine eloquence. The Judge looked straight ahead of him, he did not interrupt her, but as she went on he began to thrum on the table with the fingers of his right hand, he hummed a tune, the words of the ballad were momentarily audible; just as the woven pattern in a piece of damask in one aspect is visible and again disappears, so did the words fade again into the humming of the ballad's tune: "Her husband went out to the forest and cut him the cudgels white." After this melodramatic address, i.e. the wife's explanation of her cause accompanied by the humming of the Judge, the dialogue began again. "You still are unaware," he said, "that the Danish law permits a man to beat his wife, the only trouble is that it doesn't specify on what occasions it is permissible." His wife smiled at the threat and continued, "But why can't I ever get you to be serious when I speak of this? You don't understand me. Believe me, I mean it honestly, it seems to me a very pretty thought. Of course, if you were not my husband, I shouldn't dare to think it, but here now I have thought it, for your sake and for my sake, so please be serious, for my sake, and answer me honestly."

"No, you can't get me to be serious, and no serious answer do you get. I must either laugh at you and make you forget it as I have done before, or else thrash you, or you must stop talking about it, or I must find some other way of keeping you silent. You see it's a joke, and that is why there are so many expedients possible." He arose, pressed a kiss upon her forehead, put her arm in his and disappeared in a heavily wooded path which led away from the arbor.

The arbor remained empty, there was nothing more to be done here, the corps of occupation retreated without any booty. None of them seemed pleased with this result; however, the others contented themselves with some malicious remarks. They turned back but missed Victor. He had rounded the corner, skirted the garden and reached the rural edifice. Here

the door of a garden-room stood open on the side of the lawn, and a window facing the street was open also. Presumably he had seen something which attracted his attention. He entered the door, and just as he was leaping out through the window he encountered the others who had been searching for him. Triumphantly he holds up a packet of papers and shouts, “A manuscript written by the Judge! If I have published the other one, it is no more than my duty to publish this too.” He thrust it into his pocket, or rather he meant to stick it into his pocket, but when he had bent his arm and already had the hand and the manuscript half-way in his pocket, I stole it from him.

But who then am I? Let nobody ask. If it has not occurred to anybody to ask, I am relieved, for then I am over the worst of it. Besides, I am not worth asking about, for I am the most insignificant of all things, it makes me quite bashful to have people ask about me. I am “pure being” and therefore almost less than nothing. I am the pure being which is the accompaniment of everything yet never observable, because I am constantly *aufgehoben.* I am like the line above which is written the task for the pupil to reckon out, and below it the answer — who cares about the line? I myself am not capable of doing anything whatever, for even the idea of stealing the manuscript from Victor was not my own whim, but even this whim of “borrowing” the manuscript, as the thieves say, was borrowed from Victor. And now in publishing the manuscript I again am nothing whatever, for the manuscript was written by the Judge, and I as editor am in my nothingness only a nemesis upon Victor, who surely meant to get his revenge by publishing it.

PART II. VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE IN REPLY TO OBJECTIONS BY A MARRIED MAN

Motto: "The deceived is wiser than the not-deceived."

[Plutarch (De gloria Atheniensium, 5) reports that Gorgias uttered these words with reference to spectators at the theater.]

MY dear Reader,

In case thou hast not time and opportunity to spend half a score of the years of thy life in travelling around the world to see everything the globe-trotter gets to know, in case thou hast not talent or occasion by many years of practice in a foreign tongue to become familiar with the distinctive character of national individuality as this is revealed to the student, in case thou dost not cherish the intention of discovering a new astronomic system which shall supplant both the Copernican system and the Ptolemaic — then go and get married; and in case thou hast time for the first, talent for the second and a notion of doing the last, then go and get married all the same. Even if thou didst not manage to see the whole terrestrial clot or to talk in many tongues or to be knowing about the heavens, thou wilt not regret it; for marriage is decidedly the most important journey of discovery a man can undertake, every other sort of acquaintance with life is superficial in comparison with that acquired by a married man, for he and he alone has thoroughly fathomed the depths of life. Yes, it is true, no poet will ever be able to say of thee as the poets say of the crafty Ulysses that he saw many cities of men and learned to know their dispositions, [The first line of the Odyssey.] but the question is whether he would not have learned just as many things and just as pleasant if he had stayed at home with Penelope. If

no one else holds this opinion, my wife does, and so, if I do not err egregiously, does every wife. Such a majority is a little more than a simple majority, and so much more that he who has the wives on his side will eventually have the husbands. Yes, it is true that on this expedition the company of travellers is small, that it is not as in the case of a five-or ten-year expedition a numerous party, which also, be it observed, remains ever the same; but then for marriage is reserved a peculiar sort of acquaintanceship, which is the most marvellous of all, where as a rule every new event which comes about is the most welcome.

So all honor be to marriage, and honor too to everyone who speaks in praise of it. If a beginner may be so bold as to take the liberty of expressing his opinion, I would say that the reason it seems to me so marvellous is that everything turns upon insignificant things which the divine element in marriage transforms however into significance for the believer. And then again all these insignificant items have the remarkable characteristic that nothing can be evaluated in advance and nothing exhaustively comprehended by a cursory estimate; but while judgment is at a standstill and imagination is in a fix and calculation reckons amiss and sagacity is in despair, the married life goes on and is transformed from glory unto glory, the insignificant becomes ever more and more significant, by means of the miracle — for the believer. But a believer one must be, and a married man who is not a believer is the most tiresome customer, a real skeleton in the closet. Nothing is more odious when occasionally one sets out in company with others to be diverted by beholding demonstrations and experiments in natural magic, nothing is more odious than to have an obstinate fellow along who is incredulous about everything although he is never able to explain the tricks. However, one can stand a nuisance like that, it doesn't often happen that one sets out on such a quest, and moreover one may reap some advantage from such a crusty spectator by seeing him take part in the

game. Generally the professor of magic picks upon him and lets him hold the light, entertaining the rest of us by his sagacity, just as the dunce in a play entertains us by his stupidity. But such a surly churl of a married man ought to be put in a sack like a parricide and thrown into the water. How distressing it is to see a woman expending all her lovableness to convince him, and to see him, after he had received the initiation which entitles him to be a believer, bent only upon spoiling the whole thing — yes, spoiling the whole thing, for, jesting aside, marriage is after all in so many ways like an experiment in natural magic, and truly a marvellous experiment. It is disgusting to listen to a priest who doesn't himself believe what he says, but it is still more disgusting to see a married man who is not a believer in the order to which he belongs, and it is the more revolting because the hearer can desert the priest, but the wife cannot desert her husband; she cannot, she will not, she doesn't wish to — and even this fails to convince him.

People usually talk only about a married man's unfaithfulness, but what is just as bad is a married man's lack of faith. Faith is the only thing required of him, and faith makes amends for everything. Let understanding and sagacity and refinement add up, reckon out and describe how a married man ought to be — there is only one trait which makes him amiable, that is faith, absolute faith in marriage. Let expertness in living determine precisely what is required of a married man in the way of fidelity — there is only one fidelity, one honesty, which is truly amiable and comprises all in itself, that is, honesty towards God and one's wife and one's order which has no wish to deny the miracle.

So this is what gives me confidence when I elect to write about marriage. For though I make no claim to any other proficiency, I can hold my own in one respect, namely, in conviction. That I have conviction I know of myself, and I know it from my wife, which to me is a criterion of the greatest importance; for though it is seemly for a woman to be silent in the

congregation and not to meddle with science and art, yet what is said about marriage should be of such a sort that it meets with her approval. It does not follow that she is to appraise everything critically, that kind of reflection does not suit her, but she must have an absolute veto, and her approval must be respected as satisfactory security. My conviction then is my one legitimation, and again the guarantee for my conviction is the weight of responsibility under which my life lies like that of every other married man. True, I do not feel this weight as a burden but as a blessing; true, I do not feel this bond as bondage but as liberation; but yet it is there — the bond, no, the innumerable bonds by which I am securely tied to life, as the tree is by the manifold ramifications of its root. Suppose that everything were to be changed for me — great God, if that were possible, suppose that I were to find myself in bondage by being wed, what then were Laocoön's misery compared with mine! For no one serpent and not ten of them could so compress and so alarmingly and so tightly wind about a man's body as the married life which binds me in a hundred ways, and so — in this event would fetter me with a hundred chains. Observe then (if this may be regarded as a guarantee) that whereas I feel glad and content and give thanks without ceasing for my earthly good fortune, I also sense the horror which in this way may appal a man, the hell which reveals itself when a married man, *adscriptus glebae,* would tear himself loose and discovers thereby only how impossible it is, would sever one chain and discovers thereby only that there is another chain more elastic which binds him indissolubly — in case this is a sufficient negative guarantee that what I have to say does not consist of idle thoughts conceived in a spare moment, or of ingenious cobwebs of the brain calculated to catch other men, then do not disdain what I have to say.

I am very far from being a learned man, I make no claim to that, it would put me to embarrassment if I were foolish enough to affect any such thing. I

am not a dialectician, not a philosopher, but, with such meager opportunities for learning as I have, I have respect for science and for all that persons of superior talent propound in explanation of existence. But on the other hand I am a married man, and when it is a question of marriage I fear nobody. I would confidently and cheerfully assume the professor's chair if that were required of me, though what I have to say is not altogether appropriate to that place. I maintain my thesis buoyantly against all the dialecticians of the world, Satan himself shall not be able to wrest from me my conviction. Let captious *chicaneurs* heap together all the objections against marriage, they will nevertheless have to throw up their hands. One quickly divides these objections into two parts: one sort is answered best, as Hamann declares, by saying bah! and the other can be disposed of by argument. In all other respects I am rather thin-skinned, I cannot well put up with having people laugh at me. This is a weakness which hitherto I have not been able to overcome. But if anyone would laugh at me because I am a married man, I am in this respect invulnerable to laughter, in this respect I feel a courage which is almost in contrast with the habitual life of an assistant judge who goes from his home to the law court and from the court to his home, constantly occupied with documents. Suppose I were to find myself in a circle of clever pates who were in conspiracy to render marriage ridiculous and to make a mock of holy things — arm them with all wittiness, point their mocking darts with the sting which is whetted by an ambiguous relationship with the other sex, dip the darts in the malice which is not stupid but acquired by devilish shrewdness — and I am not afraid. Wherever I am, even if it were in the fiery furnace, when I have to talk about marriage I am aware of nothing, there is an angel with me, or rather I am far away, I am with her, with her whom I still love constantly with the blissful resolution of youth; I have still, although married for a considerable number of years, I have still the honor of fighting under the victorious

banner of a happy first love alongside of her by reason of whom I feel the significance of my life, feel that it has significance and manifold significance. For what for the rebellious are fetters, and for slavish minds are hard duties, are for me titles and dignities which I would not exchange for those of the King: King of the Wends and of the Goths, Duke of Schleswig, etc. Whether, after all, these titles and dignities will have any significance in another life, whether like much else they are forgotten in a hundred years, whether there is any way of excogitating and defining exactly how by means of memory such facts can compose the content of an eternal consciousness, I do not know. I honor the King, as does every good married man, but I would not exchange my titles for such as his. Such for my part am I, and that every other married man is the same is something I would gladly believe, and verily, whether any individual be far from it or near, my wish is that he may be even as I am.

Behold, I wear inwardly upon my breast the ribbon of my order, love's chain of roses, its roses verily are not withered, verily its roses wither not, even if they alter with the years, they do not fade, even if the rose is not so red, it is because it has become a white rose, but faded it is not. And now for my titles and dignities — what is so glorious about them is that they are so evenly apportioned, for only the divine justice of marriage is constantly able to give tit for tat. What I am through her, that she is through me, and we are neither of us anything by ourselves but only in union. Through her I am a man, for only a married man is a genuine man, every other title to honor is as nothing compared to this which in reality is the assumption underlying all titles. Through her I am a father; every other dignity is merely a human invention, an artifice, which is forgotten in a hundred years; through her I am head of the family, through her I am defender of the home, its breadwinner, the children's protector.

When one has so many dignities, one does not become an author for the sake of attaining a new dignity. I have not the least desire for a dignity I dare not lay claim to, but I write in order that he who is as happy as I am, if he reads this, may be reminded of his good fortune; that he who doubts, if he reads this, may be won over, if it were only a single individual, I am glad even of that; I demand but little, not because I am easily satisfied, but because I am indescribably content. When one has so many employments, all of them so dear, and writes as opportunity offers, one must wish that the man who might possibly profit by it may not be put out by deficiency in form, and must deprecate all criticism. For a married man who writes on marriage is surely the last person to write for critical appreciation. He writes as opportunity offers, and is often distracted by dearer occupations. For though I might be something to many by being an author, I greatly prefer to be as much as possible to my wife. I am her husband by marriage; that is to say, by marriage the *corso* was opened to me, the career which is my Rhodes and my dance-floor. I am her friend, oh, that I may be that in sincerity of heart, oh, that she may not feel the want of anything more sincere! I am her counsellor, oh, that my wisdom were on a par with my willingness! I am her comfort and her cheer — not yet summoned in that capacity, it is true, but, oh, that if once I am requisitioned for that service, my strength may be equal to my readiness to serve! I am her debtor, my accounts are honestly kept and the accounting is a blissful labor. And in the end, as well I know, I shall become a recollection of her when death separates us. Oh, that my memory may be trustworthy, that it may preserve to me everything when it is lost, an annuity of remembrance for the days that remain, that it may bring back to me even the most insignificant things, and that I may say with the poet when I am concerned for today, *et haec meminisse juvat,* and when I am concerned for the morrow, *et haec meminisse juvabit!* Alas, one must as a judge from time to time digest with

loathing the *vita ante acta* of a criminal, but one can never tire of the *vita ante acta* of the beloved, nor does one need the precision of the printed page in order to remember. It is doubtless true that pleasure stimulates labor, and so it does the work of remembrance. It may be, as sentimentality puts it, that at death there will be found the image of the loved one upon the lover's heart, but matrimonially put there awakens in the lover a decision of the will lest the thing run wild in endlessness. The lover says indeed that an instant with the beloved is heavenly bliss, but marriage, wishing all joy to the lover, fortunately has a better knowledge of the situation. Suppose it to be true that the first ebullient enthusiasm of love cannot be carried through quite in that way, yet marriage knows how the best in love can be carried through. In case a child has received from his parents a fresh copy of his lesson-book and before the year is over he has as it were consumed it, would this be an indication that he was to be praised for his zeal and earnestness? So it is with marriage. The married man who from God in heaven has received his copy — ah, as beautiful as a gift of God can be — and has read out of it daily, every day throughout a long life, and behold, when it is laid aside, when night has come and the reading must cease, it was just as beautiful as when he received it — was not then this honest prudence, which was in direct proportion to the lover's pleasure which prompted him to read again and again, was not this just as praiseworthy, just as strong an expression of love, as the strongest expression love has at its command?

It is only about marriage I desire to write. To convince an individual is my hope, to have done with those who speak against marriage is my purpose. So marriage is the only string I play upon, but that is so composite that, without exactly boasting of virtuosity, which ordinarily is required of one who has but a single string, I dare venture to make myself heard, not precisely as an artist before a numerous public, but rather as a strolling

musician who takes up his position before the door of a simple house and calls no one away from his work, although there is in his music when it is heard in the midst of labor something attractive. For I do not mean that what I have to say is devoid of elegance. Several passages I owe to my wife, although I do not talk with her quite as I write here; but everything that comes from her has a certain charm which is woman's dowry. I have often marvelled at it. As one who writes only indifferently well, when he sees his manuscript reproduced by a calligraphic artist must be amazed; as one who has sent a crabbed sheet to the press, when he receives a neatly printed copy hardly dares to recognize it as his own, so it often has been with me in my domestic life. What moves obscurely in her, I express as well as I can, and then she marvels that it was precisely this she wanted to say; so I say it as well as I can, and she appropriates it. But then comes my turn, when I behold with amazement that my thoughts, my words, have acquired an animation, a heartiness, a charm, so that I can say justly it is not my thought. The misfortune is that the lovable finery in which these words and thoughts are dressed almost entirely disappears when I would rehearse them and can no more be expressed than I can describe her voice here on this paper. Here, however, she is to a certain extent co-author, and a literary partnership of this sort seems to me quite a pretty thing when one would write only on marriage. I know that she approves of my making use of what I owe her, I know that she forgives me for employing the opportunity of saying one thing and another about her which otherwise I could not manage to say except in solitude, for how much she means to me I cannot say to her directly, for fear my laudation might be vexatious to her and perhaps almost disturb our good understanding. As an anonymous author and as one who takes the greatest precaution to preserve his anonymity I have insured myself against an offense which I hope delicacy even would forbid, against

the danger that my domestic life might become the object of anybody's curiosity.

All honor be to marriage, and honor to everyone who speaks in praise of it. What I have to say does not consist of new discoveries; it would indeed be precarious to make a new discovery about the oldest institution in the world. Every married man knows the same things I do. The leading thoughts are the same, like the consonants in Hebrew; but while these remain unaltered one can find pleasure in adding new vowels and so reading it again. Of course this must be understood *cum grano salis,* and it must not be supposed that in doing this I do it with the thought of the malicious mocker who said that love and marriage have the same consonants and only differ in the vowels, and this again is like a well known passage in the book of Genesis where it is related that Esau kissed Jacob, and the learned Jews, not being able to credit Esau with such an affectionate disposition, and not daring to alter the consonants, merely indicated other vowels, so that it read, "he begged him." Such an objection one answers best by saying bah! Every other objection is all the more welcome the more openly it is expressed, for a consistent objection is a feeler after the truth and comes very opportunely to one who has the explanation at his fingertips.

LOVE can boast of having its own god. Who is there that does not know his name? And how many there are who believe they gain much by calling their relationship after his name an erotic relationship! Eros, the erotic feeling, and everything that goes with that, has a claim to be regarded as poetic. On the other hand, marriage is not favored in this way, is not of such lofty extraction; for though it is said that God established marriage, it is commonly the priest that says this, or, if one will, the theologian, and they both of them speak about God in a sense entirely different from that of the poet.

The consequence is that all the cosiness, all the fragrance, which one has along with Eros is liable to disappear, for it is characteristic of Eros that it can be entirely concrete in the individual, whereas the thought of God is on the one hand so serious that the pleasure of love seems to disappear when the God who is the father of spirits must be the one who joins together in matrimony, and on the other hand this thought is so generic that one seems to disappear before one's own eyes as a naught, though desiring to have a teleological purpose by which one is defined in relation to the highest being. The clearness, the transparency, and on the other hand the roguishness, the demi-obscurity, in the relation of Eros to the lover, is something the God of the spirit cannot easily acquire in relation to marriage. The fact that He is involved in the affair is in a certain sense too much, and precisely on that account His presence signifies less than that of Eros, who is present wholly and undividedly for the lovers. A purely human relationship illustrates this. If His Royal Majesty lets a chamberlain appear in his stead as godfather, it may perhaps heighten the festive mood of the party, but if the King himself were to appear, it would perhaps make them ill-at-ease. It is only in connection with marriage one remembers that there is no distinction of rank which makes one class to be nearer to God than another. It is by no means an easy task to think God as the God of the spirit, and then to think Him into marriage in such a way that the thought does not become an introduction of so general a character that it has no tendency at all to conduct *in* (introduce), and in such a way that the conception does not become so spiritual that it instantly conducts *out* again.

If one would be content with the poetic explanation of love (which is essentially pagan, for to refer love to a divinity is merely the pretty playful seriousness of immediacy), or if one would let marriage shift for itself, or (if that won't do) would let it be something which comes afterwards, then perhaps one discovers no difficulty — but that way of discovering no

difficulty puts a man who is accustomed to think in a difficult position. Eros as a matter of course does not claim any faith and cannot become the object of faith, and it is this which makes Eros so serviceable to poets; but a God of the spirit who is the object of a spiritual faith is in a sense infinitely remote from the concretion of love.

In paganism there was a god for love but none for marriage; in Christianity there is, if I may venture to say so, a God for marriage and none for love. For the fact is that marriage is a higher expression for love. If the matter is not regarded in this way, everything is brought to confusion, and one either remains unmarried — a scoffer, a seducer, a hermit — or one's marriage is a bit of thoughtlessness. The difficulty is that so soon as one thinks of God as spirit, the relation of the individual to God becomes so spiritual that the physico-psychical synthesis wherein the strength of Eros lies readily disappears from sight, as if one were to say that marriage was a duty, to get married a duty, that this is a higher expression than love because duty means a spiritual relationship to God, who is spirit. Paganism and immediacy do not think of God as spirit, but when once this conception is given, the difficulty is to preserve the characteristic qualities of the erotic in such a way that the spiritual does not burn them up and consume them but burns in them without consuming them. So marriage is threatened from two sides: if the individual has not put himself in a relationship of faith to God as spirit, paganism haunts his brain as a fantastic reminiscence, and then he cannot enter into any marriage; or, on the other hand, he has become entirely spiritual, and so neither in this case can he marry. Even if both the former and the latter of these were wed, such a love affair and such a wedding is not marriage.

Now even though paganism had no god for marriage, and though marriage is a Christian idea, there is something to tie to after all in the fact that Zeus and Hera had a special predicate as the guardians of marriage:

Τελειος and Τελεια. It must be left to the philologists to explain this expression more precisely; I do not hide my ignorance, and knowing for my own part that I lack the necessary erudition, I am not disposed to boast of a spiritual falcon-eye which would warrant me in heaping scorn upon classic learning and classic culture, which remains when all is said and done the pithy pabulum of the soul, far more nutritive than green food or the speculator's guess as to "what the age demands." To me it is important only that I be allowed to apply these words Τελειος and Τελεια to married people — Jupiter and Juno I leave out of account, not being inclined to make a fool of myself by wanting to solve the historico-philologic difficulty.

Marriage I regard as the highest τελος of the individual human existence, it is so much the highest that the man who goes without it cancels with one stroke the whole of earthly life and retains only eternity and spiritual interests — which at the first glance seems no slight thing but in the long run is very exhausting and also in one way or another is the expression of an unhappy life. That the highest τέλος, if marriage be so regarded, is not exhaustively expressed by a suite of finite "wherefores" everybody can readily perceive and it need not be argued. The highest τέλος always embraces the particular determinants which compose it as its predicates, and so rigidly does it embrace them that they possess what significance they have only as immanent to it and are devoid of significance so soon as they attempt to be independent; for a detached thought which would be its own complete self is comic and scatterbrained. This is said to avoid misunderstanding. The main point is that marriage is a τε'λος — not, however, as a blind urge of nature (a notion which verges on the mystery cults), but for free individuals. For if it is a τελος, it is not something "immediate" but a work of freedom, and as belonging to the realm of freedom it proposes a task which can be realized only by a resolution of the will. Now the signal is given: all the objections which sneak like solitary

figures upon the outskirts of social life will now, if they are shrewd, converge upon this point. I know well that here the battle is to be fought, and this shall not be forgotten, even if for a little while I appear to forget it in order hypothetically to take a little look around.

The difficulty is this: love or the state of being in love is entirely "immediate"; yet at the same time being in love is something which looks forward to being absorbed in matrimony or in the resolution, the will to marry. That is to say, the most instinctive or "immediate" of all things is to be at the same time a resolution of the freest kind, a thing which because of its immediacy is so inexplicable that it must be referred to a divinity is to come to pass at the same time by virtue of deliberation and of a deliberation so exhaustive that a resolution results from it. Moreover, the one must not follow after the other, the resolution must not come sneaking along behind, but it must occur at the same time, both must be together at the instant of decision. If the deliberation has not exhausted the possibilities of thought, I form no resolution, I act either by the inspiration of genius or by force of a whim.

If the individual makes the venture, that is to say if his being in love is not merely a state of mind but actually a union with the beloved, though without his having any other expression for being in love than simply being in love, if in making the venture he is only blissfully moved and urged on by the impetus which he takes to be a trade wind that will carry him without hindrance along the luminous path with his lady-love beside him — this is not by any means to say that marriage will result the next moment. "The next moment" — for as this man is only "immediately" determined, there is bound to come sooner or later a next moment. Marriage implies a resolution, but a resolution does not result directly from the immediacy of being in love. Either nothing more is needed but the prompting of love, which like a magnet points constantly to the same point; or the resolution

must be at hand from the beginning. If the resolution is to come later, something else may come to pass instead. What is there to insure against it? Love, somebody answers. All right, but this is precisely love's critical moment when it cannot therefore come to its own aid; for the fact that the breeze of immediacy does not fill the sail of love indicates that a change of wind is to occur whilst immediacy is about to be brought to a standstill as it were in a dead calm. The other possible consequence of love's immediacy is... seduction. Who will say that the seducer at the first instant was a seducer? No, he became that at the second instant. When a man talks about love as immediacy it is not possible to decide whether it is a knight or a seducer that is speaking, for it is the next instant which decides this. To marriage this does not apply, for there the resolution is present from the beginning.

Let us take for example Aladdin. What youth with desire and aspiration in his heart, what maiden with longing in her heart, has read Aladdin's command to the spirit in the fourth act (where he gives orders for the nuptials) without being inflamed and almost set on fire by the poet's enthusiasm and the fire of the words? Aladdin is a knight, to depict such a love is moral, says somebody. No, it is poetic, and the poet by his happy thought and by the profound wealth of his presentation has forever demonstrated that he is absolutely a poet. Aladdin is entirely immediate. His wish therefore is of such a sort that the next instant he can be a poet. The only thing that concerns him is "that beloved and long-desired nuptial night," which confirms him in the possession of Gulnare — hence the palace, the nuptial hall, the nuptials.

Prepare a lordly wedding, turn the darkness into day With incense-perfumed torches in the spacious nuptial hall.

A corps of comely maidens shall perform an airy dance, While the others shall delight us with the cittern and sweet song.

Aladdin is himself almost overwhelmed, he is fainting in the swoon of anticipated delight. Not without a certain tremor in his voice does he inquire of the spirit whether he is able to perform this, he conjures him to answer sincerely, and in this word "sincerely" is to be heard as it were the dread which immediacy experiences in the face of its own good fortune.

That in which Aladdin is great is his wish, the fact that his soul has the pith to desire. If with a view to this point I were to make any criticism of a masterpiece, which here could only be an enamored expression of envy, it would be that it never is clearly and strongly enough brought out that Aladdin is a justifiable personality, that to wish, to be able to wish, to dare to wish, to be foolhardy in wishing, resolute in grasping, insatiable in aspiring, is a quality of genius as great as any other. Perhaps one may not believe this, and yet in every generation there are born perhaps not more than ten youths who possess this blind courage, this intensity upon the inordinate. Eliminate these ten and give to every other man full warrant to wish, it becomes in his hands little more than a begging-letter; his nose becomes pale, he wants to reflect, he would like indeed to wish, but now it is a question of wishing the right thing — that is to say, he is a bungler, not a genius like Aladdin, who is the favorite of the spirit for the reason that he is rude. The fulfilment of his wish must therefore not be made to appear an accidental favor, so as not to provide the bunglers with the pretext that if they were sure of a certain fulfilment, they too would wish. Falsehood, falsehood! Here already there is a reflection. No, even if Aladdin had no wish fulfilled, he would rank high for the wish, for the potency of desire, which in the last resort is of more value than any fulfilment.

Great is Aladdin! He celebrates the wedding, it is true, but he does not wed. Verily no one can more heartily congratulate him and more sincerely rejoice in him than I; but if I were able, as the poet gives him the spirit of the lamp, to give him a spirit of resolution, if I were able by daily

intercessory prayer to procure for him the one thing I think he lacks, a spirit of resolution which in intensity and concretion corresponds to what his wish is in boundless extension and abstraction (for his aspiration is indeed boundless and is as hot as the burning sand of the desert) — ah, what a husband Aladdin might have been! Now one is not able to say anything of the sort; my enemies on the other hand, robbers who lie in wait for their prey, coolly appropriate Aladdin. The seducer fortifies his soul with Aladdin's immediacy, and so he seduces, and then he says: "Aladdin too was a seducer, that I know from a very reliable source, he became a seducer the morning after the wedding." If it were not in fact the very next morning but a few years after the wedding, makes no real difference and only proves, if it were a few years later, that Aladdin had become small. Here the seducer is in the right: if it is to be all over with immediacy, then the thing to do is to break off hastily (and precisely for this reason it is a moral task to present the figure of a seducer); and if this is not to be the case, the resolution must have been present from the beginning, and so we have a husband. The enthusiasm of the poet is enlisted by immediacy, the poet is great by reason of his faith in immediacy and in its power to prevail. The married man has permitted himself to entertain a doubt, an innocent, a well meant, a noble, a lovable doubt; for verily he is far from wishing to offend love or to do away with it: as certainly as the immediacy of love does not constitute a husband, just so certainly on the other hand is a wedding where love has been left out (for whatever reason) no marriage.

By venturing out and being borne along by the blissful and irresistible prompting of love, the lover is indeed carried into the arms of his lady-love, with her he is carried perhaps much further along, but marriage he does not attain; for if that union of the lovers is not from the beginning a marriage, it never becomes such. If the resolution were to come along tardily in the rear, the idea would not be expressed. Maybe the lovers live happily, possibly

they do not bother about the objections, yet in a way the enemies are right. Everything depends upon the idealities. Marriage must not be a fragmentary thing which comes about in an occasional way, something which happens to the lovers after they have for some time been living with one another, and so the enemies are right in a way. They for their part stand for an ideality which belongs to the realm of evil, demoniacal ideality. From the objections which are raised one can easily perceive whether the speaker is merely a *chicaneur* or has demoniacal ideality. One may be quite right in not wishing to have anything to do with the objections, not wishing to be disturbed by them, but one must have a good conscience and an unbroken covenant with the ideas. To be content with being well off, being happy, etc., is perdition when this happiness is founded upon thoughtlessness, upon cowardice, upon a worldly-minded deification of existence. To have preserved one's covenant with the ideas, even though one were to become unhappy, is heaven compared with such a pitiable situation — such is my opinion too. Hence I dare to talk; as a married man I do not put my tail between my legs, I dare to talk with enemies, and not with friends only. I know that as a married man I am τελειος, but I know what is demanded of such with respect to the idea. No haggling, no compromise, no grounds of consolation offered by one husband to another, as though husbands, like women in a harem, were life-prisoners who have something to themselves which they dare not confess before the world, as though love were the glittering finery one lets the poet turn outward for display, and marriage the shabby side which one turns inward. No, let it be an open fight; the idea of marriage is sure to win. With humility before God and with deference to the divine majesty of love I hold up my head far above all witticisms and do not bow it in the face of any objection.

We grant that the enemies are right in stating the whole difficulty, and that the synthesis which constitutes marriage is difficult, but we do not grant

that they are right in representing this as an objection, still less in avoiding the difficulty in the way they do. When an opponent states the whole difficulty of the objection in order to deter us by fear, we need to have the courage to say with Hamann, “That’s exactly how it is.” This is a good answer aptly made. Here too the answer is to come, but I demand that the question be postponed for a few minutes till we have oriented ourselves a bit by a few general considerations about marriage as the highest τελος.

In paganism there was a punishment inflicted upon bachelors, while those who produced many children were rewarded; in the Middle Ages it was counted a perfection to be unmarried. These are the extremes. As for the first case, there was no need of inflicting a punishment, for existence always holds up its own end and knows how to punish the man who would emancipate himself. In this case the man who would emancipate himself is the one who will not marry. Stress must be laid upon the fact that he *will* not. As marriage is a resolution, so also is its opposite, a resolution not to marry. Such only can be the subject of this discourse. For to fool life away, seeking after the ideal (as though all such seeking were anything but stupidity and presumption), without comprehending what either love or marriage means, without even comprehending the innocent enthusiasm which reminds youth that time is fleeting, time is fleeting — so to fool life away means an existence devoid of idea. And so it is also with the fastidiousness of picking and choosing (as though all such choosing were anything but an expression of the fact that the chooser is not pure), and then getting nobody — which is life’s objective expression for this subjective choosing. That marriage in contrast with such foolery is absolutely preferable is something so definitely sure that it is almost an offense against marriage to affirm it. No, the objection that is to have any significance must vindicate its claim to consideration by a negative resolution. The resolution of marriage is a positive resolution, and properly the most positive of all.

The opposite is also a resolution which resolves not to realize this task. Everyone who not only remains unmarried but remains so without a resolution — his course through life it is not worth while to follow. Every human existence which would not be twaddle (and no man should wish to be that) dare not forego the universal, except by virtue of a resolution, whatever the reasons may be which prompt him to make this resolution, which with respect to the decision not to marry may be very various — but here it is not in place to go into them, lest attention might be distracted from the main point.

The resolution not to will to get married exhibits of course an ideality, but not such an ideality as does the positive resolution. Only in relation to time and circumstances can it become clearer to the individual that he has made a resolution when he has made the negative one, whereas the positive resolution made in compliance with a universal opinion may have been made easily enough. One can indeed succeed in getting married, as it is called, without having made a resolution, in spite of the fact that a resolution has been made, but a resolution and a resolution are widely different things. A resolution which is determined upon without more ado in continuity with others, and is decided by virtue of the fact that the next neighbor and the opposite neighbor have also resolved upon it, is properly no resolution; for whether there be such a thing as poetry at second hand, I do not know, but a resolution at third hand is no resolution. As compared with such marriages, which display neither love nor marriage in the most favorable light, the negative resolution appears at an advantage. But such marriages are not marriages at all, but mere mimicry.

All of a man's ideality consists first and last in resolution. Every other ideality is an insignificance, to admire it is childish, and the person thus admired, if he understands himself, will feel offended. So only of a positive or a negative resolution can there be any question here. The positive

resolution has the great advantage that it consolidates life and reassures the individual in his own mind, whereas the negative holds him *in suspenso.* A negative resolution is always much more laborious than a positive one, it cannot become habitual, and yet it must always be maintained. A positive resolution is secure in its happy result, for the universal, which is the positive factor in it, assures that happiness will come and gives assurance to happiness when it does come. A negative resolution, even when the result is happy, is always ambiguous; it is deceptive like good fortune in paganism, for good fortune *is* only when it *has been.* That is to say, only when I am dead can I know whether I *have been* fortunate. Thus it is with the negative resolution. The individual has declared war upon human existence, hence there is no instant when he is through with it, he cannot, like one who has made a positive resolution, learn to understand day by day more deeply the original ground of his resolution. A negative resolution does not support him who made it, but he has to support it; and however far it goes, even if good fortune favors him, even if the most important results come from it, he dare not deny the possibility that suddenly everything may receive a different interpretation. By reason of his negative resolution he now exists hypothetically or in the conjunctive mood, and it can be said of a hypothesis that it is never finished until it has explained all phenomena. For even by a false hypothesis one can provisionally make out a good deal, until the phenomenon comes along which overthrows the hypothesis; and in the case of the conjunctive "if" the reply is, "Yes, if." A positive resolution has only one anxiety, the fear of not being true to itself; a negative resolution is always exposed to a double danger: that of not being true to itself, which is like that of the positive resolution, but with this difference, that all this fidelity is without reward, a withered glory, and unfruitful as the life of a celibate; and then another temptation, the suspicion that this fidelity by which one is true to oneself may be rewarded at last by repentance.

Whereas the positive resolution joyfully recruits its strength by repose, joyfully arises with the sun, joyfully begins where it left off, and joyfully beholds everything thriving about it, as a married man does, joyfully beholds with the new day a new proof of that which needs no proof, for a positive resolution is not a hypothesis which has to be proved. On the other hand, he who has made the negative resolution sleeps uneasily at night, expects that the terror will suddenly erect itself against him, that he has chosen wrong, he wakes up exhausted to behold about him the golden heath, he is never refreshed in strength because he is constantly hovering.

Verily the state has no need to impose a punishment upon bachelors, life itself punishes him who deserves punishment, for he who makes no resolution is a wretched creature of whom it may be said in a tragic sense, “He cometh not into judgment.” It is not because I am envious of the man who will not marry that I speak thus, I am too happy to envy anyone, but I am jealous in behalf of human existence.

I return to the foregoing thesis that resolution is man’s ideality. I will now seek to show what must be the nature of the resolution which cultivates most thoroughly the individuality, and I cheer my soul by the reflection that such precisely is the nature of marriage, which, as has been said, I am disposed to regard as the synthesis of love and resolution.

There is a phantom which is often enough astir when it is a question of making a resolution, and that is *probability* — a contemptible fellow, a bungler, a peddling Jew, with whom no freeborn soul will have any dealings, a ne’er-do-well who had much better be sent to the house of correction than overshrewd men and women, since it tricks people out of something more than money and money’s worth. Every man who in the matter of resolve has not got further and never gets further than to resolve by the aid of probability is lost to ideality, whatever else he may become. When in making a resolution a man does not meet up with God, has never

formed a resolution in which he made a bargain with God, he might just as well never have lived. But God always deals *en gros,* and probability is a commercial paper which is not quoted in heaven. It is important therefore that in resolution there should be a factor which overawes probability and renders it speechless.

There is a spook which the man about to make a resolution runs after as a dog runs after a shadow on the water, and that is the upshot, an indication of extreme misery, a dazzling delusion of perdition — woe to the man who is on the outlook for that, he is a lost soul! As the man who looked upon the bronze cross in the wilderness was sound in health although he was bitten by a serpent, so he who fixes his glance upon the upshot is bitten by a serpent, wounded by the earthly mind, lost both for time and for eternity. If at the instant of resolution a man is not irradiated by the clarity of the Deity in such a way that all spooks formed by the mists of drowsiness vanish away, then his resolution amounts to only a greater or less forgery — let him take what comfort he can in the upshot. It is therefore so exceedingly important that the matter the resolution deals with should be of such a nature that no upshot may venture to bid for it at the auction, because what is being bought is bought à tout *prix.*

What is said here applies to every resolution in which the eternal is a factor and concludes the sale, and not merely to the resolution of marriage when for the first time it presses love to its bosom and concludes it in the faithful embrace of resolution. This applies to every resolution which has the eternal within it, and to that extent it applies also to the negative resolution, insofar as it is negative towards the temporal but turns positively towards the eternal. This, however, is precisely what causes it to hover. On the other hand, in the resolution of marriage love is deposed from the position of suzerain and has precisely the power of drawing down the man of resolve — not to the earth, oh, far from that, but down to the side of the

loved one in temporal existence. The act of resolution is the ethical act, it is freedom. The negative resolution has this same character, but bare and naked as freedom is in this case; it is as though it were dumb, with a difficulty in utterance which is hard to overcome, and in a general way there is something hard in its nature. Love, on the other hand, promptly sets the thing to music, though it is true that this composition contains a very difficult passage. For the bridal pair who, at this sacred moment, or when they think of it afterwards, do not find that it is nonsensical for the priest to say to the lovers that they "shall" love one another, and on the other hand do not find that it is capitally said — such a bridal pair lacks an ear for the music of marriage. Delicious as it is to be sensible of the whisper of love, this precious witness at the wedding, just so heartily welcome is that impertinent word which says, "Thou shall love her." How dithyrambic is this wedding formula, how presumptuous almost, which is not content with love but calls it a duty. What wonder that the resolution which answers to such an address appears to some a hard saying! That love is not content with being sure of itself but in its audacity has recourse to this, "Thou shalt!" That marriage has a resolution which expresses the one and only wish, has a duty which is the eyes' delight and the heart's desire! Have courage, therefore, dare boldly, have courage to will the difficult, and so in turn the difficulty proves a help. For difficulty is not a morose man, not a *chicaneur,* but an omnipotence which will make it so very good. Whereas the man who in his eternal resolution conducts himself negatively towards the temporal is lonely at the instant of resolution, even if he is very great, even though he were a Prometheus, is chained, not to a mountain, but held captive by the temporal as by a chain — the married man, on the other hand, when again he opens his eyes (supposing that he has closed them in the eternity of resolution), finds himself standing again where he was

before, always in the same place, alongside of the beloved, just where he would prefer to be, feeling no want of the eternal, for it is with him in time.

The negative resolution has reference only to the eternal, the positive has reference to both the temporal and the eternal — and man in fact is at once temporal and eternal. The ideality of the true resolution consists therefore in a resolve which is just as temporal as it is eternal, which is, if I may venture to say so, both signed and countersigned — a precaution which is taken in the case of government bonds and which even the bank takes with its bigger checks. The true idealizing resolution accordingly has this characteristic: it is signed in heaven and then it is countersigned in time. And not only this, but again and again as life goes on the married man is constantly getting new and newer endorsements, each one of them as precious as the other. Every married man understands what I mean. How could I believe anything else of him — that he regards reluctantly the additional assurances as burdensome? The right sort of a married man understands that the wife is the principal endorser and that everyone in the group that is growing up under the eyes of marriage is a new and ever new certificate. Oh, blessed security! Oh, wealthy man! Oh, reassuring bliss! To possess one's whole wealth in one single security, which cannot vanish from one's sight as does the eternal resolution from the sight of him who assumes a negative position to the temporal! The latter individual is either an unfortunate or a rebel — and a rebel also is an unfortunate. He is an unfortunate man who goes through time with his eternal resolution but never gets it countersigned — on the contrary, wherever he goes it is protested, he is an outcast from the race, and even though he is consoled by the eternal, he is yet remote from joy, in tears, perhaps in gnashing of teeth; for he who in eternity has not on a wedding garment is cast out, but in earthly life the wedding garment is literally the wedding garment.

The true idealizing resolution must be just as sympathetic as it is autopathic. But the man who is negative in relation to the temporal has no outlet for his sympathy, which accordingly, instead of being a refreshment to him when it pours out the benediction of its abundance and when it recruits itself anew, becomes to him a torment which consumes his soul because it is unable to express itself. To be suffocated is dreadful, but to have sympathy and not be able to let it draw breath is quite as dreadful. For I assume that the man has sympathy, otherwise he would not be worth talking about. Sympathy is an essential quality of man, and every resolution which overlooks this is not in the largest sense an idealizing resolution, and neither is that in which sympathy fails to find an adequate opportunity for expression. Suppose the bachelor is a fool and wastes his sympathy upon dogs and cats and foolery; suppose the hermit who made the negative choice is a noble soul, suppose his sympathy seeks and finds tasks much greater than that of having a wife and children, he nevertheless has no joy in it. If the dew of heaven might not fall upon the grass and might not have joy at seeing the flower refreshed by its delicious moisture, if it were to spread over the wide ocean and evaporate before it reached the flower, would not that be dreadful? If the milk in the mother's breast were to flow abundantly, but there was no babe; if the wasted milk were as precious as the milk of Juno after which the Milky Way is named, ah, how sad! And so it is also with a man whose sympathy does not get leave to see a wife grow green like a tree which is planted in the blessed enclosure of sympathy, does not get leave to see the tree blossom and bear fruit which ripens under the care of sympathy! Unhappy the man who has not this expression for his sympathy, and the still more glorious expression for everything his sympathy expresses: that all this is his responsibility. This contradiction is sympathy's most blissful pleasure, a bliss which makes him as it were go mad for very joy. Suppose an unhappy man who does not possess through

the resolution of marriage a good understanding with the temporal — suppose he cares for the sick, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, visits the prisoner, comforts the dying; I praise him, he shall in no wise lose his reward, but neither is he in divine madness an unprofitable servant, his sympathy constantly seeks its deepest expression but finds it not, seeks it far afield, as in fact his solicitude wanders from house to house, whereas the married man finds opportunity in his own house, his home, where it is bliss for him to want to do everything, and a still greater bliss, a divine *poscimur,* that he is and remains without merit.

The true idealizing resolution must be just as concrete as it is abstract. In the same degree that a resolution is negatively formulated, in that same degree it is sheerly abstract. But say what you will about a resolution, there is nothing between heaven and earth so concrete as marriage and the marriage relationship, nothing so inexhaustible; even the most unimportant things have their importance, and whereas the matrimonial obligation is elastic enough to span a whole lifetime (like that ox-hide which measured the whole circumference of Carthage) it closes just as elastically around the instant, and around every instant. There is nothing so piecemeal as marriage, and yet there is nobody that can less endure a divided heart than marriage; God Himself is not so jealous. Every relationship of duty can after all be approximately exhausted by definitions, every labor, every business, in short, everything a man ordinarily occupies his time with, has its time; but the married life evades every such definition. Woe unto him who finds this a burden, even the idea of being sentenced for life gives no adequate notion of the pain of his punishment; for the life-sentence is an abstract expression, but such a matrimonial criminal feels every day the horror of being sentenced for life. The more concrete a man becomes in ideality, the more perfect the ideality is. The man who will not marry has as a consequence discarded the most idealizing resolution. Moreover, it is an

inconsistency for a man to will not to marry, and then to resolve upon some positive aim in temporal existence. What interest can he have in the idea of the state, what love for the fatherland, what civic patriotism with regard to all that affects the social weal and woe? A man who will not let marriage have its realization! The more abstract it is, so much the more imperfect is ideality. Abstraction is the first expression of ideality, but concretion is its essential expression. This is expressed by marriage. In the stage of love the lovers wish to belong to one another *eternally,* in their resolution they resolve to be *everything* to one another; and this prodigious abstraction finds its concrete expression in what is so unimportant that no third party dreams of it. The highest expression of love is that the lover feels himself as nothing in the presence of the beloved, and this feeling is mutual, for to feel oneself as something conflicts with love. The resolution has no word by which to express itself, for words are almost too concrete; the vow is silent or is expressed in that immortal "Yes" — and this abstraction finds expression of such a sort that if all the stenographers were united, they would not be able to describe what goes on in a week of married life.

This is the happiness of marriage. I do not mean this in the sense in which one speaks of a particular married pair as happy. No, it is simply the happiness of being a married man. For what life is happier than that of the man for whom everything has importance? How could time be long to him for whom every instant has importance? And how secure this happiness feels itself! For indeed there is an old proverb which says that *Ehestand* is *Wehestand,* and as such indeed does marriage proclaim itself. How sure then it must be of itself that it dares to invite others to try it! Is there any other institution in life, any other relationship, which begins in this fashion? Alas, all other beginnings are only too ingratiating and are silent about the difficulties. Figaro, to excuse himself for the letter he had written to the Count, says to the Countess that she is the only lady in the realm against

whom he would with assurance venture to permit himself to take such a step. So likewise I believe that marriage is the only institution which with assurance dare say of itself that it is a worry. On the part of the others it would be an imprudence to let such a thing be known.

The true idealizing resolution must be just as dialectic with reference to freedom as to fate. Nothing ventured, nothing resolved. Now then the resolution is formed. The more abstract it is, the less dialectic it is with reference to fate. Hereby the ideality of the resolution acquires a certain untruthfulness, it readily becomes proud, supercilious, inhuman, and more particularly all the arguments of fate are regarded as legally invalid. The more concrete the resolution is, the more it comes into relation with fate or divine providence. This yields the ideality of humility, meekness, gratitude. But a married man who puts all his life and soul into it is surely the one who risks most of all. He ventures out from love’s hiding-place with the beloved, taking the beloved with him — and what may not happen! He knows not, if he were to indulge in such reflections his hair might indeed become gray in a night; he knows not, but this he knows, that he may lose all, and he knows this, that he cannot in any way avoid the issue, for the resolution holds him fast there where love chains him, but also holds him undismayed there where love is groaning. There is an old saying which perhaps has fallen a bit into discredit, no matter, it runs as follows: “What will a man not do for the sake of wife and children?” Answer: “He does everything, everything.” And what does one do against fate? Who can fathom its secret? A man bares his arm, he labors, he struggles, he suffers, ah, there is nothing a man will not endure! The more positive a man’s resolution is, the more declinable he himself becomes, and only a married man is declined by fate in all *genera, numeri* and *casibus.* — Externally regarded there are hundreds upon hundreds who have risked more than a married man, have risked riches and lands, millions upon millions, have lost

thrones and principalities, fortune and well-being, and yet the married man risks more. For he who loves risks more than all such things as that, and he who loves in as many ways as it is possible for a man to love risks most of all. Suppose then that the married man is a king, a millionaire — no need of that, no need of it, everything else only confuses the clearness of the reckoning — let him be a beggar, he risks most of all. Suppose then that the courageous man takes part in the hero-dances in the ballroom, or dances upon the tumultuous sea — no need of that, no need of it, for daily use there is no need of it; in the theater perhaps it might be needed, but it would go ill with mankind if life and the good Lord did not have several reserve batallions of heroes who are not applauded although they risk more. A married man takes a risk every day, and every day the sword of duty hangs over his head, and the journal of accounts is kept open as long as marriage lasts, and the protocol of responsibility is never closed, and the responsibility arouses more enthusiasm that the most glorious epic poet who has to bear witness to heroes. Well, it is true, he does not take the risk for nothing. No, it is an even wager, he risks all for all, and if marriage with its responsibility is an epic, it is also by reason of its happiness an idyl.

Thus marriage is the beauteous mid-point and center of human existence, giving a reflection as deep as the thing is high which is disclosed by it: a revelation which in cryptic form discloses the heavenly. And this is what every marriage does, just as the quiet lake reflects as well as the ocean, provided the water is not turbid. To be a husband is the most beautiful and the most significant task. The man who has not become such is an unfortunate one whose life either did not permit it or whom love did not visit, or he is a suspicious character who had better be taken into custody. Marriage is "the fullness of time." The man who never married is an unfortunate, either to an observer or to himself — in his eccentricity he will find time a burden. Such is marriage. It is divine, for love is the miracle; it

is of the world, for love is nature's profoundest myth. Love is the unfathomable bottom which is hidden in obscurity, but resolution is the victor which like Orpheus fetches love out to the light of day, for resolution is love's true form, its true transfiguration, hence marriage is holy and blessed by God. It is civic, for thereby the lovers belong to the state and the fatherland and the concerns of their fellow citizens. It is poetic, ineffably poetic, as love is, but resolution is the conscientious translator who translates enthusiasm into reality, and this translator is so precise, oh, so precise! Love's voice "sounds like that of fairies from the grottoes of midsummer-night," but resolution has the earnestness of perseverance which resounds through the fleeting and the transitory. Love's gait is light as the feet which dance upon the meadow, but resolution holds the tired one till the dance begins again. Such is marriage. It is childishly joyful and yet solemn, because it has constantly before its eyes the miracle. It is unassuming and retiring, though festivity dwells within it, but as the tradesman's door is shut upon the street during divine service, so is that of marriage always shut because divine service is constantly going on. It is troubled by concern, but this concern is not uncomely, since it is due to an understanding and a sense of the deep pain in the whole of existence — he is uncomely who knows not this concern. It is serious and yet tempered by jest; for not to will to do all is a poor jest, but to do one's utmost and then to understand that it is little, little, nothing in comparison with love's wish and resolution's desire, is a blissful jest. It is humble and yet bold, yea, such boldness is found only in marriage, because it is fashioned out of man's strength and woman's weakness and is rejuvenated by the child's freedom from care. It is faithful, verily if marriage were not faithful, where would faithfulness be found? It is secure, composed, snugly at home in existence, no danger is a real danger but only a temptation. It is content with little, it knows also how to use much, but it knows also how to be beautiful in frugal

circumstances, and knows how to be no less beautiful in abundance. It is content and yet full of expectation, the lovers are sufficient to one another and yet exist only for the sake of others, ft is commonplace, yea, what is so commonplace as marriage, it belongs entirely to the temporal, and yet the memory of eternity accompanies it and is forgetful of nothing.

This must suffice as a plea for marriage. It doesn't occur to me at this moment to say more; another time, perhaps tomorrow, I may have more to say, but "always the same thing and about the same," for only gypsies, robber gangs and swindlers follow the adage that where a person has once been he is never to go again. At any rate, it appears to me to be enough, and the only additional remark I would make is that if marriage were merely half as good a thing as it is, it would for all that be well pleasing to me; and I am the more ready to conclude because I feel that it is not a eulogy upon myself I have been pronouncing but rather a judgment. However, one can be a happy husband without having attained perfection, if only one has this aim in view and is sensible of one's imperfection. Here I have wanted only to peg the price up a bit; for when one has to do with bores who seize every occasion to grumble, with freebooters who ravage with fire and sword, with spies who lurk at the door, with street-loungers who would rush from the street right into the house, then one authoritatively imposes respect for holy things and plays blindman's buff with them a bit, knowing that they stand at the street door, the blind door of marriage, and collect there, but in that way can get to know nothing about marriage.

Now for the objections. Even if a married man cannot formulate them so sharply as a chicaneur can, yet he knows very well where the shoe pinches, and in rendering an account of marriage he knows how to include such things, or at least he has acquired a general aptitude for taking a hint. To elaborate the objections in detail would be a waste of time, even if one had a talent for doing that. However, this much is certain, that everyone who

raises objections is always a person to be pitied. Either he has sown his wild oats and thereby hardened himself, or he is befuddled in his understanding. In the case of every objection which is due to the latter cause the first reply to be made is that “Bah!,” a la Hamann. One lets the man talk as long as he wants to, then inquires whether he has finished, and thereupon utters that magic word. When one has thus closed the door on him there is a second reply to be made. The sophist Gorgias is reported to have said with reference to tragedy that it is a deception wherein the person deceived is evidently better off than the person not deceived, the deceived is wiser than the non-deceived. The last observation is an eternal truth and makes an apt reply whenever the understanding runs wild in its own conceits and is deceived precisely by the fear of being deceived. Yes, verily, for remaining in the blissful deceit of love and of illusion and of the miracle a very different sort of wisdom is required than for running from house to house stark naked and half mad from sheer common sense. So queer appears the contradiction. Distraction of mind is sometimes due to lack of memory, and yet there are instances of a man becoming *distrait* because he has too much memory.

If the objection is to be fundamental, it ought in aiming against marriage to aim first against love, for the first should always be first. This seldom occurs. The enemies who aim against love are the less mischievous and only very rarely get a hearing. As soon as the understanding would make an attempt to explain or to think love, the ludicrous is in evidence, which is best expressed by saying that the understanding becomes ludicrous. The matter assumes a different aspect, however, in relation to the character of the speaker. If he is a depraved man who ends a dissolute life by wanting to heap ridicule upon that which has always known how to evade his profane touch, though he has dabbled a good deal in so-called love, in this case a reply of any sort is superfluous. However, a more admissible form of

objection can be conceived, it is so admissible that one may be inclined to pity the erring one and explain his error. He must be a youth who actually is pure in relation to the erotic, but a youth who, like a child too early wise, has skipped one stadium of the soul's development and happened to begin life with reflection. Such a case is conceivable in our reflective age, a man of this sort may even be regarded as a legitimate instance, inasmuch as all the talk about reflection, the deification of it, the assumption of its necessity which is enforced by the maxim of doubting everything, is in this case expressed by the fact that he (more serious than many a light-minded systematic philosopher who would like to make a hit by writing a book about doubting everything) gets the desperate idea into his head of wanting to think the erotic, to think himself into it, i.e. think himself out of it. Such an individual is an unhappy individual, and inasmuch as he actually is pure I cannot think without sympathy of his misfortune.

He is like the Valkyrie who has lost her swan-skin and now sits forlorn, attempting to fly but attempting it in vain in spite of all her efforts. This youth has lost the immediacy which carries a man through life, the immediacy without which love is impossible, the immediacy which is constantly taken for granted and constantly carries a man a step further; he is excluded from the benefit of immediacy for which one never can get to the point of properly expressing one's thanks, because the benefactor always hides himself.

As it is distressing to behold the misery of that Valkyrie, so also it is distressing to behold the thought-struggle of such a man, whether he suffers dumbly or by demoniac virtuosity in reflection knows how to hide his nakedness by the adroit word.

All love is a wonder, a miracle — what wonder then that the understanding is brought to a standstill while the lovers are prostrate in adoration before the sacred sign of the wonder. With respect to what we are

here talking of, as in all cases, one should take heed to the expressions one uses. There is a category which means “to choose oneself,” a somewhat modernized Greek category; it is my favorite category and applies to the individual life as a whole, but must never be applied to the erotic, as when one speaks of choosing one’s lady-love, for a lady-love is a gift of the deity; and as the chooser who chooses himself is assumed to be in existence prior to the choice, so, if the word is to be used in the same sense in both connections, we must assume that the lady-love is also in existence prior to the choice. If then one uses this expression, “to choose,” in the sense of proposing someone as the beloved, instead of accepting the beloved as given, an erring reflection can at once have something to hold on to. The youth then resolves love into loving the lovable object which he has to *choose.* Poor chap, that is an impossibility; and not only that, for after all who would dare to woo if wooing is to be understood in this sense? and what manikin would dare to dote in such a way upon himself that he does not sense the truth that he who woos must first have been moved to woo by the deity and that all other wooing is foolish effrontery? I decline to woo in this way, I had rather thank the deity for the gift. He chooses better, and to give thanks is more blessed. I do not want to become ridiculous by wanting to begin with a senseless critical discourse about the beloved, saying that I love her for this reason, and for that reason, and finally for the reason... that I love her. Rightly used such a discourse delivered before the lovers themselves may be highly entertaining, by assuming in a purely humorous way that the whole content of love is equivalent to this or that insignificant trait, as if a husband were to say to his wife that he loves her because her hair is blond. Such talk is a humorous jest which has long lost sight of all the pompous importance of reflection. I render unto the deity the things that are the deity’s, and this every man ought to do. But he does not do it when he denies the deity the sacred tribute of admiration and wonder. Precisely

when the understanding has been brought to a standstill it is in place to possess the courage and the heart to believe in the miraculous, and to return, constantly strengthened by this vision, to reality, not with the purpose of sitting still and wanting to fathom the miracle. However, a fruitless effort after a sharp and well maintained critique which brings down desperation upon the head of the reflecting one, and perhaps thereby saves him, I greatly prefer to a loquacious sort of reflection, a tire-woman who wants to attire love and knows more than the miracle does. Verily love is a miracle, not the latest news of the town, and its priest is a worshiper, not a street wench.

In paganism accordingly they ascribed love to Eros. Since the resolution of marriage adds the ethical element, that half coquettish ascription becomes in marriage a purely religious expression for the fact that one received the beloved from the hand of God. As soon as God exists for consciousness, the miracle is present, for otherwise God cannot be present. The Jews expressed this by saying that he who beholds God must die. This was merely a figurative expression, the adequate and true expression is that one loses one's reason, as does the lover when he beholds the beloved — and at the same time... beholds God. True enough, I have been a married man for no inconsiderable time, and perhaps people may laugh at my enthusiasm. Let them laugh! A married man is always in love, and, if not, he never comes to understand love. The knight of reflection, the knight of the sorrowful countenance, goes further; he would fathom the synthesis implied in love. He does not notice that there is a veil hung before his eyes and that again he stands before the miracle. God creates out of nothing, but here, if I dare say so, He does more by clothing an instinct with the beauty of love, so that the lovers see only the beauty and are unaware of the instinct. Who would lift the veil? Who would dare to do that? The ideal beauty is the veiled beauty, and surely the moon shining through the veil of

the clouds is only half as beautiful, and the heavens dream only half as yearningly through the curtain of flowers, and the sea by its half-transparency tempts only half so strongly as the beloved one, as the wife, through the veil of modesty. I rave? I am only a poor wretch of a husband? So you may think. But what am I to say about the mystery which was a mystery to me and is and remains such throughout the years? For I have no notion that any explanation is to come, I cannot even comprehend the odious presumption that the veil of nature is more precious than the veil of virtue.

So there he goes, that poor fellow whom reflection, as it ever does, reduces to beggary; he goes further, his fanaticism makes him more unhappy, his wealth makes him poorer. Pie is brought to a standstill by what he would likely call the consequences of love. And who is not brought to a standstill here? It is as though the natural course of existence were at a standstill while the divinity creatively intervenes. Oh, blessed capacity for wonder! Who does not give thanks for beholding the divinity here, that he may not like the tired warrior of reflection sink into melancholy? Who does not give thanks with joy over existence — not as though the child were a wonder of a child, an infant prodigy (vanity! vanity!), but it is a wonder, a miracle, that a child is born. He who will not perceive the miracle here must (in case he is not utterly shallow) say like Thales that for love of children he will have no children — the most melancholy saying (for therein is implied that it is a greater crime or misfortune to give life to a man than to deprive a man of life), or it is the most baneful self-contradiction.

So love is vindicated as a miracle, and everything pertaining to love pertains to the miracle. Love then is to be regarded simply as a given fact. Every attempt of reflection to explain it, however flattering it is or however offensive, however reckless or however dull, is as a matter of course condemned as false. — There remains the further question, how this

immediate experience (love) can find a corresponding expression in an immediacy which is attained through reflection. Here it is that the decisive battle is to be fought.

Now, however, I would call attention to another aspect of the matter. Love is commonly only too much extolled. Even a seducer has impudence enough to want to take part in it. But with this the instant or brief period of love is regarded as woman's culmination, and hence the thing to do is to let go of her. The objections then take another direction, and the gallant's flattering adoration of the sex ends with insult.

I was differently brought up in the Christian religion, and far as I am from being able to approve of the indecent attempts to emancipate woman, all pagan reminiscences seem to me equally foolish. My short and simple opinion is that woman is quite as good as man — and with that enough has been said. Every more prolix performance upon the theme of the difference between the sexes, and every deliberation as to which sex has the preeminence, is an idle intellectual occupation for the unemployed and for bachelors. One recognizes a well brought up child by the fact that he is delighted with what he gets, and so likewise one recognizes a well brought up husband by the fact that he is joyful and grateful for what providence has allotted him — in other words, he is in love. One sometimes hears a married man complain that marriage gives him so much to attend to; how much more then he must find to attend to if at the same time he is shameless enough to want to be merely his wife's critic and censor, who every other minute of the day torments her with his hollow pretentions, that she should smile thus, hold her head thus, curtsy thus, dress thus, pronounce her words thus, or else wants to be both husband and at the same time critic and censor. As a matrimonial critic I am a perfect tyro. I have had no frivolous preparatory studies of the foppish period, which sometimes are more poisonous than people think. In a certain sense the story of my love affair is

short: I was busy about my own affairs and attended to my studies; I have not sampled the girls at balls and promenades, in the theater and at concerts, I have not done it frivolously, neither have I done it with the stupid seriousness of a marriageable male who is pleased to think that it must be an extraordinary girl who is to be good enough for him. Being thus inexperienced, I learned to know her who now is mine; I never loved before, my prayer is that I may not love again later; but if for an instant I were to think what to me is unthinkable, that death might deprive me of her, that there might take place in me such an alteration that for a second time I should be consecrated as a husband, I am convinced that my marriage has not spoiled me or made me more apt to criticize, to sort and to sample. What wonder we hear so much foolish talk about love, since we hear so much talk about it — which in itself is an indication that reflection is everywhere forcing its way in to disturb the quiet and more modest life where love preferably makes its abode, because such a life in its modesty is so close to godly fear.

In view of all this I perceive clearly that the aesthetic critics will without more ado declare me incompetent to engage with them in such an argument, and all the more when I make no concealment of the fact that though I have been married eight years I do not yet know definitely, in the aesthetic sense, what my wife looks like. To love does not mean to exercise criticism, and marital fidelity does not consist in a detailed critique. This ignorance of mine, however, is not due entirely to my lack of culture, for I too can perceive the beautiful, but it is in this way I behold a picture, a statue, not a wife. In part I have her to thank for this, for if she had taken any sort of vain delight in being the object of a love-maker's critical adoration, who knows if I might not have become a love-maker, and ended as usual as a peevish critic and husband? I do not find myself in the least capable of moving easily and with the facility of routine in the employment of technical terms

which connoisseurs spout out so readily. I do not require this dexterity, I attend no banquets with the connoisseurs. To put it very mildly, such connoisseurs seem to me like the men who sit and exchange money in the court of the temple, and repulsive as it must be to the man who in an exalted mood would enter the temple to hear the clatter of coins, just so repulsive it is to hear the noise of words like slender, plump, buxom, etc. When I read these words in the writings of a primitive poet where they spring from the originality of feeling and the vernacular idiom I take delight in them, but I do not profane them, and as for my wife, I do not know to this day quite certainly whether she is slender. The joy I find in my love is not that of a haggler, nor is it the hot unhealthiness of a wily seducer. If with regard to her I were to express myself in such terms, I am convinced that I should fall into twaddle. If I have abstained from this hitherto, I presumably am saved for the remainder of my life; for the presence merely of a tiny baby makes love more shy than it naturally is. I have often thought of this, and hence I have always found it unseemly for an older man who has children to marry a very young girl.

Precisely because love is everything to me, all the outcome of criticism is nonsense. So if I were to extol the feminine sex, I would do it only humoristically; for all this slenderness and plumpness, and the eyebrow and the flash of the eye, do not constitute love, still less a marriage, and only in marriage does love find its true expression, apart from this it is seduction or coquetry.

There exists a small book by Hen. Cornel. Agrippa of Nettesheim: *De nobilitate et praecellentia foemenei sexus ejusdemque supra virilem eminentia*. In this little work the strangest things are said in praise of woman in the most naïve way. That the author has proved what he set out to prove is not exactly my opinion, although he writes in good faith and is also good-natured enough to believe that he has proved it; but on the other hand

I approve entirely of the verse with which the book concludes, deprecating all loquacious (*vaniloquax*) praise of man. When with complete and absolute conviction of the happiness of love and marriage one reads these naïve arguments, to everyone of which is attached a highly pathetic *ergo* or *quod erat demonstrandum,* whereas the real pathos is to be found in that conviction which requires no proof, the whole thing produces a purely humorous effect. I will explain this a little more precisely. Before the Twenty-eighth of May Society a speech was once delivered by a scientific young man who in his enthusiasm for the natural sciences was inclined to believe that every new discovery, and so in particular the latest invention, that of making soap from flint, brings God closer to us and convinces us of His goodness, wisdom, etc. If this speech is to be regarded as a serious attempt to get closer to God, it appears to me a perfectly wretched one. It is quite a different case, however, when an individual who is a millionaire in the matter of faith and "better" than the Bank of England, noticing that reflection shows symptoms of wanting to prove something with regard to this matter, were to prevent the production of this proof by making the assertion that now one could even wash one's hands with soap made of flint. He might conclude his speech somewhat in this fashion: "Look, now I am washing my hands; in case this proof is not convincing, I despair of being able to produce any." In the little book mentioned above the statement is made by way of proof that in the Hebrew tongue woman is called Eva (life), and man Adam (earth) — *ergo.* As a jest introduced in the course of an *altercatio* where everything is absolutely determined and attested by the seal of the notary public and of God such a thing may be capital. So again when this author produces as another proof the fact that when a woman falls into the water she floats on top of it, whereas a man, on the contrary, when he falls into the water, sinks — *ergo.* This proof may also be employed in

another way, for it helps in some measure to explain the fact that in the Middle Ages so many witches were burnt.

It is several years since I read that little book, but I got a lot of entertainment out of it. The drollest things are brought forward in the most naïve fashion from natural science and philology. Several of them have impressed themselves upon my memory, and while I never talk to my wife about her being slender, etc., which certainly would displease her and would be a flat failure on my part, yet sometimes, though I say it of myself, I am very proficient in such arguments and reflections as do give her pleasure, presumably because they prove nothing at all, and just for this reason are a proof that our marriage stands in need of no long-winded demonstration, but that we are happy.

Apropos of this, I have often wondered that no poet seriously tries to present a married couple engaged in conversation. If once in a while they are presented (and in this case they have to be a happy couple), they talk like a pair of lovers. Generally they are only subordinate characters, and so far along in life that they can serve as the father and mother of the lovers whom the poet prefers to present. If a marriage is depicted, it must at least be an unhappy one if it is to be taken into consideration. So different are these two things: love must be happy and be imperiled from without; marriage, to be poetic, must be imperiled from within. I regard this as a dolorous proof that marriage is very far from enjoying the appreciation it deserves, for it appears as though a pair of married people were not so poetic as a pair of lovers. Let the lovers talk with all the froth of love's passion, as young men and maidens like to do, but the married people are by no means a sorry lot. I take it that he is a sorry husband who does not become a humorist through his marriage, in the same sense that he is a sorry lover who does not become a poet; and every married man, I take it, becomes somewhat humorous, has a dash of it, just as every lover becomes

somewhat poetical. I appeal to my own case for evidence, not so much with reference to the poetic as to a sense of humor, a dash of it, which I owe solely to my marriage. In the case of love much of the erotic has an absolute significance; in marriage this absolute significance alternates with the humorous view of things, which is the poetic pronunciation of the quiet and contented security of married life. I will adduce an example, and I beg the reader to be humorous enough not to regard it as a proof of anything.

In company with my wife I made a little summer excursion in the southern part of Seeland. We journeyed just as we pleased, and as my wife wished to get a notion of what certain people call loitering along the highways, we put up at all sorts of taverns, sometimes spending the night in one of them, but above all giving ourselves plenty of time. In the taverns one had opportunity to take a look about. Now it happened strangely enough that in five taverns in succession we found on the wall an advertisement which thus pursued us so steadily that we were unable to ignore it. The notice was to the following effect: an anxious paterfamilias expressed in the most complimentary terms his thanks to an experienced and skilful practitioner who with the hand of an artist had easily and without any pain relieved the paterfamilias and his entire family of several bad corns and thus restored them to social life. The personnel of the family was specified, and particularly a daughter, who, like an Antigone, since she belonged to this unfortunate family, was not exempt from the family taint. After we had read this advertisement at three stopping-places it is no wonder that it became a subject of conversation. I expressed the opinion that it was tactless of the paterfamilias to tell on the young girl, for even if it was notorious that she had been entirely healed, it might make a suitor hesitate, which was not at all necessary, for corns might be reckoned among the infirmities one could learn to know after the wedding. I beg a poet to tell me whether the theme of this conversation (which I perhaps was not equal

to carrying out as humorously as one might) is not humorous; but I would ask him further whether it is not certain that only in the mouth of a husband such a theme is proper. A lover would feel hurt, because this bad corn, even when it is extracted, has an exceedingly disturbing effect upon an aesthetic fanciful intuition of the beautiful. Such a jest in the mouth of a lover would surely be unpardonable. Now even though my conversation, by reason of my lowly talent, was a simple everyday chat, I know all the same that it amused my wife, it amused her that such a casual circumstance was treated as an aesthetic absolute, as e.g. in the query whether this might not be an adequate ground for divorce, etc. And sometimes when in my drawing room there is carried on by a connoisseur or by an over-shrewd little miss a grandiloquent discourse about love and slenderness, and about the importance of the lovers learning to know one another thoroughly, so that in choosing one can be sure of choosing a faultless mate, then I get my word in, playing really into my wife's hand, and I say, "Yes, that is the difficulty, it is very difficult — now in the case of corns, how is anybody to be sure whether one has them, or has had them, or whether one may not get them?"

But enough of this. Humor finds its support in the security of marriage, which, being founded upon the experience of living together, has not the uneasiness of love's first bliss, though its bliss is far from being less. And now when I as a husband, a husband for eight years, rest my head upon her shoulder, I am not a critic that admires or misses some earthly beauty, neither am I an enthusiastic youth that celebrates her bust in song, yet all the same I am moved just as profoundly as the first time. For I know what I knew and what I convince myself of again and again, that in this breast of my wife there beats a heart, quiet and lowly, but steady and even; I know that it beats for me and my welfare and for what pertains to us both; I know that its quiet, tender movement is uninterrupted, while I, alas, am busy with my affairs, while I, alas, am distracted by the multifarious; I know that at

whatever hour and under whatever conditions I have recourse to her it has not ceased to beat for me. And I am a believer: as the lover believes that his lady is life to him, so in a spiritual sense I believe, what also is to be found in that little book, that, as scientists teach, the mother's milk is a saving remedy for one who is sick unto death, I believe that this tenderness which struggles unceasingly to find an expression more and more heart-felt, I believe that this tenderness which was her rich dowry as a bride, I believe that it bears interest abundantly, I believe that it will double itself if I do not dissipate her fortune; I believe that this tender glance, if I were sick, sick unto death, in case it rested upon me — ah, as if she herself, not I, were the dying warrior — I believe that it would recall me to life, in case God in heaven will not exercise His power, and if God will exercise His power, then I believe that this tenderness will bind me again to life as a vision which visits her, as a dead man over whom death cannot prevail, until again we are united. But until then, until that time when God exercises His power, I believe that by means of her I imbibe peace and contentment in my life and many a time am saved from the death of despondency and the sore travail of vexation of spirit.

So does every husband talk, and better than this insofar as he is a better husband, better insofar as he is a more talented one. He is not like the youthful lover, his expression has not the passion of the instant — and what an offense it would be in the flash of a passionate instant to want to express thanks for such a love. He is like that honest accountant who in his time nearly became an object of suspicion; for when by reason of a misapprehension the strict auditor came to his door and demanded to see his account-books, he replied, "I have none. I keep the accounts in my head." How suspicious! But honor to the old man's head, his accounts were all right! A married man expresses himself perhaps even a bit humoristically when he talks to his wife about all he owes her; but this humor, this offhand

way of giving thanks, this way of making a receipt without paper but in the ledger of remembrance, is a sure proof that his accounting is reliable and that his marriage possesses in abundance the daily bread of sound assurance.

By this I have already indicated in what direction I am disposed to seek womanly beauty. Alas, even honest men have helped to give currency to the tragic mistake which reckless young girls accept, unfortunately, with only too much eagerness, without reflecting that it means despair: that woman's only beauty is the first beauty of youth, that she blooms but once, that this instant is the season of love, that one loves but once. That one loves but once is true, but woman's beauty increases with the years, and so far is it from falling off that there is about the first beauty something dubious in comparison with the subsequent beauty. Who, unless it were a madman, has ever beheld a young girl without a certain sense of sadness, because the fragility of life is here made evident in terms of the strongest contrast — vanity as fleeting as a dream, beauty as fair as a dream. But fair as the first beauty is, it is nevertheless not the truth, it is a husk, a mantle, out of which, only in the course of years, the true beauty develops before the husband's grateful eyes.

Contemplate on the other hand the old woman. Thou dost not grasp after her involuntarily, for this is not the fleeting beauty which hastens past like a dream. No, be seated at her side, regard her more closely: she belongs completely to this world by reason of her motherly, solicitous care; her busy time is over, and only solicitude itself remains, with which she hovers like the angels over the Arc of the Covenant. Truly if here thou dost not sense what reality a woman possesses, thou art and wilt ever remain a critic, a reviewer, a connoisseur perhaps, i.e. a despairing man who rushes into the midst of raging despair, shouting, "Let us love today, for tomorrow it will be no more." Not that we shall be no more — that would be sad; but that

love will be no more — that is repulsive. So take a little time, sit down beside her. This is not the pleasant fruit of desire. Be on thy guard against every presumptuous thought or against wanting to use the technical terms of the connoisseurs. In case this desire effervesces within thee, sit thou here that thou mayest be tranquillized. This is not the froth of the instant. Wouldst thou in her presence venture to abandon thyself to that, or wouldst thou offer her thine arm for a waltz? So perhaps thou dost prefer to avoid her company — ah, even if the young generation which surrounds her were discourteous enough (so thinks the gentleman of fashion, maybe, who imagines she is in need of his conversation), no, rather, if the young people were gone so astray as to let her sit alone, she feels no lack of their company, feels no sting of offense, she is reconciled with life, and shouldst thou again feel a need of the reconciling word, need of forgetting the dissonances of life, have recourse to her, sit worthily by the worthy — and which then is the most beautiful: the mother who brings to birth by the force of nature, or the decrepit old woman who brings thee to birth again by her solicitous care? Or if thou art not so sore distressed by the turmoil of the world, sit by her side none the less, the worthy beside the worthy; her life too is not devoid of melody, this old age too is non sine cithara, and nothing that has been experienced is forgotten, it is all to be heard from the various epochs of life sonorously mingling when this voice touches the strings of recollection. For behold she has attained the solution of life which is called dissolution, yea, she herself is the solution, audibly and visibly. Never does a man's life finish thus, his accounts are commonly more complicated; but a house-mother has only the little happenings, the daily sufferings and the daily joys, but hence also this happiness. For if a young girl is happy, an old woman is happier still. Tell me then, which is the more beautiful: a young girl with her happiness, or an old woman who completes a divine task, who

releases (loser op*)* the distressed and for the joyful is the best eulogy upon life by being life's beautiful solution (*Oplosning*)?

Now I leave the old woman, whose company, however, I certainly do not shun. I go backward in time, rejoicing that by God's help I can hope that a good share of my life is before me, but without anything of the cowardice which fears to grow older or fears this for the wife's sake, for indeed my assumption is that woman becomes more beautiful with the years. In my eyes my wife is already far more beautiful than as a young girl. After all, a young girl is a phantom, one scarcely knows whether she belongs to reality or is a vision. And is this to be the loftiest attainment? Yes, let phantoms believe it. On the other hand, as a mother she belongs completely to reality, and mother-love is not like the yearnings and forebodings of youth but is an inexhaustible well-spring of hearty sympathy. Neither is it true that all this was present as a possibility in the young girl. Even if this were so, a possibility is after all less than an actuality. But it is not so. No more than the mother's milk is present in the young girl's breast is this hearty sympathy there. This is a metamorphosis which has no analogy in man. If one can say jestingly that a man is not full-grown until he has his wisdom teeth, one can say seriously that a woman's development is only complete when she is a mother, for only then does she exist in all her beauty and in the beauty of reality. So let that rhapsodical, light, roguish, happy girl bound away over the meadows, making fun of everyone who tries to catch her. Oh, yes, I too rejoice to behold it — but now, now she is caught, imprisoned — it is not I assuredly that caught her (what nonsense and vain foolishness!), assuredly it is not I that hold her imprisoned (how frail a prison!); no, she has imprisoned herself, and she sits imprisoned beside the cradle; imprisoned, and yet she is in possession of her full liberty, a boundless liberty by which she binds herself to the child. I am sure she would be willing to die in her nest.

Here only a word in passing. To speak as harmlessly about the matter as possible, I assume that it was the mother's partiality for the child which made the husband a little jealous. Oh, well, good Lord, this jealousy soon vanishes. So now I have mentioned the word jealousy. It is a dark passion, "a monster which defiles the meat it feeds on." Anger also is dark passion, but it does not follow from this that there cannot be such a thing as noble anger. Just so it is with jealousy: in a noble love there is also a justifiable indignation, which truly is both distressed and offended, and above all is a normal condition of the soul, if the dreadful thing has come to pass. I find nothing blameworthy in it; on the contrary, I require of a husband that in this way his soul shall pay the last honors to her who offended him, and to her to whom he accorded, if one will, such immense importance that she is able to offend him. I regard that condition of the soul as love's ethical sorrow over a deceased one. On the other hand, I know that there are demoniac powers in life. I know that there is an unpraiseworthy intrepidity which, being tormented by an evil spirit, would be sheer spirit, and also would like to have the power to remain in a condition quite as objectionable as raging jealousy, power to remain cold, thoroughly iced by the cold passion of wit. For there is a hell in which the heat scorches all life, but there is also a hell in which the cold kills all life.

But I am not jealous even of the mother. A woman's life as mother is a reality so infinitely rich in variety that my love has enough to do day by day in discovering something new. Woman as a mother is never in a situation which might be called the most beautiful or the most interesting; she is always in an interesting situation, and mother-love is soft as pure gold, and malleable in every sense, and yet whole. And the husband's joy is new every day, it is not consumed even though he consumes it, for it is like the food of Valhalla, and even though he does not live upon it, it is certain none the less that he does not live upon bread alone, but also upon the

complacent admiration with which he observes the mother's doings — in his own house he has *panis et circenses.*

And how manifold the collisions to which mother-love is exposed, and how beautiful the mother is when her self-denying, self-sacrificing love comes through the trials victoriously! I am not speaking here of what is notorious, conceded, that the mother sacrifices her life for the child. That sounds so lofty, so sentimental, and does not bear the genuine stamp of marriage. It can as well be seen in small things, and appears just as great, just as lovely. When I see it I wonder, and one sees it not rarely even where one would least expect to see it, on the street, for example. Recently I was going along at my businesslike pace from one end of the town to the Court House where I was to pronounce a judicial sentence. It was about half-past one o'clock. Inadvertently my eyes lighted upon a scene on the other side of the street. It was a young mother taking a walk and holding a small son by the hand. This young person was something like two and a half years old. The mother's dress and her appearance seemed to indicate that she belonged even to the more select class, and hence I was surprised at seeing her unaccompanied by either a manservant or a maid. I was soon busy guessing that perhaps her carriage was waiting in another street, or before one of the nearer houses, or perhaps she had to walk only a few paces from the house where she dwelt, or she was... etc. Here I cut my guesses short, and I hope the reader will thank me for setting about so seriously to find earnest and thorough solutions. But after all the situation was rather surprising. The boy was a pretty child. He inquired curiously about everything, came to a stop and looked and inquired, "What is that?" I hastily put on my glasses in order to see more clearly and enjoy more thoroughly the lovable manner, the tender motherliness, with which she entered into everything, the loving joy with which she contemplated the little darling. The boy's questions puzzled her — perhaps no one had ever told her what a wise man once said,

that to talk with children is a tentamen rigorosum, perhaps the circle to which she seemed to belong still supposed that this was no art — what a desperate embarrassment then to be put in a tight place by the little urchin, as also by the loudness of his question, which invited the attention of the passers-by, the scene being enacted in a street so frequented as the Ostergade. Embarrassment! — nothing of the sort could I discover; motherly joy was plainly written upon her countenance, and the situation did not disturb it. Suddenly the little one stood still and demanded to be carried. This was evidently contrary to the understanding they started out with, a breach of their agreement, for otherwise a nursemaid would have been brought with them. Here was a difficult situation — yet not for her. With the most lovable air in the world she took him in her arms and went straight on without turning into a side street to avoid observation. In my eyes this was as beautiful and solemn as a procession, and I piously made after them. One and another turned to look, she noticed nothing, did not hasten her steps, being unalterably absorbed in her motherly happiness. I have sat as examining magistrate on commissions of inquiry and thereby acquired a certain expertness in observing faces, but on pain of losing my office I declare that there was not a trace of any awkward constraint, or of any restrained anger, or of any postponed impatience; there was no effort to let the countenance express any reflection upon the well-nigh ludicrous situation. As she would walk in her own room with the little one in her arms, so she walked along the Ostergade. Mother-love is willing to sacrifice life for the child; in this collision it appears to me equally beautiful. Was the little one in the wrong, was he perhaps quite able to walk, was it naughtiness on his part — it will not be held up against him when he gets home. And in a different case, what would have made the difference? What else but that the mother had reflected upon herself? There are perhaps few collisions in which even tender parents more readily make a mistake than

when the whole thing is an insignificance, but this little insignificance puts them to embarrassment. The child has perhaps a slightly awkward manner, at which one commonly laughs in the home, and the child has not the least idea that it is at fault; then there is a guest present, and the vain mother would like a little flattery, and behold, the child makes his bow a bit awkwardly, and the mother is angry — not at a thing of any importance, but the reflection upon herself makes this unimportant thing important. Oh, yes, if the little boy had fallen, had bumped his head, or had perhaps come too close to a carriage, had it been a question of saving the child with danger to one's life, I should indeed have had a sight of motherliness, but this quiet expression of it appears to me equally beautiful.

In its everyday manifestations mother-love is just as beautiful as on the most critical occasions, and really it is in its everyday use that it is essentially beautiful, because there it is in its element; because there, without receiving any propulsion or any increment of strength from external catastrophes, it is set in motion by itself alone, is nourished by itself, and propels itself by its own primitive instinct; unassuming as it is, it is always prompt to do its lovable work. Unhappy the man who has to go out into the world to seek the flower we call thousand-joys, and yet finds it not. Unhappy the man who has at the most a notion that his neighbor cultivates it. Happy the husband if he knows properly how to rejoice in his thousand-joys. If he discovers this flower outside his own domain, this flower which — unlike the gorgeous flower that has the remarkable trait of blooming but once in a hundred years, has the still more remarkable trait of blooming every day and not even closing at night — then he has joy in relating at home what he has seen abroad. Yesterday I related to my wife a little happening which attracted my attention to such a degree that it made me an inattentive and distracted hearer of the sermon, which usually I am not. Perhaps the young mother who was responsible for my distraction did

wrong in taking the little child with her to church. Perhaps — but for this I can forgive her, for this surely was because she would not commit the child to a nursemaid in her absence. I base this conclusion upon the fact that she was a mother who goes to church, not a lady who pays a formal visit there. Do not misunderstand me, as though the thing were decided by the length of time one remains in church. Far from it. I believe rather that a poor servant-girl who can hardly get away from the house and with all her haste does not succeed in getting to church any earlier than just in time to hear the priest say Amen, I believe that she can bring home a blessing from her church-going; but a person who in other respects has plenty of time for every sort of thing in life might after all find time to go to church properly. Our churchgoer came accordingly in very good time, and along with her came her little restlessness; yet I am convinced that the sermon and the whole service had no auditor more devout than she. She was shut into the pew, and the irregular member of the congregation was put up on the seat, presumably in the hope that he would sit like a regular member. This pretention, however, seemed not to have occurred to the little one. The mother bowed her head, holding her handkerchief before her eyes while she prayed. Long before she looked up again the little one had jumped down and begun to crawl about in the pew. She continued in prayer, entirely undisturbed. When she had finished her prayer she set him up again on the seat and spoke to him, presumably a few words of admonition. The service began, but the game had begun before the service, and the little one seemed on his way to find pleasure in this up-and-down and down-and-up again. Till now he had been seated at the right of his mother and had another lady on his right, while the mother sat at the end of the pew. Now there was a change of place. First it was ascertained that the door was firmly shut, then the mother moved up and shared fairly with him, so that he had the corner of the pew at his disposition. He made no noise, but like a child that is

accustomed to shift for himself he got hold of his mother's parasol as a plaything, and only as he would climb farther along in the pew did he find his way blocked. The mother remained absorbed in her devotions; only when the priest paused did she look down lovingly at the little one in the underworld. With a countenance radiant with joy in the child she turned her glance up again to the priest and now listened to the discourse with wholehearted devotion. To be able to divide her interest so equally, to have joy in the child even when he disturbed her, or at least seemed as if he would disturb her, or at least was somehow in the way, to make no foolish demands upon the child — for many parents require almost more devotion of such a small being than of themselves, and discompose the child and themselves by persisting in scolding him and correcting him and putting him in his place — to be able to divide her interests so equally that at the same time with undivided soul she is absorbed in devotion, this too is a beautiful expression of motherliness. Insignificant — oh, yes, but it is precisely in the insignificant situations that motherliness is essentially beautiful.

However, it is only the married man who has the open eye for the beautiful achievements of motherliness; he has at the same time the genuine sympathy which is fashioned out of seriousness in appreciating the infinite significance of the task, and of joy in existence which prompts him to make discoveries, though the joy does not on this account break out exactly in words and jubilation. Or might it be jealousy alone and evil passions which keep a husband clear-sighted and vigilant; might not faithful love be able to do the same, yea, be able to keep him vigilant longer? Or did not the wise virgins keep vigilant longer than the foolish ones? In this respect a married man is well described in a good sense by the terms with which Shakespeare describes a deceiver: "a finder-out of occasions, that has an eye can stamp counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never presents itself" — that

is to say, the married man does this with the quiet joy which shows that he does not pretend to be an adept, and neither does he coin falsely, and he rarely is in the situation of not finding such advantages.

Woman as a bride is more beautiful than as a young girl, as a mother she is more beautiful than as a bride, as wife and mother she is a good word spoken in due season, and with the years she becomes more beautiful. The beauty of the young girl is evident to many, it is more abstract, more extensive. Hence they flock around her, the pure and the impure. Then the deity brings him who is her lover. He sees indeed her beauty, for one loves the beautiful, and that is to be understood as identical with this, that loving is seeing the beautiful. Thus it is that the beautiful passes unnoticed under the nose of reflection. From now on her beauty becomes more intensive and concrete. The wife has no flock of adorers, she is not even beautiful, she is only beautiful in her husband's eyes. In the degree that this beauty becomes more and more concrete, she becomes less and less easy to appraise by the ordinary standards of gauging and sorting. Is she for this reason less beautiful? Is an author less rich in thought for the reason that an ordinary perusal of him discovers nothing, whereas a reader who has made him his sole study discovers greater and greater riches? Is it a perfection in a human work of art that it makes the best showing at a distance? Is it an imperfection in the flower of the field, as in all of the works of God, that for microscopic observation it becomes finer and finer, more and more delicate, more and more charming?

But if a wife and mother is so beautiful in her happiness, or rather if to him to whom she pertains she is a benediction, in her misfortune and in the day of need she is again more beautiful than the young girl. Let her child die, and then behold the sorrowing mother. There is surely no one who greets the babe on its arrival with such joy as the mother, but neither is there any that can sorrow so when again death comes to fetch it away. But a

sorrow which is precisely as ideal as it is real is the most poetic sorrow. — Or a husband dies. He leaves nothing behind him, so it is said, except a sorrowing wife. It seems to me he leaves behind him endless wealth. Let a young girl lose her lover, let her sorrow be never so deep, let her preserve his memory, her sorrow nevertheless is abstract like her recollection; to perform that daily requiem which is the vocation of the sorrowing wife she lacks the consecration and the epic prerequisites. Verily I have no desire to leave behind me a great and celebrated name, if it is so to be, if in death which is the final thing I must take the final step of seeking separation from her whom I love, my wife, my happiness here upon earth; yet in case I leave her behind me sorrowing, I have left indeed what I shall sorely miss, yea, I have left what last of all I would do without, but I also leave behind what I should be reluctant to do without, namely, a memory which better than the song of the poet or the defiant immortality of monumental bronze many a time and in many a way will preserve a remembrance of me, will take of its own and give it unto me. — Finally let the wife be tried by the hardest fate, let her be unhappily married. What is the brief suffering of the deceived maiden in contrast with this daily torture? What is the pith of her sorrow compared with the wretchedness which laments with a thousand tongues, this misery which none can bear to look upon, this slow agony which none can follow? And presumably it is because none can follow it that one forgets how beautiful, how far more poetic, here again the wife is than the young girl. Great is Desdemona by reason of her “sublime life”; one admires her for this, and yet she is greater by reason of the angelic patience which, if it were to be described, would fill more books than the greatest library contains, although it is of no avail to fill up the bottomless abyss of jealousy, where it disappears as nothing, yet almost incites the hunger of the passion.

But woman is the weaker sex. This remark seems to come rather mal à propos in the present context, for it is hardly thus she has shown herself. In fact a silken cord may be just as strong as an iron chain, and indeed the chain which bound the Fenris Wolf was invisible, was something which had no existence at all. And what if it should be so also in the case of woman's weakness, that it is an invisible power which expresses its strength by weakness? If the objectors must be allowed to use this phrase, "the weaker sex," well, let them do so then, after all they have common usage on their side. One must always beware, however, of concluding prematurely that individual instances constitute the rule. Accordingly I do not mean to deny that it may quite well be that a young girl looks queer — and even comic, if one is depraved enough to laugh — when she is thrown into the utmost dismay at her crisis, into a whirlwind which a man can hardly stand up against to keep her from being whirled away. But who says that she must be thrown into that peril? The same girl, quietly, carefully and lovingly treated, would perhaps have become a lovable being as mother and wife. At such things one ought not to laugh, for there is something tragic in seeing the storm tear away the peaceful enclosure where it might have been delicious to dwell in security. Woman should not be so strong that the distress of dismay might perhaps be on the side of the man. If he stands firm, woman by his side stands as firm as the man, and in union they both stand more firmly than either of them alone.

The trouble with this objection is that those who talk thus about woman consider her only aesthetically. This again is the same old gallant and insolent, tickling and insulting talk about her having only one instant in her life, or a brief period, which is the first awakening of adolescence. But he who rightly would talk about her strength or weakness must see her when she stands fully armed, and that is as wife and mother. Severe trials of strength, moreover, are not to be required of her, nor attempted by her, and

if one persists in talking about strength, the first condition or the essential form of all strength is endurance. In this respect man perhaps cannot hold his own with her. Besides, how much force is required for every feigned movement! But what is devotion but a concealed expenditure of force, an expenditure of force which is expressed by its opposite, by weakness? For example, good taste and carefulness about one's toilet may express itself by an effect of carelessness, which however is not the carelessness which every baker's boy understands. Or, for example, the ripe intellectual fruit produced by much effort has a simplicity, which is not however that which every seminarist admires in his simplicity. If I think of two actors, one of whom plays the part of Don Juan and the other that of the Commandant, in the scene where the Commandant holds the other's hand in his while Don Juan tries desperately to wrest it away, I ask which of them employs the more force. Don Juan is the passive sufferer, the Commandant stands calmly with his hand outstretched. Yet I back Don Juan. If the actor who plays the part of Don Juan were to employ even a half of his force, he would make the Commandant totter; if on the other hand he did not twist and writhe, he would spoil the effect. What then does he do? He employs one half of his force to express his pain, the other half he employs to support the Commandant, and whereas he seems with all his force to wish to wrest himself free from the Commandant's grasp, he holds on to the Commandant lest he totter. So it is in reality (for this is only a foolish tale), so it is in the case of the wife. She loves the husband so dearly that she always wants him to be the master, and this is the reason why he looks as if he were so strong and she so weak, because she employs her strength to support him, employs it in the form of devotion and subjection. Oh, marvellous weakness! Though the gallery believes that the Commandant has the superior force, though the profane extol man's strength and abuse it to humiliate woman, the married man has a different understanding of the

situation, and the deceived is wiser than the not-deceived, the deceived is justified rather than the not-deceived.

People measure strength, moreover, in various ways. When Holger Danske squeezed the sweat out of an iron gauntlet, that was strength; but if one had put a sparrow in his hand, I am afraid he would not have been strong enough to take hold of it rightly. I will mention the highest instance. God's omnipotence shows itself great in having created all things, but does it not show itself equally great in the almighty moderation which can permit a blade of grass to grow in its season? To woman the less important tasks are assigned, which demand all the more strength because they are less important. She chooses her task, chooses it joyfully, and finds joy at the same time in endowing man constantly with the more obvious strength. For my part, I believe that my wife can perform wonders, and the greatest deeds I read about I can understand better than that delicate embroidery of hers with which she clothes and beautifies my earthly existence.

When one has got it firmly fixed in his head that woman is the weaker sex, by which the generality of *chicaneurs* mean more precisely that she has a first instant of youth when indeed she exhausts and surpasses all praise, and that therewith it is over, that her strength was an illusion, and that the only real force she retains is that of the scream — why then of course one can make queer things out of it. Jean Paul says somewhere, "To such secants, cosecants, tangents and cotangents, everything appears eccentric, especially the center." Just because marriage is the central thing, woman must be viewed in relation to that, as man also ought to be, and all talk and reflection about each sex for itself is confused, and profane, for what God has joined together, what existence has designed the one for the other, thought also should think together. When a male takes it into his head to keep them apart, it doubtless seems to him to recoil upon woman, whereas in fact he himself becomes quite as ludicrous, a male who with a superior

air would ignore a relationship to which existence has bound him no less than woman.

If this comes to pass, the “pepper-prentice” (for however much one may have tried his hand in what one is pleased to call the erotic, even if one were a scoundrel or, what one more frequently encounters, a windbag, we are accustomed to call him in our language a pepper-prentice) — the pepper-prentice then makes an appeal to the ethical categories. But this can be regarded at the most as a crotchet; for to employ ethical categories in order to offend woman, or with the wish to offend, is not exactly the sign of an ethical character. Such jumbling together of paganism, which reduces woman platonically to an incomplete form, and Christianity, which vindicates her ethical claim, I have never seen explicitly carried out. So it must be a confused brain in which such a conceit could become so self-important as to wish to be given a more explicit expression.

On the other hand, the objections raised against woman assume an aspect of profound irony, which is not without a tragic and comic effect when it is set forth with a certain good humor, yes, even with sympathy for the sad fate which is supposed to reduce her to sheer illusion. It sticks to the assumption that she is the weaker sex. The tragedy lies in the fact that this is concealed from her by illusion, and outwardly concealed from her by man’s gallantry. It is as if the whole of existence were playing blindman’s buff with her. Here is a fit task for irony. What a pity the whole thing is a fiction. The highest things are now affirmed of woman with the most flattering phrases, up to — yea, far beyond — the bounds of the fantastic. Everything great in life is due to her. In this poetry and gallantry are unanimous, and irony is of course the most gallant of all, for gallantry is the mother tongue of irony, and it is never so gallant as when it regards the whole thing as a humbug. Woman’s existence in the world becomes a mock procession of fools in motley, and irony acts as gallantry’s master of ceremonies. The

procession reminds one of the crazy schoolmaster in one of Hoffmann’s tales, who holding a ruler as his scepter, and bowing graciously to right and left, announces that his general has now returned home after a victory over the Langobards, whereupon he takes a couple of cloves from his waistcoat pocket and hands them to one of the persons present with these words, “Disdain not this slight token of my grace.” Irony prostrates itself to the earth and does obeisance with the most submissive air.

The good thing about this objection is that it bears so clearly the stamp of fiction that it cannot offend even the weakest person. On the contrary it is entertaining, even amusing, and one can abandon oneself to it without scruple, unless maybe a little scruple is suggested by observing that it is presented in all seriousness. If the objection makes an attempt to want to explain something in human existence, one can reduce it in a trice to its most general expression, namely, that marriage or any positive relation to woman is an impediment, that she attains her highest reality in unhappy love, and that here her significance is so dubious that she signifies nothing positive, but negatively is an occasion for awakening the unhappy lover’s ideality. Thus the objection is reduced to its briefest expression, and thereby also it is reduced *in absurdum* — just as the objection itself makes as if it would let the whole of existence take that same path. But to make the whole content of life so compendious denotes in reality the haste of the devil, the swiftness of a Caesar — not in conquering but in losing. Lightenberg says somewhere that there are some reviewers who with a single stroke of the pen are well beyond the bounds of sound reason; and so also such a hasty thinker seems as if he didn’t take the time even to begin the clause which states the conclusion of his premise. What Augustine said about the celibate life, that by its aid *multo citius civitas dei compleretur et accelerarетur terminus seculi,* such a thinker seems to take seriously, but as in jest; for a religious background such as Augustine has one cannot expect from such an

objection. But as a worldly view of life it really is “in haste” (as a woman commonly says of her letter), and it smacks of the defect commonly ascribed to a woman’s letter, that it consists of... postscripts. With Hamann one may aptly shout “Bah!” at this *festinator* (who of course regards a married man as a dawdler) — if only there is time to shout, and the man is not already far away, “so that barely are his coattails left behind in existence.”

I return to the subject of love. It stands intact, no thought approaches it, it is the miraculous. The resolution of marriage is so far from wanting to subvert it that on the contrary it presupposes it. But love is no marriage, neither is a resolution alone a marriage. Someone may think then that it is due to the wretched imperfection of life and existence that love alone cannot penetrate so as to force its way through and must therefore accept the convoy of marriage. Far from it. The very reverse is true. Love penetrates the whole of life, and it does this in marriage. It is an insult to love not to let marriage join in, as though love were something so “immediate” that it could not be made taut by a resolution. On the other hand, it is no insult to a genius if we say of him that in proportion to the immediacy of his genius he possesses an equally highborn power of resolution, and that as debtor to himself he assumes the obligations of his talents. It would be an insult to him if one were to say that he is lacking in resolution or that his resolution is not proportionate to his genius. The meaning of this is not that resolution should little by little come to evidence as genius diminishes, so that at last he would be re-clothed with resolution and be a different man from what he was in the time of his genius. On the contrary, the beautiful meaning of it is that resolution is contemporary with genius and in its way is just as great, so that he who by grace received the gift of immediacy has had himself consecrated for it by resolution — and this then is the beautiful meaning of marriage.

It is also easier to demonstrate this in the case of marriage than in the case of genius, because love is itself a later immediacy which enters upon the scene at a time when the will ought to be sufficiently developed to form a resolution as decisive as love understood as immediacy is decisive. So understood, marriage is the deepest, highest and most beautiful expression of love. Love is the gift of the Deity, but in the resolution of marriage the lover makes himself worthy to receive it. To allow the resolution to be lacking, though life were never so paradisiacal, is unseemly, just as unseemly in a spiritual respect as it is for half-grown youths to want to get married.

I shall approach this same subject again and explore it further, but at this point it would perhaps be best to look around a bit, pausing for an instant to consider love at its critical moment. What is here pointed out in the realm of experience should not, of course, and cannot, of course, serve to disparage love, but only to illuminate it. There has always been a great run on love, and as little as "the nannygoat grows weary of nibbling the green shoots" do certain people grow weary of seeking *(sit venia verbo*) and wishing for the miracle of love. But just here is the difficulty, here it is that the devil sows evil seed while the lovers are not thinking of it. Even the seducer allows love to stand as a thing he cannot bestow upon himself (and it is only very young apprentices and Münchausens who talk about making conquests), but the demoniacal spirit within him causes him with demoniacal resolution to resolve to make the enjoyment as short, and in this way, so he thinks, as intense as possible. By reason of this demoniacal resolution the seducer is actually great in an evil sense, and without this resolution he is not actually a seducer. He may for all that be harmful enough, and his life may be thoroughly ruined, even though it is more innocent than that of a real seducer, or acquires a more innocent appearance because the oblivion of time comes in between. Such a man insults love; he is not evil enough to

form a demoniacal resolution, but neither is he good enough to form the good resolution — to express the case precisely, he is not good enough to be a husband in the noble sense in which I use that word, in the noble sense that a man is a husband only when he is worthy to receive the gift of the Deity.

If I must mention an example of the misapprehension of love, I will mention Goethe, that is, Goethe as he has represented himself in Aus meinem Leben. His personal life is another matter, I refrain from passing any judgment; as for his poetic writings, I do not ascribe to myself sufficient aesthetic culture to appraise them, but there are certain things I can well understand, just as well as a child can, and there is one thing marriage does not understand, even though, as was observed, it is mitigated by jest; marriage does not understand jest, and in addition to the bad resolution of the seducer there is also another opposite to the good resolution, namely, flight and evasion.

In *Aus meinem Leben* there is depicted a being who is not a seducer, he is too chivalrous for that, although this chivalry, so far as concerns *esprit* (ethically understood), is lower than that of the seducer, since it lacks demoniacal resolution, which also is ethical — that is, ethically bad. Such a being, however, finds forgiveness in this world more easily, too easily indeed, for he is really in love — but then by and by this glow cools, he has made a mistake, he withdraws "in a courteous manner," and half a year later he knows how to give reasons, good reasons, to prove that the breach and withdrawal were sensible and almost praiseworthy: after all it was too petty a thing, a little village belle; there was too much passion, that's a thing that doesn't last indefinitely, etc., etc.

.. for this sort of fudge can be drawn out as far as you like. By the aid of the half-year and by the aid of the theory of perspective the *factum* of love has become an accident (this is not only an impiety towards love but a fraud

against the ethical and a satire upon oneself) from which one has been lucky to make one's escape. Everything becomes confused before my eyes the moment I reflect that such an existence is supposed to be a poetic life. I feel as if I were sitting in the Court of Conciliation, remote from the hardiness of immediacy and remote from the magnanimity of resolution, remote from love's heaven and remote from resolution's judgment day — as if I were sitting in the Court of Conciliation, surrounded by Philistines and hearing a talented solicitor defending shady conduct with a certain poetic inventiveness. For in case the solicitor himself [like Goethe] were the hero of these vulgar love affairs, one must surely lose patience, ethically speaking. That these are vulgar affairs is not at all the fault of the individuals who played the feminine rôle (all honor to Goethe's presentation of the case, be it *Dichtung* or *Wahrheit*), for so far as I recall there is no reason to suppose that a single one of them gave up tragedy for vaudeville. For though a little village belle has been so unfortunate as to misunderstand his Excellency, if only she remains true to herself, I know from my childhood's schooling (and I still know no better) that she advances from the idyl to the tragedy. On the other hand, in case his Excellency has been so unfortunate as to misunderstand himself, and furthermore is extremely unfortunate in the way he takes to make it all right again, I know from my childhood's schooling (and I still know no better) that he has left tragedy and the drama behind him and has settled down in vaudeville.

Time has a strange power. In case that poetic figure in *Aus meinem Leben* had recognized beforehand that after all the thing would be over before very long, or having no presentiment of this in advance and having no other way of making it all right again, he had at least been ethical enough to conceive of himself as a scoundrel, then he would have been denounced as a seducer, and the alarm bells would have been rung whenever he approached a village — but now, now he is a knight. Well, not

quite a knight, but after all we are not living in the age of chivalry, yet he is something like a knight... a dignitary, to whom in an absolute sense applies *aut Caesar aut nihil.* Some time passes, he himself sorrows also over the broken relationship, which, however, with every possible precaution he would prevent from being in any serious way regarded in the character of a breach; he sorrows a little over the poor girl, it is not sham, he really sorrows — yes, really! That however is carrying courtesy rather too far, it is a sympathy and condolence which well may have the effect of only increasing the pain. The breach itself, or to express it more sharply and exactly, the courteous and amicable agreement upon a separation, is precisely the most offensive part of the thing; this last fraud which will not regard any girl whatsoever to whom a man has contracted obligations as a creditor who cannot be put off, this fraud that a bankrupt will not confess his full liability, is really the most revolting part of it, and yet it is by this courtesy he purchased the world's forgiveness. Oh, the sorrowing lover! He does not sorrow over his own instability, over this flare-up, over this promissory note which is valid in the spiritual world, over his sins: such a sorrow as this that poetic figure would presumably call melancholy, for he expressly deplores the fact that the age, and he along with it, had become melancholy by reading English authors, mentioning Young, for example. Yes, why not? When one is so constructed, one may become melancholy at hearing a sermon, if only it has pith, as Young has. But Young is far from being melancholy.

Such an existence, which in an essential sense is hardly a paradigm, may nevertheless in an improper sense assume a paradigmatic character, or be paradigmatic for the casual fact that it represents an irregular declension, in accordance with which, however, many lives are fashioned. One dare not say that such people fashion their lives after it, for they are too innocent for that, and their innocence is precisely this, that the thing happens to them,

they themselves don't know how it came about. Sometimes such persons are really enthusiasts who are chasing an ideal. As little as he who plays the lottery learns anything by losing, just so little do these men learn anything by their love affairs. This of course does not apply to that poet in *Aus meinem Leben,* he is too great not to learn, too superior not to reap advantage, and if ethically he had been as enthusiastic as he is gloriously equipped by talents, he rather than anyone else would have discovered and solved the problem as to whether there is an intellectual existence so eminent that in the deepest sense it cannot become commensurable with marriage. The answer that one loves several times, that one parcels out one's superiority, is only a disorientation, which neither in an aesthetic nor in an ethical sense fulfils what one might call a moral man's more serious expectations of life. That poet has doubtless learned much — indeed, just as the latest philosophy has made it a term of reproach to talk about "Kant's honest ways," so does Goethe smile with an air of patronizing superiority at Klopstock, because he was so much concerned about whether Meta, his first love, who had married another, would belong to him in another life.

What has such an existence come to then? It does not remain stationary with love, but neither does resolution supervene. The reflection out of which resolution comes into existence in order to lay hold on love takes a false hold, it becomes reflection about love. Hence I have lingered here to point out what will be shown later, that the reflection belonging to resolution has to let love alone and attend to very different things. So that existing poet in *Aus meinem Leben* makes no resolution, he is not a seducer, he does not become a married man, he becomes... a connoisseur.

To what extent every poet-existence ought itself to be a poem, as well as the question under what angle of refraction his life ought in this respect to be related to his poetry, I do not presume to decide. However, this much is certain, that an existence such as that in *Aus meinem Leben* must influence

the poetic production. In case this is Goethe's own life, it seems to explain why what one most misses in Goethe is pathos. The pathos of immediacy he does not possess, but neither has he pressed on to attain the highest pathos. Every time the crisis presents itself to the existing poet he leaps away. That he does in all possible directions. He relates that he was brought up in a strictly religious way. This is an impression of childhood, and surely not one of the foolish pranks one puts aside in the course of time, inasmuch as in the matter of religion it is a very serious fact that one learns the best things as a child and acquires a postulate for which there is never, never any substitute forthcoming. There comes then a later period of his life when this religious impression almost overwhelms him. That is the crisis, and a perfectly natural one; precisely as an individual is more intellectually gifted, the more difficult the task that is set before him of preserving or recovering the pious faith of childhood. What then does that poet do? — the poet who himself relates in another place that he practised all sorts of exercises in order to accustom himself not to be afraid of the dark, not to be frightened at seeing a corpse or at being alone among the graves at night. He leaps away, he puts a distance between religion and himself, he avoids all contact. Good Lord, though a person were a bit afraid of walking alone in the dark, there would be nothing so dreadful about that; but to draw back, to retreat, when it is a question of remaining true to oneself with respect to the impression of one's childhood, when it is a question of fighting, though it were unto despair, with renunciation of every demand upon life and of the expectation of any position of importance, of fighting for the precious memory of one's parents (for though that poet again and again recalls his mother, can he believe that in her eyes or in his father's it was a casual circumstance that they let religion acquire so great a power over the child?), to fight for a fellowship of faith with the deceased, in behalf of what they regarded as the one thing needful, what he had at one time accepted himself

in childish innocence with the devotion of an undivided soul — at this point to leap away! Might not this revenge itself in the fact that pathos is lacking in the poems? In case this poet is Goethe himself, might not this explain the fact that the idolized hero whose most casual utterances and sayings are collected, edited, read, adored like holy relics, that this idolized hero who is called king in the realm of thought — that he, to put it in the mildest terms, is a king without a throne in the eternal realm of religion? In Goethe's sound wisdom there is supposed to be healing for the errors of the mind and especially for melancholy, which he himself knew how to escape. How strange! Everyone knows from his childhood's schooling that distraction is the most dangerous thing for one who has a disposition to melancholy; yes, dangerous also for one who has no disposition of the sort. How strange that when he has become somewhat older and somewhat more mature (in case he then believes that the wiser man is different from the simple man for the fact that he understands what the simple man understands, and understands it better, and understands somewhat more than the other, and in case he does not believe that the wise man is to be distinguished by the fact that the only thing he doesn't comprehend is what the simple man understands) — how strange he should not know that to leap away from a task is to consign himself and his soul to an earlier or later melancholy. But Goethe knew how to avoid melancholy in another way. So much by way of illuminating the erotic.

Perhaps more competent critics also will agree with me that Goethe's feminine figures are his most masterly figures. But when one looks more closely, the best of them especially are not viewed in the light of true feminine ideality but under the illumination in which they are seen by the equivocal observer who knows how to discover what is charming, knows how to kindle into flame the glowing coal, but also knows how to look upon this conflagration with a proud air of superiority. They are lovable in a high

degree, capitally drawn, and yet it is not so much they that are dishonored as femininity that is dishonored in their persons, because the act seems almost justified, or at least innocent, in view of the superior sagacity which knows how to enjoy, knows how to relish, but also knows how to erect a distance between it and him when the pleasure is over.

In the application of this theory of distance the poet in *Aus meinem Leben* is a master. He himself has been so kind as to explain how the thing works. One must remember however that this poet does not wish to be instructive, far from it; he is conscious that the gift is not bestowed upon everybody, it is a distinction of his nature, he is a privileged individual. True, that poet is now a hero, and I who am bold enough to talk about him am a Philistine; but fortunately there are some things even a child can understand, which are equally valid whether a person be a hero or a judge-assessor or a beggar man. So then whenever a life-relationship is about to overwhelm him he must remove it to a distance by poetizing it. How different men's natures are! Or perhaps after all they are not so different! What does it mean to poetize a life-relationship? The question is not essentially whether one gets a masterpiece out of it or not — alas, in this respect there is a tremendous difference between a hero and a poor assessor as well as the beggar man. To poetize an actual life-relationship by the aid of distance (for which, be it noted, one has to furnish bond as a surety) is neither more nor less than to falsify the ethical element in it and to stamp upon it the counterfeit impression of a casual happening and a mere problem for thought. Oh, yes, when a man has a lightning-conductor like that in his pocket, what wonder he feels safe in a storm! How many a bungler and smatterer has gone by bowing and cringing before that distinction of nature. And yet every man has more or less of that distinction of nature, it is quite simple, it is no more than the ostentatious parade of the natural and pleasure-loving man in defiance of the ethical. Among criminals

one often finds this talent for poetizing, i.e. for viewing at a distance in poetic outline the actual life-relationship. Among melancholy men also it is often to be found, but with this distinction, that the aesthetically melancholy find in it assuagement, the ethically melancholy an aggravation. Possibly the cheerful Goethe was a little melancholy, just as the wise Goethe has a fair share of superstition. So this ability to poetize an actual life-relationship is a distinction of nature which on the one hand is not so rare, and on the other hand is very questionable. As a matter of course, not everybody who poetizes poetizes masterpieces. Who would be so foolish as to affirm such a thing? But from the ethical point of view this distinction, that one is a hero, yes, perhaps even the only one who counts as a hero, and the other a bungler, has nothing to do with the case. The ethical is a judge so incorruptible that if even our Lord were to have allowed Himself a little irregularity in the way of creating the world, ethics would not let itself be put out of countenance, although, to be sure, heaven and earth and all that in them is must be regarded as a mighty fine masterpiece.

If that poet-existence in *Aus meinem Leben* is poetic, then... good night marriage! It then becomes at the best a refuge for old age. If that existence is poetic, then what is to be done for woman? She too then must try to be poetic. It is unseemly when a man who is tried and experienced in the erotic, a discharged veteran, takes a young girl for his wife so as to be rejuvenated a little and to have the best of nursing, but it is disgusting when an elderly lady, an experienced spinster, takes a young man for a husband to assure herself of protection and of a refined titillation, now that the poetic begins to evaporate.

Resolute as marriage is in prohibiting one to serve two masters, it is not any more inclined to like the deserter. It is prettily said by Solomon that "whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord," or to modernize the expression a little: he who falls in love, to him

the Deity has done a good turn; when he marries his ladylove he does a good work, and he does well in fulfilling what he had begun.

What has been said in the immediately preceding paragraph cannot of course be meant as a clumsy recommendation of the resolution of marriage. This more appropriately recommends itself, since, as I have said, it is the only adequate form love can take.

Now it remains to be seen how the resolution can join in, how the reflection which is presupposed in the resolution can reach the point where it coincides with the immediacy of love. As soon as one eliminates love it becomes ridiculous to want to reflect about whether one shall get married or not. This is quite true, but from this it does not follow that one is justified in eliminating love, as one does whenever one attempts to keep the resolution and love apart and wants to make it seem ridiculous to reflect upon the resolution.

The fact that reflection is ridiculous when applied to the question of getting married when there is no love in the case was rightly perceived and profoundly expressed by two wise men of ancient times, but not, as will be seen, with the purpose of putting a weapon into the hands of the mockers. It is related that in reply to one who asked him about marriage Socrates said: "Marry or don't marry — you will rue them both." Socrates was an ironist who ironically concealed his wisdom and truth, presumably in order that they might not become town gossip which everybody could repeat. But he was no mocker. The irony here is capital. For the stupidity of the questioner consists in asking a third party' about something one never can learn from a third party. But all are not so wise as Socrates and often reply quite seriously to a stupid question. If love is lacking, reflection cannot reach any conclusion; and if a man is in love, he cannot ask such a question. When a mocker wants to use the Socratic saying, he treats it as a plain assertion, turning it into something quite different from what it is, namely, a

profoundly ironic, infinitely wise answer to a very foolish question. By transforming this answer to a query into a plain assertion one can produce a certain effect in mad comedy, but this is to jest on the Socratic wisdom and do violence to the trustworthy evidence which expressly introduces the story with these words: “Somebody asked him [Socrates] whether he ought to get married or no.” To this he replied: “Whether THOU doest the one thing or the other, thou wilt rue it.” If Socrates had not been so ironical, he might have expressed himself thus: “As for THEE, thou canst do as thou wilt; thou art and dost remain a dunce.” For not everyone who regrets gives proof thereby that now, at the moment of regret, he is a stronger and better individual than at the moment of heedless action. Sometimes regret may be the best proof that the regretter is a good-for-nothing. — It is related of Thales that when his mother insisted he should get married, he replied that he was too young, that it was not yet the fit time; and when later she renewed the appeal, he replied that now it was no longer the fit time. There is something ironic also in this reply which rebukes the worldly sapience that would reduce marriage to a venture like that of buying a house. For there is only one age which is seasonable for marriage, that is, when one is in love; at every other age one is either too young or too old.

It is always pleasant to bring such things to mind; for if frivolity is calamitous in the erotic field, there is also a certain sort of common sense which is even more calamitous. But this one word of Socrates, when rightly understood, is capable of mowing down, like Death with his scythe, the whole prolific harvest of sensible prate which would chat its way into a marriage.

So then I pause here at the decisive point: there must be a resolution superadded to love. But a resolution presupposes a reflection, but reflection is the destroying angel of immediacy. Such is the situation, and if in fact reflection were to come into conflict with love, no marriage would ever

result. But that is precisely what it is not to do; and what is more, even before the operation which through reflection attains to the resolution, and is strictly contemporary with it, there comes the negative resolution which holds off every resolution of this sort as a temptation. Whereas in all other cases the destroying angel of reflection goes about shouting death to immediacy, there is yet one immediacy it suffers to stand, that of love, which is a miracle. If reflection comes into conflict with love, this means that one is about to examine whether the loved one corresponds to the ideal abstract notion of an ideal. Every reflection in this direction, even the most airy and unsubstantial, is an affront, and a stupidity as well. Even if apparently the lover had the purest enthusiasm for wanting to discover charms, suppose even that he had a voice "so sweet, oh, so sweet!," suppose he had all of a poet's elegance in reflecting so daintily that even the most delicate feminine soul would hear only the pleasing sound and sense only the sweet fragrance of the sacrifice, without discovering the affront — it is nevertheless an attempt to empty love of its content. But as the god of love is blind and love itself a miracle (as the lover himself and even the most vehement reflection must recognize), the lover must be on his guard against this clairvoyance. There is a modesty to which even the most adoring admiration is an affront, a sort of infidelity to the beloved. Even though this admiration were to bind the lover, as he thinks, more indissolubly to her, it already has released him in a way. It is a sort of infidelity because in this admiration a criticism is latent. Beauty, moreover, is vain, and loveliness may vanish. It is therefore an affront to the loved one to want to let all her loveliness consist in the synthesis which underlies love's modesty. On the other hand, there is a feminine loveliness (here again essentially that of the wife and mother) which does not exact this bashfulness; and yet, though it were the face of an angel she had, it is an affront to want to admire this beauty, an affront which already indicates that love has lost its equilibrium.

"But," I hear the lover say, "it is precisely in this admiration I feel the sublimity of the loved one, and feel that essentially I have no claim to be loved in return." Ah, he who reckons with infinite magnitudes is none the less a reckoner. Therefore, whether the loved one is the most beauteous of women, or whether she is not thus favored — the only right, brief, pithy, adequate word for the whole content of love is: I love her. And, verily, he who in the first instance had nothing else to say, and later restricted his soul just as laconically to love's true expression, is more faithful to her than one who by the description of the loved one's beauty could entertain men and gods, and do it to such perfection that they would go away overwhelmed and envious.

But what one may dare to see, what one may dare to admire, is the lovable quality of her essential self. Here admiration is no affront, if only admiration will learn from love not to be a vapid chatterbox or a birthday poet but a faint, imperishable murmur of quiet joy. The essential quality of the soul has opportunity to reveal itself only in marriage, which has at its disposition the cornucopia of many tasks, which is the best gift one receives on the wedding day. Even if the loved one, merely to delight him for whom she would sacrifice her life, having no opportunity for greater proofs of devotion, proves it equally well in lesser instances, even if she were to adorn herself merely to please him, and she, the beauty, were now in her lovable finery so beauteous that old men would follow her wistfully as they did Helen when she walked through the halls of Troy — if he with a single nerve of his eye were to see amiss and admire, instead of comprehending love's correct expression, that it was to please him, already he is on a false track, he is on the point of becoming a connoisseur.

So when one imagines a time of love-making, especially the period of engagement, which is thus outside of marriage, things often go amiss

because love lacks the essential tasks and hence may sometimes make both the lovers critical. What Bedreddin says of Gulnare's glance

Calm as the grave which opens to release
The saved soul which rises up on high,
She opens now her lovely lids in peace,
And turns her placid glance towards the sky — this could be understood as applying to the whole lovable quality of the soul in connection with the immediacy of love. This immediacy is dim, but calm as the grave which opens, and in such wise does the transfigured woman develop out of love's hiding-place into psychic beauty, and in this transfigured form she belongs to the husband.

In what direction then is reflection to move till it reaches the resolution? — for within the holy-place of love and upon the consecrated ground of immediacy it dare not tread. The reflection turns towards the relationship of love to reality. That he is in love is for the lover the most certain thing of all, and no meddlesome thought, no broker, runs between love and a so-called ideal. This is a forbidden path. Nor does reflection inquire if he is to marry; he is not forgetful of Socrates. But to marry is to enter into a factual situation in relationship to a given reality: marriage is the most extraordinary concretion. This concretion constitutes the task of reflection. But maybe it is so concrete (defined with respect to time, place, environment, the stroke of the clock, seven and one relationships, etc.) that no reflection can pierce through it? In case this is assumed, one has thereby assumed at the same time that no resolution can ever be reached. A resolution, however, is always an ideality; I have the resolution before I begin to act in virtue of this resolution. But how then do I get this resolution? A resolution is always reflective: if one does not give heed to this, language becomes confused, the resolution is identified with an immediate impulse, and everything that is said about resolution is just as far

from being an explanation of it as it is far from being a journey when a man drives all night long but takes the wrong turn, so that in the morning he finds himself at the same place where he started. In a purely ideal reflection the resolution has ideally exhausted reality, and the conclusion of this ideal reflection is something more than a *summa summarum,* in short it is precisely resolution; resolution is the ideality brought about by a purely ideal reflection, it is the earned capital required for action.

"However," someone may say, "that is all well enough, but it will take a long time, and meanwhile the grass grows — such a married man does not indeed become a 'pepper-prentice' or bachelor, but he becomes a veteran past master." Not at all. And moreover the same objection might be raised against every resolution, and yet resolution is universally the beginning of freedom; but one requires of a beginning that it should be in season, and that it should stand also in a proper proportion to that which is to be carried out, that it should not be like an introduction which recapitulates the whole book, or like an address from the throne which takes the words out of the mouth of the whole session of parliament. But pleasure accelerates every labor, and the pleasure of the lover, which remains the same throughout all this labor of reflection, incites him from morning to night, keeps him alert and unchecked in his knightly quest; for verily this expedition of the lover in quest of the resolution is more chivalrous than a crusade against the Turks or than a pilgrimage, more pleasing in love's eyes than every other exploit, because it is concentric with love itself.

So that happy swain (for that a lover is happy goes without saying) pursues his way, led by the hand of his good genius, while the loved one sits waiting for him, confident and blissful, for every time he comes back to her (only to start out again prayerfully upon his quest, until he finds the jewel, the wedding gift, the resolution, the only worthy gift) she has never found

him changed, any more than his love has changed, though it were only to the point of becoming admiration.

And the young swain has not many instants to waste upon the quest, every instant he wastes is, as he knows, a bliss he foregoes — this must be a sovereign expedient for learning alacrity. But the good gift of resolution is also his highest gain, the wedding garment without which one is unworthy — this must be a sovereign expedient for learning not to be overhasty, lest in his hurry he hasten away from the resolution.

Precisely because the resolution, or the resolver, is thus situated, the reflection becomes ideal, and one promptly plunges into a shortcut. And why should not one take a shortcut when it is certain that it leads swiftly to the goal, more swiftly than any other road, but also more surely? It has rightly been remarked that reflection is inexhaustible, cannot be brought to a conclusion, that it is infinite. Quite true, it cannot be brought to a conclusion in reflection — any more than a man, be he never so hungry, can eat his own stomach — and therefore everyone who claims to have done this, be he a systematic hero or a newsboy, must be regarded as a Münchausen. On the other hand, reflection is brought to a conclusion in faith, which is precisely anticipation of the ideal infinity in the form of resolution. Thus the resolution is a new immediacy, attained through the ideally inexhaustible reflection, a new immediacy which corresponds precisely to the immediacy of love. The resolution is a religious life-view constructed upon ethical postulates, which is to prepare the path of love and secure it against every outward and inward danger. Behold, the lovers, being in love, are paradisiacally plucked out as it were from reality and removed as if to remoter Asia, beside the calm Indian seas, or into the midst of the primeval forest where silence dwells and where no trace of man is to be seen; but the resolution knows how to find the way to human society and prepares this safe path, while love attends to no such things but is as happy

as a child which lets its parents take care of all troublesome matters. The resolution is not man’s strength, it is not man’s courage, it is not man’s talent (these are only immediate analogies which do not furnish an objective measure for the immediacy of love, since they belong to the same sphere and are not a new immediacy), but it is a religious starting-point. If it is not this, then the resolver has only become de-infinitized in his reflection, he has not plunged with the headway of love into the shortcut but has remained on the road, and such a resolution is so miserable a thing that love must disregard it and rely rather upon itself than trust to the guidance of such a half-educated robber. The immediacy of love recognizes only one other immediacy as of equally noble birth, that is the immediacy of religion; love is too maidenly to recognize any party as privy to it except God. But religion is a new immediacy, it has reflection betwixt it and the first immediacy — otherwise paganism would be really religious, and Christianity not. That religion is a new immediacy everyone can easily understand who is content to follow the honorable path of human common sense. And although I imagine I have but few readers, I admit that I imagine my readers to be such as these, for I am far from wanting to impart instruction to the admired authors who make systematic discoveries à la Niels Klimand who have got out of their good skin in order to put on the “real skin.”

To penetrate reflection thus until one wins the resolution is not so very difficult, especially when one has as incentive the passion of love; and without passion one never brings reflection to a conclusion, but may very well linger along the road engaged in small talk with Tom, Dick and Harry, with thinkers and dealers in gimcracks, may get to see a lot of things in life and lots to chatter about, like the man who inadvertently lingered so long on board the ship that he got a trip around the world — or, to express myself

less jocularly, he who has not passion never sees the promised land but perishes in the wilderness.

Now what the resolution wants is first of all to hold fast to love. In this new immediacy, which extends far out beyond every reflection, the lover is saved from becoming a connoisseur; he is bowed down under the imperative of duty and made to stand erect again in the optative of resolution. By his relationship to love he is saved essentially and renounces the game of critical reflection.

In the next place, the resolution wants to triumph over all danger and temptation. Precisely because the reflection which comes before the resolution is entirely ideal, one single imagined danger will be enough to make the resolver resolve religiously. Let him think of any danger whatsoever, though it were merely that he cannot by thinking anticipate the future. Owing to the fact that he employs the whole power of his thought and the deep concern of his love to think this danger, he *eo ipso* thinks it in so dreadful an aspect that by himself he cannot overcome it. He has run aground: he must either let go of love... or believe in God. Thus the miracle of love is elevated to the purely religious miracle, the absurdity of love to a divine understanding with the absurdity of religion. Be of good courage! A simple honest man who has respect for human common sense can well understand that the absurd exists and that it cannot be understood. From systematic thinkers this is luckily hidden.

Finally, in the resolution the lover would put himself in relationship with God through the universal. This is resolution’s bath of purification, which is quite as beautiful as that of the Greeks before a banquet or that which Aladdin desired before the wedding. Everything known as earthly vanity, selfishness, malodorous manly spirit, the itch of criticism, etc., is consumed, and in the resolution the husband becomes worthy of the divine gift of love.

In case the lover while he is marching on in quest of the resolution stumbles upon irregularities, recognizing that he has become peculiar, not in the sense that this peculiarity disappears as a matter of course in the washing of resolution, but in such a way that he dare not presume to think of himself as a generic man — in plain English, in case he stumbles here upon remorse. That opens a wide vista, and if he is truly in love, as we assume, he can regard himself as one who is singled out to undergo an examination by existence, for when he is under a crossfire from love and from existence, the examination can readily become all too severe. — However, I will not follow this out here, this sort of difficulty has no place in the generality of deliberations, the resolver does not ordinarily stumble upon such difficulties, he returns home from his expedition like the knight from a crusade, and so:

But if he returns with feather in hat,
A jolly good welcome awaits him for that.

So then that happy young swain (for that a lover is happy goes without saying) has found what he sought, like the man in the Gospel he has sold all to buy the field where the pearl was hid, only in this respect does he differ from that man, that in a way he already owned the field when he was selling all to buy it; for in the field of love he found also the pearl of resolution. He returns home from his holy pilgrimage, he belongs to her, he is ready — ready to meet her at the altar where the Church is to declare him a proper husband.

So now we come to the wedding ceremony. Our young swain has not become an older man, far from it; no need of a year and a day to ripen thus. Yet, if he were not properly in love, and if he has no sense of ethical need and no religious postulates in his soul, he does not yet become ripe. This ripeness, it is true, makes him older in a certain sense, but it is precisely the

youth of eternity that is bestowed upon him, and thus it is that love too makes a man older.

That a loving youth is a pleasant sight need not be said, but perhaps it may need to be said that a married man is a still more grateful sight — unless the altar might be a stumbling-block! For it surely is preposterous that one should be accounted a loving youth only when he still has to fulfil his wish by coming to the altar. But the married man is a loving youth, absolutely, his love is unchanged, only it has the sacred beauty of resolution which the youth's love has not. Is my wealth perhaps less considerable because I possess it in one security which is the only safe one? Is my claim upon life less because I have it on stamped paper? Is my happiness the less because God in heaven vouches for it, and that not in jest, like Eros, but in seriousness and truth, as truly as there is a resolution to hold Him fast. Or might perhaps the language which the loving youth knows how to employ be more divine than the married man knows how to understand? Is not the marriage service itself such a "dark saying" that it needs more than a poet to understand it? Is not its language so astonishing that he who understands the half of it might lose his wits entirely? To talk about duty to a pair of lovers! — to understand this and yet be in love, be bound to the beloved by the tightest bond of immediacy! To talk about the curse which rests upon the race, about the difficulties of marriage, about woman's pain and man's sweat — and yet to be in love, and in the immediacy of love to be convinced that only happiness awaits them! To hear this, to see the resolution, to hold the mind intent upon it, and at the same time to be able to see the myrtle crown upon the head of the loved one — verily, a married man, a proper married man, is himself a miracle! To be able to hear the voice of the loved one while the organ plays! To be able to hold fast to the pleasure of love while existence assembles all the might of sober earnestness upon his head and that of the beloved!

And now as to her — for [it is true of her also that] without a resolution there is no marriage. A feminine soul has not and should not have the sort of reflection man has. It is not in this wise therefore she is able to attain the resolution. But starting with aesthetic immediacy, with the swiftness of a bird she attains the religious, and one can say of a woman, as one hardly could say of a man, that it must be a depraved woman who is not made God-fearing by love. As a married couple both are on the common ground of religious immediacy. But man reaches this through an ethical development. A wise Greek has said that daughters ought to get married when they are girls in years but women in understanding. This is very prettily said, but one must remember that a woman in understanding is not a man in understanding. The loftiest understanding a woman possesses — and possesses with honor and consistently with beauty — is religious immediacy.

It has often pleased me to reflect how a girl and a young man must correspond to one another in order to be a proper married couple. And, to tell the truth, the man who does not take pleasure in reflecting upon this may have perhaps a sense for the most beautiful thing in the natural sphere, a loving couple; but he has not a sense for spirit, and he has not faith in spirit.

Will someone say that such a thing is seldom to be seen — the sort of marriage, that is, which expresses the idea? Well then perhaps it is just as rare a sight to see a man who, believing, as we all do, in immortality and in God's providence, really expresses the idea in his life.

Woman because of her immediacy is essentially aesthetic, but just because she is essentially this, the transition to the religious is also direct. Feminine romanticism is the very next instant religion. If it is not that, then it is only a sensuous enthusiasm, a demoniacal inspiration of sensuality, the

holy purity of modesty is transformed into a dark quality which tempts and incites.

So in woman love is immediate. This is common ground. But the transition in her case comes about without reflection. It comes about in this way: at the moment when on the border of her consciousness there passes her by the thought which man's reflection ideally exhausts, she falls into a faint, her husband hastens to her aid, and although equally moved, but through reflection, he is not overwhelmed, he stands fast, the loved one supported upon his breast, until again she opens her eyes. In this swooning state she is translated from the immediacy of love into the religious sphere, and here again the two meet. Now she is ready for the marriage ceremony — for without a resolution no marriage.

Has anything now been lost? Has the happiness of love become less because its bliss reflects heaven's benediction? Has love become a temporal factor because the lovers wish to belong to one another for eternity, and because this wish has become seriousness? Is the profoundest seriousness when heard as a consonant in the most lovable jest less beautiful than what love "immediately" desires? For he who speaks at the prompting of pure immediacy speaks only in jest. When the lover would risk his life for love, and she, the loved one, says Amen — even if he does risk his life, it is noble, it ought to move stones, woe to him who laughs; but he who ventures and loses "immediately" has not yet understood himself.

There is a picture representing Romeo and Juliet — an eternal picture. Whether in an artistic sense it is remarkable, I leave undecided, whether the forms are beautiful, I do not presume to judge, I lack the requisite taste and competence. The eternal quality of the picture consists in the fact that it represents a loving pair and represents them by an essential expression. There is no need of a commentary, one understands it at once, and moreover no commentary could give an idea of this repose in the beautiful situation of

love. Juliet has sunk down admiringly at the feet of the loved one, but from that adoring attitude her devotion raises her up with a glance of heavenly bliss, but Romeo checks this glance, and by a kiss all the longing of love is forever tranquillized. For the radiance of eternity surrounds the instant, and no one who beholds the picture is prompted to think, any more than do Romeo and Juliet, that there is to be a next instant, even though it were merely to repeat the sacred seal of the kiss. Ask not the lovers, for they hear not thy voice; but direct thy question out into the world, asking in what century it occurred, in what land, at what time of day, at what hour by the clock — no one says, for it is an eternal picture.

It is a lovable pair, an eternal theme for art, but a married couple this is not. May I not dare to mention a married couple? May that other be more glorious because something is lacking of the invisible glory marriage possesses? If such were the case, why then should I be a married man? Not every loving pair is a Romeo and Juliet, but it is the beautiful joy of every loving pair to possess this ideal pattern. Not every married couple is perfect, but here it is a question only of the ideal pattern which, if I may say so, sovereignly determines the rank of subordinates.

[Here is another situation:] she does not kneel in adoration, for the difference which is given in the common immediacy of love, i.e. man's strength which gives him the preponderance, holds her upright. She only sinks, she would like to kneel in the admiration of love, but his strong arm holds her upright. She droops, not before the visible but before the invisible, before the exceeding greatness of the impression; then she takes hold of him who already is holding her upright by his support. He too is moved in laying hold of her, and if the kiss were not their mutual support, they might both totter. This is not a picture, there is no repose in the artistic situation. For as one sees her almost sinking in adoration, so does one see from the interrupted attitude the necessity of a new situation where she stands erect

by his side, one has a presentiment of a new pattern which is the real pattern of marriage, for a married couple represents an adjacent angle upon the same base. What is it that gives to the first picture that character of unconcludedness? What is it that is sought in the tottering attitude? It is the balance of the resolution, it is the higher immediacy of religion.

A fig then for all objections which merely cancel themselves. Even when the objection says scornfully, Habeat vivat com ilia it takes the very words out of the married man's mouth, for that is what the married man wishes, and the objection cannot really wish that one should forbear to get married, for then it would have nothing to jeer at, and we should all be as proudly superior as the objector. Thus marriage seems to me the most secure position of all. Love says, "Thine forever"; the marriage service says, "Thou shalt forsake all others and keep thee only unto her"; the objection says, "Keep her." But then there is no objection; for though the objection thinks that the married man becomes ridiculous, this does not prevent him from leaving all (jeering included) and keeping only unto her. Yes, in case the scoffer himself would like to have her, in case he comes forward in pursuit of a hue and cry — but that cannot be, for in this instance it is only the lawful act they would ban, and if even the lawful must "hereafter forever hold its peace," then there is never anybody who has a search warrant for the unlawful.

Since after all I write only as opportunity offers, and as it is not seemly for a married man to be beating the air against objections which for the most part are as light as air, I will now look at the matter from another side.

I do not say that marriage is the highest, I know a higher; but woe to him who would skip over marriage without justification. In this narrow defile I take up my position, in order to inspect thoroughly in thought the man who would slip by. It is easy to see in what direction that feigned sally away from life must occur. It must occur in the direction of the religious, in the

direction of spirit, in such a way that being spirit makes one forget that one is also man, not spirit alone like God.

The medieval contempt of marriage may, as I imagine, return again in an entirely different form, in the form of an intellectuality which renounces marriage, not on dogmatic or super-moral grounds, but with the daredeviltry of the intellect. The other extreme corresponding to this already finds expression, for it is just because a puffed up intellectuality has missed the ethical point that it can preachify the doctrine of the idolatry of the flesh; but the idolatry of the flesh is one expression of the fact that the flesh has become indifferent with relation to the intellect. The opposite expression is that the flesh is entirely annulled, that the spirit disowns the corruptible body in which it lives, the temporal conditions in which it has its home or temporary abiding-place, this fragmentary existence out of which it would collect itself as a whole. There are various kinds of eccentricity, the theocentric kind has a reasonable claim to be assigned to the place that belongs to it. But in fact speculation is theocentric, and theocentric is the speculator, and theocentric the theory. So long as it goes no further than that, and the theocentric confines itself to being theocentric three times a week from four o’clock till five in the professor’s chair, but for the rest of the time is a citizen and a married man and a good fellow like all the others, one cannot say that the temporal has been unfairly dealt with. Such a theoretical digression three times a week, an incidental occupation, may be expected to have no further consequences.

If, on the other hand, one takes seriously the idolizing of intellectuality, and if the individual has sufficient demoniacal ideality to remodel his life in conformity with his experimental resolution (just as the married man does in conformity with his good resolution), in the sense that every objection, every counter-argument of temporal life, is regarded as a temptation, he has with this done all that it is possible for him to do by way of representing

himself as an exception. It cannot be denied that for a time at least an individual may venture everything for the sake of his experimental resolution, it cannot be denied that he may even risk his life for it, but he does not thereby gain any justification, any more than one can gain a prescriptive right to stolen property. Such a man as he, is then, to be sure, an exception in a certain sense, in the sense that he as a demon has more will power than the generality of men, who (to speak demoniacally) do not quite manage to be evil.

On the other hand, such a man possesses not the least thing that might corrupt a judge to withhold the sentence that he is unjustified, or to move the viscera of compassion when one sees him plunge into the abyss he has prepared for himself. For pure intellectuality is a prodigious abstraction, and from this point of view nothing is to be descried, nothing whatever, not even the remotest hint of a religious idea. The exception is a wanderer, but of a peculiar sort, for he does not wander to America or to another continent beyond the ocean — or beyond the grave — no, he simply disappears. We have allowed his negative reflection to direct itself especially against marriage. It seems as if, for all that, he might have many temporal interests left. But such is not the case. For marriage is central to the temporal, and the individual personality is unable to put itself immediately into relation with the state — unless it might be that a man wanted to sacrifice himself entirely to the state, and so would not marry. But this is a vain contradiction in which he shows no regard for the consequence of his idea, to which however obedience is dearer than the fat of rams. If in relation to his idea he is to be justified in ignoring marriage, his idea must be indifferent to the idea of the state. Here as in all cases one must remember that we have not to do with the casual fact that an individual does not marry, here it is a question only of a man who is not willing to marry. Every individual of

rank (if I may so speak) in the world of spirit has resolution, and his rank is in proportion to his resolution.

The infinite abstraction has behind it a *point d'appui,* and the enthusiasm for annihilation is a case of "little risked little gained" in comparison with what is to be gained if only he who renounces the world and makes the *votum castitatis* has a religious background. Such a man as this does not take for nothing the step wherewith he oversteps temporal existence. It is true he does not gaze at the reward, yet he works hopefully in that direction — just as a man who is rowing rows constantly towards the goal, yet constantly has his back turned towards it — thus does he labor himself out of the temporal.

That such conduct is a religious abstraction is quite true, but that a thing of this sort might be so antiquated that it could not return again to haunt us is less true. It is obvious that religion has long been lying fallow; when it begins again to stir with its ideal energy it would not be surprising if it makes the same mistake. To find the true concretion for religion is not easy, since religion has constantly as its presupposition the infinite abstraction and is no simply immediacy.

People sometimes talk perhaps with good intentions and very prettily and very truly about religion, and sometimes, perhaps without noticing that they do so, they take it all back with a single word which shows that what they are talking about is the purely immediate religiousness. I constantly have marriage in view. To get a correct religious expression for marriage, to find the accurate and categorical definition for that which the Middle Ages despaired of defining, and to which the recent centuries (which are proud enough of being far ahead of the Middle Ages — surely not in the way of religiousness but of worldliness) have contributed but little, I still regard as a *pium desiderium.* I believe that a married man does well to think about such things, and then, if he would like to be a bit of an author, to write

about such things. And besides, every other subject is preempted, even astronomy.

It cannot be denied that, regarded from a purely religious standpoint, it is a matter of complete indifference whether a man has been married or not. Here opens the infinite abyss of the religious abstraction. To have a double tongue avails nothing. If one is anxiously seeking for guidance in the religious address, one perhaps finds ambiguity more frequently than one would suppose, and more frequently than the speaker himself is aware of. One extols marriage when that is the theme; on the other hand, if somebody dies unmarried — well then, since marriage is not the theme, one talks with an almost humorous accent about its being a matter of complete indifference whether a person is married or not. But what of him who has heard both discourses? For when one will talk in this way it is a great deal more difficult to be a good listener who is eager for guidance and instruction than to be an orator who is "at your service" in every way. One vindicates the significance of the temporal, its ethical significance, one calls it the season of grace, a space for repentance, the allotted time for the decision which decides for eternity; but then a child dies, and one holds a funeral oration, or one refers in a sermon to the distressed parents who have lost the little one, and the speaker deals humorously with all the vanity of the temporal, he talks about the threescore and ten years as trouble and vexation of spirit, about all the waters running into the sea, yet the sea is not full. The Romans were more consistent in letting the little children weep in Elysium because they were not permitted to live. And all the while people are laboring upon the System — good Lord, it would be asking too much of a man that he should have a practical life-view proportionate to this prodigious undertaking. And this much too is certain, that it doesn't do to have many fine speeches, with meaning in them all, but not one meaning in them all.

Even if it were so that the religious abstraction is something outworn, something antiquated, something *superseded* (for this last expression I am indebted to the System, which has been so kind as to confuse what I venture to call an eternal development of generations with the repetition of this experience which every generation makes for itself) — suppose it is so, it nevertheless would be appropriate to discuss it here. If it is not exactly an everyday sight to behold a genuine case of love, it is naturally even more rare for one to behold a real marriage. No use haggling over it, that would merely be playing into the hands of the *chicaneurs,* who know how to distil a corrosive substance even from religion. It is a poor defense to pooh-pooh an objection, though it were the purest chicanery, when one has not a good conscience and the knowledge that one is in the right.

The religious abstraction desires to appertain to God alone, for this love it is willing to disdain, renounce, sacrifice everything (these are the nuances); for this love it will not suffer itself to be disturbed, distracted, engrossed by anything else; with regard to this love it is not willing to have any double bookkeeping, all the turnover is to come about constantly with a clear relation to God, who is not related to him [the monk] through any secondary channels. The pride in such an abstraction may be very religiously tempered by humility towards God, but provisionally the abstraction must be regarded as unjustified because its attitude towards what it renounces is altogether abstract. It is not concerned with the wish to comprehend more concretely the beautiful reality of love and the true reality of marriage (for I stick to my theme), it would regard such employment as temptation. This essentially is the inhumanity of that abstraction — which, however, one should be wary of condemning, and above all one should be wary of extolling railroad speculation and the foolery of committees, as if all this hubbub and hurry-scurry constituted the content of temporal existence.

This inhumanity towards man is at the same time presumption to wards God. The inhumanity (as has been said) does not consist in willing the highest; that is not at all inhumane, and the proclamations or anathemas from a society which is worldly well-to-do yet spiritually a. Tattertown, where a man is esteemed for being what people generally are, and where moreover the envy of ostracism and the argument of potsherds is constantly used against the better man — all this of course has no significance here. Nor does the inhumanity consist in wanting to base one's life-view upon something accidental by which many are excluded, for the exception in fact does not deny that everyone is able to do the same thing; and all the fudge about its being a great thing, "but not everybody can do it," about what will become of the world [if all are celibates] — all this comes from Tattertown, where people cannot and will not understand that, if this is correct, one must leave the rest to God, who is well enough able [to look after the world] and is not reduced to such a state that He needs the assistance of Tattertown. No, the inhumanity consists in the fact that one will not have any concrete comprehension of that which for the majority of men is their life's reality. But this concrete comprehension is and remains a condition for having even the appearance of being in the right. Presumption towards God is a sort of over-forward comradeship, even if he [the monk] does not understand it as such. He may even be truly humble; but so also (humanly speaking) may a subject have the most loyal enthusiasm for his king and far outstrip those who are neither cold nor hot but are *numerus* and *pecus,* but yet when he seeks an audience he may want to be admitted by another way than that prescribed for subjects. It seems to me there must be something dreadful at being then turned away and hearing the words: "The other way — then we shall see what can be done for you." For he who has really had inwardness enough to comprehend that religion is the highest love — how downcast he must be, how annihilated, when he discovers that he has presumed too

much, that he has been too free, has grieved the Spirit, has offended his love. Ah, all the harder in case he has really meant to give his relationship the highest expression.

Such a religious exception will ignore the universal, he will outbid the terms offered by temporal reality. Therewith one straightway perceives that he is unjustified. The case is more complicated when he underbids them. Quite *in abstracto* he recognizes the reality of the temporal, or — to stick to my theme — the reality of marriage; but he is unhappy, unqualified for this joy, for this security in existence; he is melancholy, a burden to himself, and feels that he must be a burden to others. Let there be no passion in condemning; the weaker also has his rights, melancholy also is something real which one does not obliterate with a stroke of the pen. So, after having expressed himself thus about life, he finds comfort in a religious abstraction. Whereas the man who in an unaccustomed way seeks audience with the King almost awakens compassion, it seems that this is different and that it is fitting he should gain a hearing.

Here again the trouble is that he talks quite abstractly about what he would give up. Precisely because he is melancholy he has an abstract notion of what it is that makes life so joyful and happy for others. But what the alien experience is like he cannot know *in abstracto.* Herein lies the deceitfulness which is inseparable from all melancholy. Whatever may be the misfortune with which the melancholy man contends, be it never so concrete, it constantly has for him an admixture of fantasy and hence of abstraction. If, however, the melancholy man is immersed in practical life, this admixture is only a small affair, a little falsification, which does not prevent him from engaging perfectly well in ordinary business and being like other men, even though in the smallest things which he undertakes or experiences he derives a little subsidy from the inexhaustible funds of imagination, for personal use. If on the other hand he is free to regard the

whole of human life *in abstracto,* he never really gets to know what it is he foregoes. The joy of life, which he supposes the others have, becomes to him a burden — a double burden, since he already has enough to bear. Here the comical side of melancholy appears; for in relation to life the melancholy man is like the tailor's apprentice Hebel tells about: he wanted to travel by a boat which was towed up the Rhine and was bargaining for the price — then said the skipper that he might come along for half fare if he would walk by the side and help to pull. Alas, so it is with the melancholy man: by relating himself abstractly to life he believes that he is slipping through for half price, but does not observe that he is pulling as hard as the crew, and has to pay out money besides.

What evidently is lacking to both these exceptions is that they have not experienced. It is easy to see from this that no one by his own effort can become a justified exception. First and foremost something must happen. It is to be understood (as I have already said) that I am talking hypothetically, for I do not know whether there is or ever has been a justified exception, but I will come as near to describing it as is possible for me. It must come to pass in a different way, it must be one who has gone along on good terms with life, and then suddenly is brought to a standstill. So then he must have a love affair, a real love affair. There is indeed an old saying that to the god of love one can offer no resistance; but the man who from the beginning tempers himself by a resolution against reality will always have power to eject the incitement of love or to kill it at birth. As against an immediate existence love is the stronger power, but as against a resolution which has already armed itself in advance against it, such is not the case.

So first I require that he be really in love. A love broken off is enough for a man, but if it is the lover himself who has to break it, this burden is a two-edged sword in his hand, having no hilt, although he must hold on to it, and this operation is just as painful autopathically as sympathetically.

Perhaps someone says, “If once the love is assumed, it is an impossibility to get the exception in this way; for in love everything is at stake, it is high play that is ventured, and in love everything is at stake for the loved one, which amounts to doubling the first wager; how impossible then to be willing to skip away, to be willing to lose everything, honor included; it is impossible if one really loves.” Rather, if he does not really love, it is impossible for him to become the justifiable exception, in case there be such a thing, but the other is not impossible. Dreadful it is, a horror, but thus it must be. He who would break with reality must at least know what he breaks with. I am far from being cruel. Just so little as I am cruel when as a judge I sit calmly in an inquisitorial capacity and conjure up all terrors to frighten away evildoers from the peaceful enclosure of law and justice, just so little am I cruel in this case. It is possible that he who has bent the branch of happiness down to the ground may hew it off and himself be thrown by its might into mortal torments, like the unfortunate upon whom the death sentence falls, suffering all the more because at the same time he lacerates the loved one; it is possible when he is sailing securely with his good fortune to go below and bore a hole in the ship and bring himself and one more into peril from the sea, it is possible for him to do this if he is really in love, if he is not in love, then it is impossible for him to be the justifiable exception, in case there be such a thing. It is dreadful to give a sword into the hands of a madman, but just as dreadful that happiness was put into his hands when he was such — for he does not need to be entirely out of his mind. What impels him I will not investigate here, I would only describe the psychic situation which must exist if there is to be any question at all of a justifiable exception.

In the next place I require that he be a married man. This is a loss more dreadful than the loss of honor, and the cry of the fatherless child is louder than the ignominy of any disgrace, and more terrible than the loneliness of

the betrayed maiden is the melancholy misery of the mother when she is deserted. “It is impossible,” says someone, “it is impossible, when he really is thus tied to life, then to break away.” Rather, if he is not thus tied, it is impossible for him to become the exception, in case there be indeed such a thing; but the other, on the contrary, is not impossible, though it is so dreadful that it chills the soul and checks the breath of sensibility. He, however, who sits as examining magistrate must not be moved from the truth by any terror, must not cheat justice of a doit, and the exception shall not purchase his justification for a round sum but must pay the last farthing. Though it is doubtful whether falling in love be from God, and whether in the case of love there be need already of presupposing a religious explanation, marriage is absolutely of religious origin. So he who breaks it brings not only every misery upon himself and upon her whom he loves, but he brings life into contradiction with itself, brings God into contradiction with Himself. This is not impossible for a madman — and yet he does not need to be out of his mind. What can impel him I will not set forth nor try to set forth, I merely propound the psychological presuppositions; if these are not present in all their horror, he is not the justified exception.

Now the breach has been brought about. Now I go further. I require that after this he shall love life; if he become hostile to life, then he is unjustified, for the fact that he is an exception does not render less beautiful that from which he is excepted. With an enthusiasm such as no other has he must love what he broke, and with this enthusiasm descry in its every beauty more charm and deliciousness than does he who rejoices in his good fortune; for he who would renounce something universal must know it more thoroughly than does the man who lives securely in it. Behold, when such a man (if there be such a man) would talk about marriage he will have a fervor such as a married man hardly has (I at least am ready to yield to him), he will talk with a knowledge of its quiet joy such as no married man

has; for the torment of responsibility for the breach must keep his soul alert and vigilant in the contemplation of what he destroyed, and the new responsibility requires him first of all to know what he did. If such a man (in case there be such a man) would talk about the justification of the exception, then my position is only that of a subordinate member of the force, in comparison with him who is a general inspector; for he must know surely every haunt and nook, every bypath which no one is aware of, he must be able to see irregularities in the dark where another thinks there is nothing to be distinguished from justification.

The breach itself he must sense as unhappiness and dismay, for the suffering lies in the fact that he is brought to a standstill and does not, like an adventurer, romantically renounce the content of life, notwithstanding that without fraud he became a bankrupt whom life itself had brought to ruin. On the other hand he must comprehend the after-pains of the breach as punitive suffering, for although he despairs of discovering the guilt, since he is really in love and really belongs with all his soul to his married life, and even though the pain of breaking away is for him as great, nay, greater, than the pain of desolation for the loved one, yet must the enthusiasm of desperation still find its joy in making to God the same ascription of praise, in subscribing to the same declaration the fortunate make, that the ways of providence are sheer wisdom and righteousness.

He must so comprehend the breach as to understand that he who had found security in life (for the most lovable education is that which moulds a man by a wife’s humble subjection, and the most rejuvenating instruction is that of being educated by one’s children, and the best refuge is behind the sacred wall of marriage) — that he who had found security is now cast out into new perils and the most awful of mortal dangers. For even if it is established that he could do no otherwise, yet by this step he has ventured out upon the trackless vast of infinite space, where the sword of Damocles

hangs above his head if he looks towards heaven, where the traps of temptation try to catch his feet if he looks towards the earth, where no human help is offered, where not even the daring pilot who would be willing to sacrifice his life ventures to put out, because here there is more to lose than life, where no fellow-feeling takes hold of him, yea, not even the tenderest sympathy can descry him, because he has ventured out upon the empty space before which men recoil with a shudder. He is a rebel against the earthly; and the physical, which when it is on good terms with the spiritual is a staff of support, as time is also, has become an enemy; for the physical has become a serpent to him, and time has become the instant of the bad conscience. He supposes that it is so easy to triumph over the physical; yes, that is so when one does not incite it by wanting to destroy it. One does not talk of such things to lovers, for love keeps them ignorant of the danger which only the rebel discovers, love does not know the reason why marriage was instituted — *ob adjutorium, ob propagatiortem, ob evitandam fornicationem* — and experiences of the cloister could supply a dreadful commentary to this text. In this way one constructs with psychological accuracy the catastrophe of Faust, who precisely by wanting to be sheer spirit succumbs to the wild rebellion of the physical. Woe to him who is thus solitary! He is deserted by the whole of existence, yet is not without attendants, for every instant an anguishing remembrance, in which all the passion of sympathy burns consumingly, conjures up before him pictures of the misery of her who was destroyed, and every minute the sudden can overwhelm him with its terrors.

He must comprehend that no one can understand him, and must have the constancy to put up with it that human language has for him naught but curses, and the human heart has for his sufferings only the one feeling that he is guilty. And yet he must not harden himself against this, for that very same moment he is unjustified. He must feel how misunderstanding tortures

him, just as the ascetic felt every instant the prick of the penitential shirt he wore next his skin — and in fact he has clad himself in misunderstanding in which it is terrible to be, like the apparel Hercules received from Omphale, in which he was burned up.

To resume the essential points: he must not feel himself higher than the universal, but more lowly, he must à tout *prix* want to remain within the universal, because he is really in love, and what is more he is married; he must want to remain within the universal for his own sake, and for her sake for whom he is willing to sacrifice his life, whereas now he beholds her wretchedness, beholds it as one from whom they have chopped off hands and feet, and out of whose mouth they have torn the tongue, thus leaving him without the slightest means of communicating his feelings. Accordingly he must feel himself the most miserable of men, an offscouring of mankind, and must feel it doubly because he knows, not *in abstracto* but *in concrete,* what the beautiful is. So down he sinks, desperate in all his misery, when that single word, the final, the uttermost, the word so utter that it is not contained in human speech — when that word remain unuttered, when he cannot produce his credentials, when he cannot wrench open the sealed despatch which is not to be opened except out there at sea and which contains the orders from God. This is the beginning of becoming an exception, if there be such a thing; if all this is not given, then he is without justification. Whether out of this misery, which certainly is the deepest, the most torturing, where the pain ceases not except for repentance to wield its scourge over him, where all human suffering is personally present to torment him, where suffering does not let up, any more than a town ceases to be besieged because the watch is relieved by another, or because the new watch belongs to another and an unfriendly regiment, and so they "relieve" one another, i.e. if one's own pain slumbers, then sympathy awakes, if sympathy slumbers, then one's own pain awakes, and

at any instant repentance may be on its rounds to see if the watch is alert — whether out of this misery, I say, a blessedness can develop, whether in this terrible nothingness there can be concealed a divine significance — oh, what faith is needed in order to believe that God might thus intervene in life, i.e. that this might be visible to the passive-active individual, for if it is really God who intervenes, He surely contemplates the salvation of the man thus destroyed — but note that the one who is grasped by God's hand, the elect, at the moment of decision can know nothing of this — all this surpasses my understanding. I do not know whether there is a justified exception, and if there be such a man, neither does he know it, not even at the instant when he sinks down, for if he has the least presentiment of it, he is not justified.

I have not wished to inquire what can prompt a man to become so desperate that he would get possession of spirit by overreaching God rather than receive it in the way it has pleased the Deity to impart it, or how a man might be able to become the object of a divine partiality which out of jealousy employs as its first expression the terrible trial and temptation of seeming to envy the man every joy which life offers. I have wished merely to sketch the psychological presuppositions. Behold then a candidate for the cloister who cannot flatter himself with the encouragement he would have had in the Middle Ages, but who as a figure strange and alien to the contemporary consciousness must buy the hardest suffering at the highest price. My description is like a readymade garment, the penitential shirt which the exception must wear — I do not think that anyone could fall in love with such a dress, mistaking it for pleasure.

Not that I am cruel. Oh, when one is as happy as a husband can be, when one loves life so dearly, loves it under oath, under repeated oaths, and so dearly that each oath is dearer than the last, because in this love for life one holds fast to her whom I still embrace with the triumphant resolution of first

love, holds fast to one's wife for whose sake one is to leave father and mother, holds fast to that which compensates for the loss, that which adorns and rejuvenates my married life, my darling, whose joyfulness, whose cheerfulness, whose innocent mind, whose progress in the good, turn the scanty daily bread into inestimable abundance, make my thanksgiving for my subsistence and my prayers of intercession just as important in my eyes as the prayers of a king for his country — so one is too happy to be cruel. But when one sits as examining magistrate, one is undaunted by anything that would deflect the course of justice, by anything that would lead truth upon a false scent. I do not go around seeking to discover the man upon whom one might put this penitential shirt; on the contrary, I cry out to the rash one, in case he will hear me, not to venture upon these paths. He who makes the venture of his own accord is lost. But for me this is a new proof of the excellence of existence, that it is so hedged about that no one is tempted to want to venture outside, so well defended that merely the thought of the terror must be enough to quash all foolish and frivolous and conceited and unwholesome and weak-kneed talk about wanting to be the exception; for even when all that I have required is granted, I still do not know whether there is such a thing as the justified exception, indeed I would add this most deterrent warning, that he who would be the exception never gets to know definitely in this life if he is such. So then, by the loss of all things, by torments beyond measure — not to be able to purchase for himself a certitude!

On the other hand, what I definitely know, what neither mockery nor envy, any more than the terrifying character of these considerations, can tear from me, is the happiness of my marriage. The terror is now far off, I am no longer sitting as examining magistrate, but in my library; and as a thunderstorm makes the landscape smile again, so is my soul again in the humor to write about marriage, which in a sense is a task I am never

through with. A married man is not a scatterbrain, and no more is marriage a thing that can be disposed of in a trice. I have lately been performing a painful function, now I have come home, I am with her, all the powers of existence having united to put me in lawful possession of her, I am with her who shortens for me the dark days and extends to an eternity our happy understanding, who subtracts from my sufferings and is afflicted with me in my adversities and increases my joys. Behold, just now she passed by my door, I understand it, she awaits me, but she will not come in for fear of giving disturbance. Only an instant more, my love, only an instant, my soul is so rich, I am so eloquent at this moment, I would write it down on paper, a eulogy upon thee, my lovely wife, and thus would convince the whole world of the validity of marriage. And yet before long, tomorrow, the day after, in a week's time, I shall cast thee from me, thou scribbling pen. My choice is made, I follow her hint and invitation. Let a poor wretch of an author sit trembling when a thought presents itself in a favorable instant, trembling lest someone might disturb him; I fear nothing, but then too I know what is better than the happiest conceit in a man's brain, and what is infinitely more precious than any secret which a poor author can share with his pen.

PART III. "GUILTY?"/ "NOT GUILTY?" A PASSION NARRATIVE

A Psychological Experiment by Frater Taciturnus

ADVERTISEMENT

EVERY CHILD KNOWS that Soeborg Castle is a ruin which lies in the northern part of Seeland, about half a mile from the seashore, close to a little town of the same name. In spite of the fact that the castle was destroyed a long while ago, it still maintains itself in the memory of the nation and will continue to, for it has a rich historic and poetic background to live upon. Something of the sort might be said, in a way, of the Soeborg Lake which is contiguous to the castle. Originally it had a length of a couple of miles and a depth of several fathoms to live upon; for this reason it has not yet disappeared, and in spite of the fact that the mainland is encroaching upon it more and more and is constricting it more and more painfully, it will for a long time continue to vindicate its existence as a lake.

Last summer I fell in with an older friend of mine, a naturalist, who had followed the coast from Copenhagen north to this point for the sake of making observations upon marine plants. He had determined to visit the country about Soeborg, which he expected would yield rich results. He proposed that I should make the excursion with him, and I accepted the proposal.

It is not easy to get near the lake, for it is surrounded by a rather wide stretch of bog. Here it is that the border conflict is carried on day and night between the lake and the mainland. There is something sad about this conflict, which is not indicated, however, by any trace of destruction; for what the land gradually wins from the lake is transformed into smiling and exceedingly fruitful fields. But alas for the poor lake which is thus disappearing! No one has compassion upon it, no one feels for it; for neither the parson whose fields border upon it on one side, nor the peasants whose fields are on the opposite bank, are averse to winning one piece of land after

the other. The poor lake is abandoned to its own resources on the one side and on the other!

What imparts to the lake a still more shut-in appearance is the fact that the bog is overgrown luxuriantly with rushes. There is nothing to match it in Denmark, so at least said my friend the naturalist. Only at one place is there a small open channel, and here is a flat-bottomed boat in which we two (he for the sake of science, and I for friendship and curiosity) punted our way out to the lake. With difficulty we got the boat started, for the channel has scarcely a foot of water. The thicket of rushes is as dense as a forest to the height of about four yards, and when hidden by it one is as though lost to the world forever, forgotten in the stillness which is broken only by our struggles with the boat, or when a bittern, that mysterious voice in the desert, thrice repeats its cry and then again thrice repeats it. Strange bird, why dost thou sigh thus and lament? Thine only desire after all is to remain in solitude!

Finally we got beyond the reeds, and before us lay the lake, clear as a mirror and sparkling in the radiance of the afternoon. Everything so still! Silence rested upon the lake. Whereas while we punted our way through the thicket of rushes I felt as though I were transported into the midst of the luxuriant fertility of India, now I felt as though I were out upon the Pacific Ocean. I was almost alarmed at being so infinitely far from men, at lying in a nutshell upon a vast ocean. Now there was a confused voice, a mingled cry of all kinds of fowls, and then stillness prevailed again, almost to the point of making me apprehensive when the sound suddenly ceased and the ear grasped in vain for a support in the infinite.

My friend the naturalist took out the apparatus with which he drew up submarine plants, cast it into the water and began his work. Meanwhile I sat at the other end of the boat dreamily absorbed in the beauties of nature. He already had drawn up a good deal of material and began to busy himself

with his booty when I begged him to lend me the instrument. Resuming my former place I cast it out. With a muffled sound it sank to the depths. Perhaps it was because I did not know well how to use the apparatus, at all events when I wanted to pull it up I encountered so much resistance that I was almost afraid of proving the weaker of the two. I pulled again, then up rose a bubble from the depths, it lasted an instant, then burst — and then I succeeded. I had the strangest feeling, and yet I did not have the remotest notion what sort of a find it was I had made. Now when I reflect upon it I know all, I understand it, I understand that it was a sigh from below, a sigh *de profundis,* a sigh that I had wrested from the lake its treasure, a sigh from the shy and secluded lake from which I had wrested its secret. If two minutes earlier I had had a presentiment of this, I would not have ventured to pull.

The naturalist sat absorbed completely in his work, he merely inquired casually if I had got anything, an exclamation which did not seem to expect a reply, since with good reason he did not regard my fishing efforts as having any bearing upon science. In fact I had not found what he was after, but something altogether different. And so each of us sat at our respective ends of the boat, each preoccupied with his find, he for the sake of science, I for the sake of friendship and curiosity. Wrapped in oilskin and provided with many seals was a rosewood box. The box was locked, and when I opened it by force the key lay inside — thus it is that morbid reserve always is introverted. In the box was a manuscript written with a very careful and clear hand upon thin paper. There was orderliness and neatness in it all, and yet an air of solemn consecration as if it had been written before the face of God. To think that by my intervention I have brought disorder into the archives of heavenly justice! But now it is too late, now I crave forgiveness of heaven and of the unknown author. Undeniably the place of concealment was well chosen, and Soeborg Lake is more trustworthy than the most

solemn declaration which promises “complete silence,” for the lake makes no such declaration. Strangely enough, different as happiness and unhappiness are, they sometimes agree in wishing for... silence. The administration of the lottery when distributing the prizes of fortune is extolled for being silent about the names of the fortunate ones lest their good fortune might become an embarrassment to them; but the unfortunate who has gambled away all his fortune also desires to have his name passed over in silence.

In the box there were found also several pieces of jewelry, some being of considerable value: adornments and precious stones — ah, precious indeed, too dearly bought, would the owner say, in spite of the fact that he was allowed to keep them! It is a valuable find, and I feel that I am under obligation to advertise it. There was found a flat gold ring with a date engraved inside it, a necklace consisting of a diamond cross fastened to a light blue silk ribbon. The remainder was in part of no value at all: a fragment of a playbill, a scrap torn from the New Testament (each apart by itself in an envelope of vellum paper), a withered rose in a silver-gilt pyx, together with other things which only to the owner could have had a value equal to the diamonds of two carats each with which the pyx was adorned.

Herewith the owner of a box found in Soeborg Lake in the summer of ‘44 is summoned to apply to me by the initials F.T. through Reitzel’s Book Shop. In order to obviate betimes any delay I take the liberty of observing that the handwriting of this application must at once betray the owner, as well as that everyone who may do me the honor to write, when he receives no reply, can from this conclude securely that the handwriting is not the right one, for only this can properly claim a reply. On the other hand, for the comfort of the owner be it said, that even though I have taken theliberty of publishing his manuscript, its contents, unlike the handwriting, are of a sort that does not betray anybody, and be it said that I have not taken the liberty

of showing to anyone, not to a single person, either the manuscript, or the diamond cross, or the other things.

CANDIDATE Bonfils has published a table by the aid of which one can calculate the year when any day of the week and of the month is given. His merits in this respect redound also to my advantage; I have calculated and calculated and finally have discovered that the year corresponding to the dates engraved on the ring is 1751, the memorable year in which Gregory Rothfischer was converted to Lutheranism, a year which, for the man who with a profound eye contemplates Cyclopically the marvellous course of world history, was also remarkable for the fact that precisely five years later the Seven Years War broke out. So one is compelled to go back to a rather remote epoch in time, unless one is ready to assume that an error has crept into the data or into my calculation. If one refuses to do anything under compulsion, one might, for all I care, assume that a poor devil of a psychologist who can count upon but scanty sympathy for psychological experiments and unsubstantial constructions has made an attempt to give them both a little life by adding a touch of romanticism, the fiction that the thing belonged to a past age. For a sketch, however psychologically correct, which does not inquire whether such a person ever lived, is perhaps of less interest to our age, when even poetry has snatched at the expedient of trying to produce the effect of reality. A little psychology, a little observation of so-called real men, they still want to have, but when this science or art follows its own devices, when it looks away from the manifold expressions of psychic states which reality offers, when it slips away in order by itself alone to construct an individuality by means of its own knowledge, and to find in this individuality an object for its observations, then many people grow weary. As a matter of fact, in real life passions, psychic states, etc., are only carried to a certain point. This too delights the psychologist, but he has a different sort of delight in seeing passion carried to its utmost limits.

As for the reviewers, I could wish that my prayer might be understood in all simplicity and entirely in accordance with the tenor of the words as my honest meaning and that the result might correspond with the prayer's desire: namely, that the book may not be the object of any critical discussion, whether favorable or unfavorable. When one may acquire in so easy a way a claim upon a man's gratitude one surely might oblige him.

F. T.

The rich peasant in Norway sets a new copper kettle over his door for every thousand dollars more he acquires; and the inn-keeper sets a new mark on the rafter every time the debtor gets somewhat more in debt — so do I set down a new word every time I reflect upon my wealth and my poverty.

Periissem nisi periissem.

Note by the translator. This saying ("I had perished had I not perished") S.K. derived from Hamann (Schriften, Vol. III, pp. 151 and 224) and Hamann attributed it to "a Greek." cf. Papirer IV, A 123; IX, A 48.

January 3. Morning.

So it was a year ago today I saw her for the first time, that is to say, for the first time with a soul thoroughly resolved. I was not fantastic, not accustomed to intoxicate my soul with big words and brief dreams, hence my resolution did not mean for me that I should want to die if she did not become mine. Neither did I imagine that my soul would be distracted, my life become totally empty, if she did not become mine — I had too many religious presuppositions for that. My resolution signified for me: either her/or else thou wilt never marry. That was the stake I wagered. That I loved her — as to this there could be no doubt in my soul, but I knew also that with respect to such a step there were so many precarious places that

for me it became a most difficult problem. An individuality like mine is not light of foot; I cannot say, “If I don’t get the one, then I take the other”; I dare not permit myself to go on the assumption which seems to many so natural, that I certainly am good enough, if only the other is worthy of me. In my case the accent had to fall upon another spot, upon the question whether I was capable of giving my life such an expression as a marriage requires. I was as much in love as anybody can be, in spite of the fact that not many will understand that in case deliberation had not permitted me to take this step I should have kept my love to myself. I marry her/or I never marry.

Ought a soldier of the advanced guard to be married? Dare a soldier on the frontier (spiritually understood) take a wife, a soldier on duty at the extremest outpost, who is fighting day and night, not exactly against Turks and Scythians, but against the robber bands of an innate melancholy, a soldier of the outpost who, even though he does not fight day and night, though for a considerable period he has peace, yet never can know at what instant the war will begin again, since he cannot even dare to call this quiet a truce?

Melancholy is my very nature, that is true, but thanks be to the Power which, though it cursed me thus, gave me also one comfort. There are animals which are not provided with weapons against their enemies but upon whom nature has bestowed a cunning by which they are saved nevertheless. Such cunning was granted also to me, a power of cunning which makes me just as strong as anyone with whom I have tried my strength. My cunning consists in being able to hide my melancholy. As deep as my melancholy is, precisely so cunning is my deception. I have trained myself in it and train myself daily. I often think of the little child I once saw on the Esplanade. He walked on crutches, but on his crutches he could hop, skip and run a race almost as well as the best of them. Since I was quite

young I have trained myself, since I saw her and fell in love I have put myself through the most intensive training, before there could be any question of forming a resolution. At any time of day I can put off my melancholy, or rather put on my disguise, for melancholy merely waits for me till I am alone. If there is anybody present, whoever it may be, I am never quite what I am. If I am taken by surprise in an unguarded moment, I can in a half-hour wrest this impression away from anybody I have encountered in my practice. My deception is not exuberant mirth. In connection with melancholy this is nature's own deception, which precisely for this cause will make one an object of suspicion even in the eyes of a mediocre observer. The surest deception is sound common sense, passionate reflection, and above all an open countenance and an open-hearted nature. Behind this deceptive confidence and security in life there is a sleepless and melancholy reflection which, in case the assumed attitude becomes unsteady, brings everything to confusion, to the point that the adversary can't make out where he is, till one manages to attain again one's steady attitude. And so in the heart of hearts... melancholy. It is true, this remains there and is and continues to be my misery. But I have no desire to overwhelm with this misery any other person. It is certainly not for this purpose I want to marry.

May I perhaps be somewhat sophistical in favor of myself? Certainly I am in love — might it be love's wish which makes me imagine that I am equal to this? But I have trained myself for so many years, and till now it has never failed. After all, my father was married, and he was the most melancholy man I ever knew. But all day he was joyful and composed, he employed an hour of the night to drain, like Loki's wife, the cup of bitterness, and then he was healed again. I do not require so much time, I need only an instant which time and opportunity may present, and then all goes well. From the bitterness of melancholy is distilled a vital joy, a

sympathy, a heartiness, which certainly cannot embitter the life of any person. My joy, as sometimes it overflows in my heart, belongs to her entirely, for daily use I labor to acquire for her a competence of joy, only the occasional dark moments belong to me, and she shall not suffer from them.

So the matter stands. Of all the heroes who float before my imagination it is more or less true that they carry deeply hidden a sorrow which they cannot and would not impart to anyone. I do not marry in order to make another person toil like a slave under my melancholy. It is a point of honor, my pride, my enthusiasm, to keep that shut up which should be shut up, to reduce it to the scantiest possible diet; my joy, my bliss, my first, my only wish is to belong to her whom at all costs I would purchase with my life and blood, but whom I will not enfeeble and destroy by initiation into my sufferings.

Either her/or I never marry. More than once a man does not make this violent exertion, to which only the experience of being in love can impart all the glory of enchantment. For I perceive indeed that marriage is for me a difficult problem, an anxious affair, even though it is my dearest wish.

January 3. Midnight.

WHEN a desperate man rushes through a side-street of existence to take refuge in a monastery, he would do well to consider first whether in his situation in life there is not some tie which makes it his first duty to labor at getting another person afloat if this other is salvable. When to accomplish this he has done all that in him lies, then, though he has not become a knight in his lifetime, he may set his hope upon that honor which the Middle Ages suffered to be rendered to the scholastic, that he be buried as a knight. Be still, therefore. The thing is to remain as apathetic and undecided as possible. I am indeed a murderer, I have upon my conscience the life of a human being! But can one then reasonably seek refuge in the cloister? No! The only thing a murderer has to wait for is his sentence; I await a sentence

which is to decide whether I am a murderer — for in fact she is still alive. Oh, Horror! If this was an exaggeration, the expression of a momentary mood, if it was the defiant spirit of impotence which wrung this word from her lips and from the lips of her family! Oh, profound mockery upon life, if in the whole world were none but I that took this word seriously! My understanding suggests one suspicion after the other; the demon of laughter harps incessantly upon — I know what it wants, it would whirl her away as an abracadabra. Avaunt, thou unclean spirit! My honor, my pride, bid me to believe her; my melancholy spies out the most secret thought in this word, that I shall not be allowed to hide myself from anyone. She as the speaker bears the responsibility of having uttered that dreadful word, it is my responsibility whether I am to take the word literally.

I am not an impartial observer, not the counsellor of conscience, I am a participant, i.e. the guilty one. So therefore my imagination is allowed to depict her in all misery and my melancholy to teach the application: Thou art a murderer. If there be any truth in that first word I said to myself at the instant of separation, "She chooses the cry, I choose the pain" — if there be any truth in it, I now do not wish to know, and I cannot know if there be any truth in it.

Ah, would that she might not die, would that she might not wither away! If it were possible [to return to her] — God in heaven, Thou knowest, it was indeed my only wish, if only it were possible, and if only it were not too late!

Yesterday afternoon I saw her on the street. How pale, how suffering, how like a person who summons one to meet her before the judgment of eternity. Her eye so dimmed, and in my soul this shudder because Death is walking over my grave. And yet I would forget no detail of it, not one; only to the faithfulness of an anxious imagination which gives back to me more dreadfully that which was confided to it, only to the memory of a burdened

conscience which reinvests the debt at a higher rate of interest, only to such honesty as that will I and dare I entrust myself! — She is dying. And to think that I for an instant could believe in the craftiness of the understanding or all but listen to the demon of laughter — how detestable!

And yet perhaps she was pale only because she saw me. Perhaps! What a base tormentor dwells in this word! Is it not as when a child has long been tormenting a little bird when every instant it wants to die, and then he teases it so that for a second it grasps for life, grasps with its wings for freedom?

But she is dying, I cannot outlive her. But I would not die an instant earlier, lest my death afford her an explanation which even at the sacrifice of my life I would keep from her.

So then be cool, calm, discreet, unchangeable. Strangely enough, when I wooed her I was fearful of being too artful, now I am compelled to be that.

January 5. Midnight.

THE QUIET DESPAIR

WHEN SWIFT WAS old he was taken into the madhouse he himself had founded in his youth. There, it is related, he often stood before a mirror with the persistence of a vain and wanton woman, though not exactly with her thoughts. He looked at himself and said: "Poor old man!"

There was once a father and a son. A son is like a mirror in which the father beholds himself, and for the son the father too is like a mirror in which he beholds himself in the time to come. However, they rarely regarded one another in this way, for their daily intercourse was characterized by the cheerfulness of gay and lively conversation. It happened only a few times that the father came to a stop, stood before the son with a sorrowful countenance, looked at him steadily and said: '"Poor child, thou art going into a quiet despair." True as this saying was, nothing was ever said to indicate how it was to be understood. And time father believed that he was to blame for the son's melancholy, and the son believed that he was the occasion of the father's sorrow — but they never exchanged a word on this subject.

Then the father died, and the son saw much, experienced much, and was tried in manifold temptations; but infinitely inventive as love is, longing and the sense of loss taught him, not indeed to wrest from the silence of eternity a communication, but to imitate the father's voice so perfectly that he was content with the likeness. So he did not look at himself in a mirror like the aged Swift, for the mirror was no longer there; but in loneliness he comforted himself by hearing the father's voice: "Poor child, thou art going into a quiet despair." For the father was the only one who had understood him, and yet he did not know in fact: whether he had understood him; and

the father was the only confidant he had had, but the confidence was of such a sort that it remained the same whether the father lived or died.

January 8. Morning.

A YEAR ago today I saw her at the house of her uncle, where she and I ‘were at the same party. How mysteriously I brood over my love, and how secretly I imbibe love’s nutriment! And why so mysteriously? Verily it is not as though love stood in need of any incitement of mystification; but partly it is because I am accustomed from an earlier period to employ mystification, and still more from the period of preparation for this *tentamen rigorosum,* and partly because it seems to me I owe it to her. Surely it is inexcusable for a man to abuse the free intercourse with the other sex, which our institutions now permit, by making love, as it is called. It is impossible to reckon how and to what extent this love-making may disturbingly affect a girl, and disturbingly affect the man to whom she is one day to belong. I know well that love can ignore trifling occasions of disquietude, and yet, if I were in love with a girl, it would always pain me, it would affect me disagreeably, that she had been the object of a love-maker’s attention. Far better if she had been in love or married, for not any of the more serious impression of the erotic has nearly so disturbing an effect as this indeterminate sort, which precisely for this reason is described as flirtation. I could wish then that another might be considerate of me, and so shall I be of him, for I am very far from having the hardihood to assume as a matter of course that she shall belong to me. But whether she becomes mine/or she doesn’t become mine — what short shrift language can make, and at other times language is in such loving agreement with the prolixity of sorrow — my judgment remains unaltered. If she is to belong to another, I could wish that my thought, quickly slain, might retire within me and leave no outward trace.

Neither am I so reserved because I wish to take her off her guard by some mystification. What good would that do me? I might indeed go on the assumption that I am a capital fellow who surely could make her happy, if only she were good enough. I do not know if such a thought can find place in a lover's head, mine does not harbor it. I feel all too keenly the responsibility and what it would mean to take a girl off her guard by guile — to beguile myself into assuming this weight of responsibility. If at any time she were to become mine, and I must acknowledge to myself that I had used guile with her, I should be as though annihilated, for all my good luck, because what has been done cannot be undone, yea, not even construed differently by the imagination, since even her interpretation would have nothing to say about how different things would have been if guile had not been used. I do not know if guile can ever be compatible with the erotic, but this I know, that when one strives with God and with oneself about *daring* to follow the beckoning of love, about daring to grasp the wish which is the eye's delight and the heart's desire, one is secured against erring in that way. But for this reason I am so cautious, cautious up to the last instant — ah, if within me there were to come a counter-order, that I ought not to have intervened presumptuously to disturb her, and I were then to have not merely the pain of unhappy love, but be obliged to make the retreat of repentance.

However, the fullness of time is approaching. For well on to a year since for the first time I perceived that I was in love with her (for I had seen her before without perceiving this), I have abandoned myself secretly and clandestinely to this love. I have seen her in society, seen her in her room, I have followed her path unobserved. This last was in a way the dearest to me, partly because it satisfied the secrecy of love, partly because it did not distress me with the fear that someone would find it out, which might vex her and too early snatch me unresolved from my school of training. This

year, the year of training, has a peculiar fascination for me. Throughout everything else that I undertook was twined love's silken cord, as in the anchor-ropes of the Americans; and whatever else I undertook stood in close relation to it. The anchor-rope can have no presentiment of the storm which is to test it, but I on the contrary imagined many dreadful situations and exercised myself in them, while the pleasure hummed an accompaniment to the labor. A student who is in love reads diligently for his examination, how much more then must I be enthusiastic about undertaking such a course of training, which in quite a different sense was my *conditio sine qua non.*

How expert I became only he can comprehend who understands what it means to undertake nothing, not the very least thing, except by force of reflection, which is as if in order to walk one had to use an artificial leg and could not take a step without it, and at the same time would conceal from people the fact that it was an artificial leg. That at least in the case of reflection can be done successfully. A man has merely to be aware how much he does spontaneously, and then he would know what it is not to do the least thing without calculation. He would know what a difference there is between coming to a merry party and being joyful as a matter of course, and coming, on the other hand, from the utmost gloom of melancholy, and yet coming precisely at the stroke of the clock as indicated in the invitation, and with the sort of merriment prescribed by the society and the environment. In case one is not in love, one must faint by the way.

She went once a week to her singing-lesson, that I knew. I knew where the singing-teacher lived. Far from making any effort to thrust myself into these circles, I wished merely to behold her secretly. Now it chanced happily that there dwelt in the same street a pastry cook, whose shop she passed in going to her lesson. Here I had my waiting-place. Here I sat and waited, here I saw her, myself unseen, here love's secret growth waxed and

developed before my eyes, to my great contentment. It was a second rate pastry shop. I could be pretty sure of not being surprised. However, several of my familiar companions took notice of my habit of going there. I made them believe that the coffee was incomparably the best in the whole city, I went so far as to invite them with great pathos to try it. A few of them went there one day and tasted... and found it mediocre — as of course it was. I disputed this opinion zealously. The consequence was that once when the question was broached among these friends and several others why I always went to that pastry shop, one of them said, "Oh, well, that's nothing but his usual obstinacy. Once he has affirmed for a mere whim that the coffee is superb he must force himself to drink the stuff only to show that he is right. It's just like him — a clever pate, but the most contentious fellow — and the best way to take vengeance on him, as on Diogenes, is not to contradict him but to pay no attention to him, or, in this instance, to his coffee-house." Another man thought that I had a marked tendency to fixed ideas, and he found it amusing that I really could believe the coffee was good. In fact they were all at fault, for to my taste too the coffee was bad. On the other hand they were not at fault in revenging themselves on me by fulfilling my wish and leaving me in peace with my pastry cook and his coffee. If I had begged them not to come, I hardly could have been so secure. I drank the coffee without paying much attention to it, but here it was I waited, here it was I fed love with longing and refreshed it with the vision, and from thence when the vision had vanished I had much to take home with me. I never dared to sit by the window, but when I sat in the middle of the room my eye was able to command the street and the opposite sidewalk where she went, but the passers-by could not see me. Oh, beauteous season, Oh, lovely recollection, Oh, sweet disquietude, Oh, happy vision, when I embellished my hidden existence with the enchantment of love!

As a child I had a Latin-master in the grammar school whom I often remember. He was very capable, and it is not to be supposed that one learned little from him, but sometimes he was rather strange, or at least rather *distrait.* His distraction, however, did not take the form of falling into a reverie, lapsing into silence, etc., but once in a while he suddenly talked in an entirely different voice and as though from an entirely different world. We read with him among other things the “Phormia” of Terrence. Here it is related of Phaedrio that having fallen in love with a cithern player, the only way he could gratify his love was to follow her on her way to and from the music school. At this point the poet says: *ex advorsum ei loco tonstrina er at quae dam; hie solebamus fere plerumque eam opperiri dum inde rediret domum.*

The Latin-master, with a teacher’s usual gravity, asked the pupil why in this instance *dum* governed the conjunctive. The pupil replied, Because here it means the same as *dummodo.* That is right, replied the teacher; but thereupon he began to explain that one must not think of the conjunctive in an external way, as though it were the particle as such which governed the conjunctive. It was the internal and the psychical which determined the mood, and so here it is the wishful passion, the impatient longing, the soul’s expectant emotion. At this point his voice was entirely altered, and he continued: “For in fact, he who sits and waits in this barber shop, as though it were a coffee-house or some such public place, is far from being an indifferent onlooker, but he is a lover who waits for the loved one. Oh, yes, if it had been a porter, a chaisebearer, a messenger, or a cabby who had waited, then properly this waiting would have to be thought of as a way of passing the time while the girl was at the music school, and this is not thought conjunctively but indicatively — unless perhaps these gentlemen were waiting for their pay, which is a very mediocre passion. Properly, language ought not to permit such an expectation to be expressed by the

conjunctive. But it is Phaedrio who waits, and he is waiting, if only she, if at last she, if only she now, soon, soon, might return — and all this is quite properly conjunctive.” There was such solemnity and passion in his tone that the pupils sat as though they heard a ghostly voice. He fell silent. Thereupon he cleared his throat and said with the usual gravity of a teacher, “The next.”

This is a recollection of my schooldays. I now perceive clearly that my unforgettable Latin-master, though he only professed to teach Latin, could also have undertaken other subjects.

A year ago I accompanied her home at night. There was no one else who could be asked to do this. I walked joyfully beside her, in company with some other girls. I felt happier, however, for this concealment [which the “others” provided], coming so near to reality, yet without being in reality nearer or farther, while the distance of concealment draws the object to itself. If all this were an illusion? Impossible! Why do I feel happier in the distance of possibility? For the reasons I have given — everything else is a gloomy imagination; she is indeed the only one I loved and have loved, I will never love any other. But I will not degrade my soul by learning to know her (as the phrase is), by testing and exploring her nature. She is my loved one, and the secret labor of my love is to think everything lovable of her, until I almost perish with impatience. The time and hour may likely be approaching. My soul is resolved.

January 9. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. I count the instants — if only I am granted an opportunity to talk with her, the lot is cast. I have thought the whole thing over afresh: either her/or nothing. Good God! if only this may turn out prosperously! I did not dare to pray for this gift, except with the infinite reservation that I am not praying for her but for what is beneficial to me. In no other way have I ever dared to pray God for anything, nor have I ever

wished to pray in any other way. By the short-cut of resignation God and man are doubtless nearest to one another, but this short-cut is an entire journey around existence. In a certain sense I am almost more afraid of her Yes than of her No. Being on intimate terms as I am with silence and gloomy thoughts, a No befits me better. If however it is Yes — indeed, that is my only wish. It does not have to fit in with my other traits; as I have a dark corner of my soul where I am a melancholy inmate, so also shall joy dwell with me when I belong to her, I shall be able to concentrate my soul upon making her as happy as is possible for me. More I do not demand of life but that my soul might have one haunt where joy is at home, one object upon which to concentrate itself to create joy and to rejoice.

As for her, I have not been concerned to put her to the proof or, as the phrase is, to learn to know her. This saying constantly runs in my mind: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.” This one thing needful is here, she is the beloved. So I think that we fit one another: if I am good enough, she certainly is. Dangers I fear not; indeed I almost find joy in the absurd wish that she were unhappy. Truly, the only thing I fear is that without me she might become far happier.

On the other hand, into her environment, her situation in life, I may almost be said to have spied. Fortunately the situation is favorable to me. She and her family live in an almost idyllic tranquillity. Her father is a serious man, and the death of the mother has softened his nature and instilled a kindliness which, in spite of sadness, is open-hearted and inviting. Cheerfulness is not repelled from this house, but enjoyment is not sought outside or in frivolous companionship with Tom, Dick and Harry. The mother’s death has helped to unite the children in a more serious bond and taught them to find their pleasure in the home, where the father watches over them all the more carefully for his bereavement and permits himself

not ungraciously to be rejuvenated by youth's just demands upon life. This is as I could wish. Her environment is of a sort that favors my project and my future happiness more than a duenna favors the understanding between the knight and his lady-love. I would not venture to tear a girl from an environment habitual to her if I must transplant her into a strange and foreign way of life.

Come then, thou favorable moment! I would talk with her, I would not write nor have recourse to a third party. It is my belief that a sincere love, a hearty conviction, a resolute choice, bestows the brief word and imparts to the very voice an expression, a trustworthiness, which to the person concerned is more convincing and more satisfying than the result of deliberation by kindred and friends, who after all do not know one. What I want can be said briefly, the more briefly the better, if only it is said face to face. If I possessed eloquence, if I possessed the power to infatuate, how anxious I should be lest I might employ these means, and if I were to employ them, I should be the one to pay most dearly for it. I fear no one as I fear myself. Woe unto me in case I were to discover that there had been one deceitful word in my mouth, one single word whereby I had sought to persuade her.

January 11. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. It is a laborious effort after all, well-nigh beyond my strength, to keep the soul upon the apex of resolution. So it is the wood-chopper swings the axe well above his head, and this position redoubles its weight many times; he throws all his strength into the stroke, every muscle swells with the exertion. That is only an instant. Oh, that these instants might be shortened! Oh, that I may not be making a mistake, grasping amiss! If in this almost supernatural state of mind I am not grasping a reality, if this potentiation of feeling were to turn against me in the service of a new reflection, then I am utterly exhausted, perhaps annihilated forever.

O time, time, how dreadful it is to have a quarrel with thee! O man, how strangely art thou compounded: to be capable of being so strong, and to be capable of falling before mere nothing! I feel now as strong as a Greek god, but I perceive also that if nothing comes to pass, I am crushed.

Then I met her. We encountered one another as we both were calling upon a family in Princes Street. The lady we sought was with her grandparents in an apartment some floors above; as I had a message for her, the daughter was polite enough to offer to go and fetch her. — So we were alone. Perhaps an opportunity so favorable or a moment so safe might not soon present itself. The grandmother was rather deaf, but very curious, as old people often are. So everything had to be reported to her loudly and clearly, which naturally takes some time. Juliana as she ran out to the stairway had slammed after her the entry door, and so locked herself and her mother out. The situation did not favor any unbosoming of glowing feelings, but it would compel her to use all her powers to insure that no one would notice anything, and if at the worst the others upon joining us should find her a little different than usual, they naturally would explain this as due to the tactlessness of Juliana in leaving us alone, and all the more for the fact that I had to go out to open the door, which would give occasion to a little merriment. The dramatic happens more swiftly than it can be told. A half-minute was enough for me to survey the situation, though I am prolix in recalling it to memory.

Am I sly after all, is there something calculated in everything I undertake? Good God! When I employ my shrewdness precisely out of consideration for her, what more can I do? The word uttered might remain a secret between her and me, no one, not even a devil could chance to suspect that such an instant had been so employed, the word uttered could be dead, powerless, as though it has never been said, if so it pleased her. The situation was precisely of a sort to prevent her from saying to anyone a

word such as in another case she might utter in agitation of mind and bitterly regret.

What I said I do not know, but I trembled inwardly, and my voice though calm showed how deeply I was moved. How it was I cannot describe, only it was an indescribable alleviation to give vent to my feelings. I am sure that what I said had the stamp of the inward genuineness of my passion. She remained as if petrified, she trembled visibly, she answered not a word. — I heard footsteps on the stair, the bell rang, I opened the door, laughter helped us out, conversation began; the thing succeeded. My wish was that she would go first and thus avoid following me directly, which might seem suspicious; and by going first she would also secure herself against any questions. Presumably she had comprehended the situation as I did. She went. I remained for an hour's time to distract attention.

Thereupon I went home and appealed to her father in writing, soliciting her hand. At this point every worldly deliberation, every sympathetic and anxious consideration [on the part of her family] in view of so important a step is agreeable to me and is to my notion appropriate. I am far from wishing to avoid it, on the contrary I desire that every difficulty, every doubt, may be definitely faced, that every danger may become clear to her. But my first word, my declaration of love, is to be upheld in its integrity, it is not to be jumbled in among such deliberations as one additional exhibit. I have kept silent so long, and therefore I have a right to utter the word without artifice, without deceit, but just as my feeling prompts when it concentrates the whole strength of a quiet passion in one decisive word and in one decisive instant. That is the impression I would like her to have of me, and that is the impression I myself would like to have, the rest I commit to God — as also this that I have done, though in another way.

Have I overwhelmed her? Have I made too strong an impression? Can a girl perhaps not bear the unexpected and an outburst of passion

concentrated in one word? Why was she silent? Why did she tremble? Why was she almost afraid of me? When the city gate has not been opened for many years, it is not thrown ajar noiselessly like an ordinary door which turns on hinges! When the door of silence has long been shut, the word does not sound like the good day and farewell of a tripping tongue; when a man will stake all upon one word, when for a year and a day a man has willed one thing and now is to say it, not to a friend, but to one who holds in her hand the fulfillment of his wish, then is the voice not uninterested like that of the night-watchman who cries the hours, nor interested in the same way as the peasant who counts his turfs. Why am I afraid then, why am I uneasy, why is reflection ready to wound me, as though there were something crafty in keeping silent so long, something demoniac in being able to do so, something sly in seizing the opportunity, something unforgivable in employing the simplest means and the most honest mode of procedure — because maybe this is the most effective?

January 12. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. It is decided. So they did not make my time of probation too long. Well, I needed the relief, for I am greatly fatigued. Oh, thou sinewy and supple athlete, possibility; one tries in vain to deprive thee of power by raising thee from the ground, for thou wilt let thyself be drawn out as long as eternity, and still dost keep thy foothold; one seeks in vain to put thee at a distance, for thou art a man's self. Yes, I know it, it is thou who one day wilt take my life, but not this time. Let me go, thou withered witch whose embrace is to me more loathsome than was that of the witch of the woods to the squire of Roland, shrink to the nothingness thou art, lie there like a shrivelled snake till life again enters into thee, and again thou dost become tough and elastic before my soul, ready to consume my life. At this instant thy power is broken. The time of probation is past — if only it has not been too short, if only they have not hurried her into forming a

resolution, if only they have represented to her sufficiently the difficulties of the case.

Be joyful then, my soul! God in heaven, I thank Thee! Now a little day of rest so that I can thoroughly rejoice in her, for I know that I can undertake nothing, nothing whatever, without thinking of her.

The first kiss — Oh, what bliss! A girl joyful in heart, happy in youth! And she is mine. What are all gloomy thoughts but a cobweb, and what is melancholy but a mist which flees before this reality, a sickness which is healed and which is being healed by the sight of this health, this health which indeed is mine since it is hers who is my life and my future. Wealth she does not possess, that I know, I know it well, nor is there need of it, but she can say as an Apostle said to the impotent man, "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that I give thee: arise and be strong!"

If yesterday I became ten years older, today I have become ten years younger — no, younger than I have ever been. Is not this a crisis? Is it suspension of the sentence? *Estne adhuc sub judice lis?* Have I indeed become ten years older, I who was almost an old man? — poor girl, who will have to cherish a dead man! Or have I become young, younger than I ever was — enviable lot to be able to be so much to a man.

January 12. Midnight.

EVERYTHING is asleep; only the dead rise at this hour from the grave and live over again. And not even that am I doing, for as I am not dead, I cannot live over again, nor in case I were dead could I live over again, for indeed I have never lived.

To keep my nightly occupation as much hidden as possible I take the precaution of going to bed at nine o'clock. At twelve I get up again. No one thinks of such a thing, not even the sympathetic souls who have sympathy enough to censor me for going to bed so early.

Was it an accident which brought us so near to one another? Or what power is it that persecutes me with her whom I flee and yet would not escape? To see her is a terror to me, such as it must be for a sinner to hear the death sentence read, and yet I dare not avoid this sight, any more than I dare seek it, which to her might be equally disturbing. In case I were to know within myself that I had gone a step out of my usual way to avoid her, had remained away from any place where I am accustomed to go, in order to avoid her, I believe that I should lose my reason. Only by enduring and suffering, by submitting to every argument directed against my lacerated soul, do I retain any meaning in my existence. If I were to follow a particular street in search of her, were to take one step, I believe that I should lose my reason, for fear I might have hindered her from helping herself out of this affair. I dare not do anything nor leave anything undone, my situation is like the eternal torture of the damned.

And today was the anniversary of our engagement! She was about to cross obliquely from the street to the footway where I was walking, she could not step up to the curb till I had passed, and a carriage which drove by made it impossible for her to retire to the street. If I had wanted to talk with her the situation was as favorable as it could be. But no, not a word, not a sound, not a movement of the lips, not a doubtful intimation in the eye, nothing, nothing on my part. Great God! If she were a fever patient, if this word of mine were the glass of cold water she craved — and I were to refuse it? So then I am a monster! No, my little maiden, no! we have talked enough with one another! Oh, to think that I am capable in my thought of talking thus about her for whose sake I would venture everything, if only I can be persuaded that it is profitable to her. But why does she persecute me? I am in the wrong; most truly, most certainly I have done her an atrocious wrong. But am I not punished? Have I not a murder upon my conscience? Have I no rights at all? Should she not understand what I suffer? Is it a

loving girl who acts thus? And why does she look at me in that way? Because she believes that inwardly this makes an impression upon me. So then she believes there is some good in me. And then to be willing to wound a tortured soul!

I made the instant as long as possible. In such an encounter there is necessarily a halt, because the one must wait till the other has gone by.

So I used my advantage to form a judgment of her appearance and if possible of the state of her soul. I had taken out my pocket handkerchief, and as one holds it out to see what part one will use, so I stood phlegmatically as though I did not recognize her, although I regarded her, and saw her with the exactness of despair. But not a word, not a look which was not as meaningless as nothing. Only within did I burn, for I too have warm blood, perhaps only too warm. Burst, thou heart, so that I fall over dead — there is some sense in that, one can put up with it. Beat tinglingly to the finger tips, if that must be, beat inwardly with the blow of terror upon the heart, but not visibly in the temples, not in the lips, not in the eye — that I will not, I will it not. Why did I become heated, why was I compelled to discover what a power of dissimulation I possess when it serves a good cause?

She was not so pale, but perhaps the fresh air was the cause of this, perhaps she had been taking a long walk. Her glance made an attempt to judge me, but she cast her eyes down, she had almost a beseeching look. A woman's prayers! Who was so irresponsible as to put this weapon into her hand? Who gives a sword to a madman? And yet how impotent he is in comparison with the prayer of the impotent!

As I turned the corner I had to hold myself up by the support of the houses. In case I had then encountered an acquaintance to whom I would say, "So it is, I may appear quite calm and unimpassioned, but on turning a corner I come near fainting" — and in case this acquaintance were an

inquisitive person who would watch me secretly, then what? Why then I should be aware of it, for as Caspar Hauser could feel the presence of metal through countless layers of clothing, so I can feel deceit and cunning through every covering. What then? Why, then I would not become dizzy when I turned the corner, but when I had gone some way along the street and the inquisitive person had seen nothing, then I would seek the nearest cross street in order to collapse.

Sleep well now! Sleep well, my beloved! Would to God she might sleep away all her pain and sleep herself joyful and rosy before morning! Have tight-rope dancers who are parents no father-and mother-love, have they no love when they set the child up on the thin rope and walk beneath it in mortal anguish? If then my sentence has not yet been pronounced, that I am a murderer, what worse can come to pass but that she dies? And yet there is no likelihood of that. Either she is the rare exception among girls, and then my behavior is exactly what is needed to insure that she shall not be troubled at being the distinguished instance, a girl whose apotheosis did not begin with death but with sorrow/or she is — indeed I do not like to say it — she has imagined, etc., and thereupon she becomes sensible etc., i.e. she imagines she has become sensible, etc. — halt! I possess no factual evidence which justifies me in drawing any conclusion. So then I remain in my misery and hold her in honor. But my shrewd common sense, my common sense it is which says this, yes, it says this to vex me, for it never was my wish that she should prove herself to be less than she seems, and neither for her sake nor for mine could I wish to be delivered in this way, i.e. in this way to be proved a fool.

But there is nothing, nothing that can assist me to get a little evidence. In vain I throw myself now upon one side, now upon the other; when one lies upon a bed of torture it pricks on all sides. She may despise — great God! that is what I want, what I labor for, and yet I shudder inwardly at such a

living martyrdom. Whether I can endure it, whether I shall not despair utterly, I do not know, but this I know, and this is known to the Power which by its nature is cognizant of the most secret thoughts, it knows that I pulled the cord of the douche. If that will crush me, I know not. — She can consign her soul to patience, can with unscathed conscience don the veil of sorrow — what can I do, how can I hide from myself, where is the hiding-place in which the weary man can collect new strength, where is the couch spread upon which I can slumber quietly and refreshingly? In the grave? No, it is false when the Scripture says that in the grave there is no remembrance — I shall remember her. In eternity? Is there time there to slumber? Eternity! How will she appear when I see her again? Will she come forward accusingly and condemningly? Horrible! Or will she have sweated the whole thing out like a childish prank? Disgusting! And yet not disgusting but something worse, for would not my silence be to blame for the fact that she became such as this? And I precisely it was who feared lest one word from me might make her chatty and tranquillize her in flippancy!

January 15. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Is this what it means to be engaged? For I know what it is to be in love, but this new experience, to know that the object of love is assured to one, that she is mine, mine forever!

— It has not yet been made plain enough that the author of the diary (like S.K. when he broke his engagement) sought to liberate the girl from her attachment by making her believe he was a scoundrel who had been trifling with her affection.

— One may still find on the Continent a showerbath which is released by pulling a cord.

“Is this what it means to be a mother,” was Rachel’s lament when the twins strove together in her womb; and so probably many a man has said to himself when he attained what he had aspired after, “Is this what it means?”

And are there not as it were two natures striving within me? That is: have I become ten years older, or have I become ten years younger?

How strange it must seem to be a young girl, to live one's life off-handishly. I thought that I should be released, that I should be transformed, that seeing myself in love and looking upon her in love, I should behold myself saved, so that I might become like her, a free bird, a youthful song of gladness, that we should grow into one, that our life would be happy for us in union and comprehensible to others in its happiness, like the greeting of a joyous traveller who throws us a kiss as he hastens by.

I understand many things, every reflection I hear or read is as familiar to me as if it were my own. But this life of a young girl I do not understand. Thinking of nothing, and yet being so lovable; living with foolishness and wisdom so jumbled together that one does not rightly know which is which. Imagine a jeweller who had developed to such an extent his knowledge of precious stones that his whole life was in this distinction between genuine and false, suppose he saw a child playing with a variety of stones, genuine and false, mingled together, and having equal delight in both — I think he would shudder inwardly at seeing the absolute distinction resolved; but in case he beheld the child's happiness, its delight in the game, he perhaps would humble himself under it and be absorbed in this "shuddering" sight. So it is that for the spontaneous ("immediate") nature there is no absolute distinction between the ideas which like precious stones refract rays of light in thought and speech, and those which lack this quality, there is no absolute distinction which makes the one the most precious of all things, and the other nothing; makes the one the thing which defines everything, and the other that which cannot even be defined by relation to this.

Lovers ought to have no differences between them. Alas, alack! We have been united too short a time to have differences between us — we have

nothing between us, and so we have a world between us, nothing less than a world.

There are moments when I am happy, perfectly happy, happier than I ever could have dreamed of being. This is abundant compensation for my pain. If only she has no foreboding, all is well.

She is silent, quieter at least than she is wont to be, but only when we are alone. Is she thinking? If only she does not begin to reflect!

January 17. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. What is this? What does it mean? I am as deeply moved as the forest in its anxious flutter against the coming storm. What presentiment is this which oppresses me? I no longer recognize myself. Is this being in love? Oh, no! This much I understand well, that my strife is not with her, not with Eros. The clouds gathering over my head are religious crises. My life-view has become ambiguous to me — exactly how, I cannot yet say. And my life belongs to her, but she has no foreboding.

January 17. Midnight.

WHAT I write in the morning is the past and refers to the past year, what I now write, these “Night Thoughts” of mine, are the diary of the current year. The current year! What a terrible mockery of me is implied in this word. In case a man had invented language, I should believe that he had invented this word to deride me. In old times the army employed a very cruel punishment, that of riding a wooden horse. The unfortunate man was held down by weights on a wooden horse with a very sharp back. One time when this punishment was put in execution and the culprit was groaning with pain, up came a peasant who walked on the rampart and stopped to look at the drillground where the culprit was undergoing his punishment. Desperate with pain and irritated by the sight of such a blockhead, the unfortunate man shouted at him: “What are you staring at?” But the peasant

replied, “If you can’t bear to have anybody look at you, then you can ride around by another street.” And just as that riding culprit was riding, so is the current year running with me.

Something must be done for her. My brain does nothing but spin intrigues from morning to night. If before she became mine my conduct was characterized by complete candor, by the most anxious avoidance of everything that might seem to be guile, now I have become all the more intriguing. Who would not regard me as a fool if I were to tell him that now in this current year I am more busied about her than ever before? And yet the difficulty is that I dare not undertake anything, for the remotest suspicion of how much I am busied about her would be absolutely the most dangerous thing, a thing which might entice her out by a hope of the indefinite, and let her be saved, i.e. let her perish from vacillation.

To want to pay in gold for every bit of information, for every word, and not to dare to do it because it is perilous since it might arouse her suspicion and disturb her in her effort to help herself! To have to elicit an utterance en passant by a thousand tortuous ways, when one might have communication in abundance but does not dare to, does not dare to for her sake! In case I were to observe absolute silence towards my so-called nearest ones, that also might arouse a suspicion. Hence I have concocted a formula which I recite to them. Only I do not utter it as a formula but declaim it so that they do not observe that it is a formula. This one can learn from a parson. He knows very well that it is an old discarded sermon he is delivering, but he declaims and wipes the sweat from his brow, so that the hearers believe it is a talk. So do the persons concerned believe that I am talking, in spite of the fact that I am only reciting a formula which is so stereotyped that every word has been selected as a result of long deliberation. The opposite method can also be used with effect, namely, to talk in this manner: “Your highly esteemed favor of the 25th inst. *styli novi* duly received and contents

noted.” There is nothing that renders passion so opaque as the business style of the bookkeeper and the counting-house. This is the best method. I have studied it in my operation upon a case of morbid reserve, and so I know it. One should never press a reserved person importunately. With that the game is lost. But just as a rheumatic man is alarmed by a draught, one can move the reserved patient by a hint carelessly thrown out without being followed up. Or one can waylay him when once he has given a little vent to his feeling. One can straightway judge of his reserve by noticing how hard it is for him to break off when once he has begun. He regrets that he had said anything, he wants to dispel the impression (one keeps silent), now he is suspicious of himself for the fact that this didn’t succeed, he would divert the conversation to another subject (one keeps silent), he is vexed at the pause, he betrays himself more and more, if only by the zeal he shows to hide his secret. But when one knows this, one promptly proceeds with the exercises. And the art is to talk a little around the subject (for complete silence is imprudent), and thus to hold a consuming passion supply bridled by the conversation, so that like a rider one can guide it by a thread, and like a jockey make a turn in a figure eight.

It is after all a diversion to intrigue, to hear witnesses and receive evidence, to compare and check, to run the world around, to lie in wait for the instant, and to undertake something, even if nothing is gained by it — but it is unendurable to sit and be with child and bring forth wind, to devise plans each more ingenious than the last, and not dare to employ them because it is even shrewder to let things be, lest one be betrayed; to see these seductive fruits of Tantalus which tempt sympathy by promising everything! To have the passion of a gambler and not dare to budge from the spot — and only to be bound by oneself! To have the soul full of foolhardy courage, the brain full of plans, the word ready — and then to have a pen which can write, and that only with great pains, hardly more

than a letter an hour! To have the passion of a fisherman, to know where the fish will bite, and not to dare to throw out the hook; to see the float jerked and not to dare to pull it in, lest the movement might betray something! To have in one's power the person who could tell everything, to have the knife at his throat in case he were to betray anything, and yet not to be able to employ him because for me there is no comparison between revenge upon him and the injury he might do her! Instead of such information, to have to be content with the chance word of a maid or a man-servant, a cabby, a passer-by, and to have to make something out of that because it is a question of one's salvation! To have to "cook soup on a sausage-pin" — but literally to have to cook strong broth on a sausage-pin because it is the most important thing in the world! To have to sit here by night and go over my talk to make sure that the voice has not betrayed anything, that the conversational tone was maintained! Not to dare trust anyone! What is the sense of trusting anybody if one would not trust the girl one loved and whom one could beset with a hundred spying observations! If one were to confide in anyone, to be obliged then to choose him whom one cannot trust — i.e. to confide in him in the form of deception!

The only one from whom I really learn to know anything is very far from being in my service. Yet there is a secret understanding between us. He knows everything, perhaps he is the most reliable of all. Fortunately he hates me. If possible he would torture me. I understand that. He never says anything directly, never mentions a name, but he recounts to me such strange stories. At the beginning I did not understand him at all, but now I know that he talks about her, but under feigned names. He believes that I have imagination enough to understand every hint; that I have too, but also understanding enough to treat it as nothing. Yet I must take into account that he is malicious.

Would she were dead, would that she had died at once, would that she had sunk dead before my eyes at the decisive moment, would that the family had perished with her, would that I had been arrested, would that there had been a criminal trial! Oh, would that this had come to pass! At once I would have appealed to be executed and thus to be exempted from empty prolixities. Human justice is after all mere fools-play, the three courts through which the case may be carried only make the jest tiresome. The prosecution and the defense are like Harlequin and Pierot, and justice is like Jeronymus or Cassandra, who are led by the nose. Everything here is ridiculous, including the guards who parade at the execution, the only tolerable figure is the executioner. If my appeal were not denied when I myself was willing to pay all the costs, then with that confidant of mine I would have sought out a neighborhood corresponding to my condition of mind and would have required of him what knights are accustomed to require of their faithful squires, that he run the sword through my heart; and indeed it makes no difference whether it is a squire or an executioner, although the latter has the advantage that he need not feel any scruples of conscience. — Then there would have been some sense in the whole thing.

But in this situation there is no sense. I am a scoundrel. Right — if I were the man I seem to be; but I am exactly the opposite. What am I then? A fool, a visionary, an eccentric knight, who would so take to heart the word of a young girl. What! Is it a theological procedure against me as Aristotle requires? Is there no third [possibility]? Was it an idle word? Death and hell! When I examine the declaration of a witness I do it seriously. I employed two months, I have tested it in every mood, she said it in as decisive a way as possible. Is that an idle word? It must be then that a girl in accordance with her nature is renewed also in a spiritual sense and begins all over again.

Behold, now I am well prepared to go to bed, disposed to sleep — I the faithless one. So I will not think at all about anything, and will abhor especially him whose life-view in wishing to defend a girl offends her more deeply than I have done. So in conclusion I will think of thee, immortal Shakespeare; thou art capable of talking passionately. I will think of the lovable Imogene in *Cymbeline,* when in Act III, Scene 4, she says:

False to his bed! What is it to be false?

To lie in watch there, and to think on him?

To weep twixt clock and clock? If sleep change nature, To break it with a fearful dream of him, And cry myself awake?

Here even a poet of the first rank would break off, but Shakespeare knows how to speak fluently the language of passion, a language which *sensu eminenti* has the characteristic that if one cannot speak it fluently, one cannot speak it at all, i.e. it has no existence for one. Hence Imogene continues:

That's false to his bed, is it?

Grant that Imogene is right in saying, "Men's vows are women's traitors," but cursed be the paltry comfort that a woman's oath can deceive no one, because she is incapable of taking an oath or swearing.

January 20. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. I cannot keep my soul fixed upon the immediacy of love. I see indeed that she is charming, to my eyes indescribably charming, but I have no mind to divert the passion of my soul in that direction. Alas, charm is transitory, it is a pity to grasp it incontinently. She shall not have reason to complain that in this regard I led her astray erotically. There is moreover another reason for my self-restraint, for when she is most beautiful I am most unhappy. It seems to me then that she has such an indescribable claim upon life, so then I conceive that everyone has a claim upon life — everyone but me. I could wish that she were ugly, then

everything would go better. I wonder if Socrates would not have understood this declaration of being in love with the ugly. After all it is true that like only loves like. If she were unhappy, it would help. But this childlike happiness, this lightness in the world which I cannot understand and with which I cannot sympathize deeply and essentially (because my sympathy with it is through the medium of sadness, which precisely manifests the contradiction) — and my heroic struggle, my courage and (to mention something good on my side) my lightness in dancing over abysses, of which she can have no conception and with which she can sympathize only unessentially, as with a dreadful tale one reads without being able to think it as real, except through the medium of imagination — what will come of this?

So I have chosen the religious. This lies closest to me, I have put my trust in this. So let beauty be a thing apart, let heaven conserve it to her. If I gain a common point of departure on that road, come then thou smiling and carefree beauty, I will rejoice in thee as sincerely as I can, then braid fresh roses in thy hair, I will handle thee as lightly as is possible for me, as is possible for one who is wont with the passion of thought, facing mortal danger, to grasp the decisive thing.

Yesterday I read aloud to her a sermon. How moving it was! Never has my soul been more shaken, tears were wrung from my eyes, an apprehension of the dreadful is upon me, lower and lower sinks over me the dark cloud of care, I can hardly see her although she is sitting by my side. I wonder what she is thinking, poor girl! And yet let there come what will on that road. What is she thinking? She is hushed, quiet, but entirely tranquil. I wonder if she might ascribe this effect to love, supposing that I was overwhelmed by her. That is impossible, to my eyes it would be the most unseemly thing I can think of. When I humble myself under God — then for her to suppose it was under her! No, such an effect upon me she has not.

I have been able and still am able to bear to live without her, if only I may retain the religious. But I have a presentiment that what affected me so deeply were religious crises involved in the attempt to introduce this factor into what I had begun.

Might it be possible, might my whole life-view be at fault, might I have stumbled upon something where the mysterious is prohibited? I do not understand it. I who had become a master in my art, I who (yes, I admit it) proudly ranked myself with the heroes I found in the descriptions of the poets, because I knew I could do what was related of them, I who precisely for her sake and for the sake of this relationship had brought this art to perfection! If a pilgrim who had wandered for ten years, taking two steps forward and one step backwards, if now he were to see the Holy City in the distance and he was told that this was not the Holy City — oh, well, he would walk farther — but if he was told, “This is the Holy City, but thy way of progressing is entirely wrong, thou must wean thyself from this way of walking if thou wouldst be wellpleasing to heaven!” He who for ten years had walked thus with the utmost exertion!

January 20. Midnight.

Is there no third party here? No, all is dark, the lights entirely extinguished. It goes without saying that if anyone were suspicious of me or curious, the best course would be to remain in a dark room. How rewarding it is to be reserved, verily I cannot say that I have lost my reward.

Supposing a third person were to think about my conduct as a lover, or a second person — for as a matter of fact I perhaps am the only one who thinks about it, and that not with a second party. Well, that after all is what I wish and what I strive for. Yet it is a fearsome thing to think it thus in the stillness of the night when the whole of existence seems somehow topsy-turvy and somehow preposterous and hence somehow uncanny. When will the moment come that I am permitted to examine more closely how it

stands with me and what I have suffered? — So then, if there were a third party who thought about my conduct as a lover — at any rate I will begin it, and I am able to begin anywhere, the only thing I cannot do is to leave off. There is a contradiction in this whole desperate effort I am making, I seem to myself like a man who would take his *examen artium* and had read outside the subject enough for seven men, but had not read what was prescribed, and so failed to pass. A third person, whether it be the theatrical friseur, a merchant of silk, wool, or linen, a little girl at boarding school, to say nothing of the gentlemen who write novels and romances — a third person would have the answer on the tip of his tongue. The situation is this: I am a depraved man, in a new debauch of sin I have soon forgotten the girl and the relationship. "That is certain, it is only too certain, so we will find a way out." And certain it is — this is precisely my comfort. I am not known to many people, it is true, but if the girl were to go to any of them that know me, there is not a single one who would fail to say this. Whether it be the green-grocer's apprentice over there, all dressed up on a Sunday and engaged to be married, he thinks with abhorrence of such a man; whether it be one of the simpler amateurs of East Street, he feels himself a knight when he reflects upon such baseness; whether it be a husband who worries his wife to death by his marital fidelity, he is indignant at the thought of such falseness. But the girl, so says the third person, sits and sorrows, she is busy with every little remembrance, she listens for his footstep. — But this first is not so, consequently it follows that the second is not so. Would that this conclusion were true! But what is it Aristotle says?

Every word she uttered, every look of hers, I remember as clearly as if it were yesterday, and every hint I get about her, even the most insignificant, is immediately put in circulation between the deliberating thoughts. The most unimportant item becomes the subject of the most enormous effort. There were some in ancient times who held that the vortex is the principle

which explains the world. My life is a vortex. What sometimes brings the vortex to a boil is an atom which cannot be seen by the naked eye, a mere nothing. My pride forbids me to disregard the least item, my honor forbids it, and when one is alone with it as I am, one must deal with it scrupulously. What in another case I should allow to go in one ear and out of the other now possesses importance, absolute importance. In case a religious zealot had only one Biblical text he could appeal to, what efforts he would make to prove its genuineness, so that he might see his system erected upon that secure foundation! And a Biblical text after all is something, but a word of hers, a remark about the tea which she didn't know she had uttered, that is a small thing. Yet it might be possible that this implied a secret — this might be possible. Who but I might be able to understand this? But also in my own person I have confirmation that it might be a secret, for to whom could it ever occur that I might be such a man as I am? *Ergo* — yes, it is correct, absolutely correct, this thing is possible. It is possible that she was just as proficient in reflection as I am. Yes, if my honor and my pride, my melancholy, were not screwing me tight in these thumbscrews, I hardly should have felt the force of this syllogism. But I would not have it otherwise. If the situation might be altered, if only this were possible, oh, if this were to come about, then I should know within myself that I have exerted myself to the utmost, that I have done all that understanding and madness can devise, that the alteration did not come about as a new fancy but as the potentiation of logical consistency, I should know within myself that I have done everything to repel her from me, if this might save her, and everything to keep my soul at the highest stretch of desire, in order that I might remain the same. That I am at this instant, heaven be praised, and my hope is that I may be able to sustain this tension as long as may be necessary. After all there is nothing so fortifying as consistency and nothing so consistent as consistency itself. Till now I have not conferred with flesh

and blood, the passion of my soul keeps the sail unchangeably taut for the wind of resolution. As sailors say that the ship keeps going unchangeably with the same headway, so I dare say of myself that I stand still unchangeably with the same headway. She has besought me in prayer, it is her prayer which has brought me to despair.

My suffering is a punishment. I accept it from God's hand, I have deserved it. I have often in my youth smiled inwardly at love. I have not derided it, nor sought with hand or mouth to make it ridiculous, it concerned me too little for that. But I have lived intellectually. When in the poets I read the speeches of lovers, I smiled because I could not understand how such a relationship could concern them so much. The eternal, a God-relationship, relationship to ideals, was what moved my soul, but such a middling thing I could not comprehend. Well, now I suffer, I do penance, although it is not in a purely erotic sense I am suffering.

January 25. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She appears to have no religious postulates. So a metamorphosis may come about. And yet what will my bit of influence amount to in opposition to the spontaneity of childhood? If only I do not acquire too much power over her. If only there does not supervene the unseemly situation which well may occur along this road, that I become a religious instructor instead of her loved one, that I become patronizing to her and do away with the erotic factor, that I become autocratic instead of the beloved, that I consign her feminine loveliness to oblivion and assert myself. Would that I might succeed in lifting her, or rather that she might vault over into the sphere of religious freedom where she will feel the might of spirit and feel herself secure and safe, then all will be well. May she not come to think unreasonably that she owes me something, or imagine such a thing. Even if my melancholy is unable to afford satisfaction to her pretty youthful claim upon life (and God knows if it be not my melancholy which

by its exaggerations puts my sympathy to the torture), well then I will regard her love as a sacrifice which she offers. Can love be more highly valued or more dearly paid for? In an intellectual respect I shall always be able to be something to her. Then too we grow older, so there comes a time when youth no longer desires in such a way and when our love has in a peculiar sense the years in its favor. Or is that love so much to be envied which knows no more beautiful period than when the lovers could float out upon the floor in a waltz?

She is reserved, quiet, thoroughly tranquil. When anyone is present she is merry as usual.

January 26. Midnight.

OH, if it were possible, if it were possible! Every nerve in my body tries out as it were, thrusts out feelers before it in existence to discover whether after all it might not turn out thus: that we might come to the point of suiting one another, that up to this time I shall have retained the strength to maintain my soul and my love at the highest tension of the wish *per tot discrimina,* that she has promptly apprehended the situation aright without looking either to the right hand or to the left. Oh, how great a return for all my misery, though in all it were to last but one day and the wedding day were to be the day of my death, what exorbitant pay for all my trouble, for what, comically conceived, I have lightly given away, and what in my tragic suffering I call the forced labor of a convict! Inexpressible bliss! What then are Romeo and Juliet in comparison with an understanding reached through such trials of temptation, in comparison with a victory attained through such dangers, in comparison with the happiest issue from the deepest despair! Great! yea, verily that would be great! If it were to occur in the winter time, I deem that the flowers might spring up for gladness; if it were in summer, I deem that the sun might dance for joy; and at every season the race would be proud of a happiness which made us too happy to be proud of happiness.

— But if, but if, if I were to become weary and lose my strength and were to die away from the wish; if she were to become sick and were to waste away, if she be now sick and is wasting away! Or if she could not hold out with me in the desert of expectancy, if she were to long for the more secure life in Egypt, or if she were to marry another! God's blessing be upon her. That to be sure is what in a sense I desired, what I labored for. And yet now I regard it differently. So I have more than one mind. Is that a sign of cleverness or of madness? If she was entirely unchanged, having suffered nothing either in mind or body, but she understood me not, understood me not absolutely, if the heart in the young girl's bosom were not to beat so violently as it does in the breast of the faithless man, if young blood were not to rush to her head as it does to mine, if it were to run tranquilly in the veins of the inexperienced girl and not as it does in the cold soul of the man of understanding, if she were not to comprehend my suffering or its degree, were not to comprehend my icy calmness and its necessity in case the word "forgiveness" between us were to be seriousness, the seriousness of the Judgment, not a rampart we each of us fled to in loving jest while faithfulness rejoiced in its victory, if she were not to comprehend absolutely that in our age there is only one way of being an enthusiast and preserving the soul's romanticism in the midst of the laughing hard-headedness of the nineteenth century, and that this is by being just as cold externally as one is inwardly hot, if she were not to understand, not to understand absolutely, that it is a base thing to help by halves, and that it is faithfulness to decline to give a deceptive alleviation, if she, when from heaven there came the intimation, the signal for our happiness, had ceased to mark time and was not in a position to respond to it — what then, what then, what then? Yea, I can endure no more, I sink back again. If only she is saved, it will be right with me. Let her do what she will if only she is outside of me, actually outside of me, belongs to another, has become weary of the whole affair, or

never has understood me. In case I am assured of that, whether she were to wish it, or whether she merely let it come to pass (which is something I do not fear, for if I dare to give rein to my passion, it makes place for me everywhere), then what a sophist I should become to prove to her that she has chosen the highest thing.

So I wish her well. In this very second I can think of ten possibilities, yea, of twenty, in spite of my distressful one-sidedness which has a sense only for the possibilities of misfortune, I can think of an interpretation of everyone, and then again of an interpretation, which shall prove to her that she has done the proudest thing. Supposing she were so proud that she dare not admit her love for me, she who however was bound to die of it, suppose she defends herself by making light of me — if only I might venture to speak, I shall not be ashamed of her, I will say calmly "Much have I lost, much indeed, or rather I have been obliged to deprive myself of my dearest wish." Should I fear to admit an unhappy love? Should I alter myself and my judgment of her because she altered towards me? What after all is a human life? It is like grass, withered tomorrow. Perhaps I too shall be dead tomorrow! If a fool were to laugh at me, what does that prove but that I have acted wisely?

If a son of perdition were pityingly to shrug his shoulders at me, what does that prove but that I still dare hope for my salvation in the beyond before God?

But for myself and for us both I wish still again my most blissful wish which is beyond all human measure and passes all understanding. Sleep well, my beloved, sleep well; be with me in my dreams, be with this lonely one, thou heavenly Perhaps, with thine inexpressible bliss. And so to rest:

Zu Bett, su Bett wer seinen Liebsten hat,
Wer keinen hat muss auch su Bett.

February I. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Certainly in an erotic sense I am not doing her an injury. With her I comport myself as modestly as if she were not my fiancée but simply a girl confided to my care. How could this have a disturbing effect upon her, how could it have the effect of indirect stimulation? Oh, faithless reflection! When a man fixes his eye upon thee, thou faithless one, thou dost appear trustworthy enough and like an experienced warrior who vouches for victory, and no sooner is one's face turned away than thou art seen as thou art, a deserter, a deserter by profession, a deserter to whom it is an impossibility to be faithful to anyone. That she is encompassed by such a reflection she hardly is aware.

She is quiet and reserved with regard to every religious impression. I will touch her a bit poetically, and in a lighter conversation she seems to find pleasure in the theme.

If only she be not proud, for in that case she must misunderstand me entirely. I do not deny that at certain instants there is something which seems to indicate it, in the presence of others I even have been the subject of utterances which might well be thus interpreted.

February 2. Midnight.

GOD created man in His own image, and in requital man created God in his, says Lichtenberg, and it is true that a man's conception of God is essentially determined by the kind of man he is. So it is that I conceive of God as one who approves of a calculated vigilance, I believe that he approves of intrigues, and what I have read in the sacred books of the Old Testament is not of a sort to dishearten me. I cannot conceive of God without this poetic mindfulness of the honest device of a troubled passion. If it were not so, I must become anxious and fearful about myself. The Bible is always lying on my table and is the book I read most, a severe book of edification in the tradition of the older Lutheranism is my other guide —

and for all that I have found nothing whatever to deter me from acting towards her as shrewdly as I possibly can, from concocting a plan as shrewd as I can possibly devise, when I have in view not my own welfare but hers. This collision between shrewdness and pure ethico-religious duties abstractly conceived is difficult enough. From great speculative geniuses and admired poets whose utterances at a merry meal are carefully written down and published with the veneration accorded to the evacuations of the Dalai Lama one learns that the devil never reveals himself wholly, and that therefore close reserve is a demoniac trait. This however ignores the contradiction that the Old Testament as a whole furnishes examples abundantly of a shrewdness which is nevertheless well pleasing to God, and that at a later period Christ said to His disciples, “These things I said not unto you from the beginning... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” — so here is a teleological suspension of the ethical rule of telling the whole truth. If it happens that there offers himself for poetic treatment an individual who was great by reason of his close reserve, or if such a character is encountered in the course of world history (which speculation in fact has the task of reconstructing), people sneak up to admire — secured by the result, they can well understand him. What a comfort for the man who in his need is seeking guidance — and is not yet secured by the result! Reserve, silence (the teleological suspension of the duty of telling the truth) is a purely formal determinant and may therefore just as well be the form of the good as of the evil. To resolve the collision by annulling shrewdness is really declining to think the collision at all, for there is also a duty which enjoins the use of one’s shrewdness. But the very instant a man recognizes this he has *eo ipso* won God for the cause of intrigue (in a good sense). Thereby subjectivity is reinstated in its rights, which must be recognized by every individual who acts and has not confined himself to gossiping about others or poetizing or speculating by

the aid of the result. Most men do not so much as come out into these spheres, for there are always few who act in an eminent sense. So if one would by an appellation which singles out those who have experienced what every man is permitted to experience — if one would single these men out, one may use the demoniacal as the chief principle of division and divide thus: every individual is demoniacal who through himself alone, without any middle term (implying in this instance silence towards all others), stands in relation to the ideas; if the idea is God, the individual is religious, if the idea is the evil, the individual is in the stricter sense demoniacal. Thus I have understood it, and this has helped me. Fundamentally the thing is easy enough, except for the man who has once helped himself to the buccaneer riches of the System and thereby has been helped again to the beggar's staff. Only when one is so prudent as to want to construct the System without including in it ethics is such a thing possible, and then one gets a system in which one has everything, everything else, and has left out the one thing needful.

Perhaps I do not really love her? Perhaps in general I am too much given to reflection to be able to love? Now I will begin my self-interrogation as follows. I may not have loved her at all? But, my God, whence then all these sufferings? Is it not a sign of love that I think of her day and night, that my life is consumed simply in saving her, that I never think at all whether it is going to be terrible for me, because I think only of her? And yet against me I have language, have her, have the human race against me, I have nothing I can appeal to, nothing to support me. Do I not love her? "Is that love," retorts she and language and the race, "when one deserts her?" That is a colloquy I have not been able, am not able, to endure. Therefore I have resort to Thee, Thou Omniscient; if I am thus guilty, then crush me — ah, no, who would dare to pray in this wise? So then enlighten my understanding that I may see my error and my depravity! Think not that I

desire to escape sufferings, that is not my prayer, annihilate me, cancel me from the number of the living, revoke me as a mistaken thought, as an unsuccessful attempt, but let me never be healed in such a way that I cease prematurely to sorrow, exhaust not my ardor, quench not the fire in it, for that after all is something good, though it needs to be purified, let me never learn to haggle, I must conquer, even though the fashion of my victory is infinitely different from anything I can think.

What a comfort to have language on one's side, to be able to say as she can, "I have loved him!" If on the other hand my first proposition is false, no conclusion can be drawn from it. But here it is not a question of a couple of paltry propositions which one would unite in a conclusion, but it has to do with the most frightful thing of all, an eternal torment: a personal existence which is unable to unite itself in a conclusion.

Now I will sleep. It well may happen to a lover that he cannot sleep for the disquietude of love; I perhaps remain sleepless because I cannot ascertain whether I love her or no.

February 5. Midnight.

A LEPER'S SOLILOQUY

[The scene is among the graves at dawn, Simon lebrosus is sitting on a tombstone, he has fallen asleep, he wakes and cries out:]

SIMON!— "Yes." — Simon!— "Yes, who is calling?" — Where art thou Simon?— "Here. With whom art thou speaking?" — With myself. "Is it with thyself? How disgusting thou art with thy corrupted flesh, a pestilence to every living thing, avaunt from me, thou abomination, betake thyself to the tombs." Why am I the only one who cannot talk thus and act accordingly? Everyone else, if I do not flee from him, flees from me and leaves me alone. Does not an artist conceal himself in order to be a secret

witness of how his work of art is admired? Why cannot I separate that disgusting figure from me and be secretly a witness of men's abhorrence? Why must I be doomed to carry it about and show it off, as if I were a vain artist who in his proper person must hear the admiration? Why must I fill the desert with my cry and be company for the wild beasts and abbreviate the time by my howling? This is no exclamation, it is a question; I put the question to Him who Himself has said that it is not good for a man to be without society. Is this my society? Is this the mate I am to seek — the hungry monsters and the dead who have no fear of contagion?

[He sits down again, looks about him and says to himself:]

What has become of Manasseh? [lifting up his voice] Manasseh!

— *[He is silent a moment].* So then he has wandered off to the city. Yes, I know it. An ointment I have discovered, by the use of which all leprosy turns inward so that none can see it and the priest must declare us whole. I taught him how to use it. I told him that the sickness did not therefore cease, that it became internal and that one's breath could infect another and make him visibly leprous. Then he was jubilant, he hates existence, he curses men, he would avenge himself, he runs to the city, he breathes poison upon all. Manasseh, Manasseh, why didst thou give place in thy soul to the devil, was it not enough that thy body was leprous?

I will cast away the remainder of the ointment so that I never may be tempted. Father Abraham's God, let me forget how it was prepared! Father Abraham, when I am dead I shall awaken in thy bosom, then I shall eat with the purest, thou indeed art not fearful of the leper. Isaac and Jacob, ye are not afraid to sit at table with one who was a leper and was loathed by men. Ye dead who sleep here around me, awake, just for an instant, hear a word, only one word, greet Abraham from me because he has a place among the blessed prepared for him who had no place among men.

What is human compassion after all! To whom is it rightly due unless to the unfortunate, and how is it paid to him? The impoverished man falls into the hands of the usurer, who at the last helps him into prison as a slave — so also do the fortunate practice usury and regard the unfortunate as a sacrifice, thinking that they purchase the friendship of God at a cheap price, yea, by unlawful means. A little gift, a mite, when they themselves possess abundance, a visit when it involves no danger, a bit of sympathy which by contrast may season their lavish living — behold, that is the sacrifice of compassion! But if there is danger, they chase the unfortunate out into the desert so as not to hear his cry which might disturb music and dancing and luxurious living, and might condemn compassion — human compassion, which would deceive God and the unfortunate.

So seek then in vain for compassion in the city and among the fortunate, seek it out here in the desert. I thank Thee, Thou God of Abraham, that Thou didst permit me to discover this ointment, I thank Thee that Thou didst sustain me in renouncing the use of it; I understand however Thy loving kindness in that I voluntarily endure my fate, freely suffering what necessity imposes. If no one has had compassion upon me, what wonder that compassion has fled like me out among the graves, where I sit comforted as one who sacrifices his life to save others, as one who voluntarily chooses banishment to save others. Thou God of Abraham, give them corn and new wine in abundance and prosperous seasons, build the barns greater and give abundance greater than the barns, give to the fathers wisdom, to the mothers fruitfulness, and to the children a blessing, give victory in battle, that it may be the people of Thy possession. Hear the prayer of him whose body is infected and impure, a horror to the people, to the happy ones a snare, hear him if for all that his heart was not tainted.

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Simon lebrosus was a Jew. If he had lived in Christendom, he would have found a very different sort of sympathy. Whenever in the course of the year the sermon is about the ten lepers, the priest protests that he too has felt as if he were a leper — but when there is typhus....

February 7. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She has beheld me overwhelmed by the power of religion, but she has no eye for the religious; she knew me long before our engagement, she has witnessed my customary demeanor as a man of cold common sense, almost a scoffer; she believes that I scoff at everybody except her — suppose then she were proud, I shudder at the thought, this indeed would be seductive food for pride, to be adored (and in this sense she might misunderstand the religious emotions) by one who scoffs at everything else.

In the presence of others her pride is more clearly exhibited. Perhaps it was there from the very first, but I did not have time to discover it. It begins to dawn even upon me. The other day it came about in such an unseemly way that the people present were startled by it. In itself it is a thing of no importance, a young girl may be allowed to take many liberties, perhaps it was merely frolicsomeness. If only I were tranquil within myself, but I am fearful of worse conflicts. And if it is something else than frolicsomeness — I foresee an abysmal misunderstanding. If only she does not believe that these strange symptoms, as they doubtless seem to her, are nothing more than an erotic impression, that it is the case of an adoring lover who worships a goddess. With that she would be taking my religiousness erotically in vain. Truly one humbles oneself under God and the ethical relationship, not under a human being. It is true that my inward man is quite different from my outward, but never have I religiously scoffed at anyone. Religion is my principle of equality, and my soul is not in the least disposed

to erotic squabbles as to which of us might be considered rather extraordinary.

I am far from desiring any exaggerated tenderness of love, but I would like very much to have her express herself rather more, in order that I might perceive what is going on in her. In spite of all my efforts she regards me, I believe, as a very sharp critic, and this impedes her freedom of utterance.

February 7. Midnight.

WHEN the whale is wounded it betakes itself to the ocean floor and spouts streams of blood, it is most terrible when it is dying. The herring dies straightway, and then is as dead as a herring. But sometimes the whale lies perfectly still, although it is not dead. If sometimes I spout blood in the instant of passion, if when the word breaks forth it is as though I broke a blood-vessel, I too can be perfectly still, but for all that I am not dead. What an enigmatical power has pathos! In a certain sense one can pack it up all together and keep it in a waistcoat pocket, but when passion is kindled into flame, it then is evident that this little insignificance is an ocean of fire.

Now I will begin in another way, I will think of the situation as though I were merely an observer who had to make a report. I know very well that this objectivity will not relieve me, it is not meant to, I simply feel the need of evacuating the almost comical feature which is found in the situation. Having done that, having shaken off the burlesque, I again shall be in mettlesome mood to pull tragically, hoist tragically as a burden the same thing.

Here is the report. It is a young girl who, though otherwise gifted happily with womanly loveliness, lacks one thing: religious postulates. In a religious respect she stands about at the following point (a point which is probably seldom noted in the parson's official protocol, for she is perfectly well able to "read"): in her case God is pretty nearly the picture one forms of a good-natured elderly uncle who for fair words does everything the

child wants. One therefore makes a great deal of this uncle. One has at the same time a certain inexplicable reverence for God, which does not amount to more than that. When one sits devoutly in church, this is, in a purely aesthetic sense, a lovable sight. But of resignation, of infinite resignation, of relationship to spirit, of absolute relationship to spirit, there is not a trace. This girl lays claim to religion and talks about it offhand. And as the youthful mind utters presumptuously the first thing that occurs to it (which is indeed a trait of feminine amiability), so in relation to religion does she comport herself. She loves a man more than she does God, she swears by God, she adjures by God, and yet as for religion she is merely romantic in the little tablet form, and so far as concerns intrinsic religious value she is only a fiat dollar.

Now in case the opposite player who is her partner were simply a sensible man, he probably would respond to this with tit for tat, like the schoolboys who answer one another with, “Dare you say ‘by God’.” But he is precisely the opposite of this, he is religiously constructed, his romanticism is the greatness of infinity, where God is a mighty God, and seventy years is a stroke of the pen, and the whole of earthly existence is a period of probation, and the loss of one’s only wish is a thing one has to be prepared for if one would have to do with Him, because He has a round conception of time and says to the man who seeks Him, “No, it is not yet the moment, wait a little longer.”

“How long?”

“Well, some three score years and ten.”

“Good God! Why, in the mean while one might die ten times!”

“That may well be left to Me, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground — so then, let it be tomorrow, quite early,” — that is to say, in seventy years, for since a thousand years are to Him as one day, seventy years is precisely 1 hour, 56 minutes and 3 seconds. Thus it is the partner is

constructed, in this situation he believes that it is his business not to be offended at God because He is great, but to consider that he himself is lowly, not to squabble with God because He is eternal (for this after all is never a fault, but it is indeed a misery on the part of the temporal being that he is nothing), that it is his business to stand fast, not to want to disturb within himself the only love which is a happy love, not to lose the only admiration which is blessed, not to want to miss the only expectation which stands fast — like his business, which is to stand fast. If then he is so constructed, it follows that if a person is able to bring her relationship to him under a God-relationship, the schoolboy's "by God" becomes absolute, he is bound both in time and in eternity. He has enough discretion not to respect this word in the mouth of every passer-by, but to that girl he is bound — and she has no hesitation in employing the adjuration. The fact that she recites this phrase merely as an interjection by which she will not feel herself in the least degree religiously bound (because on the whole she exists in the dialectic of the wish, the dialectic of the agreeable and the disagreeable) and the fact that he knows it, are of no help to him; by virtue of his God-relationship he must honor this demand unto the last farthing.

There is something profoundly comic in this incongruity. Everyone, it is true, is free to swear by God. People then are commonly accustomed to employ ethical categories in judging the swearer, enquiring whether he is of the truth or whether he is a hypocrite. But this procedure is not adequate and it may do much injustice, for such an individual may in fact be merely comic. Otherwise I can make nothing of it. Even when I take a greater instance, this procedure is not adequate. When the Pharisee is depicted in the Gospel as a hypocrite, this is true only insofar as he feels himself better than other men; what he goes on to say, however, is comic, as soon as one thinks about it imaginatively. Let one imagine an individual who talks with God in prayer and now is moved to talk thus: "I fast twice in the week, I

give tithes of mint and cummin." That is just as comic as the man who lay in the ditch and believed that he was on horseback. For the Pharisee believes that he is talking with God, whereas, to judge from what he says, it is clear enough that he is talking to himself or to another Pharisee. Similarly, in case an innkeeper were to stand in a church and talk with God in prayer, saying, "I am not like the other innkeepers who only give the prescribed wages, I give good wages and a New Year holiday besides," he is not for all this a hypocrite, but he is comic, since it is clear that he is not talking with God but is talking to himself, *qua* innkeeper, or to one of the other innkeepers. Therefore one should never summon God's aid in behalf of a wish, for thereby one binds oneself absolutely. For if this wish is not fulfilled, God and I are not for this cause quits, but I must stand by my word, I must every instant hold fast to the declaration that this was and is my only wish, so seriously, so eternally my only wish that I ventured to give it religious expression. For if after some time has passed I come with a new wish and send out a message to God again, just as whimpering parents send out a message to the doctor for nothing at all — what then? Then I have made a fool of God, and at the same time have shown that I am a comic individual who, far from being a hypocrite, took it for granted that to *pray* to God was the same as to pat pappa on the chin and say, "Please, please."

Here ends the report; my common sense has received its tribute, I owe it nothing more. Come now and remain with me, my beloved pain! Outwardly she cannot now be mine (or might it be possible; oh, if only it were possible!), but that in a spiritual sense she should not be where I am is a thought that puts everything to confusion for me. Can the one person not understand the other? Is there then no equality in religion?

— Why did I carry her out with me upon the stream? Why was I so at fault as to apply to a girl's existence a standard which only disturbs us both? Yes, now, now it is too late. Even if everything were to turn out happily, so

that she does in effect help herself out of her misery, or never has been so very deep in it, yet to me the religious is so completely the true meaning of life that it terrifies me to think that she might be healed only in a temporal sense. When one has not this anxious care it is easy enough to withdraw with senseless glittering glory, like an elect spirit. But in case my (if it may be so called) great standard has disturbed her life, then she in turn holds me by her (if it may be so called) little standard; she with her little standard is for me a prodigious despot, because without her I cannot bring to completion any life-view, since through her I feel sympathy for every man. Without having any particular knowledge of mankind, it has been my comfort, and as it were my victory over life, my repose from the invidious diversities in life, that one might require religion of every individual. And yet I have stumbled upon an individual of whom I do not know whether I dare require it, whether I may not thereby do an injustice. But on the other hand, if there exists one single individual of such a sort, if therefore religion is to go in the same harness with genius and talent, then I am reduced to impotence, for this thought is properly my life-thought, which gives me the frank-heartedness not to envy the distinguished and highly favored, and gives me the tranquillity of mind not to be distracted at the wretchedness of the man who outwardly is more wretched than I.

Furthermore, suppose that in the last resort she more admired than loved me, suppose she cherished the pitiful notion that I was something great. How difficult then it must be for her, who was perhaps intoxicated by the conceited dream that I worshipped her, to overcome such an impression. And again it is my fault that she is humbled in this way! When one has not such an anxious care, one can well understand that it is a temptation to be reckoned among the persons of distinction upon whom the eyes of many are fixed; this is no temptation to me, I wished to be a soldier in the ranks, indistinguishable from the others.

Not even do I dare to give my outward existence a decisive religious expression, for fear she might misunderstand this and venture out upon the sea of infinity. That she is not able to do, at least not yet. What must save her (such was my first thought, and such it is still) is a certain healthiness of the temporal sort. I am convinced that even at the most decisive instant, when I posited the separation between us, she had no conception of resignation. Either the thought, "Now I am dying and then it is all over" — but that is not resignation; or she continued to hope simply in the form of immediacy — but that is not resignation; or she recovered by virtue of her natural healthiness and was inflamed by the desire to grasp the temporal precisely at that moment — but this is not resignation.

So be still. The thing for me is to be as meaningless as possible. Every hint from me would only be disturbing — and what is the most dangerous of all, it might perhaps be a help at the instant. She must, however, be incited, lest the condition of suffering become habitual. The condition of suffering — I do not definitely know, in fact, whether she suffers.

However, reflection is perfectly inexhaustible. It is like Tordenskjold with his famous parade: it uses over and over again the same few troops, but when they have marched past the reviewing stand they turn into a side street, don another uniform, and thus continue the parade... of the incalculable forces of the garrison.

February 12. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She does not listen without attention when I read to her one or another religious work; I myself am being developed more and more strongly in a religious direction. I cannot yet achieve enough freedom from care to give to love a more erotic expression, I never make the least mention of love.

If only I have not erred in planning the thing on so great a scale, if only it does not prove too serious for her, although in fact all moroseness and

harshness is foreign to my nature, especially in relation to her who makes me as gentle as can be.

So I talk to her in a rather lighter vein, I converse. Verily this conversation has for me a fascination I never could have guessed. What a pleasure it is when I think of the future, for this conversation will continue to have something so inviting to me, so refreshing to my soul, that I desire no other solace than this. As ever, she is substantially without reflection, but she does not chatter, she says one thing or another as it happens to occur to her. Instantly my reflection lays hold of what was said, by a slight modification it is transposed into my sphere, and thus the conversation alternates between us. Now she gives utterance to something in her immediate fashion, a slight modification, sometimes only a change of modulation, and I am satisfied by the observation and amused by it. She is unable to comprehend how such a saying of hers can amuse me so much; however, she seems quite delighted at the liveliness of the conversation. She finds satisfaction in expressing herself, then is amazed at seeing her utterances the object of so much attention, then I perceive underneath it a little matter of reflection and introduce it — so we are both pleased. I think I am actually discovering that I have some qualities which might make me a perfectly good husband: I have a sense for insignificant things, I have a memory for small matters, I have some talent for interpolating a bit of significance, and all of this is useful in the long run. If only I knew how I might become a perfect pattern of a husband, I would spare neither time nor trouble. But the misfortune is that I have a fundamental defect in my morbid reserve, and to be anything by halves is a bitter pill to me.

February 13. Midnight.

IF only something would happen! To keep one’s soul in an ecstasy from week to week, to keep the countless reflections on the *qui vive,* to have everything in readiness, in readiness every instant, because one cannot

know whether they are to be used, or when they are to be used, or what is to be used!

I have seen her today. She was pale. Oh, when one has a soul full of foreboding, when along with this one has a sense for the ominous, such a pallor may well acquire significance. Macbeth was furious merely because a messenger who came with an unpleasant report was pale; but here indeed the pallor is the report. And yet the physician's report is to the effect that on the whole she is in good health. At least I heard this at the house of the Hansens, where the physician was and where they were talking about her. For on account of the family's connection with her and the presence of the physician I had a suspicion and repeated interrogatively the word I had heard the physician utter just as I entered the room, asking who was in such good health. They were put to embarrassment, and I, not without a certain note of sarcasm, said that I did not wonder at a physician being embarrassed at saying what he so rarely says, that a person is in very good health—"who then is that person?" The physician bethought himself and said, "Ah, it was Fru Fredriksen."

"Good Lord," said I, "Fru Fredriksen! Has she been ill? It was she whose husband was sheriff in Scanderborg, and later was transferred here to Seeland. Why that is very curious," etc. Then for a brisk quarter of an hour I conversed with the excellent family, including the physician, on the subject of the aforementioned lady. It was clear that the situation was as painful for them as it could be. Thereupon the physician departed, and I began to talk about the physician and the many families who had him as their doctor, remarking that I never knew he was the physician of Fru Fredriksen. This I could not say so long as he was present, for it was very possible that he had spoken the truth, but perhaps the family did not know it, and knew on the contrary that it was an evasion he had hit upon. In this fashion one never need be at a loss for material of conversation. But it was about her they

were talking, that I am sure, for I know that less than a quarter of an hour earlier the physician had been at her house, and undoubtedly he had come directly from it. So this is the physician's report. On the other hand, I beheld her pale. What a torment to have to observe a phenomenon when the phenomenon itself alters in relation to the observer.

She had once a desire to be something extraordinary, an artist, an authoress, a *virtuoso,* in short, to shine in the world. That might indeed be possible, at least it is psychologically correct that an unfortunate event might be a decisive impulse in this direction. True enough, I never have been able to understand how this occurred to her, how she could so misunderstand herself. Lovable as she was, she had no particular talent. Had it been there, I surely should have discovered it, for my melancholy would have perceived one suffering the more, because I should have understood that she must have a prodigious claim upon life. But a catastrophe may indeed transform a person, and the wish, the aspiration, was perhaps a veridical presentiment in her soul. What wonder that I did not understand it, I who from my earliest youth have constantly lived in the contradiction between seeming to be highly gifted in comparison with other individuals, and being convinced in my own mind that I was good for nothing.

I am free and untrammelled, no servant to any man, to any other woman, or to any situation in life. I lie at the bow of my boat wondering if out yonder a phenomenon might appear. If she were thus to come forward as an object of admiration, that would be just the thing for me, it would be the happiest existence I could imagine: Secretly to see her admired, secretly to risk the last thought and the last farthing in order that the admiration might be jubilant. Impatience already seethes within me! I am able to talk people around, I can lie, prove everything, flatter, shake hands with a journalist, even write articles myself day and night — and admiration after all is for sale to money and shrewdness. I give up everything, my happy lot it is to

labor secretly for her. And then when the end is attained, when pain has potentiated the powers of her soul, when fortune and favor and flattery vie with one another to adorn the distinguished one, when her soul swells to overflowing and she marches past me triumphantly, then I dare to behold her calmly, my glance cannot disturb her, for over against me existence has clearly vindicated her.

But after all one must have something concrete to hold on to. I will not so soon again run after anonymous novels, this last made me thoroughly sensible of the ludicrousness of my conceit. If I have not learned anything else from it, I have got a conception of the way reviewers feel. I have never been able to take seriously the work of a reviewer, but it needed only the vaguest suspicion that she might be the authoress (for rumor said that it was by a woman), and with that I set everything in motion to prove that the book was something extraordinary.

February 20. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. No, I can come to no other conclusion but that I am making her unhappy. There is a yawning disproportion between us, she does not understand me, and I do not understand her, she cannot rejoice at that in which I rejoice, nor sorrow for that in which I sorrow. I have begun the thing, however, and I am holding out, but I want to be honorable: I admit to her that I regard her engagement to me as a sacrifice on her part, I have besought her to forgive me for dragging her with me out upon the stream. More I cannot do. Verily I never dreamed that ever I might humble myself before a human being. Well, of course, it is not precisely under her I humble myself, it is under the relationship and the ethical task; however, I have to bring myself to say this to a human being, and in saying this it is not exactly in a jesting mood I say it! Fundamentally this is no great help, for she hardly catches a word of it, and by herself she is unable to explain what it means. But here again we have the disproportion.

February 20. Midnight.

I SAW her today in Hauser Square. Everything as usual. It is lucky that she sees me often. I know in my own heart that I never go out of my way, not so much as a foot-breadth, in order to see her; that I dare not do, my existence must express absolute indifference. If I were bold enough to do it, and if I did not have my hypochondriac sharpness of vision to spy upon myself and to anticipate every possibility, I long ago would have taken up my dwelling in her neighborhood, merely for the sake of compelling her to see me. There is nothing more dangerous for a girl in her situation than to avoid seeing one and thereby to give imagination opportunity to dream.

She must be nettled, lest she go on and become languid, neither one thing nor the other, neither sorrowful nor triumphant. And now this is about to succeed. A correspondence by letter with a friend out in the country (that is to say, with a person I do not trust) is communicated in copy to my initiate (who plagues me by his fidelity); my friend of course received this communication from me under a pledge of the profoundest silence, and on condition of the profoundest silence he in turn confides it in writing to his lady-love in Holbek, and so it goes along famously and at the greatest speed. They sometimes complain of the slowness of the post — when one is so lucky as to have a friend's woman-friend to carry the letter it travels at the greatest speed, I expect she will run on foot to the capital merely to disclose her secret for the information of the person for whom it is intended. After all there is nothing in the world so reliable as a friend of whom one knows to a certainty that he will betray everything that is confided to him — nothing more reliable if only one takes care what one confides. If one were to beseech a friend to say this or that, there is no assurance that he will do it, but when one confides to him under the pledge of secrecy something which one would have come out, one is perfectly secured, for then it is sure to come out. All the same, it is a piece of rare good fortune when such a

friend has in turn a friend, and this friend again has a woman-friend — then it goes with the swiftness of light. In this way friendship has assumed the charge of my correspondence.

The more one suffers, the more, I believe, has one a sense for the comic. It is only by the deepest suffering that one acquires true authority in the use of the comic, an authority which by one word transforms as by magic the reasonable creature one calls man into a caricature. This authority is like the self-assurance of the policeman when he lays hand upon his stick without ceremony and permits no back-talk and no obstruction of the street. The man who is struck would retort, he makes a protest, he would be treated with respect as a citizen, he threatens an investigation; at that instant the next rap of the stick follows, with the warning, "Hold your tongue, keep moving, don't stand still." To want to stand still, to protest, to threaten an investigation, is in fact an attempt on the part of the pathetic bungler to count for something serious, but the comic turns the fellow about to show another side, just as the policeman by his impetus gets him turned around, and regarding him from behind makes him comic by the help of his stick.

However, this authority over the comic must be so painfully acquired that one cannot exactly desire to have it. But this comic forces itself upon me especially when my sufferings bring me into relation with another person.

The correspondence above mentioned contains a confidential communication regarding my love affair. Everything is correct, especially the name, the year and the day — the rest is in greater part fiction. I am entirely convinced that she cannot possibly possess a just apprehension of me and of our relationship; I have confused for her the whole thing too much for that, transforming it into a witch's letter which can signify whatever you please. Everything must be left to her, and from me she must at no price acquire an authoritative interpretation, for then she will never be

healed. That she may be able to recover herself completely is my highest wish for her, and I will venture everything for it. Merely one single trustworthy word of guidance would be enough to insure that she would retain in quietness an impression of me which she must not have.

My peroration during the two months [since the engagement was broken], my departure from the scene, which certainly was not brilliant but was consistent with the part I played, was calculated to give the impression that I was a depraved man. This is the principle point in my interpretation of the case. For such an interpretation brings it about that her suffering becomes at once autopathic, free from any trace of sympathy, that for her the suffering does not become in the least dialectic, as though she were at fault in any way or had any cause to reproach herself. We must proceed now in the same way. What now in the next place will have the most stimulating effect? I think it is when such a scoundrel is not without a certain sympathy for the poor girl. A rascal properly stands altogether outside the good, but if he becomes impudent enough to wish to communicate with it through an almost chivalrous sympathy — I know nothing more revolting. That confidential falsification of mine bears precisely the stamp of this sympathy. It is written without passion, but in the form of courtesy. To keep the tone exactly right I constantly had in mind when I was writing a person who has or has had a toothache and about the state of whose health one does not inquire without sympathy.

On other grounds I have felt an aversion to writing all this, not indeed on her account, for my hope is that it will be profitable to her, but on account of those through whose hands it passes. And this for a peculiar reason: I am convinced, I wager a hundred to one, that all three of them will say after reading it, “Ah, after all he is not so bad as I thought, he is not without sympathy after all.” It is incredible how men are struck with stupidity in regard to the ethical. By being impudent enough to want to be the most

despicable of all men, one becomes a perfectly honest man, just about as good as most people are. For, good Lord! so many have had a love affair and left the girl sitting and waiting, but when one has a little sympathy one is a fairly good sort. And yet to be a scoundrel is not so hopeless, salvation is still possible in that case; but to be able to show sympathy in that way furnishes indubitable evidence that the man has lost his own soul.

And now to rest. I withdraw every thought of mine from the effort of intrigue, I concentrate all my thought upon her, upon my anxious care, upon my wish. I will not be disturbed by anything, but also I will do what I regard as my duty. If it may be right for a good cause to become a fool, one may also be justified in being an intriguer — or rather, I fear a subsequent anguish and regret if I have left any means untried. I have no great faith in intrigues — not for the reason that I have failed to calculate everything to the best of my ability, but because the affair is so important to me.

Oh, blended pain! We are more and more separated, there lies a lifetime between us, and it seems to me as though there might now lie an eternity between us, if she completely tears herself loose from me. It is as though I were serving two masters: I do everything to work her loose, to annihilate everything between us, and then I discipline my soul that it may maintain itself upon the apex of the wish, in order that my wish, if its fulfillment in any way were possible, might be just as ardent at the instant when she is lost to me forever as it was when prostrate at my feet she besought me. To wish while one is young is not difficult, rather it is difficult to desist; but to keep the soul fixed upon the wish when secret remorse, when deathly anguish, consumes one's strength is not easy. To cut capers when the horse is young and mettlesome and has breath in its nostrils is not difficult; but when it is weary, when it totteringly supports itself, when at every step it wants to fall — then to cut capers is a thing the horse cannot do. But the spirit giveth life, and as an aged king said, "A king can die, but he cannot

become sick," so it is my comfort that I can die, but I cannot become weary. For what is it to have spirit, unless it be to have will, and what is it to have will, unless it be to have it beyond measure? For he who does not have it beyond measure does not have it at all.

February 28. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. It needs only courage and endurance, and I shall reach the religious with her. This assurance is life assurance — or, alas, it is only a precaution like making a deposit in the Widows' Fund. In any case I can take part in everything and develop more and more dexterity. Her youth is a claim upon me for every effort, and I am as youthful as I can manage to be. I believe that it is succeeding. A few days ago there was a man who said of us that we were a regular pair of young lovers. Of course, that we are too: she by virtue of her seventeen years, and I by virtue of the artificial leg I use. The deceit is succeeding, as it always does with me. The fact is, I seldom succeed in expressing myself directly, but indirectly and deceitfully I succeed beyond measure. In my case this is a natural disposition, a talent for reflection I was born with. But at the same time I am learning something else, I am learning the comic from the ground up — a young lover with an artificial leg! I appear to myself like Captain Gribskopf. This comic however is my secret, not to be jested with. I am not afraid of exertion, for I take delight in it, but I fear misunderstanding.

February 28. Midnight.

IT is the last straw — she is on the lookout for me, that is evident. So I have been fighting the air, she must have a residual sympathy, a nerve in which I still pain her. She cannot yet have received the confidential communication, it was lucky I thought of sending it. In my look she can discover nothing. My face is no advertisement sheet, or, if it be such, it is

for mixed notices, which are so mixed that no one can make anything out of it.

Last Thursday I already was struck by the fact that for a second time, and on a Thursday, I had seen her in Hauser Square. She knows from an earlier time that every Thursday precisely at four o'clock I pass that way, she knows that I have dealings with a man who dwells there. If she is seeking me, I dare bear witness within myself that I have not gone a foot-breadth out of my way to seek her. It is almost maddening, so apprehensive I am about doing anything which might arouse her suspicion, and my apprehensiveness makes me assume that she is just as susceptible to the least impression as I am.

This must be investigated. Five minutes before four I was in Hauser Square and entered the Jewelry shop. My suspicion was correct, she came along two minutes later. She walked slowly, looked about her, and turned in the direction of Tornabuske Street, from which I was accustomed to come. In and for itself it is a capital idea to be seen on the street, where chance can always account for it. But since my separation from her I have opened an incessant warfare against the power men call chance, in order to do away with it if possible. No military force is necessary for that, but especially memory, a memory just as petty as is chance itself. Hastily I sprang out of the shop, ran around by Suhnes Street, and came out of Tornabuske Street precisely at four o'clock as usual.

We met and passed one another by. She was a little embarrassed, perhaps also for the reason that she was a bit alarmed at walking in what was as good as a forbidden path, or a bit exhausted by spying out the terrain. Hastily she cast down her eyes and avoided my glance.

So much is clear, that my machinations are rather fruitless; but so much also is clear, that she has a lot of strength.

There is nothing for me to do. I come every Thursday precisely at four o'clock to Hauser Square. To remain away would be very imprudent. I believe I have never been so precise about time as I am with the stroke of the clock, lest my coming too early or staying away might arouse her suspicion either that I was waiting for her or was avoiding her, which in different ways would prove the same thing, that I concerned myself about her.

March 5. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. No new symptom. When a brighter prospect opens before me as now, when it seems to me that all will succeed, when a joyful thought lodges in my soul, then I hasten to her, I am really young, young as one must be in the days of youth. At such moments I take no circuitous path, I rush with the haste of longing so as to be able to delight myself with her. If it were always so, if I were always able to be thus, it surely would be possible to marry.

How it stands with her in a deeper sense I do not know, nor do I wish to know. I will not force her or take her off her guard, but I am surprised at her cautious reserve, and it is something constrained, it is as if she were fearful of my criticism, lest her utterances might not be clever enough. So difficult to understand has my outward nature made me.

March 5. Midnight.

SOLOMON'S DREAM

SOLOMON'S judgment is well enough known, it availed to discriminate between truth and deceit and to make the judge famous as a wise prince. His dream is not so well known.

If there is any pang of sympathy, it is that of having to be ashamed of one's father, of him whom one loves above all and to whom one is most indebted, to have to approach him backwards, with averted face, in order

not to behold his dishonor. But what greater bliss of sympathy can be imagined than to dare to love as the son's wish prompts, and in addition to dare to be proud of him because he is the only elect, the singularly distinguished man, a nation's strength, a country's pride, God's friend, a promise for the future, extolled in his lifetime, held by memory in the highest praise! Happy Solomon, this was thy lot! Among the chosen people (how glorious even to belong to them!) he was the King's son (enviable lot!), son of that king who was the elect among kings!

Thus Solomon lived happily with the prophet Nathan. The father's strength and the father's achievement did not inspire him to deeds of valor, for in fact no occasion was left for that, but it inspired him to admiration, and admiration made him a poet. But if the poet was almost jealous of his hero, the son was blissful in his devotion to the father.

Then the son one day made a visit to his royal father. In the night he awoke at hearing movement where the father slept. Horror seizes him, he fears it is a villain who would murder David. He steals nearer — he beholds David with a crushed and contrite heart, he hears a cry of despair from the soul of the penitent.

Faint at the sight he returns to his couch, he falls asleep, but he does not rest, he dreams, he dreams that David is an ungodly man, rejected by God, that the royal majesty is the sign of God's wrath upon him, that he must wear the purple as a punishment, that he is condemned to rule, condemned to hear the people's benediction, whereas the Lord's righteousness secretly and hiddenly pronounces judgment upon the guilty one; and the dream suggests the surmise that God is not the God of the pious but of the ungodly, and that one must be an ungodly man to be God's elect — and the horror of the dream is this contradiction.

While David lay upon the ground with crushed and contrite heart, Solomon arose from his couch, but his understanding was crushed. Horror

seized him when he thought of what it is to be God's elect. He surmised that holy intimacy with God, the sincerity of the pure man before the Lord, was not the explanation, but that a private guilt was the secret which explained everything.

And Solomon became wise, but he did not become a hero; and he became a thinker, but he did not become a man of prayer; and he became a preacher, but he did not become a believer; and he was able to help many, but he was not able to help himself; and he became sensual, but not repentant; and he became contrite and cast down, but not again erect, for the power of the will had been strained by that which surpassed the strength of the youth. And he tossed through life, tossed about by life — strong, supernaturally strong, that is, womanishly weak in the stirring infatuations and marvellous inventions of imagination, ingenious in expounding thoughts. But there was a rift in his nature, and Solomon was like the paralytic who is unable to support his own body. In his harem he sat like a disillusioned old man, until desire for pleasure awoke and he shouted, "Strike the timbrels, dance before me, ye women." But when the Queen of the South [sic] came to visit him, attracted by his wisdom, then was his soul rich, and the wise answer flowed from his lips like the precious myrrh which flows from the trees in Arabia.

March 7. Midnight.

I DID not see her on Thursday. Presumably she has now received the confidential communication. Certainly it was confidential enough, it was entrusted to weakness and dishonesty. Or perhaps she came a little earlier or a little later, I do not know, for I always come punctually, not a minute before and not a minute later, not at a quicker pace at one time than at another. That I dare not do. Only he who has a notion of the shrewdness and cunning required in order to turn the most insignificant things to account

will comprehend what such ascetic renunciation means when it is applied to the most insignificant things.

My head is weary; oh, if I might betake myself to rest and lull myself to sleep by sorrowful recollection! Oh, that like a departed spirit I might leave pain behind and remember only what was so beautiful! But I dare not, with that I should be depriving her of her rights. I dare not, for I am living, I am in fact still in the midst of the action. The play is far from being over. Is the play not over? For me verily it is not over, for the later development is so far from being a postlude that the engagement was rather a prelude, and the piece began when it was broken off. And yet there is no action, nothing occurs, in the visible and outward world nothing occurs, and all my effort is to refrain from acting and yet to maintain myself in action *κατά δύναμιν*. Why all this? Why do I do it? Because I can do no otherwise, I cannot endure that my life should have no meaning at all. The nothing that I do does after all give a little meaning to it; every other attempt, be it to forget, to start afresh, to clink glasses with a friend and drink the health of a comrade, is impossible for me, although I understand that people then would find that my life had a deep meaning. Perhaps my eye is at fault, but I have never seen a friendship where the one inflamed the other to risk the utmost for an idea which bears on one's personal existence; but I have indeed seen that, because the other, *ό ετερος*, had not the pudicity which for a time one always has with regard to oneself — I have seen that their comradeship taught them both to chaffer and not to take the world too much to heart. Only the God-relationship is the true idealizing friendship, for God's thought penetrates so as to separate mind and thought, and does not come to an agreement in fudge and nonsense. — I do this nothing and this everything because it is the loftiest passion of my freedom and the deepest necessity of my being. In case Simon Stylites had in any way been able to bring into relation with the thought of God his practice of standing on a

high pillar and bending in the most difficult postures and scaring away sleep and courting terror in the crises of trying to balance himself — then in my eyes he did well to do that. His fault was that he did it before the eyes of men, that after all he was a ballerina, that, like her when she bends upon the floor in the most difficult posture, he seeks the applause of the public. That I have never done, but I have indeed done as he did, I scare away sleep and contort my soul.

On my part this is not morbid reflection, for the leading thought in this whole matter is as clear to me as day, namely, to work her loose and to keep my soul upon the apex of the wish. I do not hit upon a new purpose every day, but my reflection may well hit upon something new in relation to the purpose. Would that be called morbid reflection when a man who would be rich in the world holds to this firmly but in the form of calculation takes everything into account without altering his first plan? Is this morbid reflection when he holds fast to his resolution but, perceiving that by one method he will not succeed, chooses another? If I had been suffering from morbid reflection, I should long ago have acted in an outward way and broken with my first purpose to keep quite quiet and yet on the alert. Yes, if I merely had to keep awake like one of the wise virgins, had merely to keep my lamp burning, and for the rest might let my soul be without passion, it would be easier, but that I dare not do, for then I would be insensibly changed and would not be maintaining myself unchangeably upon the apex of the wish by the elasticity of passion. This then is what I will: if I am changed, it must be against my will. Praise God, this has not occurred up to date.

March 9. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. No new symptom. Where we are I do not know. I will not be in too great haste to explore.

March 15. Midnight.

YESTERDAY I did not see her. Perhaps after all that encounter in Hauser Square was an accident, or perhaps it was an attempt she ventured to make out of solicitude for me. Perhaps she has got my confidential communication, perhaps it has not had the effect of nettling her but only of depressing, perhaps she chooses at last to languish, to be anesthetized by the soothing alleviation of quiet sorrow. Suppose she were to move out into the country, suppose she were unwilling to live in the old surroundings, could not bear it, but rather would have an emphatic expression for the fact that she was mortified, suppose she were to become a lady's companion in a noble family, or a governess. Great God! to have a creditor of this sort, one who has power of life and death over me! And not to dare to redeem the obligation, and that this precisely must be a man's humiliation, that he dare not do it! Presumably she does not dream what an enormous power she has over me, that she determines the quotation of life-value, that by such a step as that which I now fear she plunges me into the deepest despair. The case stands thus: if I get her worked loose, or if she works herself loose, in short, if she becomes herself again, I have got to the point precisely where I can work for my own interest, can be anxiously concerned about my own pain. Before I was engaged to her my life was like a painful inquisition of myself, then I was interrupted and summoned out to the most dreadful decisions; and when I am through with that, if ever I am, then I can begin again with myself where I left off. Now of course I have learned what is even more painful than that. And if this does not come about, if she wilts, I am a beggar, a pauper, yea, a slave who lies in outer darkness.

And yet in fact she let fall a word about wishing she might find a place in the country. And such a word, a word of hers, a caprice, a remark of which she was no more aware than one is aware of what one says in one's sleep, such a word is enough for me. It strikes me that I am like a child of

the urchin age which tries its hand at the first problems of practice in the mother tongue, to construct a meaning out of a given word.

Today I heard accidentally from a liveryman that her father had engaged a carriage to drive to a manor house half a score miles out in the country. What is he doing there, he who almost never goes beyond the walls of the capital, except when he rides, and that at the most is the distance of a mile; he who has no connections in the country? Suppose now — the word runs in my mind, and the school exercise begins! — suppose now she actually has resolved, suppose she wills to be mortified, wills to be that openly, wills to despair and to have the characteristic form for despair.

Great God! only not this, everything else, only not this! Cursed be riches and earthly glitter, and to be or to seem to be something great in the eyes of the world! Would I were a pauper, a wretched creature, then the incongruity would be a different one. It is true in fact that in the eyes of the world I am a scoundrel. In the eyes of the world! What are the eyes of the world but blindness? And what is the judgment of the world? I have not found ten men who have the strength to judge severely. Or am I not honored and esteemed as I was before? Do I not enjoy more recognition than before? and is not the qualification, the title, which is required in the eyes of the world just this, that one is a scoundrel or at least has an unusual *ingenium* for becoming one? Give the world the choice between a deserted girl who bows her innocent head with sorrow and seeks a hiding-place in the country where she may repine, and a play actor upon life’s stage, a shameless fellow who holds his head high and defies everybody with his proud eyes — the world’s choice is promptly made. A man is condemned to lifelong imprisonment for accidental homicide; but I, I have no sentence pronounced upon me. Condemned! I incite people against me, and they cry “Bravo”; I expect that they will slay me, and they carry me in triumph; I shudder, I doubt despairingly whether I have courage and strength enough to bear the

condemnation of the world, whether I do not owe it to myself to put myself in a better light, but I do not waver, I pull the cord of the douche — and the judgment of the world is extremely favorable.

But let not this occur, merciful God! let it not occur! I am in despair, I break with Thee, I rush out there, I win her once again, I surrender everything so as with gold to bid defiance to the grandeur of the manor house, I celebrate the wedding and I shoot myself on the wedding day.

At any rate, out there I must hasten, I must see what takes her there. Alas, I dare not make any inquiry of anyone, never that! It is easy enough to impose the vow of silence when one would have nothing more to do with the world, but to have to be silent when one is so deeply concerned!

March 17. Midnight.

A FALSE alarm. Now I have driven twenty miles in sixteen hours, I have been close to death owing to anxiety and impatience — and for nothing. In a ludicrous way my life has been in danger — and for nothing. A lout of a postilion falls asleep, and the horses with him. In a fury I leap out of the carriage and beat the fellow, without taking into consideration that he is a giant compared to me. But what will not one do in such a mood? And the people extol the system of posts, the extrapost. It is a miserable affair. If Richard III would give his kingdom for a horse, I believe I would have given half of my fortune for a team of racers. The postilion throws me to the ground. It would be no use to walk, I must give fair words and a prodigious pourboir — and we started.

The whole thing turns out to be a private affair. There is a farm vacant, and a man in Jutland has a son who wants to have it. His father is an old friend of her father, who is out there now enquiring about the terms.

That a brain can stand that! It is a heaving swell such as there is not in the Atlantic Ocean, for this swell has nothing on either side of it and is the most terrible of all.

March 20. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. No new symptom. Whether this quietness and security is a good sign I do not know, whether in a spiritual sense it is a fertile air and the fair blossom is burgeoning in secret, I do not know, I dare not yet investigate, for fear of doing so too early and thereby interfering with the growth.

March 20. Midnight.

I HAVE no time to think about myself, and yet my inward life is of a sort to give me enough to think about. I am not actually a religious individual, I am only a properly and completely formed possibility of such a thing. With the sword hanging over my head, in mortal danger, I discover the religious crises with a sense of originality as vivid as if I had not known them before, with so vivid a sense of originality that, if they had not been discovered, I must have discovered them. Of that there is no need now, in this respect I can humble and chasten my soul in the way I once consoled a man of rather limited intelligence to whom another said mockingly that he had not invented gunpowder— “there is no need of that,” I replied, “for it has been discovered.” But it is one thing to learn from a textbook exercises to be memorized, one thing to be able to recite the catechism to the parson, or even to the bishop when he makes his visitation, one thing to be able to preachify like a parson — but an entirely different thing is primitiveness in appropriating. It is well I do not have to teach others. I joyfully pay the school tax and the priest’s tithes. Hail to him who is so sure of himself that he dares to take money for giving instruction!

I am good enough as a possibility, but in the catastrophe when I would appropriate to myself the religious patterns, I encounter a philosophic doubt which I will not pronounce as such to any man. It has to do with the factor of appropriation. Placed as I am in the religious catastrophe, I grasp after the paradigm. But, behold, I am not able to understand the paradigm, even

though I venerate it with childlike piety which will not let it go. One paradigm appeals to visions, another to revelations, a third to dreams. To talk about this, to kindle the address with imagination and yet retain the assumption, the assumption which bears precisely upon the factor of appropriation on the part of subsequent generations, is easy enough — but to understand it!

When one is able to comprehend the religious need so profoundly that one might even do well to call for the priest, and one has a philosophic scepticism completely corresponding to it, the prospects are not exactly the best. However, if only I get through this year of mourning when I have to mourn for her (and my year of mourning is not determined astronomically, it may be drawn out to five and even to ten years and my whole life may be determined by her), then I can throw myself into these conflicts, and then surely the thing will succeed. To hold out I am resolved, I will not run away from the conflict, I will not be clever in the use of shrewd devices by which one deceives another, like schoolboys who when they are writing the first pages of the copybook look in the middle of the book, and when they are in the middle of the book look at the last pages of the book, and with the last pages of the book fool the teacher. It is my conviction that the will is the principal thing even in relation to thought, that talents ten times as good without an energetic will do not make so good a thinker as do talents ten times as poor with an energetic will — the superior talents will avail for understanding the many things, the superior will for understanding the one thing. But from the fact that one has will and has the will to hold out it does not follow that one becomes a jubilant saint, who, contemplating the course of life and of the universe and of world history sees and, behold, “It is so wonderful!” Let him contemplate if he will life and world history and behold that it is so wonderful — when I contemplate him I behold that he is an ass, just as he also beats a cancan on the pulpit for the honor of

Christianity or becomes so serious that he tickles the people as the priest tickles himself with a pinch of snuff. Stupidity or getting into a sweat and becoming red in the face is no nearer to seriousness (because the perspirerer is too stupid to be able to laugh) than the asinine stare is to religiousness. If I know nothing else, I know this, that the comic ought to be employed to police the religious field. One should not characterize delusion as hypocrisy but as stupidity. By calling a person a hypocrite he is put at an advantage inasmuch as this implies that he has a God-relationship. A pathetic anger and indignation at the malversations of speculation, at the systematic peculation which (like the Roman proconsuls who sucked the provinces dry and enriched themselves) makes the System rich and life poor, and a good comic sketch of a religious enthusiast — that most assuredly is what is needed. A skipper can keep on swearing all day without meaning anything by it, and so can a religious enthusiast be solemn the whole day long without having a wholesome or a whole thought in his soul. That Gothic king would not be baptized when he heard that in heaven he would not be united with his fathers, the natives in America feared heaven more than hell and wanted to remain heathen lest in heaven they might be united with the orthodox Spaniards — and so does many an enthusiast, if he does nothing else, make one disgusted with religion.

About this step I dare not yet say within myself "today," but I feel that with respect to what I have ventured I have put myself deeply in debt to her. He who has made another person unhappy is well adapted to hold out in such conflicts. The man who is sentenced for life they put to rasping dye-wood, which is mortally dangerous; but after all he is sentenced.

This too I perceive, that the unmarried man can make greater ventures in the world of spirit than the married man, he can stake everything, being concerned only about the idea, and he is far better prepared for the *discrimen* of decision where one has barely room to stand, let alone to

establish an abode. But truly it was not for this reason I would not marry. I too desired quiet joy in life, and her prayer made my one wish my only wish; and even if I had not wished it, I should have done it, because I always believe that obedience is dearer to God than cosmopolitan, philanthropic, patriotic sacrifices upon the altar of humanity, that quietness in the fulfilment of a modest duty is infinitely more worthy and more becoming to every man than luxurious living in the world of intellect and prodigality in concerning oneself about the whole human race, as though one were almighty God. Let them talk glowingly about the wrath of God and the consuming fire — there is something else that I fear, and that I fear just as much, namely, that I should compel God to become haughty (*foment*) towards me, so that I should vanish as an untruth before His haughty majesty. A religious enthusiast would likely find this expression not sufficiently serious, he would likely wish to have me swear in a godly way, as the skipper swears in an ungodly way. It is serious enough for me, and more terrible than the sensuous conceptions of a heated imagination. So soon as I disdain duty God becomes haughty, for only in the performance of duty am I in submissive understanding with His sublime highness, and therefore it is not a haughty majesty. Hence it is not God that makes Himself haughty — that He never does, that is paganism — but it is I that make Him haughty, and this is a punishment. Here is the profound consistency in this relationship, that the man who would approach nearer to God by disdaining the simplest things actually removes God to a distance by reason of His haughtiness, a haughtiness which even the most wretched man does not have to experience. In this respect also I am very sharp of hearing, and though it is not heard by many a philosopher who cries out in the world *δοσ μοι πον στώ, yet I hear* a voice which says, "I will give you *dosmoi,* ye dunces *[dosmere]*!"

No! If I had not believed that I had a divine counter order, never would have retreated, and if only this order is recalled I shall choose again my wish. God forbid that laborious exertion and tension should weaken my wish before such a thing is permissible! I can understand my counter order, for it passes through repentance. A repentant individual who can employ his whole life for a recantation cannot go forward. It is a perfectly simple protest against a marriage. I have neither visions nor dreams to guide me, my collision is quite simply one between repentance and existence, a collision of suspension with relation to a present actuality. Until that collision is resolved I am *in suspenso,* so soon as it is resolved I am free again. Hence it is that I make every effort to keep myself upon the apex of love. So soon as she is free the religious crises are my task.

To think quite hypothetically, suppose that she were again in possession of herself; suppose that the word about death were an exaggeration, not intended as a pathetic line, but only as one says in the course of conversation, “I am about dying of heat in these small rooms”; suppose she may have meant it but had not understood herself; or suppose she had suffered unto death but had triumphed; suppose I had contributed little to this triumph, or nothing at all; suppose she were to snatch at the defense that she had never troubled about me at all — what then? Then I have troubled all the more about her. Good God! if this were possible! How my soul clutches at every explanation from this angle! Although in some of these hypothetical cases I should be sorry for her sake, I ask nothing more, so then I have suffered most, more I do not ask, I have assumed the rôle of the girl, have been more active in the work of sorrowing, or at least just as active, I ask no more. I did not leave her in order to lead the dance or to play the part of chief lover in a comedy.

What for her has had no significance, or only perhaps the significance of a temporal decision, has had for me eternal significance. I regret nothing,

not a tear, not a single tear I shed for her sake; I am not ashamed of it, for it is not unmanly to be able to weep, but it is womanish not to be able to hide it from everyone. Yea, if there were a mocker who had counted every tear (ah, despicable deed, ah, pitiable delusion of the man who counts the tears which assuage my grief!); suppose the number were great, suppose she were to mention the number to deride me, a man who weeps — I shall not regret it. Though I should die tomorrow, my life was yet an epigram which makes an inscription on my tomb superfluous. I do not regret it; after all she has done me good, done me an infinite good, just by an unconsidered word and an exorbitant utterance.

But, behold, if such were the case, my position becomes difficult in a peculiar way. I had to have a human life upon my conscience in order to be awakened and torn out of the lethargy of melancholy. I humble myself under the seriousness of this thought. But then comes my understanding and says, "No, it is not true, thou didst perceive well enough that it was not a human life, that it was thine own imagination which fashioned this conceit and showed it to thy melancholy, and both agreed that it was indeed possible. But then it was not a human life, it was a word, a word which in the mouth of many another thou wouldst even have laughed at." Yes, in a sense that is true. And yet I regret nothing, not even that I have suffered all this pain, which after all has not yet lamed me, though it would do so were I to talk to anyone about it. In loneliness, in sleeplessness, I have been sensible of it, when in a single second one is able all at once to think together more thoughts than can be written in months, when imagination conjures up dreadful presentiments which no pen dare deal with, when conscience starts up anxiously and provokes terror by optical deceits.

But, alas, all this is only an hypothesis.

March 25. Morning.

TODAY a year ago.

What is the happiest existence? It is that of a young girl of sixteen years when she, pure and innocent, possesses nothing, not a chest of drawers or a pedestal, but has to make use of the lowest drawer of her mother's escritoire to keep all her magnificence: the confirmation dress and a prayer-book! Happy the man who possesses no more than he is content to put in the next drawer.

What existence is the happiest? It is that of a young girl of sixteen years, pure and innocent, who indeed can dance but goes to a ball only twice a year!

What is the happiest existence? It is that of a young girl when, sixteen summers old, pure and innocent, she sits diligently at her work and yet finds time to glance sidewise at him, at him who possesses nothing, not a chest of drawers, not a pedestal, but is only a partner in the same wardrobe, and yet has an entirely different explanation of the case, for in her he possesses the whole world, in spite of the fact that she possesses nothing.

And who then is the most unhappy? It is that rich young man twenty-five winters old who dwells opposite.

When one is sixteen summers old and the other sixteen winters old, are they not equally old? Ah, no! How is that, is not the time identical when it is identical? Ah, no! The time is not identical.

Ah, why were nine months in my mother's womb enough to make me an old man? Ah, why was I not swaddled in joy? Why was I born not only with pain but for pain? Why was my eye not opened for happiness but only to behold this realm of sighs and to be unable to break away from it?

March 27. Midnight.

To clutch an hypothesis is like embracing a cloud instead of Juno, and at the same time it is unfaithfulness towards her. But to employ the hypothesis as an expedient for exercising the soul, ungirding it and giving its energies new elasticity, is permissible, yea, obligatory. Being thus fortified I am

again completely hers. If I no longer hold her to my breast, I do nevertheless embrace her, for the work of remembrance in the morning hours and the lifesaving attempt at the hour of midnight constitute as it were an embrace in which she is enfolded. A lifesaving attempt — can it be called such? Though I had everything in readiness, what does this avail if I dare not employ it? Though I were never so willing, what does it avail when I am bound, and to keep myself bound is the only thing that possibly may help her a little? If I could get myself afloat, I soon should be in my boat, in case this might in some way be of advantage to her, for it is also possible that what at one time would have saved her has now no importance in her eyes. It is incredible how many ways possibility knows of getting out of a difficulty, especially for one who dare not tread a single one of them — for with that there would be one less way, perhaps several. And yet it is a lifesaving attempt.

How strange a power a single word has when, as in this case, it is not integrated in the coherence of the discourse or the sentence where it is hardly noticed in passing, but when without grammatical connection it stares at one with the provocation of a riddle and the relevance of dread! I am as deeply depressed as if in this word there were a veridical presentiment of actual truth, as if I were to lie in my boat upon that rush-encircled lake one quiet evening, as if I heard her cry — and now to my oars, and I saved her life, but never more shall she be human. Dread and pain and bewilderment had thus been slowly picking the lock of consciousness, and at last despair succeeded in disintegrating the charming essence of this lovable womanliness. Horrible! Dare I not command this thought to flee from me? dare I not pray that this thought be taken from me? No, it is in fact a possibility. And yet if only I were sitting with her, only this, that I might venture to be present, that I might venture all, although it were nothing, this at least would be an alleviation, an alleviation like the

tumor which causes a dull incessant pain but not so much suffering. Everything would now be confused for her, she would believe that we were sitting as aforetime in a boat upon this lake where once we rowed together; and then we would exchange, if not the winged word, at least the expressions of insanity and would understand one another in madness, and talk about our love, as Lear would talk with Cordelia about the Court and enquire for news from it. — But to be separated from her, and then if she were to die, that he who was closest to her, the only one, perhaps, who had a whole lifetime, short or long, to mourn for her, that he was the only one who might not be in mourning, or rather that he was prevented from riding in the carriage when the funeral cortège followed her to the grave, although he knew better than anyone that a deceased person is the mightiest of all!

Oh, any expression at all for sorrow, though it be the most painful expression, is after all an alleviation in comparison with having no expression whatsoever. To live as though I were dumb, and to have torments in my soul and speech within it, not as one learns it from a phrase-book but as the heart discovers it; to be as if dumb, yea, as if mutilated, and yet to have sufferings which crave the eloquence of an actor! To have to be distrustful of the voice lest it tremble, to have to be distrustful of the foot lest it go out of its customary way and leave a betraying footprint, to have to be distrustful of the hand lest it seek its place upon the breast and indicate the hidden thought, and lest it stretch out for her. To sit at home in sackcloth and ashes, or rather naked in one's wretchedness, and when one would dress, to have no other clothes but those of joyfulness and merriment in order to hide oneself!

"Where precisely is it you are suffering?" says the physician to the sick man. "Ah, everywhere, dear Doctor," he replies. "But how do you suffer?" continues the physician, "Tell me, so that I can diagnose the disease." No one asks this of me, I have no need of it, I know well how I suffer, I suffer

sympathetically. Precisely this suffering it is that is able to shake me. Although in my melancholy I am inwardly convinced that I am good for nothing, so soon as danger comes I have the strength of a lion. When I suffer autopathically I can apply all my will, and melancholy as I am and brought up in melancholy, the terrible finds me prepared for the still more terrible. But when I suffer sympathetically I have to employ all my strength and all my inventiveness in the service of terror to fashion an image of the other's pain, and thereby I become powerless. When I myself suffer my understanding discovers grounds of consolation, but I dare not believe in any of them when I suffer sympathetically, for in fact I am not so precisely acquainted with the other that I can know whether there are present the presuppositions which condition the effectiveness of such consolations. When I suffer autopathically I know where I am, I place signs along the path of suffering so that I may have something to go by; but when I suffer sympathetically I go astray, for I cannot know where the other really is, and every instant I have to begin all over again, and be prepared to be able to think a still more dreadful possibility, the horror of which I must endure in order that I may shirk nothing.

The moment she is free, then indeed I am without sorrow; but at that moment I am at the point where she supposed I was when sometimes she begged me to remember her. Yes, at that moment I shall remember her, but at that moment I shall have found alleviation, I shall be sad and say with Ossian, "Sweet is the sorrow of melancholy!" Then I shall have peace, for the remembrance of melancholy is blessed and softened and is as happy as the weeping willow when it is swayed by the evening breeze. But not now. I do not fear the whole world, at least I think I do not, but I fear this girl. A glimpse of her as she passes by, and my fate is decided till the next time. Hence she essentially is everything, absolutely everything; if she is free, she essentially is nothing at all. True, she is lovable, but essentially this does not

signify anything. I have been in love, but my soul is fashioned of a substance too eternal to despair over an unhappy love; on the other hand I can despair over an unhappy responsibility, over being on unhappy terms with the eternal meaning of life. How dialectically difficult my position is, only he can comprehend who himself is tried. When an inexperienced man reads a legal document through, he can understand it to be sure, but only the experienced lawyer can reconstruct its genesis, only he can read the invisible writing which witnesses to difficulties overcome, only he is capable of knowing about the contributions vanished generations have made to the formulation of this document, he recognizes the signs of border warfare waged by ingenuity against ingenuity, ingenuity in the service of justice and ingenuity in the service of deceit, and for him therefore each individual expression has significance, not just up to a certain point, but absolute significance, and for him such a document is also a contribution to the history of the human race. The inexperienced man can indeed understand it, but he is unable to draw it up, yea, hardly with any confidence can he copy it exactly.

April 2. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. I had determined that either on the first or the second of this month I would examine where we are. I arranged an occasion and the interrogation of circumstance in order to give her feeling an opportunity of expressing itself. What comes of it? In the most free and easy way in the world, in fact with unseemly vehemence which bordered almost upon petulance, she declared that she didn’t care for me at all, that she had accepted me out of pity and couldn’t in the least conceive what I wanted of her. In short, it was a little improvisation *ad modum* Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing.* O melancholy, what sport thou dost make of the melancholic! The poet says truly, *quem deus perdere vult primum dementat.* Now I have been wandering through the valley of the shadow of anxiety,

seeking to do everything as well as I could, I have humiliated myself in such a way as I dare not admit before anybody, I have sat in the darkness of death, deeply wounded by the thought that I could not make her happy — and never did I suspect what is the most natural thing, and what now that she says it I can perfectly well understand, that she doesn't care for me at all.

However, it was perhaps only an unpremeditated utterance, an impetuous outburst, perhaps she was vexed, though I cannot comprehend by what. I will not let her provoke me to anger. If only I were perfectly well assured in my life-view, so that I might venture to use force, the whole thing would be a prank. But on the other hand she opens to me a bright prospect. This much is certain, a marriage is for me a difficult problem; I have now learned to understand this much, that if I had so understood myself before, I would not have embarked upon this. And now she seems to have far greater power in relation to me than I in relation to her.

The exploration resulted in an explosion, and I received the corrosive sublimate straight in the face. Just as one who for a long while has been sitting in the dark cannot at once see anything when a strong light shines into the room, so it was with me: although she was sitting by my side, I could not see her. This ideal figure which I embraced with the anxious responsibility of an eternal obligation became in fact something less, something so inconspicuous that I hardly could descry her. My melancholy was as if wafted away by the wind, I beheld what I had before me — heavens and earth! a saucy little miss!

I have to repeat the experiment again to see whether this is seriousness or not. I feel a lack of consistency in her behavior. To be consistent she must put an end to the thing and reject me. But she doesn't seem to have that in mind. What does this signify? We shall see.

April 2. Midnight.

BUT if she actually were to become insane! As for the danger of death, maybe there never was any serious question of it; at all events she now seems to be past that peril, although there remains always for me the alarming logical conclusion which results from confounding a *cum hoc* with a *propter hoc*. But as for insanity... let us see how the thing went.

First of all, my retirement as a scoundrel made an essential change in the situation, inasmuch as that would throw her into a pathological emotion of a totally different sort, it would arouse wrath, exasperation, defiance in her mind against me, and more especially her pride would prompt her to venture to do anything which might keep up her spirits. If I had been faithful to her, not only love but the other sides of the soul would have found satisfaction in possessing all in the loved one, and hence in losing all in the loved one; but as I did not prove myself a worthy object of her love, it would require a very rare heroism to disdain the comfort which most readily presents itself: that, namely, of making the unworthy one as unimportant as possible. In this respect I have supported her with all my might, and I believe that if I had not used such prudence (by which at the same time I paid due respect to the common judgment passed upon me), I should have been directly to blame if she had become insane; for to want to be a worthy object of her love, and then to want to behave in such a way, is to propose to her a dialectical problem which is so specifically relevant to the single individual's God-relationship that only by God's help can one hold fast to the problem. Hence it is the duty of the individual to submit, even to contribute, to the opinion that he is a depraved man, in the eyes of all who are concerned in the matter, and especially in her eyes, though in relation to unconcerned parties he may well hold his peace. This I have done.

Psychologically considered, it is possible for a feminine soul to become crazy in two ways. One is by a sudden transition which gets the better of the understanding. One may become blind by the sudden change of light and

darkness, the heart may cease to beat by reason of a sudden change of temperature, breathing being impeded by the air which is drawn in. So it is also with the understanding in the case of a sudden transition: reflection is unable to breathe, and the understanding comes to a stop. So in this case insanity is petrifying. There is no proportion, or rather there is an absolute disproportion, between what the understanding is capable of dealing with, and the problem proposed to it. This disproportion expresses the character of the insanity. One instant is decisive for the whole thing — only one instant more, and this would not have occurred.

The other way is when a secret passion exhausts the will, and the sufferer slowly sinks into insanity. In this case the sufferer does not become petrified but becomes distracted by a multiplicity of ideas which displace one another by a natural necessity and stand in no relation to freedom, which at one instant when it was free called up the ideas, but now they unfreely call themselves up.

The first could not possibly be the case with her, for the transition was made as gradual as possible, and besides it must at once have been observable that this had occurred. It is rather the second, which in a way is the most dangerous, we might suppose has set in. For in a certain sense the relationship was made for her as dialectical as it was possible for my reflection to make it. I do not know that I have neglected to bring forward any possibility reflection could suggest, throwing it out always as an aside and so hypothetically that it was left entirely to her to find an explanation. That I did intentionally, and I believe (humanly speaking) that it is the only correct way. Ah, the labor was trying, and it was almost to be feared that I rather would be the one to lose my mind. By nature she was not very reflective, or rather hardly reflective at all, but one can never know what effect an occurrence may have. Merely a tenth part of the reflection-possibilities I set in motion would have been enough to unsettle a feminine

brain if she had discovered them herself. But reflection-possibilities must have lost their attraction for her. That is what I wanted, and (humanly speaking) that is the correct thing. Secret sorrow must itself discover and bring forward reflection-possibilities, and then sorrow finds seduction in holding on to them, and this is the earnest money of insanity. Such is not her case. She may call up whatever reflection-possibility she will, it does not acquire the refreshing coolness of novelty, nor the enticing allurement of surprise, it possesses no secret infectious power, for she is already acquainted with it. Moreover, I have brought forward every reflection-possibility as completely as I could. I wanted to give her an impression of a superior reflection. One does that any way one can. So the instant she begins to reflect it will occur to her to say, “Ah, what good does it do me to reflect! If only I could reflect like him — and what good did it do him?” For a feminine soul, reflection is like sweets for the child: a little is tempting, but *en masse* sweets lose their seductiveness.

Furthermore, if sometimes she thinks of me, if she sets her hope upon the possibility that the relationship might be reestablished, a new sort of reflection might sneak in, she herself being the discoverer of such. With a view to this I have labored and am laboring with might and main by keeping my existence entirely unchanged. Perhaps, however, she will draw a conclusion from something she has heard about me or from something she thinks she sees in my outward appearance. Quite so, but at the same instant she will bethink herself that my reflection has exhibited to her so much possibility that she cannot possibly keep pace with it. This cannot humiliate or mortify her, for it is entirely natural that a reflective individual has more and even much more reflection than a girl. If she has not yet, as I hope not, to the point of nausea, formed a concrete conception of what reflection amounts to, it would perhaps be able to tempt her. I do not believe that such is the case now. I have done everything to make reflection loathsome to her

(for the omnipotence of reflection when it dwells upon one thought of course becomes omnipotence in dialectical bosh when the one thought is taken away) and to bring it about that every attempt at reflection, the moment she began it, might seem to her fruitless. I have suffered in doing this and suffer from it: a man may suck poison from another and himself die of it; by wresting reflection from another a man may become only too reflective. But if reflection is odious to her, she will be close to a resolution and will not tread the slippery path which may lead to insanity. If she becomes free, she becomes free by reason of her own resolution and not by means of one or another consideration or interpretation which I contrived to suggest to her.

In all human probability she could not become insane for love. Just because she has so little power of reflection the sudden transition would be the most dangerous thing for her. This danger has been obviated, and I have done the best I could with all my might to prevent the delirium of reflection. If then insanity were to set in, it must be due to the mortification of pride at finding herself rejected, which in despair of having a revenge would shut itself up within itself until it went astray. Ah, I know the world's judgment upon me, I perhaps have felt the pain more agonizingly than she; I shudder when I think that by a proud or (what is still more dreadful) by a compassionate glance somebody might give her to understand that she was insulted and thus impart to her the sense of insult. Once it was the custom in olden days, so it is related, that when a prince was being educated there was educated with him a boy of simpler extraction who had to take the floggings. People have talked about the cruelty towards the poor boy who had to take the floggings. To me it seems a far greater cruelty towards the poor prince, who, if he had a sense of honor, must have felt the blows far more forcibly, far more painfully, far more devastatingly, than they were felt corporally. I know also how it tortured me to expose her to this pain, I know

that I was willing to do everything to prevent it by giving a false expression to the separation, so that in the eyes of the world I should be the sufferer, for when it is only a question of myself I know just how much pain there is and what I have to do for it. It was not possible, however, to put this through. Several times in our colloquies I let fall jestingly and in a conversational tone a few hints to call her attention to this, but in vain. Only a word from her, and the thing would have been done, though I had prudence enough to broach in a jesting and conversational tone an expedient which for me would have been an indescribable alleviation. More I did not dare to do. Ah, if I had talked about it with all the passion I felt, she would have perceived *eo ipso* in my zeal how much she concerned me, and then again the whole thing would have hung fire, and again she would have allowed herself to employ every means to move me, that is, to torture me, for moved I might not be. It is a comic contradiction to talk with pathos or with the decisive assurance of a systematic philosopher about what one is not convinced of oneself or does not oneself understand, but it is a tragic, a profoundly tragic contradiction to have to talk in vague terms, with jesting hints, in conversational phrases, about a matter which concerns and alarms one in deadly earnest. It is a comic contradiction to be ready to bet fourpence when there is an infinite stake to be won, but it is a tragic, a profoundly tragic contradiction to have to play as if one were playing for counters when one knows only too well how much is at stake. I suppose it would be one of the most dreadful collisions, perhaps the most dreadful of all, if one were to imagine that solicitude for some person made it necessary for an Apostle to talk ambiguously and in a light conversational tone about the truth of Christianity. — But to return to the subject. That insanity might come about in such a way I am reluctant to conceive, not because it is a dreadful thought, for the dreadful is a challenge to my honor to think it, but because it would cast a less favorable light upon her conduct towards me. Every

outburst of passion whereby she laid a murder upon my conscience, every such outburst of passion which, until further evidence is forthcoming, my honor requires me to regard as truth, in spite of the protest of the understanding, every such outburst which may be ascribed to exaggeration can after all be easily reconciled with womanly purity and womanly loveliness, but every such outburst, on the assumption that pride was the motive, can only be an unseemly falsehood directed by self-love against me. True enough, I have permitted myself to direct many a falsehood against her, but truly it was for the sake of saving her and was meant sympathetically. Hence I am so reluctant to conceive this horror. Moreover, again I have done everything I could and have done it indefatigably. If my existence were to express something positive, it is conceivable that it might inflame her pride. If I were able to sustain a manly existence, which is such precisely by reason of its relation to the other sex, that is to say, by personal beauty, elegant deportment, an ingratiating nature, courteous ways, etc., then the prejudice in favor of me might be prejudicial to her, it might be an incitement to anger that he to whom the sex conceded competence as a judge had passed such a judgment upon her. But fortunately no man is farther from this than I. If I were an artist, one therefore who has an understanding of beauty and of femininity, if I were a poet, who is in fact the darling of the sex, then that possibly might inflame pride, for the fact that he whom the sex acknowledged had passed such a judgment upon her. If I were a thinker, a scholar, it would be more difficult to imagine how such an existence could be a further trial to offended feminine pride; and yet such an existence would be something after all, and on the other hand the something I am is precisely nothing. With her *in mente* it gratifies me and my genius to keep my whole existence at the critical zero-point between cold and warm, at the critical zero-point between being something and being nothing, between being perhaps wise, and being perhaps, perhaps

sottish. Such an existence is entirely heterogeneous with a feminine existence, it cannot even be of any concern to a woman, still less incite her. My derangement of mind is not so great as to inspire her sympathy, but I am just half mad enough for her to say disinterestedly, “Oh, he’s so mad,” and if an offended pride is concerned about vindicating itself against me, it easily could rise superior to such a queer chap. It requires a good deal of dialectic to conceive of the zero-existence and to sustain it, but then to conceive of this existence as a polemic against oneself demands an uncommon dialectician. A woman rarely possesses much dialectic; she did not have it, if subsequently she has become such an uncommon dialectitian, she is perfectly able to look after herself, and if she has not, then my mode of procedure is correct and well thought out.

This is my diagnosis. To me unfortunately it gives scant comfort — though for me it is always a necessity to make everything clear to myself. If I had been consulted and had dared to say with regard to the condition of the sufferer that it is as I have described, I should be tranquil about the danger of a delirium setting in. Since I am not a physician but am the guilty party, this is of no help to me. The poison works upon me, the poison of reflection which I have developed within myself in order to suck all reflection out of her. I remember that she once said to me that it must be dreadful to be able, like me, to explain everything. She might here have got a notion how little she understood my reflection, for she scarcely apprehended how welcome this utterance was to me, and in what way it was welcome.

However, I have understood that after all she might become insane; my melancholy has also impressed upon me this possibility. Even though the unfortunate one whom insanity has ensnared in its infatuation were to suffer nothing, to have to experience insanity sympathetically in the case of another, staring incessantly at the doubtful reading of an eternal

responsibility — ah, the thought of it is enough to drive a man to distraction! And yet if that were to come to pass, I should dare to seek her out, and that would be an alleviation to me — but suppose she were to recover and my problem were to retire again, then surely it would be my turn to go mad. To keep watch by her side night and day, that I can do, but I cannot sleep, and my agony is not overcome by "each night to rest beside my faithful wife," when it is not settled whether she can be my wife.

Now I will extinguish the lights. When everything is dark around me and I am silent I feel better. What is the use of talking. Everybody indeed would say it was a lie. Be that as it may. It is not my purpose to defend my assertion against opponents, neque thesin meant publico colloquio defendere conabor. And what is the case I am arguing with God? If it were about the emperor's beard — if she were to have changed her mind, if she would gladly retract every word which works along with my melancholy to fashion the horror — what then? Then it would merely follow that she had brought a nemesis upon her own head, that it is evident she had confused her person with the eternal relationship to God which is implied in the responsibility of duty, and with that she would have shown how insignificant she is. The case has been carried to a higher court; I have bestowed upon her every possible ideality; I could not, either for her sake or for mine, desire here again to come to such close quarters with the comic.

April 5. Morning.

Y ES, I was quite right; I got today the declaration and the last will and testament legally confirmed by... my little confirmand — for that is exactly the way she impresses me, the little miss that she is. And yet she does not want to act, she seems rather to want to incite me to become an adorer. In the case of anybody else I should say that this is the beginning of a little coquetry; of her I dare not and I will not say it, not even think it. But it is one of the most ludicrous things I have experienced. I am, as I have most

deeply felt, much too old in comparison with her, but by such behavior she makes me indeed so disproportionately old that I am involuntarily prompted to think of an old schoolmaster who *ex cathedra* made the following speech to a pupil: “If you come to me again this way, you really will get one upon the ear... and I really believe you will get it right away.”

This then is the consequence of my ideal conception of duty. If it might be made clear to me that in the strictest sense I had a duty towards all men, I should be the most worried person in the whole land. I have an ideal conception of every relationship of duty, and inasmuch as my independent position brings it about that I have not entered into any, the conception still has the primitiveness characteristic of childhood, the enthusiasm proper to youth, an anxiousness attributable to melancholy, which makes the conception itself perhaps the best thing I have, but also constrains me to the most reckless exertion.

Why should she then bring laughter into this relationship? If she really didn’t care for me, well then, I am all ready for the journey; I have been religiously broken and contrite, and I may be so again when I assume the responsibility, but I am not to be broken erotically. If this is her serious meaning, then let one come straight out with it, let one say it becomingly, let one do honor to oneself in all that one does in this respect; but let not one be peevish and strike out backwards, for thus one only makes everything ridiculous. Even in her behavior there is, perhaps against her will, a recognition of me, for it is like a sort of insubordination. She must surely know that she possesses just as much power as I, and the person who possesses the power does not behave like this.

April 5. Midnight.

A POSSIBILITY

LONGBRIDGE gets its name from its length, for as a bridge it is long, though as a road the length of the bridge is not very considerable, of which one can convince oneself by crossing it. Then when one is standing on the other side, in Christianshavn, it seems as though the bridge must after all be very long, for it seems as though one were far, very far away from Copenhagen. One notices immediately that this town is not a capital or royal residence, one misses in a sense the noise and traffic in the streets, one feels as though one were out of one's element when one is out of the bustle of meeting and parting and hasting on, in which the most disparate interests assert for themselves an equal importance, out of the noisy sociality in which everyone contributes his part to the general hubbub. At Christianshavn, on the other hand, there prevails a quiet repose. There people do not seem to be acquainted with the aims and purposes which prompt the inhabitants of the metropolis to such noisy and busy activity, do not seem to be acquainted with the diversities which underlie the clamorous movement of the capital. Here the ground does not move, or rather shake, beneath one's feet, and one stands as securely as any stargazer or dowser could wish to stand for the sake of his observations. One looks about in vain for that social *posciamur,* where it is so easy to go with the others, where every instant one can get rid of oneself, every hour can find a seat in the omnibus, surrounded on all sides by conductors, where one feels so deserted and imprisoned in the quietness which isolates, where one cannot get rid of oneself, where on all sides one is surrounded by nonconductors. In certain quarters there are streets so empty that one can hear one's own footfall. The big warehouses contain nothing and bring in nothing, for though Echo is a very quiet lodger, yet in the way of business and rent no owner is the better for it. In the populous quarters life is far from being extinct, and yet it is so far from being loud that the quiet human murmur suggests to me at least the buzzing of summer out in the country. One

becomes sad as soon as one enters Christianshavn, for memory is sad out there among the empty storehouses, and in the overpopulated streets the sight is sad where the eye discovers only an idyl of poverty and wretchedness. One has crossed the salt water to get here, and now one is far, far away, in another and remote world where dwells a race which deals in horseflesh, where in the only square there stands a solitary ruin, ever since that conflagration which did not, as pious superstition recounts in other instances, leave the church standing while it consumed everything else, but consumed the church and left only the prison standing. One is in a poor provincial town where the only reminder of the vicinity of the capital is the presence of suspicious characters and the special vigilance of the police; everything else is just as it is in a provincial town: the quiet hum of humanity, the fact that they all know one another, that there is a shabby fellow who at least every other day does duty as a drunkard, and that there is a lunatic known to everybody, who shifts for himself.

So it is that several years ago there might have been seen at a definite hour of the day at the southern extremity of Water Street a tall, thin man who walked with measured tread back and forth along the pavement. The strangeness of this promenade could scarcely escape anybody's attention, for the distance he traversed was so short that even the uninitiated must observe that he neither was out on business, nor was taking a constitutional like other people. Those who observed him often could discern in his walk a symbol of the power of custom. A sea-captain, accustomed on shipboard to promenade the length of the deck, marks out on land a distance of equal length and walks mechanically back and forth — so did this wayfarer, or bookkeeper, as the people called him. When he had reached the end of the street one observed in him the converse of an electric shock, the tug of custom in him: he came to a halt, swung about, turned his eyes again to the ground, and then marched back, and so on.

He was known naturally in the whole quarter, but in spite of the fact that he was crazy he never was exposed to insult; on the contrary, by the inhabitants of the neighborhood he was treated with a certain deference. This was due in part to his wealth, but also to his beneficence and to his advantageous appearance. His face, it is true, had that monotonous expression so characteristic of a certain sort of lunacy, but the features were fine, his figure erect and handsome, his dress was scrupulous and even elegant. His lunacy was very plainly exhibited only in the forenoon between eleven and twelve o'clock, when he walked out along the paved way between the Bornehus Bridge and the end of the street. The rest of the day he doubtless was dangling after his luckless preoccupation, but his aberration did not show itself in this way. He talked with people, made longer excursions, took an interest in many things; but between eleven and twelve o'clock one could not at any price get him to stop walking, to go on farther, to make a response to a questioner, or even so much as to return a greeting, though at other times he was courtesy itself. Whether this hour had some special significance to him, or whether, as sometimes occurs, he was actuated by a bodily disorder of regular recurrence, I never was able to learn while he was alive, and after his death there was no one from whom I could seek more precise information.

Now although the inhabitants of the neighborhood almost reminded one by their attitude towards him of the behavior of the Indians towards a lunatic, whom they venerated as a wise man, they perhaps privately had conjectures about the cause of his misfortune. It not infrequently happens that a man reputed to be shrewd betrays by such conjectures quite as much disposition to madness, and perhaps more puerility, than any lunatic can be charged with. The so-called shrewd people are often stupid enough to believe everything a madman says, and often stupid enough to believe that everything he says is madness, although no one is more cunning than a

lunatic often is in hiding what he wants to hide, and although many a word of a crazy man contains a wisdom which a wise man need not be ashamed of. Hence it is perhaps that the same notion which regards the governance of the universe as being determined by a grain of sand or a mere accident is considered valid in psychology; for it is the same notion when one descries no deeper cause for insanity but regards it as easily explicable by nothing, just as mediocre actors think that to play the part of a drunken man is the easiest job — which only is true when one can be sure of a mediocre audience. The bookkeeper was shielded from ridicule because he was loved, and the conjectures about him were so securely preserved in silence that actually I never heard more than one. Perhaps the neighbors had no more concealed under their silence; that is a view I too can adopt, and I am not disinclined to do so, for fear my obstinate suspicion that they privately had many conjectures should betray in me disposition to puerility. The conjecture was that he had been in love with a queen of Spain; and this obviously was wide of the mark since it did not account for one of the most remarkable traits, his decisive predilection for children. In this way he did a great deal of good, actually consuming his fortune in doing it; hence he was sincerely loved by the poor, and many a poor woman instructed her children to greet the bookkeeper deferentially. But in the morning between eleven and twelve he never responded to a greeting. I have often seen a poor woman pass him with her child and greet him in the most friendly and deferential way, as did the child too, but he did not look up. When the poor woman had gone by I saw her toss her head. The situation was touching, for his benefactions were in a very characteristic and curious sense entirely gratis. The pawnshop takes six per cent on a loan, and many a rich, many a fortunate, many a mighty man, and many a middleman between them and the poor, will sometimes take usury on the gift, but in the case of the bookkeeper a poor woman was not tempted to be envious of him, or

dejected because of her wretchedness, or cowed by the poor-rates, which the poor do not pay in money but work out by a bended back and a mortified soul, for she had the feeling that her “noble and generous benefactor” (to use the expression of the poor) was more unfortunate than she — than she who got from the bookkeeper the money she had need of.

But he was not interested in children merely as an opportunity for doing good; no, he was interested in the children themselves, and that in a very singular way. The moment he saw a child, at any time but the hour between eleven and twelve, the monotonous expression of his face became mobile and reflected a great variety of moods, he made up to the child, engaged it in conversation, and all the while regarded it with such close attention that he might have been an artist who painted children’s faces only.

This is what one saw in the street, but one who saw him in his apartment might marvel still more. One frequently gets an entirely different impression of a person seeing him in his home and in his chamber than when one sees him elsewhere. And this is not true only of alchemists and others who busy themselves with occult arts and sciences, or of astrologers, like Dapsul von Zabelthau, who in his sitting-room looks like other people, but seated in his observatory has a high peaked cap on his head, a mantle of gray callimanco, a long white beard, and talks with a dissembled voice so that his own daughter cannot recognize him but takes him for a bugaboo. Ah, one not infrequently discovers an entirely different sort of change when one sees a person in his home or his chamber, and then compares him as he here appears to be with what he appears to be in public life. Such was not the case with the bookkeeper, and one only saw with astonishment how serious his interest in children actually was. He had collected a considerable library, but all the books had to do with physiology. Among them were to be found the most costly copper engravings, and along with them whole series of his own drawings, including faces drawn with the precision of portraits,

then a row of faces connected with one original in a sequence which showed how the likeness constantly grew less, though a trace of it always remained; there were faces executed in accordance with mathematical formulae, others which illustrated by a few clear lines how a slight alteration in the proportions completely altered the total impression; there were faces constructed according to physiological observations, and these in turn were checked by other faces sketched in accordance with a hypothetical assumption. In all of these what interested him particularly were the similarities attributable to family relationship in successive generations as seen from the point of view of physiology, psychology and pathology. It is perhaps to be regretted that his works never saw the light of day; for it is true he was a lunatic, as I learned on closer acquaintance, but a lunatic is by no means the worst observer when his fixed idea becomes an instinct for prying things out. A curiously interested observer sees a great deal, a scientifically interested observer is worthy of all honor, an anxiously interested observer sees what others do not see, but a crazy observer sees perhaps most, his observation is more intense and more persistent, just as the senses of certain animals are sharper than those of man. Only it goes without saying that his observations must be verified.

When he was thus occupied with his passionate investigation (which generally speaking was at all times except between the hours of eleven and twelve) many people would suppose that he was not crazy, although it was precisely then his lunacy permeated him most completely. And as underlying every scientific investigation there is an x which has to be sought for, or (regarded from another side) as the thing which prompts the scientific investigation, which is an eternal presumption seeking to corroborate its certainty by observation; just so did his anxious passion have an x which it sought, a law which would determine precisely the degree of resemblance in racial inheritance and thus enable one to reach an exact

conclusion; and so too did he have a presumption to which his imagination lent a dolorous certainty that this discovery would confirm some dolorous fact concerning himself.

He was the son of a subordinate government employee living in modest circumstances. At an early age he got a position with one of the richest merchants. Quiet, retiring, rather shy and embarrassed, he attended to his business with an intelligence and punctuality which soon led the head of the house to discover in him a very useful man. He employed his leisure time in reading, in studying foreign languages, in developing his decided talent for drawing, and in making a daily visit to the house of his parents, where he was the only child. So he lived on without knowledge of the world. He was employed as accountant, and soon he was in receipt of a considerable salary. If it be true, as the Englishman says, that money makes virtue, it is certain also that money makes vice. However, the young man was not tempted, but as year after year went by he became more and more a stranger to the world. He himself hardly noticed this because his time was always fully occupied. Only once did a presentiment of it dawn upon his soul, he became a stranger to himself, or was like one who pulls himself up and vaguely recalls something he must have forgotten, though without being able to comprehend what it was. And something indeed he had forgotten, for he had forgotten to be young and to let his heart delight itself in the manner of youth before the days of youth were past.

Then he became acquainted with a couple of clerks who were men of the world. They soon were aware of his shy embarrassment but had so much respect for his ability and knowledge that they never did anything to make him conscious of his lack. Sometimes they invited him to take part with them in a little gaiety, in short excursions, or at the theater. He did it and liked it. His companions on the other hand were doubtless none the worse for his company, for his shyness put a wholesome check upon their

merriment, so that it did not become wanton, and his purity imparted to their very amusements a nobler character than perhaps they were accustomed to. But shyness is not a power able to maintain its position and assert itself, and whether it was that the sadness which sometimes seized a man unacquainted with the world then revolted against him, or whatever other cause there may have been, at all events an excursion in the forest ended with an unusually sumptuous dinner party. Frolicsome as the two clerks already were, his shyness became only an incentive to them, and the painful sense of it on his part became an incentive to him, which had a more and more powerful effect the more they were inflamed by wine. Then the others led him with them, and in his over-excitement he became an entirely different man — and he was in bad company. So then they visited one of those places where, strangely enough, one gives money for a woman's despicableness. What occurred there even he himself did not know.

The following day he was out of sorts and dispirited; sleep had obliterated the impression, yet he remembered enough not to want to seek again the society of these friends, whether it was reputable or evil society. If he had been diligent before, he now became all the more so, and the pain he felt for the fact that his friends had so misled him, or for the fact that he had had such friends, made him even more retiring, and to this the death of his parents contributed.

On the other hand, the esteem in which he was held by the head of the house increased with his efficiency. He was a man much trusted, and they had already begun to think of giving him a share in the business when he fell ill and was sick unto death. At the moment when he was closest to it and was about to set foot upon "the solemn bridge of death" there suddenly awoke in him a remembrance, a remembrance of that incident which till then had not existed for him in any real sense. In his remembrance of it that occurrence assumed a definite form which brought his life to an end along

with the loss of his purity. He recovered, but when he left his couch with health restored he took with him a *possibility,* and this possibility pursued him, and he pursued this possibility in his passionate investigation, and this possibility brooded in his silence, and this possibility it was that set in manifold motion the features of his face when he saw a child — and this possibility was that another being owed its life to him. And what he sought so anxiously, and what made him old when he was barely a man in years, was the unfortunate child, or the query whether there was such a child; and what made him a lunatic was the fact that every obvious way to discovery was cut off from him, inasmuch as the two who had been his destruction had long ago journeyed to America and disappeared; and what made his lunacy so dialectical was the fact that he did not so much as know whether his notion was a result of his illness, a fevered imagination, or whether death had actually come to the aid of his memory with a recollection of reality. Behold, it ended therefore with his wandering silently with bowed head along that short path between the hours of eleven and twelve, and with his wandering the rest of the day along the prodigious detour of the desperate windings of all possibilities, to find if possible a certainty, and then the thing to be sought.

However, in the beginning he was quite capable of attending to the business of the office. He was as precise and punctual as ever. He scanned the ledger and the letter-books, but now and then it came to him in a flash that the whole thing was labor lost, that there was something quite different he ought to be scanning; he closed the yearly statement of accounts, but in a flash this appeared to him a jest when he thought of his prodigious accountability.

Then the head of the firm died, leaving great wealth, and as he had loved the bookkeeper like a son, being himself without children, he made him heir

to a fortune as if he had been a son. Thereupon the bookkeeper closed the account and became a man of science.

Now he had *otium.* His anxious remembrance might not perhaps have become a fixed idea if life had not inserted one of those casual circumstances which sometimes turn the scale. The only kinsman he had left was an old man, the cousin of his deceased mother, whom he called Cousin κατ’ εξοχην. This was an old bachelor to whom he betook himself after the death of his parents, and in whose house he dined every day, continuing this practice even after he had ceased to be in business. The cousin took delight in a certain sort of equivocal wit which (as psychology easily explains) is more often heard from old men than from the young. It is certain that when all hath been heard and most of it forgotten a simple open-hearted word in an old man’s mouth may acquire a weight it otherwise does not have, it is also certain that an equivocal expression, a careless word, in the mouth of one stricken in years may easily have a disturbing effect, more especially when one is so much disposed to infection as the bookkeeper was. Among the recurrent witticisms to which the cousin repeatedly returned there was one standing joke, namely, that no man, not even a married man, could know definitely how many children he had. This was a way the cousin had, who for the rest was a good fellow, what one calls a boon companion, fond of a merry party, but the equivocal jest and his pinch of snuff he couldn’t get along without. So there is no doubt that the bookkeeper had heard the cousin go through his whole repertoire a number of times, with that equivocal jest included, but without comprehending it or in any real sense hearing it. Now on the other hand it was aimed steadily at his sore spot and was calculated to wound him where he was weak and suffering. He would fall into one of his reveries, and when the cousin’s jest should have given spice to the conversation it was the accidental touch which developed the elasticity of his fixed idea so that it established itself

more and more securely. The silence of the reserved man and the wit of the loquacious cousin worked together upon the unfortunate until at last the understanding seriously resolved upon a change of masters because it could not endure serving with such housekeeping, and the bookkeeper exchanged understanding for lunacy.

In the capital there is traffic and tumult in the streets, at Christianshavn there prevails a quiet repose. There people do not seem to be acquainted with the aims and purposes which prompt the inhabitants of the metropolis to such noisy activity, do not seem to be acquainted with the diversities which underlie the clamorous movement of the capital. It was at Christianshavn the poor bookkeeper dwelt; there, in the practical sense of the word, he had his home, there, in the poetical sense, he was at home. But whether it was along the specialized historical path of investigation he sought to penetrate to the origin of that reminiscence, or whether it was by the prodigious detour of ordinary human observation that he sought wearily, with only the support of deceptive hypotheses, to transform that x into a known quantity — he did not find what he sought. It seemed to him sometimes that the object of his search might be very far off, sometimes that it was so near to him that he was sensible only of his own contrition when the poor thanked him on behalf of their children for his lavish gifts. It seemed to him as if he were dispensing himself from the performance of the most sacred duty, it seemed to him the most horrible thing that a father should give alms to his own child. Hence he would have no thanks, lest this gratitude might be a curse to him, but for all that he could not cease to give. And seldom have the poor found a benefactor so "generous and noble" and received help on such favorable terms.

An intelligent physician, viewing the case in a more general light, would of course have been able to remove from his mind this possibility which was the origin of all the rest; and even if, accommodating himself to the

sick man’s fancy in order to venture another method of cure, he had admitted this as a dolorous certainty, he still would have been able by his knowledge as a physician to remove the deduction from this certainty through a sequence of so many possibilities to so remote a distance that no one would be able to descry it... except the crazy man, who perhaps would only be the more deranged by such treatment. Such various effects has possibility. It is used as a file: if the body is hard, the sharp edge can be filed off; but if it is soft in temper like a saw, the teeth of the saw only become sharper by filing. Every new possibility the poor bookkeeper discovered sharpened the saw of anxiety with which he was sawing alone and from the bite of which he himself was suffering.

I often saw him over there when he wandered along the waterfront, and I saw him also on other occasions; but once I encountered him in a coffee house of that neighborhood. I soon learned that every fourteenth day he came there in the evening. He read the papers, drank a glass of punch and talked with an old ship’s captain who came there regularly every evening. The captain was well up in the seventies, white-haired, with a wholesome complexion and unimpaired health; his whole person showed no indication that except as a sailor he had been much tossed about in the world, and doubtless this impression was correct. How these two got to know one another I never learned, but it was a coffeehouse acquaintance, and they saw one another only in that place, where they talked with one another, now in English, now in Danish, now in a mixture of both. The bookkeeper was an entirely different man, he looked so roguish one could hardly recognize him as he entered the door with an English greeting which gave cheer to the old sailor. The captain’s eyes were not of the best, with advancing years he had lost the capacity for judging people by their appearance. This explains how the bookkeeper, who was in his fortieth year and here looked much younger than he did elsewhere, could make the captain believe he was sixty

years old and could maintain this fiction. In his youth the captain had been, as a sailor can be in all decency, a jolly good fellow, but doubtless in all decency, for he had such a worthy air and his whole nature was so lovable that one could vouch for his life and for his smartness as a sailor. He never tired of telling tales about dance-halls in London and larks with girls and then about India. Thereupon they drank to one another in the course of the conversation, and the captain said, “Yes, that was in our youth, now we are old — but I should not say ‘we,’ for how old are you?”

“Sixty,” replied the bookkeeper, and again they drank to one an other. — Poor bookkeeper, this was the only compensation for a lost youth, and even this compensation was the effect of contrast with the all too serious brooding of insanity. The whole situation was so humoristically planned, the deceit about the sixty years supported by the use of the English language was so profoundly thought out with a view particularly to the humorous effect, that it impressed upon me how much one can learn from a lunatic.

Finally the bookkeeper died. He was ill several days, and when death came in earnest and he now was about to tread in earnest the dreadful bridge of eternity, the possibility vanished, it had been nothing but a delirium; but his works did follow him, and with them the blessing of the poor, and there remained also in the souls of the children the remembrance of how much he had done for them. I followed him to the interment. I chanced to be driving back from the grave along with the cousin. I knew that the bookkeeper had made a will and that the cousin was far from being covetous. I therefore took the liberty of saying that there was something very sad in the fact that he had no family of his own which could inherit what fortune he might leave, in the fact that he had not been married and left no children. Although the cousin was really affected by the death, more so than I could have expected, and on the whole produced a more favorable

impression than I had foreboded, he could not refrain from saying, “Yes, my good friend, no man, not even the married man, can know definitely how many children he leaves behind him.” To me the redeeming feature was that this was an adage, which perhaps he was hardly conscious of repeating, the pitiful thing was that he had such an adage. I have known criminals in prison who were really reformed, had really got an impression of something higher, and whose lives bore witness to it, yet to whom it would occur that in the midst of their serious talk about religion the most abominable reminiscences were mingled, and that in such a way that they were not aware of it at all.

Longbridge gets its name from its length, for as a bridge it is long, though as a road the length of the bridge is not very considerable, as one can convince oneself by crossing it. When one is standing on the other side, in Christianshavn, it seems as though after all the bridge must be very long, for it seems as though one were far, very far away from Copenhagen.

April 6. Midnight.

How disappointing when a person is concerned about only one single thing and nothing occurs that has any reference to it. In the street there is plenty of life, in the houses there is movement and bustle and noise, but about my affair not a single word is heard. Thus it is a thread dealer sits in his little shop on a side street waiting for customers and rarely hears a footfall — in East Street the stores are full of people. But then the thread dealer does not have to pay so high a rent as the rich merchant in East Street. That is true, but on the other hand I am subject to as great taxes and exactions as any married man, and yet nothing happens that concerns me.

If the actress knew her rôle, had memorized it perfectly, with animation in her voice, in her bearing, was only waiting for the cue — but the prompter had fallen asleep, and she could find no means of awakening him!

If one saw that the telegraph was erected on the other side of the world, it was functioning and the first words were legible, but then a mist descended, and except by means of the telegraph nothing could be learned, and what one wished to know was as important as the salvation of one's soul!

If the noble steed knew why he was saddled, knew that now she would come, the royal maiden, the cavalier, the steed's pride, and therefore he puffed, panted, stamped his hoofs, bidding defiance with his strength, that it might please her with a voluptuous shudder to control his fiery metal — but the ostler went away and did not come again, and then he came again, but the cavalier was not with him, and yet the knightly trappings were not taken off, and the mighty steed was distressed at missing the breath in his nostrils and the joy of the leap and the satisfaction of obeying the hint of the royal cavalier!

If Scheherazade had invented a new story more entertaining than any previous one, if she had put all her trust in this tale, that it would save her life and not merely postpone the sentence of death, in case she were to succeed in telling it as thrillingly as she could at this instant — but she was not summoned at twelve o'clock, and one o'clock drew near, and she feared she might have forgotten it or forgotten how to tell it!

* * *

LAST night I had the good fortune to converse with a couple of very clever ladies. It all went off very brilliantly, and I almost believe that my presence inspired the clever women. They were ladies of fashion, and I — well, I am a man of the world, that is to say, I am intelligent and depraved. What wonder then that such clever people are in sympathy with me! It is so luxurious to try one's hand at a gallantry which is fashioned out of effeminacy and witty intelligence, the auspices are so favorable when a party to the excursion is a man from whom in case of need one can draw

back and say, “No, God forbid, we do not, of course, approve of his shabby conduct, but after all he is so clever.” So on that occasion I learned much about what essentially is required for a happy erotic understanding; I learned that when a man is not clever enough to follow the emancipated spirit in her lofty (I would say gadding) flight, it is a cross, and penible in the highest degree to be tied in this fashion, indeed such an alliance is really invalid. No more was said, but I have no doubt that my heroines, being so sure of their own cleverness, were willing also to invert the proposition and express their sympathy with one who was tied to such a girl, or rather to prompt him to cut the matter short and seek a cleverer mate. A hint was also dropped which doubtless was meant for me and obligingly meant. O silence, silence, how thou canst put a man in contradiction with himself! So then they were proclaiming to me an indulgence, making a favorable appraisement of my conduct. That one woman dare thus offend another woman, and in this case a girl the latchet of whose shoe she is not worthy to unloose! If I had been emperor, they would have been banished straightway to a desert island. Now it is a nemesis upon me that my outward existence, though it is not known to many, contributes in a measure to confirm somebody in this odious aristocratic cleverness. If only I were free and did not have in mind the consideration that an authentic interpretation of my conduct might be a dangerous precedent for her — verily, if the maiden who sorrows or causes me sorrow wishes to place a man in the field as a martial contingent to fight for the good cause of love, let her set me free, and pro virili I shall hold up the banner. Come on then, ye clever ones, with your disdainful witticisms! A good cause stretches the bow taut and hits most surely the mark. That true love should be held in such slight honor! Yes, I feel indeed that I could make good use of an unhappy love affair, it comports well with my existence. If only I were free in giving expression to my love, if I were rejected but yet in formal possession of my love, if only I

were not afraid that by acknowledging its significance for me I might suddenly unsettle her who must be supported by precisely the contrary notion. Then I would say, “Yes, I am the effeminate male (for man I dare not suffer myself to be called), the wretched manikin, who could not manage to love more than once, the narrow-minded wretch who was stupid enough to take seriously that pretty word about the first love, and could not regard it as a coquettish nosegay which experienced or half-experienced young ladies bandy about teasingly at the tea-table. One might after all have a little compassion upon me; I myself feel what a pitiful figure I cut, especially in these times when even girls die as pathetically as Falstaff falls in the battle against Percy — and arise again vigorous and nubile enough to toast a fresh love. Bravo!” — And by this speech, or rather by a life which is a justification for speaking thus, I am inclined to believe (if such a thing is at all possible) that the one man may benefit the other, to believe that I should have benefited my highly esteemed contemporaries more than by writing a paragraph in the System. What we imperatively need is that the pathological factors in life are posited absolutely, clearly, legibly and forcibly, that life does not become, like the System, a peddler’s cart containing a little of everything, so that everything is to be done up to a certain point, even the most foolish thing of all, that of believing up to a certain point, that people do not lie but are ashamed, do not lie in such a way that, erotically speaking, they die romantically of love and are heroes, but do not remain standing (or lying) in that position, but arise again and go further, and become heroes in the daily chronicle of news, and go further and become frivolous, witty, like the heroes they laugh at in the comedies of Scribe. Just try to think the thought of eternity into such a confusion! Think of such a man at the Day of Judgment hearing God’s voice, “Hast thou believed?” — and then the reply, “Faith is immediacy, the immediate is not what one should stop with, that is what they did in the Middle Ages, but

since Hegel one goes further. One must admit, however, that it is immediacy, and that immediacy *is* — but wait for another boon." My old schoolmaster was a hero, a man of iron — woe, woe unto the lad who could not answer yes or no to a plain question! And if at the Day of Judgment one is no longer a lad, still God in heaven can count as a schoolmaster. Just to think that this paragraph-madness, this curriculum-craziness, this systematic slithering has so got the upper hand that in the end one would like to instruct God with all brevity in the newest philosophy. If God won't do it, I think then that the trumpeting angel will take his trumpet and smite such a Privatdocent upon the pate so that he will never be a man again.

But he who bungles in one thing bungles in all, and he who sins in one point sins in all. If only you clever ones knew how comic is the cleverness you admire. If only you knew — not how bad a seducer is, but what a comic personage. If you knew how detestable, but also how ludicrous it is that love, the loftiest thing in earthly life, should be regarded as merely the invention of sensuality, no more than the rut of the beast, or a plaything for wit and a social diversion for clever people! But you do not know that all this is merely theme for vaudeville, that your social cleverness is nothing but fiddle-faddle. Suppose that a woman, beautiful as the mistress of a god and clever as the Queen of Sheba, were to offer to squander summa summarum of her hidden and manifest charms upon my unworthy cleverness; suppose that the same evening a comrade were to invite me to drink wine with him and clink glasses and smoke tobacco studenticos and enjoy the ancient classics — I should not hesitate long. "What vulgar taste!" someone cries. Vulgar? I do not descry the vulgarity. I take it that along with love and the eternal element in love, all this beauty, and the gift of cleverness as well, is of infinite worth; but without this, a relationship between man and woman, which yet essentially would express this, is not worth a pipe of tobacco. I take it that when from this one separates love,

and from love (mark well!) the eternal element, one can only speak correctly of what is left over, which amounts after all to the same thing, whether one talks like a midwife who talks without beating about the bush, or like an extinct soul which, being "burnt out to sheer spirit" cannot comprehend natural impulse. It is comic that the action in the vaudeville turns upon the sum of 4 s. 8 d., and so too it is comic that Don Juan has 1003 loves, for the number simply proves that they have no value. Hence one should be sparing in the use of the word love. Language has only the one word, and nothing is more sacred. One should not be shy of employing if need be the expressive term, as the Bible and Holberg do; but above all one should not be so excessively spirituelle as to think that the spirituelle is the constituent factor, for it constitutes anything but an erotic relationship.

But to maintain a prescriptive right in an unhappy love affair, to become happy in the highest sense by means of it, to make significant what to me appeared senseless when in Prussia they established an order of merit for those who had taken part in the war of liberation, and likewise an order for those that remained at home, to enrich this with a beautiful meaning, to wit, that he who had remained at home [understand unmarried] was happy by reason of his order, happy by reason of his [unhappy] love, although in the star upon his breast one more clearly perceives the cross [of marriage renounced] than in that of the more fortunate, although he wears the order (as that other is called in Prussia) "for good will" — that I well perceive would be a task to engage the enthusiasm of one who knows how to be content with the idea, with oneself and with the cognizance of heaven. Let them then fall at his right hand, the individuals who perished battling for an unhappy love, they rest in honor, they deserve a burial inscription and a monument, but he must not bury the dead for fear he might be distracted from his task. Let them then arise again, the seemingly dead who come to life by the application of the usual remedies, let them take delight again and

yet again in stabbing for the ring in the cake, let them find everything restored to them now that they are thriving mistresses in their own house, let them when they are fully restored find themselves happy in being raised up with the best of care into a third marriage, let them mumble in unison over the fragments of a love story, and dribble life away in connubial intercourse — but he must not be willing to take time to behold it for fear he might be delayed.

My vow of silence makes me strong in monologues; but even a digression like this brings me only the more definitely back to her. When the fatherland is pressed by war and a woman can afford to equip a ship, that must be glorious, it seems to me. Such never will be my lot, but she, she is able to launch in the sea a warship which will fight for a good cause.

April 7. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She is intractable. She breaks the engagement, and breaks the engagement, and yet doesn't break it. Heavens and earth, if the match is to stand thus, if we are to break it off — well then, we may as well begin tomorrow.

April 7. Midnight.

How is it with the wish? Might I not after all wish to have another, wish to find indemnification in a new love? Well, if a man who holds a cane in his hand were as certain that he is actually holding it in his hand as I am certain that there is not a thought of this in my soul, he would be pretty sure. But the passion of the wish, is this entirely unchanged?

It is difficult to test oneself with regard to a possibility, it is as if, without daring to use the voice, one were to test whether one has a strong voice. Many a time, and hitherto in vain, I have speculated how to find a way of testing myself with regard to possibilities.

However, I still believe that the passion is the same, and if it should be changed, I am certain that a hint, the merest hint of a more definite possibility will be enough to make the wish more burning than ever; for actually it was with the rupture of the engagement that for the first time I can say of myself in every sense and from every point of view as was said of Phaedria, *amare coepit perdite.*

In one way everything is in readiness, there is lacking only approval on the part of the idea, and the consent of the thought-context, notwithstanding I have sought in all quietness and still continue to seek every turn that can be given to this question. Hardly can any stage manager know with greater assurance that the change of scene is all prepared when he rings the bell than I know it. I have a standing account with a merchant for a complete set of furniture, my chambers are put in order, everything is calculated for a wedding — if only the moment comes, the bell rings, and the change of scene is accomplished in the twinkling of an eye.

Distrustful of myself, I have arranged my personal existence entirely like that of a married man. Punctuality and orderliness prevail everywhere. Darius or Xerxes (it is indifferent which) had a slave who reminded him to make war on the Greeks. Since I dare not confide in anybody, I must be content with having my reminder within myself. In my whole existence I express incompleteness — there is a memento. Whatever I buy, I buy in double quantity, my table is set for two, the coffee is served to two, when I ride I always ride as if I had a lady beside me. In so far as in these night hours I live rather differently, it is not just because this life pleases me so much.

And in case the whole thing comes to nothing after all, I regret nothing. I would not omit the least item: it is a matter of honesty which has the utmost seriousness for me, that if ever the thing might be done, my reckoning must be exact to the last farthing.

April 8. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. War has been declared. When one has to fight it is important to use self-restraint, above all no precipitancy. Admission to a menagerie costs 3 s., later it is reduced to 1 s. A fine edition of a new book costs a pound; if one is not precipitate, there comes out subsequently a cheap edition, and the book after all is the same. When one has to fight one must be alert to seize the opportunity, and must know where the opportunity is. At an antiquarian's or at second hand one buys at half price. When the dancer alights from her carriage she carefully hides her feet with her cloak lest anybody might admire these pretty feet. Not for ten pounds would she do differently, and yet everybody knows that it costs only 3 s. (or for persons of rank 8s.), and with that she dances before one in silk slippers, etc.

The mood I am in is abhorrent to me; all the frosty intellectuality which I had forever banished from this relationship she has forced back into it. It shall not be for long.

Today I entered her room with a skip, remained standing, hat in hand, assuming an easy conversational attitude, kissed her hand in passing with courteous and officious politeness, and hastened into the salon, where I knew there was company, because it was an anniversary occasion in the family. It was an opportune chance. Sarcasm, satire and coldness make a poor showing under four eyes, there must be some company present if this is to be effective.

A lady in the company was so kind as to invite us for the following evening. Usually I leave all such things to her, but in this case I hastened to accept in the most cordial terms, with thanks on behalf of both of us. It was quickly decided, and the terms in which I expressed myself were so flattering, that if my little confirmand were to have said a word against it, she would have disgraced herself. She did not do it.

When I was leaving her and had said farewell and was halfway out of the door I suddenly turned around and said to her, “Listen, it is quite true, don’t you think we ought to break it off?” Thereupon I swung about and parted with a wave of the hand.

April 10. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Last night I was bored beyond words; but what will a man not do for his fiancee, that she may have a chance to go out in society... and that one may get her to be a little bit courteous.

She understands me very well, that I can see. In case it really were to come to a breach I had the situation well in hand.

Today we had to go to the Exposition and take a promenade and pay calls. It all goes capitally. With the utmost courtesy I keep her at a distance from me, although we are seen together more than we commonly are. There is some advantage in being regarded as malicious: I can be pretty sure not to be treated superciliously when we are out together, she easily gets to feel that she is *de trop.* Why did she provoke me! Of course no third party notices her embarrassment, for I constantly draw her into the conversation: “It is as my sweetheart says, only yesterday she said it.” A look from her is enough, and I proceed: “But for God’s sake, my sweet girl, canst thou not remember, it was yesterday — no, wait a bit, I am not any too positive of that, it was four days ago, just four days ago. Canst thou not remember?” etc. She understands very well why I said four days.

But my mood is past, there is something ominous in the whole thing. An old man has said that it is never well to let that which is to be regarded as holy appear in a ludicrous light. It is true enough that a young girl is not a holy object, and yet she was something like that to me. Verily I did not torment her by requiring her to behave like an ideal, I only wanted her to sit still while I was concerning myself all too deeply about the relationship.

I hope, however, she will soon get over this childhood's malady, there is still so much good understanding between us that I venture with confidence to read aloud to her from an edifying work. A third party would perhaps find it suspicious that I who am capable of behaving as I do should want at the same time to be a religious character. To scorn cleverness and everything but solemn plain downright seriousness is easy enough for one who has nothing else. But such judgments are of no help to me. In a spiritual sense the same thing is true of individuals which is true of sentences: a sentence which consists only of subject and predicate is easier to construe than a period with subordinate and intermediate clauses. The fact that there was a man who *couldn't* behave thus towards his lady explains nothing therefore, whereas if there were one who could, and in a situation similar to mine would not do it, and that on valid grounds, the case would be applicable. I hold to the idea. She is comic. Essentially this is what I would express. And I believe I do her more justice than if in an erotic relationship I were presumptuous enough to reprimand her formally. I must constantly possess the saving grace of indifference, it is the aesthetic idea which judges between us.

But if this were to develop in her a spirit of defiance, it might cost me dear. However, I do not know how else to act.

April 10. Midnight.

ONCE there was a man who said to me, "I have suffered something so terrible that I never have dared to speak of it to anybody." Most people will dismiss this utterance perhaps a bit hastily as an exaggeration. And yet if they were right in thinking it an exaggeration, the man too may have been right in another way. For when it came to an explanation it appeared that the object of terror was a mere insignificance, but the fact that it had so affected him that he did not dare to confide it to anybody may well have caused him to suffer terribly.

Today I read in the newspaper about “a young girl of superior station” who had put an end to her life by suicide. If only this girl had considered what deadly anguish she might cause another person, I believe she would have desisted. But how could it occur to her to be prudently careful of me? And now not to dare to inquire of anyone, but only with countless starts and jumps and turns, in the careless language of conversation, to fish for information! If on the whole my path is strewn with thorns, these accidental commotions are like a thorn hedge in which I am stuck fast. I am constantly seeing ghosts, in chance utterances, in verse, in mystifications. It is a nemesis upon me that I am so adept at this.

It is now already a fortnight since she received my confidential communication. During all that time I have not seen her in Hauser Square. — Agitated as the sea may be, and wherever in all the world one may be upon the sea, the compass always points to the north. But upon the sea of possibility the compass itself is dialectical, and the variation of the magnet furnishes no reliable indication.

April 12. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She finds herself on rather a fasting diet — and not without dismay, as I can well observe. She would not be averse to yielding a little, but she cannot prevail upon herself to do it. Yes, that’s the way of it, she has trumped too early and quite in the wrong place. What, in view of my behavior these last days, would have been a rather justifiable retort came like a capricious shower. — True, I wage war for the sake of peace, and yet it tortures me to think of the final goal of the war, the crisis when she gives up. That will pain me, for I do not desire a victory over her. As long as we fight it is undetermined which is the stronger, but when she surrenders as the weaker one I do not desire to be present. I am proud myself, and in my relationship to her I am prouder on her account than on mine.

April 13. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. It all went capitally. For that I have to thank her good genius, and I have done so silently. Yesterday afternoon during my fencing hour the mask fell off just as I was making a pass, the adversary had raised his saber and was not able to stop it, so I got one on the head. The whole thing was of little importance, some blood flowed, a piece of plaster was applied to it, and I went home. But what happens? Yesterday evening rather tardily she gets an exaggerated account of it, and as I failed to make my appearance although I had promised to come, she becomes anxious. The shedding of blood, the tension between us, or our broadsword play, and perhaps a little love, united to make her sleepless. It is just as I have always said, in the course of one sleepless night a person can be incredibly changed. Today she came in haste to my apartment with her father. She showed a distress that must move the hardest heart. — So all went well. We were spared having me conquer, and mortal danger helped us to understand one another.

So much lovableness, such a girl, and with that such a little miss! But I gladly give twenty pounds to the poor out of gratitude for escaping so luckily the awkwardness of the capitulation. She looked at me now and then in such a way that I understood she had something on her heart to say. But I talked about the dangerous wound and about the coincidence that it was a mask that fell off. At that she laughs, although there was a tear in her eye. Then I say, “Yes, you may well laugh at me for being thus unmasked.” Then she says, “Oh, what foolishness, you know very well what I mean.” And I, “Yes, you mean that I should challenge him again and declare that it doesn’t count when the mask falls off.” And then we talked of other things.

Thereupon she goes home, and I watched her as when she returned from her singing lesson, and yet she now walks differently, there is a reckless happiness in her gait.

O Death, I believe they do thee injustice. What significance thou art able to impart to life when even such a little reminder produces such an effect!

April 14. Midnight.

THE method must be changed. When an examining magistrate would examine sharply he makes the environment as inquisitorial for the accused as possible: the murderer he seats beside the murdered man; him who is afraid of the night he awakens at cockcrow. For me there is an environment where my examiner is able to bring me very close to a confession, as close I think as it is possible to bring me. That is in a church. Today, contrary to my custom, I went to the Church of the Holy Trinity. Farsighted as a bird is she, and unfortunately she has a high conception of my talent for observation. She fixed her eyes upon me and could very well see that I saw. I was standing in the narrow aisle on the right; she came from the church door, went directly across in front of the choir and was about to be shut into a pew on the opposite side. She looked and then nodded her head. I hastily withdrew my glance, turned the pages of the hymn-book as though I had lost the place, and by this movement brought about a shake of my head. Ah, I feared that in this greeting there was concealed a hope. When I looked up another glance was exchanged; she seemed to have understood the movement of my head, and thereupon she nodded again. Ah, her expression was entirely different, it was as though she required of me only an admission, having given up hope. I had found the place and was now joining zealously in the singing, and as a chorister sometimes does I lifted up my head with the voice and then let it sink, a movement like that of a man who bids at the auction and says, “Yes.” Then the priest entered and we were separated. I did not watch her as she departed, and I left the same way I came, not a foot-breadth out of the path. A Pythagorean could not be more fearful of stepping on the ground than was I of taking, as they say, one step.

So I have talked then! No, I have not talked, I have not even done anything I could avoid doing. This ought not to have been in a church, she should not have tried to move me from what I once regard as my duty. But in a church I am so readily tempted to regard the matter eternally, and viewing it eternally I can willingly tell the truth, but not in time, at least not yet. She can perhaps be saved for life, she is not to bid farewell to it because I do. I do not think that she is sufficiently developed religiously to be capable of conceiving what it means to make such a break with existence, which is even more decisive for a woman than for a man. To wish to proceed along that path in union would be to repeat that dreadful incongruity which already I contemplated with dread during that two-months period of horror, that in union we should mourn an unhappy love. That cannot be. What likeness is there between her sorrow and mine, what fellowship between guilt and innocence, what kinship between repentance and an aesthetic sorrow over existence, even if that which awakens repentance is the same thing as that which causes her sorrow? I can sorrow in my way; if she is to sorrow, she must do it on her own account. A girl can subject herself to a man in many things, but not in ethical matters; it is unethical for her and me to sorrow thus in union. Along that path how is she ever to come to the point of sorrowing religiously, if she is to leave unresolved the ethical problem of my conduct towards her, when it is over the consequence of this she would sorrow? If only I might be a woman for half a year in order to learn how it is she is differently fashioned from man. I know very well that there are examples of such conduct on the part of women, I have them psychologically at my fingertips, but in my eyes all these characters were failures. I can make no sense out of my view of life if I myself am to have the experience that one individual is wasted upon another, and wasted she is if things go on this way.

As soon as she has begun to venture in the narrow way which leads to a religious view of life she is lost to me. A woman may possess passion as strong or even stronger than that of a man, but contradiction in passion is not a task for her, as for example the task of giving up this wish and retaining it at the same time. If she labors in a purely religious way to give up this wish, she is transformed; and then if ever there were to come an instant for its fulfilment, she would no longer understand it.

And yet perhaps I am talking quite irrationally, perhaps my construction of her is planned on too great a scale. Perhaps the religious movement of infinity is not within the compass of her individuality. Her pride had not energy enough to raise her temporally to a higher power. If she had been absolutely proud, this, humanly speaking, would not have happened. Perhaps therefore religiousness in her does not accomplish the complete revolution of infinity. Her religious eternity is possibly not the eternal decision but an indefinite extension of time. So eternity has dwelt with her, comforted her, as when in Homer’s descriptions a god or a goddess hastens to the help of one of his heroes. She believed it was the decision of eternity, she believed it was her death, she believed all was lost; but behold, instead of waking to this eternal decision she became weary of fruitless wishing, weary of the fruitless act of renunciation, and fell gently asleep in eternity, while time passed, and she awoke and belonged again to life. Then there would even be a question of a new engagement, a new love.

This indeed was what I desired, thus she is free in fact. I have thought of three possibilities: that through pride she might be raised to a higher power in temporal existence; that through an illusory resignation she might attain a new love; or that she might become mine. Every unseemly possibility whereby she might indeed become free, but in such a way that she would lose in my eyes, I have not been willing to think.

The first possibility must be discarded; for if even now, after receiving my confidential communication, she has not got further along, she is not proud in the sense requisite for constructing the unusual character upon this foundation.

The last possibility is only a wish, which encounters moreover this difficulty, that she will have remained at the point for it only in case she had not begun at all upon the religious way but had kept herself in a state of feminine naïveté. No sooner has she begun to sorrow religiously than the wish vanishes like the evening sun when the moon begins to shine in its splendor, or like the moonlight before the break of day. Double illumination and double reflection a woman cannot deal with, her reflection is only single. If she would give up the wish, then reflection is the conflict between the life fostered by the wish and the death exacted by resignation; to will both at once is impossible to her, or perhaps even so much as to understand such a thing.

So there remains the middle possibility: the slumber of illusory resignation, repose upon an eternity, while time passes and again she opens her eyes and awakens to new life. If this comes to pass, then no human life has been wasted upon me. The girl who once in the illusion of sorrow felt, alas, that she was a superfluous flower in life, felt, alas, like the poor little bird which could not be taken into consideration when a greater was in question, seems now in this way to be taken into consideration. So let the scientists teach us that existence is waste on an enormous scale, let whosoever will talk about a love which demands sacrifices, if the situation is as I here think it, the girl becomes in my eyes a capitalist, and providence effects a highly economic conversion of her funds. It has been said that Denmark is the only state which possesses a private fortune, because it has the toll of the Sound. It appears to me that on the smaller scale of the world of private persons she in like manner becomes an exception among women.

Marriage is like the ordinary revenue of the State, but then at the same time she possesses the mortgage on my life and has the interest on it. But it is well at all events that she has not done this for my sake or because I begged her to do it. — This, it seems to me, looks very inviting. Her existence acquires more importance than mine. That cannot have had great importance for her, since in such case there must have come about one of the situations constructed *en gros,* and that would have resulted in costing me dear.

Yet even when I think the thing in this purely hypothetical way there is still a ticklish point left over. For what is it she is to do? what is it one may expect to happen? Oh, yes, I know full well, she is to do what perhaps is preached in more than one church. The religiousness of infinity is perhaps not always preached where in other respects people are precise about the categories. Nor is it always Christianity these people preach when, without a trace of hypocrisy, they use the sacred name and the Biblical expression, for the movement of thought may be entirely pagan. That in which she is expected to find comfort is not the real religiousness. As seen from that point I should vanish from before her eyes as an atom, as a mere occasion like the sale of Joseph, until she should win the eternal; but with that there would be no question of a new love. No, what she is supposed to be healed by is a practical wisdom permeated by a sort of religiosity, a not altogether unseemly composition of a bit of aesthetics, a bit of religion and a bit of practical philosophy. My life-view is different, and with all my might I compel myself to hold to the categories and to hold them fast. This is what I *will,* what I require also of everyone whom I admire, of everyone I am in any real sense to recognize, that by day he should think only of the categories of his life and dream of them by night. I judge no one; he who is busy judging others *in concreto* is seldom true to the categories. It is the same as in the case of one who for the proof that he is serious has to rely

upon the testimony of another; such a man is not serious, for seriousness, first and last, is self-assurance. But every existence which wills something is thereby indirectly a judgment, and he who wills the categories judges indirectly one who does not will them. I know too that even when a man has only one step left to take he may stumble and let go of his category; but I do not for this cause believe that I shall let it go and be saved in twaddle, I believe that it would hold on to me and judge me — and in this judgment there again would be the category.

But what power she has over me! To gratify her every wish, to employ the days in giving her joy, that indeed is a pleasure, had I been permitted to do it; but my thought which is my very life and the loss of which is my spiritual death — if that is to be taken from me! I have long since cancelled as unessential all the differences between men, but what keeps me in life is the belief that there is equality for all in the matter of willing, that in this respect the same thing may be required of all. And yet by the merest hint hardly divined she has brought me to the pass (as a third party would say) of treating decorously that equivocal resignation. And why? Because I in my turn cannot exist spiritually unless she may exist in the same spiritual apprehension. From this one perceives how dangerous it is for a thinker to be in love, not to say married, and to hear daily the reasonings of a woman. Ought the thinker perhaps to be neither the one thing nor the other, or ought he perhaps to be both? — Oh, yes, here you have a real man who resigns himself up to a certain point, and then in turnconsoles himself up to a certain point! But no, be still, thou passion, which would stir my mind to rebellion, though there is good reason for it. For that which to the point of desperation I require of myself — not as something extraordinary but simply as the right thing — I cannot endure to see confused with something different, I cannot chaffer.

But have not I myself furnished the occasion for such a thing? I have in fact labored to the end that she may become free. Quite true; but I have left the thing so dialectically to her decision that she can do what she will. I thought I owed it to myself that I should incur no responsibility. Perhaps in the first period of horror it might have been possible to bring about a milder decision; but I should have been thinking of my own, not of her welfare, had I done anything in that direction. She perhaps would not have comprehended how in that way she became dependent upon me and instead of being respected was wasted. So the thing was put in such a way that she had plenipotentiary authority to act in the strength of religious infinity. Thereby I was bound forever and never would quite recover myself. If she chooses the other, I have guessed wrong.

What consoles me is that infinite reflection is not essentially a thing for women. Hence that rather doubtful sort of resignation may keep a woman just as beautiful. If she falls in love, that is a help to me so far as I can be helped, but whatever she does I cannot but try to make something beautiful out of it. It would be a bitter consolation for me if I am helped and she too, but in my heart I must say of her, “This existence is a renunciation of the idea.”

And to what end all my cares and plans and efforts? What do I accomplish? Nothing. But not for this cause will I cease, precisely for this cause I will not cease, for when one does everything and it is of no avail, one can be sure one is acting with enthusiasm. Therefore I do not disdain this nothing, any more than the widow disdained to cast her two mites into the treasury of the Temple. This nothing in the way of accomplishment is a great deal in the way of suffering, as a lonesome man will understand. For when agony has convulsed the bowels and the body trembles, there is a friendly hand which supports the patient’s head until the fury of the pain is calmed; or when the groan alarms and pain wrings the heart which is about

to burst if it is that of a woman, there is a compassionate woman who loosens the stays until she breathes again; but the lonely man dare not even abandon himself to the physical relief which agony is for passion.

But there is no time yet to sorrow on my own account, for the dialectic difficulty of my position is shown also by the fact that it signifies two entirely different things, facing the alternative of sorrowing on my own account or sorrowing on account of her and her family. However, I will try to find out what would be the most beautiful form for a new attachment. The most beautiful would be that before she was engaged to me she had been in love with another and that this love might now awaken again, supported perhaps by the self-reproach she might feel at having given me the preference. Thus her association with me would be an episode, she would not be falling in love anew but returning to her first love, and her association with me would perhaps have taught her to find this more beautiful than ever. Bravo, bravo, that will do! In case my pen were a living being — but it is only a steel pen — but in case it were a bird which came with this leaf in its beak, if it could have any joy in my gratitude, how I should thank it! — But the misfortune is that about this I know nothing. And yet there cannot be imagined a more reliable informant to whom I could appeal than she is. But why keep it secret? And why so zealous to hold me fast? The answer to this would make clear to her a responsibility towards the unknown individual and towards me. Have I then taken her by surprise? Far from it, I made the case clear to myself at an early date. If I have taken her by surprise, it must be by reason of the caution with which I sought to avoid it. Assuming this to be the case, all is well again. She feared me more than she loved me. So when the debates began about breaking the engagement she brought up again the forgotten experience, and the painfulness of it has been the prompting of her despair. — So it is then. If this comes about, she is helped, i.e. she has helped herself, and I am helped

because she is free, and helped because she has not become less beautiful. She owes nothing to me, for she has not followed any advice of mine, since I have given none, and in this direction could not have given it. If she owes me anything, some little compensation for all the suffering, it is this, that I have not been meddlesome enough to want to advise her. I owe nothing to her directly, for I have not begged her to do anything for my sake, and she cannot by any means be supposed to have done this for my sake. Indirectly I owe her much, but the debt is essentially grounded in my personality, which precisely upon the hypothesis here assumed desires to acknowledge it.

All this is capital — if only it were not a hypothesis. It is a capital hypothesis, if only as a hypothesis it were not so frail.

It lacks five minutes to two o'clock, my working time is over. I shall think of her passionately from midnight on, but not a minute beyond this stroke of the clock. It is necessary to hold out, and after two o'clock every thought of her is a temptation, a fraud against her, for there must be some sleep to maintain passion in the long run, which is what I will to do. — The difference between thin beer and the strong beer or ale the English drink is not that the latter foams, for the thin beer too can foam and foam just as strongly, but its foaming is over in a moment — on the other hand the foam of the heavy beer lasts.

April 15. Morning.

A YEAR ago today. So then the weather became fair, indeed serene. One starts out for the country at an early hour in search of freedom and beauty, but the weather is uncertain, so one sits in the carriage speculating whether it might not be possible to wrest from the changeable condition a fairer aspect so that one might be content with it — and then the sun itself grows weary of the capricious inventions of the scurrying clouds and of the inconstancy of the showers, and it bursts forth in all its splendor, so it is

settled that the weather is serene. How could I fail to appreciate duly the fact that now it has been settled by her, my sun, that the season of showers is past?

The feminine immaturity which gave vent to utterances a bit feverish is now as though forgotten. I dare to believe that I am loved. It never occurred to me indeed that she might be in love with another, but she seemed to me to lack the consolidation which embellishes the soul and permeates it by its beauty. The sight of it now affords me an experience of joy comparable to the dreadful experience of seeing a man who has taken poison and observing that it begins to take effect.

And the pain occasioned by the fact that she could behave so preposterously invests her with a gentleness I had not divined. And the fact that she is sensible of my pain — how much that proves! How fortunate that death came between us! If we had fought longer, if by our own efforts a settlement had been reached between us, however amicably, it would still have been precarious. I fear only that she takes the whole thing too much to heart. To relegate it completely to oblivion might cause her to suffer in silence, and if I make a reference to it, she at once is agitated, even though I do it as good-humoredly and as jestingly as possible. Is it perhaps precisely because of this jocular tone?

April 17. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. The misfortune is that she has no religious postulates. In this respect I have been beating the air. Yet she wanted to fight with me, she has not exactly been vanquished by me, but the dread she experienced that night has taught her to understand herself. She regards it as a defeat, even though she finds herself happier than before. Here the thing for her is the freedom of infinity as over against me. For the moment she has idealized me, and now by this little misconception she disparages herself. If only there does not succeed to this a weakness, a blind devotion

towards me which I cannot and will not understand. I do not want to be worshiped. I do not believe that unfaithfulness on her part would wound me so sorely as this annihilation of herself, as it seems in my eyes to be. I am proud, and so ought everyone to be in relation to other men; let him be humble before God, and that in every respect, but not humbled under the personality of another man. Truly, there is a kind of devotion which if it holds fast to me would compel me to repel it — terrible as it may be to say so. If it is unseemly for lovers to squabble, there is also a devotion which in a religious sense is a terrible responsibility.

April 18. Midnight.

So then there is nothing for me to do except to keep calm, for to accomplish anything with regard to another love which I know nothing about is impossible. So the reflections I have registered above are in vain, and so too a good part of my sympathetic expectation for her and the trembling for myself.

What then is the good of shrewdness? But I am anything but shrewd. If in a certain sense I am the shrewdest in my circle, in another sense I am perhaps the stupidest of all. Nothing I have heard or read has struck me so pointedly and personally as a saying about Periander. It is said of him that he talked like a wise man and acted like a maniac.

That this saying applies aptly to me is proved by the fact that I accept it with the most passionate sympathy, and yet it has not the slightest influence to change me for the better. This way of appropriating it is quite à la Periander. Within my postulate I am shrewd, but the postulate for my action is so ideal that it turns all my shrewdness info foolishness. If I could learn to discount my postulate, my shrewdness would make a good showing. If I could be shrewd in this way, I should have been married long ago. To get one's wish fulfilled and to get thanked for it into the bargain as for an act of charity, and then to arrange matters as if one were essentially in possession

of one’s freedom, that would have been shrewd, and I should have been regarded as an estimable man who does not break his plighted word, a prodigy of a husband who is faithful to his wife and does honor to a girl; for my ideal postulate presumably does not do her honor, and the fact that I would prefer to spend everything and set heaven and earth in commotion rather than sneak into the honorable estate instituted by God and so sneak through life is enough presumably to prove that I have no honor.

My wish, which aims higher than to see her free, my wish, which is the culmination of the divine madness in my soul, must now, I suppose, be relinquished. But I will not relinquish it. As soon as I am set at liberty and dare to act it would still be possible that my nature might inflame the wish in her. Suppose this possibility, contingent upon a remote possibility, is infinitely remote, yet I will not let it go and will not renounce it. Only an official certainty that she is free and is another’s — only with this is the wish dead. But until then it shall not visit me piteously as a fleeting fancy now and then, but it shall be held in high honor as the highest passion in my synthesis.

True enough, sadness is the grace which accompanies sorrow, as despair accompanies it as a fury; but one first shrieks in pain before one dares to be sad. To become sad at once is sometimes an indication of a base soul.

So sleep well, my girl; he who promised thee faithfulness can do no more than he does. So sleep well, my dear child, as I almost might say, for my solicitude is almost like that of a father who desires to see his daughter engaged. Behold, this is sadness. But I will not be sad, I will hold out with thee, I will hold out though I become an old man — if nothing happens in the meantime. I do not call back the night watchman who stands on the lookout for the fulfilment of expectation.

April 20. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. When an examining magistrate has perhaps been sitting for a long time reading documents, hearing testimony, confronting witnesses, exploring localities — just as he sits there in the chamber he suddenly sees something. It is not a man, a new witness, it is not the *corpus delicti,* it is a something, and he calls it "the course of events." As soon as he sees the course of events, he, the examiner, has all he wants.

I have noted in myself that there was disquietude in my whole being, that something dreadful was in the wind, I did not sleep at all the whole night, and now I see — alas, not the course of events, but the course to destruction. She is devoted to me in a measure which fills my whole being with dreadful foreboding; and yet she is lovable in my eyes and touches me profoundly, but this devotion and the agitation it causes me are a torment. Even if I were a different man I could not understand this devotion, and I cannot devote myself in this way. And think of me who am intensely reserved! And she hardly knows me! What an incongruity! I acquire power over her, and she has none at all over me. Is such a relationship a marriage? It is like a seduction. Do I then wish to seduce her? Abominable thought! And is there not a higher sort of seduction which is worse than that of lust? She says she has never felt happier than now, she cares about nothing but her ecstasy. Is it on my part compatible with love to see such an incongruity? And I know for myself that I am intensely reserved. Yes, to be sure, I have seen that by my practice in dissimulation I am able to conceal my reserve. But her devotion becomes exigent, it turns my being inside out. True enough, she does not comprehend this in the least; but I know it, and what am I to do?

That misunderstanding has done irreparable harm. Perhaps she had inwardly intended to fight seriously. And there is no limit to the expression of devotion when once it begins to express itself directly. It is as when a person first begins to complain of his sufferings: soon the true expression

no longer suffices to move the hearer, and so, without being conscious of it, he stealthily interjects untruth. That misunderstanding does irreparable harm. If I look serious, she thinks it is because of our strife. And to think that such is not the case at all, but it is my reserve which makes me gloomy! Ah, it is enough to drive one mad!

Today she bade me sit on a chair. I did so without suspecting anything. She retreated a few steps, then approached and fell upon her knees. Doubtless there was a little coquetry in this, but essentially it was an expression of sadness, and for all that an expression of beatitude (yes, I may call it that), an insane beatitude at having found the correct expression for her passion. That instant I laid hold of her and lifted her up. He who has committed a crime casts his glance around the room, suspicious of every corner, he directs it through the window to the neighbor's house, and the agony of conscience makes him sharp-sighted. I cannot say how dearly I would have paid for a certainty that no one had seen it, or how dearly I would have paid not to have seen it myself. Have I demanded this? Truly, she has never understood me. I myself have never bowed the knee before any man, perhaps I might do it before her if the situation required it, but for her personality and mine the situation ought never to occur. For me, such a thing is not a foolish prank, an exaggerated gesture; if I had done it, I should count no insult so intolerable as to have it regarded as such. Another instance of my pride.

I know very well that a girl is different from a man, but yet I shall never forget that act, it has produced a madness in my blood, a confusion in my brain, an anguish in my reserve, a despair in my resolution, and above all a humming in the ear of presentiment which is harbinger of the extremest ill.

April 22. Midnight.

As one who is sickly and accustomed to a certain medicine must have the pain-killing drops with him wherever he goes, so, alas, must I have with

me everywhere a brief summary of my story of suffering, so that I may orient myself in the whole situation — orient myself in the matter I have thrashed out by myself, in a way quite different from that in which a pupil thrashes out his lesson with the teacher. If I happen suddenly to think of it (suddenly means in this instance that half a day has elapsed since the last time I recited the lesson), there occurs then the most dreadful crisis. Psychically this in a measure corresponds with a slight return of apoplexy as a bodily ailment. In an instant I become dizzy, my thought cannot quickly enough catch hold of something solid in the complication, and it seems to me as if I were a murderer. There is nothing to be done except with the utmost effort to renounce all thought about it as a religious temptation — then the instant is past, and again I understand what hundreds and hundreds of times I have recited.

— Or I suddenly reflect how much I have suffered, and the thought comes so suddenly that the superintendent of reflection cannot hasten quickly enough to the spot, and I am completely overwhelmed. This happened to me yesterday. I was sitting in a coffee house reading a paper, when suddenly that idea awakened in my soul, so suddenly that I burst into tears. Fortunately there was no one present, but I learned to be more cautious.

April 24. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. I am a lost wayfarer, I am like one who has come into a strange land where people talk a different language and have other customs. If my suffering were that the strangers behaved towards me with nationalistic pride, that would be well enough. But such is not my case. She is very far from making any demand upon me, in her illusion she sees only her illusion, and she is infatuated with it. She is happy, she says, and I believe that in a certain sense she is happy. She is lovable and busies herself with her love like a child which is left to its own devices but is joyful and

happy in its pastime. One could sit and look at her and grow old and still look. There is only one inconvenience, and that is the fact that I am the object of this love. All that preceded that little *altercatio* and which in my eyes was of such great importance, namely, the ideal impression to which I, who myself bow under the ideal, sought to direct her attention, has not moved her in the least. In this respect she is, as it were, unsusceptible. But the conflict, my altered behavior, death's intervention, is changing her nature, she displays an amiability at which I sadly wonder and which makes me an enthusiast for her. And what does this mean then? It means that she is totally unreceptive of the motives which I count the highest. There is a difference of language between us, a world between us, a distance which now is revealed in all its painfulness.

April 25. Midnight.

PATIENCE!

April 26. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. So it is upon this reef I am to be wrecked! I have never humbled myself before anyone, neither have I wished to exalt myself. My notion about the relationship of man to man is for everyone to get his deserts, and that's enough. Generally speaking, I have not had a great deal to do with people in an intimate sense, my spiritual existence has preoccupied me too much for that. Now I have been humiliated. And who is it that humiliates me? It is a young girl, and it is not by her pride, for we should get ourselves out of that all right, but it is by her devotion.

Fortunately she is not to remain with me always. No, never shall that be! Possibly she may imagine it, but I do not understand it, and it is a question after all of her happiness. And if we are united, it will at last come to the point where she begins with consternation to suspect what I ought to have prevented.

To maintain my reserve in her presence is easy enough — perhaps it is precisely on this account I feel humiliated.

What for me is the nerve of my spiritual existence, namely, equality in human relationships, she does away with. She cares nothing for this infinite passion for freedom; she has conjured up her illusion, and that suffices her. I too think that one may love, that one may sacrifice everything for one's love; but whether I am to see good days, or whether I am to adventure my life, the deepest breath of my spiritual existence I cannot forego, I cannot sacrifice, for that is a contradiction, since without that I do not exist. And of this breath she feels no need.

Yet precisely now I feel that I love her, that I love her more deeply than ever, and yet I dare not, I *(nota bene)* who as her fiancé am bound to love her.

April 27. Midnight.

I HAVE no inclination to make any entry, and there is nothing whatever to register. In this town the night watchmen show by their cry that they are on their beat. Why all this crying? In England they go along in perfect silence and put a ball in the box, and the inspector sees in the morning that they have been on the beat and have not slept.

April 28. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. If only she might put up some resistance against me. When I am fighting it is easy for me, and even when I am to live in peace I wish that he I am to keep peace with were equally strong or stronger than I. The more blindly she is devoted, the more responsibility falls upon me. And I am afraid of the responsibility — and why is that? It is because I then have myself to deal with, and of this strife I always am afraid. In case God Himself were a man of some sort, whom one might have outside oneself and talk to and say, "Let's hear now what you've got to say, and you'll have

a chance to see how it strikes me" — in that way one would get off easily. But this is the reason God is stronger than anybody, the strongest of all, that He does not talk that way to a man; the man He would briefly engage in conversation he takes under custody in such a way that through the man himself He speaks to the man. Their conversation is not a *pro* and *contra* as of persons outside of one another, but when God speaks He uses the man himself to whom He speaks, He speaks to the man by means of the man himself. Therefore it is He possesses might and can crush a man any moment He will. In case the situation, for instance, were this, that God has spoken once for all, in the Bible, for instance, then, so far from being the mightiest, God would be in the tightest fix, for one can readily dispute such a thing, if one is free to oppose to it one's own opinion. But such an assumption is an airy fancy which has no basis in fact, for God does not speak thus. He speaks directly to every separate individual, and the instant He speaks to him He uses the individual himself in order through him to say to him what He would say to him. Hence it is a weak point in the structure of the Book of Job that God appears in the clouds and also appears as the most accomplished dialectitian; for what makes God the terrible dialectitian He is, is precisely the fact that one has Him at very much closer quarters, and therewith the softest whisper is more blissful, and the softest whisper is more terrible, than seeing Him enthroned upon the clouds and hearing Him in the thunder. Hence one cannot argue dialectically with Him, for all the dialectical power in the soul of the man concerned God uses against this man.

When an individual fears God he fears what is more than himself, and after this fear comes the fear of oneself, and the *angustiae* of this fear is responsibility.

The more she devotes herself, the more unhappy I become. Is this a happy engagement? And what indeed is her happiness? From my point of

view it is the happiness of infatuation, of illusion. But Socrates says that the greatest misfortune is to be under an illusion.

April 29. Midnight.

THE question remains whether I might not convey to her a mitigated notion of my character. If she thinks of me at all, as there seems to be a sad probability she does, I can well see what in all human probability she might need. The explanation given of my conduct was about as follows: I was to a certain degree a depraved man, but yet not entirely bad, I had good points too; I had indeed loved her but was lacking in seriousness, and then there was my instability, I could not keep a resolution; I regarded her indeed as an amiable girl, but I did not find in her a spirit with which I could be happy; it is handsome of her therefore to submit to her fate, it is magnanimous of her to be reconciled to the girl who one day is to enthrall me with a greater power, "for one thing is certain, that though he were to find a girl more *spirituelle,* he will find none that loves him so dearly. This he himself must surely admit, and in view of that he surely has repented of his conduct, even if he is too proud to alter anything." — A repentant individual who is too proud to alter anything he has done amiss! What then in God's name is repentance?

To think of being obliged to help one by such an explanation, in which every sentence is meaningless, and as applied to me is also untrue! I am either exceedingly depraved, a hypocrite, indeed, if not loathsomely enslaved by self-deception, or else I am as chivalrous a soul as the best of them. I do not lack stability in keeping a resolution, least of all when the criterion is a young girl who doesn't quite know what a resolution is. I have never regarded her as amiable, have never altered my opinion of her a tittle. I have not *found* anyone more *spirituelle* or intellectual, since I do not seek for feminine intellectuality but beg to be excused. Her magnanimity is a trump entirely misplaced, for I have no intention of enacting "A Story of

Everyday Life" and engaging in the business of barter. It is true that I repent, but just as certain it is that I wish to alter everything.

By the aid of this explanation I am making pretty progress: I step out of the determinants of infinity — and become comic. Not in the eyes of everyone, to be sure, for there are several poets in whose eyes I still am a hero. Verily, one would hardly suppose that an eternal and righteous God had discovered the ethical, but that a theatrical tailor had bunglingly patched something together. And this is the standard which is applied even by poets to their heroes — for the sake of showing that they themselves are heroes. But Scribe is the smartest of them all. In his works one reads or hears lines which bring to confusion the whole of existence, as if comedy were not played before men, even before madmen, but before "distracted June-bugs," and yet these lines are so trippingly composed in a conversational tone that it all seems a matter of course. A married woman is depicted and by the author is regarded as both sensible and worthy, as one in fact who champions the good cause, a case of true love between a young girl who is under her protection and a young man who has had recourse to her on this account. I do not recall the lady's name, so we may call her Madam Scribe. So then to the wooing swain she said, "Have you reflected that the girl has no fortune?"

"Yes, I have considered that."

"She has only a dowry of 20,000 francs."

"I know it."

"And yet you are ready to keep your word!"

"Yes."

"Truly, this heroic courage captivates me completely in your favor." What a satirist Scribe is without knowing it. I thought I was with Master Jackel. The young swain is brought under a brilliant illumination: he gets the girl and 20,000 francs — and becomes a hero. But such a hero is as

comic as a tailor's child named Casear Alexander Bonaparte Appleclump; and a poet who nominates such heroes seems to me as foolish as the tailor who had his babe thus baptized.

However, it is my duty to do everything that might seem to be serviceable, whether or no it is profitable to her as a matter of fact. What I have sought to do hitherto has proved futile. If she had been a religious personality in the proper sense, that would have been dreadful for me. But I have not sought counsel from flesh and blood.

My common sense is furious as it shudders at the motley, that is, at becoming a hero à la Scribe. But so much for that. I am thinking of her, I behold her in convalescence, I behold the possibility of a happy issue. Well, I submit to the discipline. Truly this girl is designed for my humiliation. Though no one understands this, though few would understand it if I were to tell of it, I understand it, understand it excellently.

When Pericles' legitimate children were alive he promulgated a law that no one might be accounted an Athenian citizen who was not born of parents who were both Athenians. Many suffered by reason of this law. Then came the pest and all of Pericles' children died. His grief was so great that when he stepped forward to lay a wreath upon the head of the last he burst into tears before the eyes of all, a thing which had never before been seen. He had only illegitimate children left, so Pericles urged that the law be rescinded. It is harrowing: Pericles weeps — and Pericles does one thing one day and the opposite thing the next. But it is affecting to read Plutarch: he says that the Athenians indulged his desire; they believed that the gods had wreaked vengeance upon him, and that men therefore ought to treat him indulgently.

Pericles was a great man, he could keep a resolution; he never went into society after he had resolved to devote himself to the service of the State. It is easy for me in this comparison to feel my lowliness; but would that I

might be sensible of the indulgence which indulges me by letting me comprehend that I ought to misrepresent my existence! But have I not constantly misrepresented it? True, but this misrepresentation was such that, if she took it into consideration, it might produce something great in her. This misrepresentation, whatever it may effect, will not be an aid to greatness. And she honored the first method far more highly than this.

April 30. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She does not any longer foam over in the expression of her devotion. Perhaps the whole thing was a transition. But I have seen that terrifying tableau, and I shall never forget it.

My melancholy has triumphed after all.

May 1. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Is it possible? She was provoked by an inattention on my part. I do not deny that it was an inattention. She almost challenges me. Now or never. It is well that the word separation came up between us in that little *altercatio.* It always makes it easier to bring the word out again.

I will not run away from the thing. It is not to have good days I would be separated from her, but because I cannot do otherwise. If I cause her pain, I cannot, I dare not, exempt myself from the sight. I wish to get through with the thing as soon as possible, I believe that this is best for her. However, I also am willing to do differently and shall show respect for every argument.

At this moment she is the stronger. So now the matter is started. My sentence upon her is brief; I love her, I have never loved any other, and will not. I desire to stop with this and not go farther — so I venture to say this, but yet I have strength to get me a new love. My fault is that I ventured in where I do not belong. What I have made of myself with all my passion proves to be a delusion, but now I cannot make myself over again. She does not understand me, nor I her. From the first time I saw her and while she

was my object in the form of hope I could imagine her dead without losing my composure. I should have felt pain, perhaps all my life long, but eternity would promptly have been at hand, and for me eternity is the highest. Only thus can I understand that people love one another. In the consciousness of eternity, in the infinite, each of the partners is free, and this freedom they both possess while they love one another. This higher existence does not concern her at all. Is then this relationship of ours a foundation for a marriage? Is a husband then a pasha with three horsetails? By such a union I become unhappy, I feel apprehensive with regard to my deepest existence. If now I could, if I were morally compelled to go through with this, well then, what further, what of her happiness for which I am to risk all this? Am I then to stake everything upon a fond illusion? If only anyone could assure me that she would be happy — but to be in an illusion, is that to be happy? But if once she has given herself up, I have the responsibility.

That these are premises for a life sentence it is easy to see. Whether it applies to two or to one, I dare not say; the sentence upon me is the more certain. But is it not then unreasonable to make two unhappy when one is enough? Yes, it would be all right if only I could see how it is to be understood that I can make her happy.

May 2. Midnight.

BUT does not my soul conceal a secret wrath against her? I do not deny it. I have no liking for this direct expression of feeling. Let one keep silent and act within oneself. I do not like to talk about dying of love. And if the speaker, without any womanly resignation, does not hesitate to place upon the conscience of a melancholy man the burden of murder, as if this were faithfulness, genuine faithfulness which outdoes Charlotte Stiegliz, who indeed took her own life, but because she felt that she was a burden and had a womanly sense of the situation; I do not deny that, if it were another person who did it, I should require existence to let us have a view of the

case as a false alarm, it would satisfy my wrath (if it were another person) to have it publicly acknowledged that these strong words and noble oaths are neither more nor less than a bad attack of belching (with reverence be it said), a little fit of the hiccups, occasioned perhaps by a surfeit of novel-reading, that these death-thoughts are dreams, not such as Shakespeare's Juliet has, but as Greta has in Wessel's comedy after eating peas. I should require this of existence because what I myself eternally respect is not to be made ridiculous, and he who truly and seriously respects it is not to be made ridiculous because a girl mimics the same words.

I am bound by no oath, on the contrary I am set at liberty, and that upon a condition very unusual, by the fact that I am a scoundrel, for usually such a person is put in confinement. I uttered not a word about death when the dread of death pierced my soul, and I still am of the same opinion, that if I actually die, I have no need to say it, I have not invited anyone to view me as a melodramatic hero. This, however, has little to do with the case, if only I might in myself be found faithful. For whether a man has appearances in his favor or appearances against him, time is and remains a dangerous enemy. Impulses from without help only for a little while, and in the end this is deceptive. If a man is to hold out, it must be by his own strength, and not even this avails if his religiousness does not day by day suck eternity into the temporal resolution. Every man who truly has remained faithful must therefore thank God for it. This is the sharpest, the most difficult perhaps, but also the most inspiring discrimination, that namely which determines what a man properly can say that he has to thank God for and nobody else. To have appearances against one always helps to illuminate this distinction; but everyone makes it, as language itself does, the only question is *how.* It is this "how," not new phrases, terms and expressions, which makes the thing clear. — Yesterday I saw a drunken woman on the street; she fell down, the boys laughed at her, then she got up again without

anybody's help and said, "I am woman enough to get up by myself; but that I thank God for, and nobody else — no, nobody else!" When this distinction concerns a man absolutely there is something humiliating for him in the fact that, so far from making new discoveries, a drunken woman says the same thing. And yet there is something indescribably joyful and touching in the fact that even a drunken woman says the same thing. How it is said is every man's responsibility; but I wish only to lead my life where every man can lead his — if he will.

A life which would labor for the idea I can understand; apart from that it is impossible for me to sympathize essentially with anyone, be he happy or unhappy.

This does not hold good with respect to her. No renunciation of the idea has yet taken place, and therefore I abhor any thought of this in connection with her as an affront to her. If it takes place, I crave only the indulgence that I may be able to refrain from thinking of it. What is death? Only a little halt on the path one has definitely chosen, if one has remained faithful to the idea. But a rupture with the idea signifies that one is taking a wrong direction.

May 4. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Twice already in two days I have introduced that terrible word in the course of conversation. There is a great difference between the displacement of a warship in the ocean and a nutshell, and this difference is outwardly visible. It is not the same with words. The very same word may imply even greater differences, and yet the word is the same. This word has not yet been uttered between us with pathos, but it recurs again and again, in connection with various topics, in order to explore the feeling it evokes. — From what I have observed till now I might almost be tempted to believe that the thing will be got over more gently than I dared to hope.

As for my part, I have assumed the responsibility for this step. As I regard it, this means that I am making another person unhappy. I cannot get off more cheaply when I act on my own responsibility. The issue may show that in reality I estimated my responsibility at too high a figure. But thus it is I have resolved to act. I have pictured to myself the worst, so reality cannot terrify me. What I suffer within my own mind where everything is in confusion and perturbation, what I suffer from the thought of her pain, from the thought that I shall never overcome this impression, since my whole structure has been made to totter, since my view of life, of myself, of my relation to the idea has failed to pass muster, and I never can erect any new structure without being reminded of her and of my responsibility — this is my share in this, the lion's share, or rather the sorrow is so great that there remains more than enough for us both.

May 5. Midnight.

A SCHOOL EXERCISE

PERIANDER

PERIANDER was a son of Kypselus of the Heraclidian race, and he succeeded his father as tyrant of Corinth. It is said of him that he always talked like a wise man and constantly acted like a maniac. It is very strange, and a continuation, as it were, of the madness of Periander, that he who characterized him by this clever saying did not himself know how significant it was. The rather shallow author who vouches for it introduces in his simplicity the wise observation in the following way: "It is very extraordinary that the Greeks could have reckoned among the wise men such a fool as Periander." But a fool (MM *fat* — such is the moralizing author's term) Periander was not. It would have been different if he had said that there was another Periander, Periander of Ambracia," with whom

possibly he was confused, or that there were only five wise men, or that historians had rather discordant notions, etc. So the gods understood the saying about Periander better, for in their wrath they so led him through life that they brought down the wise words as a mockery upon the head of the tyrant, who by his deeds brought his own words to shame.

When he became tyrant he distinguished himself by leniency, by justice towards the lowly, by wisdom among people of understanding. He kept his word and gave to the gods the statue he had promised, but it was paid for by women's jewels. Bold were his undertakings, and this was his saying: "Diligence accomplishes all things."

But beneath the leniency smouldered the fire of passion, and the word of wisdom concealed, until the moment arrived, the madness of his actions; and the bold undertakings gave proof of powers which remained the same in the transformed man. For Periander was transformed. He did not become another man, but he became two men, who could not be contained in the one man. These two were the wise man and the tyrant. That is to say, he became a monster. The occasion of his transformation is variously related. But this is certain, that it was only an occasion, for otherwise we cannot understand how he could be so changed. However, it is related that he had lived in criminal relations with his mother Gratia — surely before he had yet heard his own fine saying: "Do not that which you have to keep secret."

And this is a saying of Periander's: "It is better to be feared than to be lamented." He acted in accordance with this saying. He was the first who maintained a bodyguard and altered the government as the tyranny required, and ruled as tyrant over bondsmen, himself bound by the power he could not get rid of; for he himself said: "It is just as dangerous for a tyrant to lay down his command as to be deprived of it." He also got out of this difficulty by a clever device which subsequently will be described, and not even death subjected him to revenge — his name was inscribed upon an empty tomb.

That this must be, Periander understood better than anyone, for he said: “Ill gain is father of a bad bargain.”

“A tyrant,” said he, “must have good will as a bodyguard, and not armed soldiers.” Therefore the tyrant Periander was never secure, and the only refuge he found safe enough in death was an empty tomb in which he did not lie. This thought would have been expressed in a way evident to all if upon the empty tomb had been put the following inscription: Here RESTS a tyrant. The Greeks, however, did not do this. More placable, they permitted him in death to find peace in the motherly bosom of his native earth, and wrote upon the empty grave words which sound more beautiful in verse, but mean substantially this: Here Corinth, his native land, holds hidden in its bosom Periander the rich and wise. But this is untrue inasmuch as he does not lie there. A Greek writer composed another inscription, intended rather for the beholder, that the inscription might remind him “not to grieve because one never attains one’s wish, but to accept with joy the dispensation of the gods, reflecting that the spirit of the wise Periander was quenched in despondency because he was unable to accomplish what he would.”

This must suffice concerning his end, which teaches posterity about the wrath of the gods what Periander did not learn from it. The narrative recurs again to the occasion which led to the madness of Periander, which from that moment increased year by year to such a degree that he might have applied truly to himself a saying which, so it is said, a desperate man thousands of years later placed upon his escutcheon: “The more lost, the less repentant.”

As for the occasion, we will not attempt to decide whether it was that a rumor circulated about his criminal relations with his mother, so that he was mortified that people knew he “had done what one dared not mention”; or whether the occasion was an enigmatic response from his friend

Thrasybolos, tyrant of Miletus, who indicated by sign language which, though not understood by the messenger (like the message of Tarquinius to his son) was well understood by Periander as a hint for the guidance of a tyrant; or finally whether the occasion was despair at having killed with a kick his beloved wife Lyside to whom he had given the name of Melissa. This we cannot decide. Everyone of these occurrences by itself would be sufficient: the ignominy of dishonor for the proud prince; the temptation of the significant enigma for the ambitious man; the torture of guilt for the unhappy lover. In union they would little by little have the effect that wickedness altered the understanding of the wise man, and exasperation deluded the soul of the ruler.

But when Periander was altered his fortune changed too. The proud saying, that it was better to be feared than to be lamented, fell upon his own head, upon his life of despair, and fell upon him in death. For he was lamented. It was lamentable even that he had uttered such a word, lamentable that the gods, who are the stronger, worked against him, whereas the deeper he sank in perdition, the less he understood in penitence their anger.

Melissa was a daughter of Prokles, tyrant in Epidauros. When the mother was slain, her two sons, Kypselos and Lykophron, the one seventeen years old and the other eighteen, fled to their maternal grandfather in Epidauros. There they remained some time, and when they returned to Corinth Prokles took leave of them by saying, “Do you know, children, who it is that killed your mother?” Upon Kypselos this saying made no impression, but Lykophron became silent. On returning to the paternal house he never deigned to reply to his father. At that Periander became exasperated and drove him away — and then learned (when by many questions he succeeded in prodding the memory of Kypselos) what it was Lykophron concealed under his silence. His wrath now pursued the outcast, and he

commanded that no one might espouse the cause of the persecuted fugitive, who went from house to house until finally some friends took him in. Then Periander had it proclaimed that whoever offered hospitality to Lykophron or even spoke to him should die. Now no one dared have anything to do with him, so that he must perish of hunger and wretchedness. Periander himself was moved and went to him when for four days and nights he had had neither meat nor drink. He invited him to be ruler in Corinth and lord of all his treasures, since he had now learned well what it is to defy his father. But Lykophron answered nothing. Finally he said, "Thou thyself art deserving of death, for thou hast transgressed thine own commandment and spoken to me." Exasperated by this, Periander banished him to Corcyra, and his wrath was turned against Prokles, whom he vanquished, took captive and deprived of Epidauros.

Periander had now become an old man. Weary of power, he sought to lay it down. But, as he had said, "It is just as dangerous to lay down a tyranny as to be deprived of it," and from the tyrant one learns that it is also difficult to get rid of it. Kypselos was unfitted to rule, upon him not even the saying of Prokles had made an impression. So Lykophron was to succeed to the power. Periander sent a messenger to him, but to no effect. Finally he sent his daughter, that the obedient might persuade the disobedient and by her mild temper lead the erring one back to reverence for his father. But he remained in Corcyra. Then finally they decided to treat with one another, not as a father and son treat with one another in love, but like mortal enemies. They decided to exchange residences. Periander was to dwell in Corcyra and Lykophron was to be ruler in Corinth. Periander was about to start upon the journey, but the people of Corcyra had such a horror of him, and understood so well the intolerant spirit of the father and the son that they resolved to murder Lykophron, for they hoped that then Periander would not come. They did so, but by this they were not saved from

Periander, who ordered three hundred of their children to be carried away and violated. But the gods prevented this, and Periander took it so to heart that he was unable to avenge his son that he resolved to put an end to himself. He summoned two young men and showed them a secret passage. Thereupon he commanded them to meet there the following day and slay the first man they encountered, burying him immediately. When these had gone he had five others summoned and gave the same order, namely, that they were to wait at the passage and when they saw two young men they were to murder them and bury them at once. Then he had twice that number summoned and ordered them in the same way to slay the five whom they would meet and bury them on the spot where they were cut down. Then came Periander himself at the hour appointed and was murdered.

May 6. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. It goes better and better. The word is acquiring more and more pathetic significance for us. She seems calm. God grant that she may be so. If only a little earlier I had understood myself as I now do! When that little *altercatio* broke out, that would have been the moment for it. Being egged on, she herself perhaps would have broken the engagement and have suffered nothing.

My soul is weighed down, my mind is oppressed, my hope is like a lifeboat with too many people in it on a tempestuous sea.

But he who has another to be concerned about finds no time to feel his own pain, and the dreadful terrors of imagination greatly outweigh those of reality. The incongruity between us shows itself again here and does her a new injustice. Her actual pain, though she feel it never so acutely, her lamentable outcry, though it were never so violent, is nevertheless weak in contrast with the inventiveness of my fantasy, even though I see nothing.

May 7. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. She does not reach a decision suddenly. And suddenness perhaps would be the most dangerous thing for her. The practice has got along so far that it is almost like a dress rehearsal. If it should come off as well in actuality, I demand nothing more, although in another sense it will be a bit inexplicable to me.

For my part, I have a feeling of homesickness for myself. It is distracting to have imagination and reality so much at odds. The distress my imagination causes me is dreadful. What if, in a way as tragic as it is comic, I should again find reality easier! Oh that I might be permitted to retain my imaginations! With them I am accustomed to wrestle.

Yet it comforts me to be eyewitness to everything. Even though she were to die, I want to be an eyewitness to it. Reality, after all, is not the torture possibility is.

May 8. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. The same situation repeated, the decision as near as it can be in a rehearsal — yet it is a rehearsal which is not without passion on her part. She seems, however, to understand that what was too grave a matter for jest must be serious. She is without any vehemence. That is the good part of it. It must come about today.

When the merchant stands at the extremest point of the harbor and sees his ship with its rich cargo imperilled by the sea, and resigns himself to the loss, and goes away, saying to himself, “It is thine own fault that thou didst not insure it” — would it be a joy to him perhaps if a sailor were to come running after him, saying, “One can see the ship again, it has not gone down,” and he were to turn around, and the sailor were to take the spyglass to look out there and were to say, “Well, now it is gone again”?

True, she means to me much more than a merchant vessel and its cargo. That the whole affair may mean as little as possible to her is my wish, my most heartfelt wish; but even if she were to receive laughingly the letter

which she will receive today, even if she were to regard it as glad tidings that she now is liberated from a burden — would it were so, but even if it were so, it would not help me. What I have experienced in my inward man, the fact that I have stood upon the extremest point of possibility and seen the extremest horror — the consequence of having stood there and seen that sight will pursue me. I have no wish to wound her, if I mean enough to her to be able to wound. I humble myself under the relationship and under my guilt, and thus it is I would part from her. From the rehearsals I believe I have seen enough to know that the horror of reality will be such that I should be shirking something by not beholding it.

I wrote her a letter in these terms:

"In order not to put more often to the test a thing which after all must be done, and which being done will supply the needed strength — let it then be done. Above all, forget him who writes this, forgive a man who, though he may be capable of something, is not capable of making a girl happy.

"To send a silk cord is in the East capital punishment for the receiver; to send a ring is here capital punishment for him who sends it."

Now that it has been done I totter like a drunken man, I can hardly walk, cannot collect myself. Indeed there is nothing to collect. These moments are like a hyphen between two words.

What happens? Great God, she has been in my room while I was out. I find a note composed with the passion of despair, she cannot live without me, it would be her death if I were to leave her, she conjures me for God's sake and for the sake of my salvation, by every pious remembrance which binds me, by the holy name which I rarely take upon my lips, because doubt has prevented me from appropriating it, although for this very cause I have greater reverence for it than anything else.

So then I am married to her! What else does a marriage mean but a religious expression and a religious sanction given to an engagement. The

thing is done. There are two powers which bind me and bind me indissolubly: that of God, and that of a dead man with whom there is no disputing. There is a Name which will bind me forever, although all my thought only descries it afar. That too she has laid under sequestration. Wipe out these powers, and I no longer exist; and if I exist, I am bound, and in these thoughts I shall think uninterruptedly of her who has laid these powers under sequestration.

Erotically she is at fault, that is certain. A girl has no right to employ such means. The fact that she employs them shows essentially how little understanding she has of them. I truly would not dare to employ such means. He who employs them against another binds himself just as tight as he would bind another, lest it should ever result that he had used in vain these holy means. But she has unlimited credit on the score of the capital account of my wrong.

But what folly to go up to my room! Someone may get to know that on that day she was in my room, and perhaps does not know that I was not at home. So perhaps her honor is now compromised. And I who have been so vigilant lest any indignity of the sort might dare to approach her! It is hard enough that it should appear as if I rejected her. I should be only too glad to have it appear that she rejected me. The terror of responsibility cheapens considerably the direct erotic sufferings.

And where did she go when she left my room? Perhaps she ran away in a delirium of despair at not being good enough. Good enough! That, I believe, is the only thing that is not in question. O death, who gave thee permission to exact usury? Art thou not a worse usurer than the most bloodthirsty Jew, worse than the most bloodless miser, when thou dost but threaten, or but torture one by the fear of death?

So then the terminus for our separation is postponed — if for no other reason, because her honor is involved, and because the whole thing has

assumed a dreadful form: I have a human life upon my conscience, and an eternal responsibility. But what is to be my relation to her? A religious point of unity is nonsense. That we two should sorrow in common is crazy, seeing that I am the guilty one, and she the sufferer. What an absurdity to have to be at one and the same time father-confessor and a murderer, to have to be the one who crushes and the one who compassionately raises up!

No! She shall not fail to see me, I have no mind to run away from anything. If she has foolishly fixed me for life in this relationship, fastened me by a bond which she is able to bind but cannot loose, it may go ill with her, I shall manage to hold out. However, it does not follow from this that she is to become mine and I hers; but if she believes she can make some impression upon me, if she has an argument which I perhaps have not considered, I do not shirk anything.

We are separated, but I shall do what a man can to help her. So take hold of me with all thy might, thou mighty power, thou counterfeiter, who art truth's changeling, but not to be distinguished from it in deceit. Give me strength for two months — that is the period, not a day more; but for that time, punctually and conscientiously, give me strength. Transform all anguish in my breast to nonsense upon my lips, all pathos to twaddle when it comes to expression. Take away, take it away, conceal every look, every feeling, every hint of a feeling, which might please her, hide it so surely that no truth may glimmer through the deceit. Refashion me, let me, when I sit by her, sit like a nodding Chinese idol, with a senseless smile upon my lips, encompassed by the incense fumes of noodledom.

I went to see her. She was calmer than I had expected. — A pair of secret lovers have need of caution to conceal their mutual understanding. We are openly lovers, and yet in this case too caution is needed to conceal *our* understanding.

So tomorrow begins the last struggle, the period of horror. I have of her no impression at all. Religion, which has always preoccupied me, has preoccupied my thought to desperation, and will preoccupy me as long as I am able to think, she has won over to her side. Perhaps it was a wild combat in which she knew not what means to employ, and so hit upon this. Be that as it may, I am bound to treat it with respect. What I shall venture to do now is to wrench myself from her if possible, to confuse her picture of me to sheer nonsense, and bewilder her thoroughly. Every counter-argument shall be treated with respect. I know well enough what these arguments will be. All sympathy for me must be destroyed, and at the same time she must be run to a standstill by reflection. In all human probability, she will experience with me the worst suffering, and humanly speaking she will not be disposed to begin the thing over again the moment I leave her. — One becomes almost calm when it is a question of action, though it be the most desperate thing one proposes to do, and that in the most difficult form, namely, in the form of time and the long run. But if I cannot be calm, I might as well not begin such a work.

May 8. Midnight.

Now all is quiet, not in the sense in which it holds that quiet is attained by a passion which is stronger than the noisiest outbursts. No, it is quiet in the sense of the dealer when he says that corn is quiet, there is no demand; quiet in the sense in which one speaks of a village as quiet, because it is uneventful and no event is to be expected, where nevertheless the usual things occur, the cocks crow on the dunghills, the ducks splash in the pond, and the midday smoke rises from the chimneys, and Morten Frandsen hurries home, and all is in movement until the peasant shuts his door and looks out into the quiet night, for till then there was no quiet. Quiet, not in the romantic sense in which one uses the word in speaking of a house which by its close reserve suggests some mystery, but as one uses it in the homely

sense of a house where the tranquil members of the family are severally employed about their own affairs, and where everything occurs as it is wont to occur; quiet as one uses the word with regard to “the quiet of the land,” who all the week long attend to their business, cast up their accounts, shut their shops, and on Sundays go to church.

The more I think upon this quiet, the more my being is transformed. The hope of any passionate decision has been given up, the whole affair will pass off quietly. But to me this quiet, this security, appears like the slyest subterfuge of existence. Ah, when quiet is an endless nothingness, and precisely as such is the form of possibility for an infinite content, then, then indeed I love it, for then it is the element in which spirit lives, and is of richer content than any change of dynasties or any world events. Therefore I love thee, thou quiet among the graves, for the dead sleep there, and yet this quiet is the form for the eternal consciousness of their works! Therefore I love thee, thou quiet of the night, when the inmost character of nature betrays itself more clearly than when it loudly proclaims itself in the life and movement of all things! Therefore I love thee, thou quiet of the hour of spiritual exercise here in my chamber, where no sound and no human voice sets limits to the infinity of thought and of the thoughts, to which Petrarch’s words apply: “The sea has not so many creatures in its waves, never did the night behold so many stars in the vault of heaven, there dwell not so many birds in the forest, nor are there so many blades of grass in the field and meadow, as every night my heart has thoughts!” Therefore I love thee, thou solemn quiet before the battle, whether it be the quiet of prayers which are not uttered aloud, whether it be the watchword which is whispered, thy quiet signifies more than the tumult of battle! Therefore I love thee with shuddering, thou quiet of the desert; thou art more terrible than all that happens or has happened! Therefore I love thee, thou quiet of loneliness, rather than all that is multifarious, because thou art infinite!

But this vegetating quietness, which is like a spell cast upon human life, where time comes and goes, and is filled with something, so that there is no sense of lack, for all rivers run into the sea, and yet cannot fill the boundless sea, but this and that can for men fill up their time — this is foreign to my soul. And yet it is this I must try to become familiar with. Down there in the village dwells pretty Mary. She too had a love affair; now the pain is past, now the musician scrapes the violin, and Mary treads the dance with a new lover. No! No! That brings my whole being to confusion! Let infinity separate us; my hope was that eternity would unite us. Come, death, and preserve her for eternity; come, madness, and put all aside for the time being, till eternity removes the seal imposed by the probate court; come, hate, with thine infinite passion; come, proud distinction, with thy withering wreath; come, godly fear, with thine imperishable blessedness; come one of you and take her whom I cannot take — but not this, not the pottering triviality of the temporal. — If this comes to pass, then I deceive her, then I must deceive her. I steal her picture as my imagination loves to represent it, I shall gaze upon it, but it shall not remind me of her, as hitherto it did when I decided to forego the anesthetic relief of remembrance, for now it is only remembrance.

Alas, when we separated my understanding taught me that I must be prepared, yea, that I might venture to expect it. Now — now it seems to me so difficult, if this were to occur.

However, will it actually occur? I know not. But this I know, that I owe it to her to adapt myself to anything that is possible for me. And this is possible, to give her, or seek to present (and for me the decisive thing is not whether in all human probability I shall accomplish anything), a more lenient interpretation of my conduct, an interpretation which to me is more distasteful than the bold lie I employed when I hoped that in an infinite sense it would be advantageous to her.

May 12. Midnight.

TODAY I saw her. It was at noon, just outside King's Garden. She was coming out, and I was walking on the farther side of the street, directly opposite. It really was my intention when I started out from home to go into the garden; if such had not been my intention, I would not have gone a step out of my way to encounter her. But this strictness is not much more than a reminiscence of a bygone method, when with ascetic abstinence from every even the remotest interference, and with selftorturing cruelty, I recognized infinity in her. Accordingly I had never occasion to take advantage of the favor of a chance encounter. So we met. She had seen me a little in advance and so was prepared, but possibly also in some agitation. What a task for the observer! To have half a minute to see — to see what was to be the subject of reflection for many hours! And with that to have to look out for oneself and be mindful to take into account what impression the sight of me might make. A movement passed over her face — was it an indication of suppressed pain, or was it the transition to a smile? I have never known a girl, or indeed any person, in whom the preliminaries to weeping and laughter were so exactly alike as in her. And in this case the contraries were not so strongly pronounced; for a suppressed laughter can be observed in the movements of the muscles of the neck, and suppressed weeping by the heaving of the bosom, but here the dubious movements lay between contrasts less extreme, and moreover there was no time to look. The movement might have been accounted for by the fact that she gasped for breath, in such a way, however, that I did not see her as she opened her mouth, but as she closed it. — One could lose one's wits by wanting to torture anything out of such an impression, and yet that is what I want to do. When one hears the church clock and counts the strokes, it does not follow that one knows what the hour is, for on account of the transmission of the

sound to a distance one may fail to hear the first strokes, and so be in error at the beginning of the count.

She had the appearance of being in even vigorous health — a bit pale, but I dare never ascribe to this pallor essential significance, for the sight of me might produce it. But I dare to rejoice at her wholesome appearance — or might it be a false appearance, that the air has given her the semblance of health? What can a hasty doctor say? A hasty doctor I am not, properly speaking, it is not I that pass hastily through the patient's room, it is the patient who runs past me so hastily; and a doctor 1 am not, rather it is I that am the patient.

May 15. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. I have often laughed at a lover of whom it was told me that he had another coat which he kept hung in his lady's house, which he put on when he visited her, in order not to wear out the new coat. Now I no longer laugh at it. I too have another coat, not hanging in her apartment, but outside in the corridor. There I put it on and discard every expression of my love, every hint of my sympathy, every tempting little wish, which, if our relationship were secure, would be fain to delight her with insignificant expressions of love. When I have the coat on, then begins a continual twaddle, beating about the bush, constantly mixing up the physical and the moral, confounding all things with one another, constantly chatting about our engagement, and our engagement, and things like that.

It is an agonizing punishment I suffer, as agonizing as if the scene were in Tartarus, to have to sit thus making mouths at myself. But so it must be. By this course of action our whole relationship, when the moment comes again to break off, will have no attraction for her, not even the fascination of the dreadful, but she will be sick and tired and disgusted, as one is tired of orange juice because one has taken medicine with it. If later she should be

able by herself to bestow ideality upon the relationship, she is quite a different individual than I supposed, and is far from standing in need of me.

May 16. Midnight.

As I have said, the whole thing is likely to pass off quietly. Yesterday and the day before I had a talk with my friend, who is very well informed, and who tortures me in a spirit of true friendship, though at the same time he obliges me with all sorts of information, without referring to her except under fictitious names. And his friendship is unchanged. First he wanted to distress me with the suggestion of mortal danger to her, now he pipes a different tune, he would if possible incite me by stirring up in me a little jealousy — but then she must be in a pretty good state of health. I possess in this man an incalculable advantage. He it is I now shall make use of. Today the comedy began. As he sat talking, in the midst of his narrative, I arose, embraced him heartily and said with pathos, “Now I understand you. Oh, what a fool I am that I did not recognize in you a friend! Do not deny it, you are speaking of her, of her whom, alas, I made unhappy, and whom yet I loved, to whom many a time I have wished to return, but I cannot, no, I cannot; honestly speaking, my pride has too much power over me.” My friend was rather taken aback. It must be pretty embarrassing when one is sitting in friendly converse, and with artless Christian malice would torment a man, then to be folded in friendship’s embrace. As if a robber who met a traveller on a remote path and was just on the point of falling upon his prey, were to feel himself tenderly embraced and were to hear these affecting words: “O kindly fate, which hast sent me a guide when I had gone astray; O thou my benefactor, the precious representative of humanity in these lonely places,” etc. It might well be possible that the robber would fall into embarrassment. So at least did my friend. I know very well that she must occasionally seek information about me. This I do not know from him, but

because there is another who has been very nimble in getting news to carry to her; and my friend stands much closer to her.

He became now in a way my friend. It goes without saying, however, that I do not trust him beyond the threshold. On the other hand, it suits him well to believe that he has me in his power, and that I am still so much concerned about her that he can find pleasure in torturing me. First I wanted with his help to open a correspondence with her. I declared in the most dramatic manner that I did not dare to see her and therefore must write. That I have seen her no one knows, and it would hardly occur to her to say it. This plan, however, was rejected. Then he promised to see to it that there should come into her hands several letters which I am to write to a third person. As a precaution I have used three sorts of ink, so that there might be a little difference in the color, since the dates are different.

So with combined forces the thing is going ahead. He has no objection to her marrying again, because he believes this will irritate me, and he perceives that I possibly may be of some help to him in this direction.

An author (I forget who it is) has said that honesty is the most durable thing — only not with reference to pleasing women. I really believe too that truth does not make a woman happy; I would not say by any means that a lie does, but some sort of little untruth. The jealousy he is scheming for is my affair. *Non enim est in carendo dificultas, nisi quum est in habendo cupiditas,* says Augustine. Well, it is true that I desired her, yes, that I desire her; but the fact that there was no external impediment shows that there was something higher which constrains my wish. This higher thing is the idea. Along with that I desire her... infinitely; without that, I hold to that which is higher than either of us. My preoccupation is therefore a different one, that regarded essentially (for regarded from the point of view of actuality and chance it may be that I accomplish nothing) I with these letters am writing her a letter of separation which puts infinity between us, that with these

letters, regarded essentially, I have contributed my part (verily not with a sympathetic wish) to acquire some lightness in the life which heavily distresses me.

May 19. Midnight.

BY this time she has presumably received my letters. The interpretation of the relationship does not fail to mention repentance and contrition. This "accommodation" is what distresses me most. In the case of every other deceit I have had at all events an ardent spirit, because the reason for it and the impulse to it was the hope that she would collect herself in an infinite sense. This time I am in low spirits, and yet this time perhaps I shall exert a much greater influence over her than by all I labored to do when by tearing myself from her I became more tightly bound to her. My repentance and contrition are of course expatiated upon in many words, and of course the upshot of the many words is that now it cannot be undone; I repent of the past, I wish to undo it, but I cannot, no, I cannot, but I have a will to do it if only my pride would let me, otherwise I would, etc. Repentance used to be recognized by the fact that it acts. In our age it is perhaps less exposed to such misapprehension. I do not believe that either Young, or Talleyrand, or a more recent writer, are right in saying of language that its purpose is to conceal thought, for I believe that its purpose is to assist and confirm people in refraining from action. What in my eyes is nonsense will perhaps produce a great effect, and perhaps the majority of my more intimate acquaintances will say, if they read these letters, "Well, now at last we have understood him."

It is pretty hard. One would fain enjoy the reputation of not being publicly regarded as a Bedlamite. To that in fact I too attain. I really believe that whatever I might say, if only it were not the truth or my sincere opinion, I should be regarded even as sagacious, whereas by doing the other thing I should be absolutely bringing about my deportation. If I were to

speak thus: “I took this decisive step because I felt myself hampered, because I must have my freedom, since the libido of my desire embraces a world and cannot be satisfied with one girl” — then the chorus responds: “There’s a lot of sense in that. Hail to thee, thou enlightened man!” Were I on the contrary to say, “She was the only one I have loved. Had I not been certain of that when I left her, I should never have had the courage to leave her” — then the chorus cries, “Off with him to the madhouse!” If I were to say, “I was tired of her” — then says the chorus, “There we have something one can understand.” But if I were to say, “Then I do not understand it, for one dare not denounce a relationship of duty because one is tired of it” — the cry then is, “He is mad!” If I were to say, as the most recent construction would, “I repent it, I would fain undo it, but I cannot, no, I cannot, my pride will not permit it, no, I cannot” — then the judgment of the chorus is, “He is just like the rest of us, and like the heroes in French poetry.” If on the contrary I were to say, that nothing, nothing could so satisfy my pride as to undo it, that nothing, nothing would so assuage the cold fire of revenge which demands redress — then the response is, “He is delirious, don’t listen to him. Away with him to the madhouse!”

Mundus vult decipi — there could hardly be a more precise description of my relation to the environment which I may call my world. I believe too that in a broader sense it is the best thing that has been said about the world. The speculative philosophers therefore should not rack their brains to fathom what it is the age requires, for from of yore this has always been the same, namely, to be led by the nose. If only one utters some nonsense and drinks to the health of mankind *en masse,* one becomes, like Peer Degn, loved and respected by the whole community. It is not different now, and everyone who sets himself down before the eyes of all to ponder how he might discover what the age requires, has substantially discovered it already. In that respect everybody can serve the age, whether it be

understood as a whole nation, as humanity in general, as all the generations to come, or as a smaller group of contemporaries. I serve the sympathetic by being a scoundrel. There is no doubt that I satisfy their requirement. I myself profit by it too, and in a certain sense I find this public estimation quite desirable. To be a paragon of virtue, the normal type of intelligent man, is for one thing very embarrassing, and for another thing... very problematical. On the other hand, I am not persecuted either. That too is desirable, lest I should draw a false inference and think well of myself because I was persecuted in the world.

With regard to other people I have never hesitated to follow my guardian angel by yielding to a certain innate bashfulness about the good that is in me, and a rather melancholy distrust of myself — that is to say, by deceiving in such a way that perhaps after all I am always a little better than I seem. I have never been able to understand it in any other way but that every man is essentially thrown back upon himself, and that apart from this there is either vicarious authority such as that of an Apostle (the dialectic definition of which I cannot comprehend, though in reverence for that which has been handed down to me as sacred I refrain from drawing any conclusion from my non-knowledge)... or else mere patter. It is perfectly true that he who cannot shave himself may very well sit down and employ others to accommodate his hair and beard; but in the world of spirit this is nonsense. Nevertheless it is esteemed a part of seriousness to be straightway at hand to exert an influence upon others, without for this wanting to be an Apostle (how humble!) — and without being able for all that to define in what way one differs from or resembles such a figure (how senseless!). Everybody wants to work for others. This is the conventional theme of the patriotic or moral address, where it is easier to understand; but it is also a conventional feature of the rhetorical form of the religious address. I do not doubt that it is found in the printed instructions for preachers, and one hears

it often enough, except when one listens to an individual who has himself been tried by experience and knows how to speak, and knows whereof to speak. If the sermon is about preparing the way of the Lord, the first topic has to do with the duty of every Christian to do his part in spreading Christianity— “not only we priests, but also everybody,” etc. That is *charmant.* “Not only we priests.” Here one feels at once the lack of middle terms to determine whether a priest is an Apostle, and if not, how he differs from such a figure, and in what respects he is like him. The ecclesiastical points of dispute about ordination increase the difficulty, and the principal middle term is thrust into the background by decisions within the undecided. So then, “not only we priests.” That to which “not only” refers is not given, and then follows the apodosis with all the seriousness of exhortation: “Give heed, my dear hearers, to what I say: it is not only I and we priests who should labor thus, but you should all labor thus!” How? Yes, this is the only thing that is not made clear in this serious address — if that can be called serious which is not serious in its thought-content. Now the first topic is finished; the priest wipes off the sweat, and the hearers do likewise, at the mere thought that they have thus become missionaries. The orator begins again. One hopes to get a little more light on the subject; but, lo, the next topic is, that everyone should prepare within himself the way of the Lord. This of course is the way one ought to speak, and upon this point one can construct a whole life-view. One understands that the individual has to do with himself essentially, and that the business of accomplishing something is accidental, cannot be assumed by anyone in advance, and cannot be ascribed to oneself, and only as seen retrospectively in eternity can it be seen as it is, essentially as God’s bounty, and accidentally the deed of the individual. For in fact existence, and providence within it, is something more than the simple sum of all the deeds of individual men. A man must have his absolute thought *in mente* wherever he fares. When it is

lacking, a man is at fault in two ways: he beguiles people into dreams, and he works injustice to the sufferer. For in fact that first topic requires success of every man. It is easy enough to talk about a thing which inexperienced and indolent natures especially like to hear; but it is senseless to *require* it, because success does not depend upon freedom but is the boon of providence — and suppose now that one were to have ill success. If on the contrary it is understood that the individual has to do essentially with himself, then it will also be understood that he so exists in order that his life, his word, may *possibly* have significance for others. "Possibly," because in the first place it is the affair of providence, and secondly the power exercised by the example, the teacher, is not direct. At this point then a speaker might begin, inverting the topics, somewhat in this fashion: "Not even I, though it may seem so, can essentially do more than attend to myself. Do not let yourselves be captured by an illusion." But ordinarily the address is planned in exactly the opposite way. One appeals to the example of John the Baptist; but John is not directly a paradigm, he is set apart (*αφορισμενος*) for a special work, and hence middle terms are needed. Moreover, one must always be cautious in employing world-renowned figures, for these possess a completely rounded character which makes it easy to contemplate them, but as easy to misunderstand. Every figure which is to be employed must in its dialectic structure be clear to thought, otherwise it is merely a jest to propose him as a paradigm.

I have pondered much over this, seeing that I am an existing person, and so must put to use ethically what is said. When one elects to do differently, elects to teach or to learn, but leaves out the crises of realization, one may have much to talk about, I dare say, many words of instruction, and may find tranquillity, I dare say. From what I have thought on this subject I have come to the conclusion that I do a man the most good by deceiving him. The highest truth with respect to my relationship to him is this, that

essentially I can do him no good — this is the expression for the deepest yearning of sympathetic pain, which only by living in a mare's nest one can abstain from having an experience of, but is also an expression of the loftiest enthusiasm for the equality of all men. And the most adequate form for this truth is that I deceive him — for otherwise it would be possible for him to make a mistake and learn this truth from me, and by this he would be deceived, that is, by believing that he had learned it from me. I know well that the plurality, were I to initiate them into my doubtful process of thought, would smile at me and reprehend my levity, for the infatuating is taken to be the serious. That cannot disconcert me without making me guilty of an inconsistency, and that cannot come to pass, seeing that I have no desire to confide in anybody, and am not likely to make the mistake of supposing that I ought to go forth to proclaim this parsimonious closeness instead of being close myself. For let man be close, then God alone is openhanded.

I have learned this best, but also in the hardest way, through my relationship to her, in which yearning sympathy constantly desired to make her an exception, and in which I have wished to the point of desperation to be everything for her, until I learned in pain that it is infinitely higher to be nothing for her. It comforts me that in my relationship to her I never fancied that I was a teacher or was called upon to say a few admonishing words. Though the wisest man were to devote six hours a day to a person, and were to devote six more to consider how he might do it best, and were to keep this up for six years, he would be a deceiver, if he ventured to say that *essentially* he had done him good. And for me at least, this thought is the deepest source of enthusiasm. Language, arts, handicrafts, one man can teach another, but in an ethico-religious sense one man cannot essentially benefit another. Hence it is beautiful and it is uplifting to give expression to this by the extremest effort of deception, for a deception under ethical

responsibility is anything but an easy matter, and it is always able to hold its own with the admonishing word. It comforts me now, when all the subsequent things have occurred, that she never stood to me in the relation of pupil, which might have been upsetting to her. What I have uttered I have uttered as if it were to myself I was talking, and I made neither gesticulations nor applications. If she appropriates it, she does it of her own accord, not relying on "his word and gown." It is convenient enough to jump into an omnibus and ride around and say a few admonishing words, there may be something pretty implied in the wish to do it, but it is stupid to be capable of teaching that "a man can do nothing whatever," and then at the same time to be capable of ascribing to a few admonishing words such a prodigious effect. To God is due the thanksgiving of wonder and admiration for the effects. For each man is to look to himself in life, in eternity there will be time to see what God brought out of this. And this applies not only to the conspicuous influence of single individuals, but to the slightest fraction of effect ascribable to the most insignificant man.

So it is I have sought to understand existence. He who has understood it in the same way will surely behave in the same way, and above all will constantly express himself so cautiously, and in the form of deceit, that he may avoid the danger which everybody in our time, down to the most insignificant newspaper reporter, must be aware of, namely, that there are a few men who have conceived the desperate idea that the thing directly uttered is the truth, and that it is their task to sally forth into the world, etc. But to sally forth into the world may well be left to the knights errant; the true seriousness is attentive to every danger, and to this among others, that one may in bona fide become an unreasoning pupil, a thing which is best prevented by employing contradiction as the form of presentation. In my view no one (with exception of such authoritative individuals as the Apostles, whose dialectical position I do not comprehend) has been more

serious than he who clad his thought in the form of jest, and who loved so sympathetically his fellow men, and no one who has so profoundly admired the Deity. So let the chroniclers tell of kings who introduced Christianity; my notion is this, that a king can introduce a better breed of sheep, and railways; but Christianity and spirit (ethically understood) not even an emperor need put himself to the trouble of introducing — that is to say, in the essential sense.

A change is now being effected in my relationship to her. Till now I have remained perfectly quiet and respected the infinity in her. Now I come out with an explanation. This I regard as a deceit. In the earlier period the form was deceit, and the content was interest for the infinity in her. Thus my quietness, my silence, my self-effacement, was the form in which deception expressed an infinite interest in her. Now it is different. What I say, I do not mean; but neither do I mean that the form of deceit adequately clothes my real meaning. Whether in reality it influences her, is not to the point. I have to do only with the essential, and the essential point is that this is my intention and purpose. The explanation I give, that I repent but cannot undo what I was at fault in doing, is sheer nonsense. For in case I am unable to allege reasons why I cannot undo it, I ought never to talk about my repenting, least of all allege pride (i.e. that I will not) as the reason, for that simply is making a fool of her. Therefore until now I have never represented myself as repentant, although in fact I am repentant and have repented of entering into that relationship, and I am humiliated by the fact that I cannot undo it, precisely as my pride prompts me to do, since now it is broken by the experience that I, who have had an almost foolhardy conception of what the will can accomplish, must here writhe at the thought of something which I will, and will passionately, but cannot do. Why I cannot (that being something implied in my relation to the idea — until that is changed or I am) it is impossible for me to tell her in such a way that she could

understand it; but this precisely is the reason why I have never said to her that I repented. Such was the intention of my conduct. But to repent, and to allege pride as the impediment to the expression of repentance, is *lèse-majesté* against God. How anybody can understand it and find it plausible, I cannot conceive; but then in turn most people would say the same about my way of regarding it.

Perhaps for the first time I am doing something which I myself regard as senseless. I have done many things which the plurality perhaps would regard as senseless; but that has not disturbed me, since this might also be because the plurality has not understanding enough to think the thing out, nor courage enough to venture out to the extreme positions where I lead my life. I have done many things, too, which I myself have afterwards perceived to be foolish, and although repentance when it makes inspection has no respect for excuses, there is yet a sort of comfort in the fact that when I did the thing I did not know that it was senseless. Unqualified as I am to comprehend such problems as the future of humanity as a whole, or what it is the age requires, I have absolutely collected myself within myself. When the rights of the case seemed to me doubtful, I have been accustomed to pronounce my name aloud to myself and say, “One may die, one may be unfortunate, yet one can preserve sense in one’s life, and faithfulness to the idea.” Now that is no more. And who is at fault for it? Another would perhaps say, “It is she, under whose slipper you still remain.” That, however, I would not say, for I fain would refrain from such senselessness as this, that another is at fault for the fact that I get into a scrape. I will say rather that I myself am at fault, the fault is mine, it lies in my weakness, and the difficulty is that my understanding vouches to me for it that my conduct may be beneficial to her in a finite sense, while my sympathy would prefer to love her in an infinite sense. This relationship has humiliated me, and

now, whether she reads my letters or no, whether they have an effect upon her or no, she now triumphs over me in a way which makes me despondent.

May 21. Midnight.

THERE is nothing new under the sun, says Solomon. Well, that may be so, but it is worse when nothing happens at all. By this consideration alone I assure myself of the absurdity of seeking any confidant. Of course if my pain were rich in episodes, in changes of scenery and decoration, it then would be interesting. But my suffering is boring. In fact I am still constantly engaged in expounding this nothing, and the scenery is unalterably the same.

If I were to travel in order to make time move, *per mare tristitia fugens per saxa per ignes* — but it cannot be done. I must still keep perfectly quiet. A journey, which she would easily get wind of, might possibly upset her and prompt her to entertain an illusion, namely, that I, after a certain length of time in foreign parts, had become changed. But time must be dealt out to her as stingily as possible; and I only wish that a providence would often bring our paths together, for she is the better for seeing me, and so having opportunity to assure herself that I am here and live here unchanged, that I am not sitting in a foreign land — possibly thinking about her and getting homesick. If I were to make a journey, I ought to have gone away long ago, giving out a false report of the duration of my journey, and coming back suddenly. Perhaps it would have occurred to her that this suddenness had something to do with her, until she saw that it had nothing to do with her — that possibly might have been good for her. The time for such a thing has passed.

The clock just now struck one. This disconsolate indication of time! For twelve strokes are many, one notes that time is indicated, and even two is a number to be counted; but one is suggestive of eternity. If there be such a thing as an eternity of punishment, and the unfortunate man who suffers it

were to make complaint to someone, how surely one would turn away from him, for not only is he unhappy, his suffering is boring — if it were not boring one might show him sympathy.

For my part I crave nobody’s sympathy. God in heaven is not disgusted by the boring. They say that it is a duty to pray, that it is profitable to pray, that there are three grounds for it, maybe there are even four. I have no intention of taking away from anybody his grounds, he is more than welcome to retain them, if only I may retain the thought of *daring* to pray, as something, so inspiring that, in a deeper sense than did Plato and Aristotle, one can say that wonder is the beginning of knowledge. With respect to this matter I have no confidence in many arguments and sixteen grounds; perhaps it would be better, with a view to the prosperous classes (for the poor, the unfortunate, the simple classes, have no such difficulty about prayer) if a regulation were introduced making it cost something to get permission to pray — then there might be a run on it. If it is true of earthly love that it seeks privacy, it is even more true of prayer that it prefers loneliness and to be as much hidden as possible, in order that it may neither be disturbed itself, nor annoy others by its emotional character. There is not the least need of having witnesses to it, and they don’t help any. A prince who travels incognito can at any moment put off his incognito; and it seems to me likewise that the outward semblance of the man of prayer is an incognito, which he cannot indeed put off in order to become an object of worldly admiration, but which he can lay aside when in the act of prayer he is raised to the infinite by wondering at God, by wondering at the fact that God is the only one who does not grow tired of listening to a man. And in turn this holy wonder will prevent the man of prayer from reflecting whether he is getting what he prays for. It is not a pretty love affair where one is looking out to see if it pays, and even if he sees that it pays capitally, it is not a happy love affair. Prayer was not invented to bring suit against

God, but it is a favor graciously granted to every man, and which makes him more than a nobleman. But if one understands with wonder, yea, with a wonder which shipwrecks his understanding, that prayer is a favor, then it is apprehended that arguments are not necessary at all, for it is only the doubtful that is recommended by arguments. Every extraneous reflection has *eo ipso* the effect of nullifying prayer, whether it be a reflection which looks from the corner of the eye to temporal advantage, or a reflection upon the individual himself and his relation to others — as if a man were so serious that he could not pray within and for himself, but must come forward and do the whole congregation good by his intercession and by his example as a man of prayer. Thus there are men also who cannot speak except before a general assembly, and Madame Voltisubito cannot ride unless she hears the whip crack.

Ah, but for her! If she will not in herself understand, but would rather seek temporal consolation! It is hard on a man who has not dissevered his soul in dissolute concern for Tom, Dick and Harry, or for the whole human race, to dare only in loneliness to express his concern for himself, and not to dare to do all that, which to be sure is in a higher sense a mere nothing, but which nevertheless is some assuagement for sympathy.

May 22. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Laughter, after all, is the best means for exploring. She joins in the laughter, but then she can endure no more, her laugh breaks. So then after all she has no infinity of passion, but has it only to a certain degree. Then I shudder, for I know what is about to come, there will come prayers and tears until again she is weary; but my twaddle has not grown weary, it goes on indefatigably.

To be pricked where the most delicate nerves are located is dreadful, but still more dreadful it is not to dare to change an expression while that is happening, but to have to sit perfectly calm and continue to chat.

Only for ten minutes today was I serious. I propose to behave in the same way every eighth day. I said to her calmly, “Hold up, break it off, thou canst not hold out with me in the long run.” But with that passion flames up most hotly, she declares that, she would prefer all this to not seeing me. This is only a passionate outburst, and its very vehemence indicates to me that my line of action will be conducive to setting her afloat.

May 25. Midnight.

REMEMBER her — I dare not. Had death separated us as it separates lovers, had she broken with me, then I should have dared to remember what was beautiful and lovable, to remember every instant which was a happy one for us. When spring burgeons in youthful vigor I should remember her, when the leaf gives its shade I should repose in the memory of her, in the evening when the summer mists collect I should see her image, by the quiet lake, when the reeds rustle, when the skiff approaches, I should imagine that I was about to meet her, until the monotonous waves would rock me away into remembrance, at the shop of my old pastry cook I should seek a trace of her, and often, often deceive myself by the thought that I was going to her. But I dare not. There is no change of seasons for me, as in me there is no change. Remembrance does not blossom in my hand, it is like a judgment on my head, or like an enigmatic sign the significance of which I do not know. Did Adam dare to remind Eve, did he dare when he beheld thistles and thorns before his feet, did he dare to say to Eve, “No! It was not like this in Eden. Ah, dost thou remember?” Did Adam dare? Still less do I.

May 27. Midnight.

FORGET her? — that is impossible. The whole structure of my life has collapsed. I was melancholy, but in this melancholy I was an enthusiast, and that disconsolate thought of my youth, that I was good for nothing, was perhaps only a form of enthusiasm, because I required an ideality under the

weight of which I sank. This secret I wished to keep within myself, and within this secret a glow, which indeed made me unhappy, but also indescribably happy. Early, all too early, I thought I had perceived that the enthusiasm found in the street and in the market is of a kind I should not wish to have part or lot in. So I desired to make my exterior cold and heartless, so as to have no fellowship with an enthusiasm which was deluding or self-deluded. That was a proud idea, such as might occur to a melancholy man. But though people were to cry against me loudly as an egoist, I was not willing that anyone should get the better of me. All this is brought to confusion, I am disarmed. I have been taken prisoner by the appearance I sought to conjure up. I have in fact treated a person shabbily. And although I have a different understanding of it, and although I am certain — as certain as that the sun rises in the east — that whatever I do I shall always have enthusiasm on my side — I cannot make any man understand me.

Providence has taken me captive. The idea I cherished of my existence was a proud one, now I am crushed. I know well enough that I can hide it from others, but I have lost the real pith of my existence, the secure stronghold behind the deceitful appearance, I have lost what I shall never regain, what I myself must prevent myself from regaining, for my pride is still left, but it has had to *referre pedem,* and it has the task, among other things, of never forgiving myself. Only religiously can I now understand myself before God, in relation to men misunderstanding is the foreign language I speak. I desired to have it in my power to be able to express myself in the common tongue any moment I would, now I cannot.

Ah, blessed is an understanding with God, but the fact that by providence or by my own act I am so surrounded by misunderstanding that I am constantly forced back to the lonely understanding with God has also its peculiar pain. Who would hesitate to choose a confidential relationship?

But my choice is not free. I am aware of freedom in my choice only when I surrender myself to necessity, and in surrendering to it forget it. I cannot say, “To whom should I go but unto Thee,” for I cannot go to any man, since one cannot confide oneself to the intimacy of misunderstanding; I cannot go to any man, for I am a prisoner, and misunderstanding, and misunderstanding, and misunderstanding again, are the iron bars before my window; and I do not elect to go to God, for I am compelled. But then comes the instant of understanding, and then it is blessed again after all that there are iron bars before the windows, for this brings it about that the understanding cannot be a deception, cannot be something traditionally acquired, a result at second hand, and that it cannot be some sort of chatty babbling — for to whom am I to talk?

My idea was to construct my life ethically in my inmost being, and to conceal this inwardness under the form of deceit. Now I have been forced farther back within myself, my life is constructed for me religiously, and so much farther back in inwardness that with difficulty I reach actuality.

Who would ever think of assuming an air of importance directly before the face of God? But my situation is as if God had chosen me, not I God. There is left to me not even the negative expression of being something of importance, namely, that it is I who come to Him. If I will not submit to bearing the smart of necessity, I am annihilated, or have no place to exist except among men in misunderstanding. If I bear the smart of necessity, then there will come about the transformation.

I shall never recover my loss, it may be long enough before I learn to bear it. As I go about amongst men putting my best foot forward, it seems to me as if my lost pride passed me by as if in the look of another I could read that he condemned me as one who had lost pride and honor. Then like a desperate man I could wish to run in among men to grasp my lost shadow, to claim it again, to revenge myself, to console myself with revenge, until I

should sink down exhausted. Yea, woe to the woman whose glance might move me in such a way! Upon a woman at least one can take revenge. I know that there are horrible thoughts which may find place in the man who discovers a stone of stumbling in a situation due to nature. How was it that Richard III could overwhelm the woman who was his sworn enemy, and transform her into a lover? And why, I wonder, did he do it? Was it state policy? Can we also ascribe to state policy the scorn with which he reflects upon the facility of victory? Was it to prove to himself that he was fit to be a king, when with the lust of despair he dwells upon his own deformity? No, it was hatred of existence. With the power of spirit he would mock at nature which had made mock of him, he would turn it into ridicule along with its invention of love and of love for the beautiful; he who had been wronged, he the cripple, he the man of despair, he the devil, would prove that he, in spite of language and natural law, could be loved. So he learned, so he discovered, that there is a power which has upon women a sure effect, namely, untruth and lies, when they vibrate with the flame of wild enthusiasm, with the unwholesome heat of lust, and yet with the icy coldness of the understanding, as we are bidden to cool the best wine with ice. He himself hated, and yet he generated love, even though woman does not love such a man, but feels disgust at him, and only in dizziness and stupefaction sinks into his arms. There is such an evil spirit, and it offers big earnest money, the presentiment of superhuman powers, and it tempts by illusion, as if a mad revenge were the true way to rescue one's pride and to avenge one's honor. And the way must be hard, even if it is possible, the way back across the yawning abyss which also in time separates good and evil, the transition from being supernatural in greatness through the power of evil, to being nothing, nothing whatever, less than nothing, in repentance.

"What is honor?" says Falstaff, "Can honor set a leg? No. Ergo it is an imagination, it is a painted scutcheon." No, this ergo would be a crazy

inference; for even if honor can do nothing of all these things when one wins it, yet when it is lost it can do the opposite, it can amputate an leg and an arm, yea, it can maltreat a man worse than they do in Russia, and send him to Siberia. If it is able to do that, it is surely no mere imagination. For go to the battlefield and consider the fallen, go to the soldiers' hospital and consider the wounded — never didst thou find there a dead man, never a mutilated man, so maltreated as he whom honor made away with.

Then comes understanding again within the iron bars. Where then is the field of honor? It is wherever a man falls with honor. But the man who, rather than slink through life with honor, preferred to lose honor and to give it all to God, he also falls upon the field of honor. If we are to expect a new heaven and a new earth, so also we must have a new honor. So then if I fall where no one dreams a field of honor can be, even if I am buried in the unconsecrated ground alotted to the dishonored, yet in case an individual, who perhaps passed by my grave with other thoughts, were suddenly to halt and address to me this funeral oration, "How comes it that this man lies here? Can one without infamy lie among the dishonored? And he indeed lies here with honor" — I demand no more than that. I will conceive the case clearly and more decisively than the crisis of my life illustrates it. Take Mary Magdalene, suppose that no one was privy to her shame, that she could have sneaked through life with honor, and in death could have sneaked out of the world with a myrtle garland upon her brow — it seems to me that by her courage she won a very different honor, it seems to me that in death she lies without the myrtle garland more illustrious than with it.

So it seems to me also that after all he did not lose his honor who admitted that he had begun what he could not finish, it seems to me that he preserved his honor better than if he had taken at a good bargain what he would give everything he had to possess, than if he had sneaked through life

as a girl's benefactor, when not even to himself he dared admit that he was the more modest figure he alone desired to be, instead of holding the girl at a high valuation when in a spirit of youthfulness she overvalued herself, and holding her at a high valuation when in distress she far undervalued herself, and holding her at the highest valuation as her deceiver, when for the lowest price he might have been her husband; it seems to me that the benediction of gratitude pronounced upon him would have been like a mockery, and that the revered name which then would have designated his relationship to her would have been an abomination, but that the severest condemnation of language and of wrath pronounced upon his conduct would have been a reparation of honor.

May 30. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Could it be possible that she might conquer and get her wish? Let us see. What I cannot get over is that my whole view of life, which is not snatched vainly from the air but is essential to my individuality, can no longer pass muster. I cannot be happy, she cannot be happy, a marriage our relationship cannot become. She cannot be happy — what is the meaning of that when she herself so passionately desires this thing? But what good does passion do when it is questionable whether she understands herself? Her passionateness simply shows that she has not enough freedom of thought to entertain another point of view. If we separate, and I employ force to break away, she will become unhappy. But in that case there is nothing to give color to the notion that she is happy, and so her unhappiness and my guilt make sense. But if by remaining with me she becomes unhappy, it is nonsense; and then when passion is over with because the inciting opposition is no more, what then? — Our relationship cannot become a marriage. Why not? Because in my melancholy I am morbidly reserved. That I knew in the beginning, and I believed that the task was to conceal it. It was in this way I understood the matter, but such a

situation is not marriage. But if she is willing to put up with being married to me with the left hand, as it would be substantially? But I will not put up with it, for as I now see it this would be an affront to her. Is one to ask then only whether one can put up with something, and not ask what this something is, whether it is true, whether it is beautiful, whether it is in conformity with the idea? About this she asks nothing — she who once was proud. This shows that she is too passionate to have any judgment. — For a marriage the wedding ceremony is requisite. What is a wedding? It means taking an oath which is mutually binding. But for a mutual obligation surely mutual understanding is requisite. But she does not understand me. What then is my oath? Nonsense. Is it a wedding? No! It is a profanation. Though we were wedded ten times, I should not be wedded to her, whereas she would be wedded to me. But if she does not concern herself at all about this? Is one then only to ask for one's passionate wish, and not at all about the idea? Is one to believe merely in one's passion, and have not the least faith or trust in the thought that he whom one loves, as one says, may mean well, although he is not of the same opinion? Does not this demonstrate her passionateness and the contradiction implied in it? Precisely in the act which is to bind us most inwardly together I perceive a divine protest against the whole thing. At the moment of the wedding we do not become united, but I learn to know what I knew beforehand, that we are separate. Is this a wedding? Or am I wedded to her for the reason that she dwells in my house, and because I desire no other woman? In that case I am essentially wedded to her now, for after all she does abide with me, and I shall know well how to honor myself and her by seeking no new love — as though I had weighed and rejected her, as she doubtless imagines, showing again by this that she does not understand me, and showing also that in her passion there smoulders a hidden pride.

A woman after all is a marvellous being, and love a strange power! I cannot give up loving her, and yet her faithfulness is of a dubious sort. To love as she does at this moment, is that a difficult art? No, it is weakness. Is it beautiful? No, it is unfree. Is it a power? No, it is impotence. Is it altruistic? No, it is self-love. Is it faithfulness? No, it is innate craftiness. And yet when it is a woman who does this, then.... But no, I do not believe I should think thus in the case of any other; but when she does it, she does it in such a way, or I see it in such a way, that she loses nothing in my eyes. She employs every device against me, and it never occurs to her to hint by a single word that she could believe me and therefore would yield, that she will resign and thereby give me my freedom, that she will despise me and on these terms let me go. In a way we have exchanged rôles, for in a certain sense she is the strong one and I the weakling, inasmuch as I am constantly fearful on her account. And truly, one against one, I should not be a match for her; but the misfortune is that I am more than one, inasmuch as I have the category and the idea on my side. A hero therefore I am not capable of becoming, for it is not my victory I seek, but that of the idea, and I am willing to be brought to naught. So when I have conquered and the thing is decided, I shall not say like Pyrrhus, "One more such victory, and I am done for," for this victory is conclusive.

June 3. Midnight.

So then I am on the lookout. If I were to say this to another person, it doubtless would require explanation; for it is easily understood that the pilot coasting the shore, that the watchman on the pinnacle of the tower, that the lookout at the bow, that the robber in his lair, are on the lookout, since there is something to peer at — but he who sits alone in his chamber, what can he be peering at? And he who expects that everything (i.e. the insignificant affair which nobody else perhaps would heed) will pass off quietly, is in fact peering at nothing. What wonder then that this strains his soul and his head;

for to look at something is good for the eyes, but to look at nothing is a strain on them. And when for a long while the eye looks at nothing, it sees at last itself, or its own faculty of seeing — so it is that the emptiness around me forces my thought back into myself.

So I begin again from the start to examine the dialectical difficulty of my expectation. The culmination of my life, that almost mad wish, the utmost effort and the last longing of my enthusiasm is that the whole thing might be made good. I have held my soul upon this supreme point.

I feel indeed that now by the weight of the temporal I am at times dragged down from that point. So then, new exercises. From this wish the paths diverge: the wish is one thing for her and another for me. Autopathically I must wish that she might become another's. For my person in its egoism this is the easiest way out. Sympathetically I do not wish this, unless it were to come about in a way that is inconceivable by a return to a first love; for otherwise it is a temporal healing which is not the highest. On the other hand, for her to be infinitized in a religious sense would be and is the highest, and that too I must wish, although, autopathically understood, such an existence would be a heavy burden for me. It would not be difficult for her to find a religious way out. She has nothing to reproach herself with, she can live in blissful friendship with the eternal, she can die quietly and placidly in God, "as mild and gentle as the cradle-babe dying with mother's dug between its lips." For me such an existence on her part would be a condemnation to penitence *in perpetuum.* As the next best thing to being religiously infinitized, my sympathetic wish would be that she might be raised to a higher power in temporal existence, become something great and uncommon in the world. If this were to occur my life again would be laid under embargo. — The catastrophe of horror hardly needs to be again brought up, it may be regarded as a thing of the past.

In spite of this long scala, there is sense and meaning in my existence. What I have done hitherto, until these last letters, is consistent. I have kept entirely quiet, mute, as if nothing were going on. What an effort it has cost me, only he can know who comprehends my sufferings, no one else. How truly does Heiberg say in a masterly novel: “However strong one’s reasons may be for regarding a person as inwardly unhappy and broken-hearted, yet if he looks composed, cheerful and merry, all our reasons are put to flight, and we believe rather what we see than what we know.” — We have often laughed at the bear which struck its master a fatal blow to chase a fly away. This is indeed comic, but the situation can be made to appear profoundly tragic. Suppose that the bear was aware what the consequence would be if it exerted all its force as it alone could, suppose then that it saw its master tormented and that it must sit still and repress itself so as not to make everything worse. This might be trying and very difficult, for it knew that it could easily kill the fly.

The art of the actor consists in seeming to be deeply moved when he is untroubled (if he is really troubled, it is a fault); the art of the reserved man consists in seeming to be untroubled although he is deeply moved. If he is not deeply moved and shaken, his art = o, and he is not reserved.

June 5. Morning TODAY a year ago. I might in fact get along without the marriage ceremony, and plan for an erotic union such as we have examples of. She is willing to put up with anything — but shall one not raise any question about what it is one is willing to put up with? The situation is so desperately topsy-turvy that I could easily entice her to seduce me. But though she believes now (alas, in her pain!) that I can readily find a finer girl, or though she believes (alas, in her delusion!) that I so easily could forget her and find in other ways new and ever new joy in the world, she ought then also to believe that I rate my honor so low that for a fancy I would be willing to forfeit what never can be regained. For honor I

shall never acquire again, or as the last thing of all, sooner will she acquire a new love. But to live outside of wedlock, whether she would put up with it or not, whether she could rely upon my faithfulness or not, is from an ideal point of view an indignity. And she might die, and she might bring down upon my conscience a murder, and she might curse me, and she might abhor me, and she might write an epigram upon my melancholy when she is consoled by a new love, and I am unaltered in that place where she imagined herself to be. But no indignity shall be put upon her — least of all in such a way that I thereby become a knight.

If there were any man I could turn to, I would go to him and say, “Oh, please, please supply a little meaning for me in my bewilderment.” The most dreadful meaning is not so dreadful as meaninglessness, and this is the more terrible the more meaninglessly it smiles.

* * *

Laughter explores in all directions, and by its aid and under its false flag I introduce everything into the conversation, in order that my reflection may inspect the thought-paths in her soul and her powers of resistance. I perceive this much, that she does not possess the proper ideal conception of what it is to sorrow. In a finite sense she is in sound health, and after all it is by the finite she must be saved. She must be brought to the point of being disgusted with the whole thing, then we part, then she lays her down to sleep, then she sleeps it out, and then she is saved again for time. It is not with the powers of ideality she has to fight, she has a finite hope to which she holds fast, and my presence helps her. The fact that I am here and must look on, gives her an importance in her own eyes which she will not have when I am gone.

If I were not sure of myself that I suffer more than she does, and that the worst awaits me when I have to do only with myself, I could not hold out. However, it goes on, and one can become accustomed to every suffering. What I shuddered at as at entering a fiery furnace, I am becoming accustomed to. I am so extraordinarily successful in bosh and drivel that at home I have to make the opposite motions in order that the whole thing may not dissolve in galimatias. If she had infinity in her soul it would be an easy task for her to be magnanimous towards me (Oh, invidious situation!), to give me my freedom, to take the pain and get a religious equivalent for it, and so to make me her debtor, a debtor in respect to magnanimity. These terms have been offered her, I did not dare to refuse them to her; but verily it would have been upon me a terrible punishment. What does all her anger and contempt amount to in comparison with magnanimity!

June 5. Midnight.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

(Daniel)

1. RECOLLECTIONS of my life when I was a beast and ate grass, I, Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples and tongues.

2. Was not Babel the great city, the greatest of all the cities of the nations? I, I Nebuchadnezzar, have built it.

3. No city was so renowned as Babel, and no king so renowned through Babel, the glory of my majesty.

4. My royal house was visible unto the ends of the earth, and my wisdom was like a dark riddle which none of the wise men could explain.

5. So they could not tell what it was I had dreamed.

6. And the word came to me that I should be transformed and become like a beast which eateth the grass of the field while seven seasons changed

over me.

7. Then I assembled all my princes with their armies and disposed that I should be forewarned when the enemy came as the word indicated.

8. But no one dared approach proud Babel, and I said, “Is not this proud Babel which I have built?”

9. Now there was heard a voice suddenly, and I was transformed as quickly as a woman changeth color.

10. Grass was my food, and dew fell upon me, and no one knew me who I was.

11. But I knew Babel and cried, “Is not this Babel?” But no one heeded my word, for when it sounded it was like the bellowing of a beast.

12. My thoughts terrified me, my thoughts in my mind, for my mouth was bound, and no one could perceive anything but a voice in likeness as a beast’s.

13. And I thought, Who is that Mighty One, the Lord, the Lord, whose wisdom is like the darkness of the night, and like the deep sea unfathomable?

14. Yea, like a dream which He alone understandeth, and the interpretation of which He hath not delivered into any man’s power, when suddenly He is upon one and holds one in His powerful arms.

15. No one knoweth where this Mighty One dwelleth, no one could point and say, “Behold, here is His throne,” so that one could travel through the land till it was said, “Behold, here is the confine of His dominion.”

16. For He dwelleth not on the confines of my kingdom as my neighbor, neither from the uttermost sea unto the confines of my kingdom like a bulwark round about.

17. And neither doth He dwell in His Temple, for I, I Nebuchadnezzar, have taken His vessels of gold and vessels of silver, and have laid His Temple waste.

18. And no one knoweth anything of Him, who was His father, and how He acquired His power, and who taught Him the secret of His might.

19. And He hath no counsellors, that one might buy His secret for gold; no one to whome He says, “What shall I do?” and no one who says to Him, “What doest thou?”

20. Spies He has not, to spy after the opportunity when one might catch Him; for He doth not say, “Tomorrow,” but He saith, “Today.”

21. For He maketh no preparations like a man, and His preparations give the enemy no respite; for He saith, “Let it be done,” and it cometh to pass.

22. He sitteth still and speaketh with Himself, one knoweth not that He is present until it cometh to pass.

23. This hath He done against me. He aimeth not like the bowman, so that one might flee from His arrow; He speaketh with Himself, and it is done.

24. In His hand the brain of kings is like wax in the smelting oven, and their potency is like a feather when He weigheth it.

25. And yet He dwelleth not on earth as the Mighty One, that He might take from me Babel and leave me a small residue, or that He might take from me all and be the Mighty One in Babel.

26. So did I think in the secrecy of my mind, when no one knew me, and my thoughts terrified me, that the Lord, the Lord was such as that.

27. But when the seven years were past I became again Nebuchadnezzar.

28. And I called together all the wise men that they might explain to me the secret of that power, and how I had become a beast of the field.

29. And they all fell down upon their faces and said, “Great Nebuchadnezzar, this is an imagination, an evil dream! Who could be capable of doing this to thee?”

30. But my wrath was kindled against the wise men in the whole land, and I had them cut down in their folly.

31. For the Lord, the Lord possesseth all might, as no man doth possess it, and I will not envy Him his power, but will laud it and be next to Him, for I have taken His vessels of gold and vessels of silver.

32. Babel is no more the renowned Babel, and I, Nebuchadnezzar, am no more Nebuchadnezzar, and my armies protect me no more, for no one can see the Lord, the Lord, and no one can recognize Him, 33. Though He were to come, and the watchmen were to give warning in vain, because already I should have become like a bird in the tree, or like a fish in the water, known only to the other fish.

34. Therefore I desire no longer to be renowned through Babel, but every seventh year there shall be a festival in the land, 35. A great festival among the people, and it shall be called the Feast of the Transformation.

36. And an astrologer shall be led through the streets and be clad like a beast, and his calculations shall he carry with him, torn to shreds like a bunch of hay.

37. And all the people shall cry, "The Lord, the Lord, the Lord is the Mighty One, and His deed is swift like the leap of the great fish in the sea."

38. For soon my days are told, and my dominion gone like a watch in the night, and I know not whither I go hence, 39. Whether I come to the invisible land in the distance where the Mighty One dwelleth, that I might find grace in His eyes; 40. Whether it be He that taketh from me the breath of life, that I become as a cast-off garment like my predecessors, that he might find delight in me.

41. This have I, I Nebuchadnezzar, made known to all peoples and tongues, and great Babel shall carry out my will.

June 7. Midnight.

WHEN I was a child a little peat fosse was my all in all. The dark tree-roots which protruded here and there in the profound obscurity were vanished kingdoms and lands, where every discovery was as important to

me as are antediluvian remains to the scientist. There was eventfulness in plenty, for if I threw a stone, what prodigious movements it caused, the one circle greater than the other, until the water again stood still; and if I threw the stone in another fashion, the movements were different from these and in themselves were enriched by many diversities. I lay by the edge and looked out across the surface, seeing how halfway out the wind first began to ripple the water, until the rippling waves vanished among the rushes on the opposite side. Then I climbed up into the willow which leaned out over the fosse, sitting on the extremest branch I could reach and weighing it down a little so that I might stare down into the obscurity. Then came the ducks swimming to strange lands and climbing the small tongue which jutted out from the land and formed with its rushes a bay where my boat of driftwood lay. But if then there flew out of the woods and over the water a wild duck, it awakened by its cry obscure memories in the heads of the tame ducks, so that they began to flap their wings and fly wildly along the surface — then it awakened also a longing in my breast, until again I stared myself into contentment with my little peat fosse.

So it always is, so compassionate is nature, so rich: the less one has, the more one sees. Take for example a book, the most mediocre that has been written, but read it with the passionate feeling that it is the only one thou wilt read, then out of that book thou dost read all things, i.e. as much as there was in thee, and more thou didst never get out of any book, though thou wert to read the best.

The period of childhood is now long past, hence on the score of imagination I have less to contribute — so greatly am I changed. But the object of my contemplation has not become very great in proportion to advancing age. There is *one* person, one only, about whom everything turns. Upon that girl I gaze and gaze until I produce out of myself what perhaps I should never have managed to see, though I had seen ever so much, for it

would not follow that by seeing much my inwardness would have become transparent to me. If she had been uncommonly talented in spirit, she never would have had such an influence upon me. She is just enough for me as a responsibility, and the responsibility again is mine, and yet it is she who by this responsibility brings out before consciousness my inwardness. I was far too much, and much too definitely developed for her to influence me by imparting anything, nor was she equipped to enrich me in a spiritual sense with new content. But, in the last resort, for understanding oneself one has to be in the right situation. This she has helped me to reach by responsibility. From this point of view all my suffering is directly favorable to me. The searching quietness of responsibility teaches one the necessity of helping oneself by force of spirit. Achievement, action, activity, which so often are praised, and deservedly, may easily have, however, an admixture of distraction, so that one does not get to know what one is capable of by force of spirit, and what part the manifold external impulses play; by them one is also spared many terrors, which do not get time to reach one; but being spared does not mean to overcome them or to understand oneself. By the responsibility she will help me further, for I shall not be through with the thing when she is. Suppose she were to become the wife of another man, and I free; with that I am not through with it, I still should have left the possibility that it suddenly might dawn upon me (perhaps owing to the guidance of some thinker, perhaps by a casual word, which sometimes has such great power) — that it suddenly might dawn upon me that a marriage might have been constructed out of our relationship. Precisely because in such a case I should not have the sympathetic dread on her account, pain will grip me again, but then autopathically. What then will responsibility be to me? It will be my comfort, and precisely in the responsibility I shall learn to know myself.

As viewed from this standpoint of self-understanding, I comprehend very well that as a man I am far from being paradigmatic, I am rather a sample man. I indicate with fair precision the temperature of every mood and passion, and while I produce my own inwardness, I understand these words: *homo sum, nil humani a me alienum puto*, But in a humane sense no man can fashion himself after me, and least of all in a historical sense am I a prototype for any man. I am rather a man such as might be needed in a crisis, an experiment which existence uses to feel its way before it. A man half as reflective as I, would be able to acquire significance for many, but precisely because I am wholly reflective through and through I acquire none at all.

As soon as I am outside my religious understanding I feel as an insect must feel when the children play with it, for existence seems to have acted just as mercilessly with me. As soon as I am within my religious understanding I understand that precisely this has absolute significance for me. That which in the one case is horrible jest, is in the other sense the deepest seriousness.

At bottom, seriousness is far from being a simple thing, a simplex, but is a compositum; for the true seriousness is the unity of jest and seriousness. Of this I can best convince myself by contemplating Socrates. If in accordance with one of Plato’s interpretations we ingeniously explain Socrates as the unity of the comic and the tragic, it is quite right, but the query remains, Wherein does this unity consist? It cannot be a question of a new kind of poetry or anything of that sort; no, the unity consists in seriousness. Socrates then was the most serious man in Greece. His intellectuality stood in absolute proportion to his ethical nature (where this is not the case one can be serious about trivialities), his comic sense was precisely as great as his ethical pathos; his seriousness was hidden in jest, hence he had freedom in it, and to be serious he did not need the least

outward support (which always detracts from the specific worth of seriousness).

In the case of an immediate existence it is important not to see the contradictions, for with that immediacy is lost; in the existence of spirit the important thing is to hold out and to endure the contradictions, but at the same time to hold them off from oneself in freedom. Hence the narrow-minded seriousness is always afraid of the comic, and rightly so; but the true seriousness itself invents the comic. If this were not so, stupidity would be the privileged caste with relation to seriousness. But seriousness is not mediation — that is a poor jest and a new motive for the comic. Mediation has no place in the existence-sphere of freedom, and only in a ludicrous way, coming from metaphysics, can it intrude into the sphere where freedom is constantly in process of becoming. Seriousness fathoms the comic, and the greater the depth out of which it fetches itself up out of this sphere, so much the better for it; but it does not mediate. What it seriously wills it does not regard as comic inasmuch as it wills it, but for all that it is well able to see the comic side. Thus it is the comic purifies the pathetic, and conversely the pathetic lends emphasis to the comic. Accordingly that comic construction will be the most annihilating which is so fashioned that indignation is latent in it, though no one observes this for laughter. *Vis comica* is the most dangerous weapon and therefore is entrusted only to the hand of him who has a pathos which completely corresponds to it. The man who could thus make a hypocrite truly ridiculous would be able also to crush him by his indignation. On the other hand, the man who would employ indignation, and does not possess the corresponding *vis comica,* will easily fall into declamation and become himself comic.

But here I sit and forget her! No, certainly not; for the unity of the comic and the tragic concerns me closely. My belligerent understanding has often wanted to whirl the whole thing away in laughter, but precisely out of this

whirlwind has my tragic passion developed more strongly. Thus it is that I understand myself better, and understand that I have held fast to seriousness. If it had not been so from the beginning, if step by step I had not seen the comic, and under its supervision preserved the tragic, then if it turns out that she becomes another man’s wife, presumably a certain passionateness (which is not seriousness in spite of its vehemence) would have got the better of me, or else laughter (in a way that is unbecoming in its separation from the pathetic). For this is comic, that I am a scoundrel, and she the one who will die — now that the situation is inverted. But this shock I can well endure, for from the very beginning my pathos is saved. My pathos has not its origin in her or her vehement outburst, but is my soul’s inwardness. Hence transformation cannot make me its plaything, for I hold fast to the idea, and the comic from without has no power over me. The fact that I believed everything, every word of hers, as seriously as a person possibly can, is not at all comic. Whether she did not mean it, has nothing to do with the case; whether like Jacob von Thyboe she says, “We have reconsidered that,” makes no difference whatever. True, if I had believed it merely in virtue of her, because she said it, if I had believed it merely in reliance upon her trustworthiness, I should then be comic, and in a certain sense I should have been comic from the beginning. But I believed her because she stood in an ethical relationship to me, so that it was my duty to believe, it is I who have given her word the weight of eternity for me, because I showed respect to the relationship; never have I relied “upon her word and gown” in planning my life. Hence I have seen the comic from the very beginning, and just for this reason I cannot to all eternity become comic. I can produce the comic any moment I will, but I will not, and this will controls my pathos, so that it is not vehement and blind and thereby comic.

So the matter stands, even in case that “if” comes to pass. I am and remain unchanged.

June 11. Midnight.

TODAY I saw her. But this seeing is of no great service to me, for I dare not believe what is commonly accounted the surest thing, my own eyes. But today circumstances favored me. I was walking with another man when we met her. I knew that he was not acquainted with her. As we were approaching I said to him, “How suffering the girl looks!” That maybe was an untruth, but what will a man not do to get ocular demonstration? He replied quite apathetically, “It doesn’t seem so to me at all.” It is an odd thing to talk to a person in such a way; I doubt if ever in his life he will chance to say a word to me which is so important, although for him it had no importance at all. It didn’t stop there, however, for we had something to talk about and therefore walked back and forth in the street, and half an hour later she returned by the same path from a shop. While she was passing us (which she could not avoid doing, because there was no side street, and she had seen us too late) I called his attention to her again, and when she had passed I said, “You really are right, she looks blooming.” He replied, “Yes, that’s what I said; but I cannot conceive why you concern yourself about it.” It is an odd thing to talk to a person in this way; I doubt if he ever will make a remark which touches me so closely, and yet he thought nothing much about it. I explained to him that it was one of my diversions to pay attention to peoples’ exterior in order to infer their interior condition. So I was quite ready to concede to him that the last time she looked well, but I was convinced that in the course of her walk something must have occurred which produced this effect, for the first time she looked unwell. He became a bit angry and maintained that he could read faces as well as I, and that both times he had seen one and the same thing. I stood as upon hot coals, lest I might have compromised myself; but to save myself

from the snares of imagination when in loneliness it would distress me with the fear that he might have noticed her particularly and would later learn to know that it was she, I then risked the utmost: “Well, we shall soon have the case decided. Do you believe you could recognize her again, for I am not sure that I could, although I looked at her more attentively than you did. Let us go together and procure some information about her.”

“Evasions,” said he, “evasions merely for the sake of carrying the point. How should I recognize her again, since I only looked at her cursorily, though I saw enough to vouch for what I have said.” It is an odd thing to talk to a person in this way; for I doubt if he ever will utter a word which so relieves my concern as does this word, which he uttered however only for the sake of getting the better of me. This is like an official survey. The person I walked with was truly an impartial man. So I dare to believe it. — When one must thus steal up to a thing, one appreciates it the more. — To steal up to a pleasure is natural enough, but not to dare to be concerned, to walk in the path of concern as though it were a forbidden path — and now if the result had been that she looked unwell, I should have had to steal up to that.

June 12. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. If then a marriage could be constructed in spite of my morbid reserve, this union is my wish. Quite certainly, even though I cannot at this moment decide in how far it is purely erotic, or has an admixture of emotion prompted by her pain in conjunction with my pride, which in a sense she has on her side. So I might indeed try to imagine that my break with the idea was praiseworthy, since it was for her sake; without concerning myself about her, I might take her at her passionate word, and thus have as much as possible of the joy I wished for myself and which is always in her possession — and thus be unrepentant and free from all difficulties and terrors. When I look away from the idea, I seem to be very

well off with this. And now when she not only will put up with everything, but will thank me for it as for a charitable deed, consequently — I cannot endure this confusion. Where can my weary thought find a place to repose? Circumstances change, and my head swims. It was my wish that she might become mine, it is my pain to relinquish it; it was my duty to remain in the relationship, it is enough to consume one's strength that I have broken a relationship of duty — but, God in heaven preserve my understanding, save me from one thing, let me not become her benefactor; I cannot live without having some sense in my life, I must have a little, it may be little enough. Let me become her murderer, if so it must be; I understand then that I have pressed forward where I ought not to have ventured, when I make an effort I can understand that it is a heavy punishment inflicted upon me, and the thought-life in me can again draw breath — but to be her benefactor! No, that is impossible. Avaunt, crazy senselessness with thy smiling phyz, make me miserable, but so that there is some sense in it, but beatify me not in nonsense. If I cannot do it though it is my wish, if I cannot do it though it is my duty, there is nothing more to be said, the rest is not only of the evil but of insanity.

Happen what may, though I fall dead today, it is after all not so terrible to go hence with a homicide upon my conscience, as to live as her benefactor. There must be a fault on her part: such terms should never have been offered me. This implies an insult to us both, for it is as if she said "Thou dost not love me, thou hast no regard for thy duty, but after all thou art miserable enough to let thyself be moved, and I am weak enough to will this."

Perhaps she suffers for the fact that her breast is burdened by suppressed sighs, that she cannot weep; so does my consciousness suffer for the same cause, that it cannot manage to take breath, but groans with suppressed thoughts and perishes in meaninglessness. As a fish when it lies upon the

beach gasps in vain for the sea wherein it can breathe, so do I gasp in vain for sense and meaning.

* * *

She suffers, it is evident, and he who sees it is I. No one else has a notion of what is going on between us. When anyone is present my bearing is as it always was. She remains quiet, and I keep watch with a hundred eyes over every word that is spoken, lest suddenly there might come an explosion. She would find relief by talking to somebody, but it would merely have a cooling effect, and the worst symptoms perhaps would come over her in loneliness; she is much better off in holding out with me.

A casual utterance may cause the worst disturbance of all. When one is keeping everything in check by one's calculations, suddenly somebody may let fall a remark which, without having any intention of the sort, touches one sensibly. Yesterday we were at a dinner party. There was talk at table about engagements. A lady remarked that "engaged persons always lose weight." How strikingly applicable! For her and for me it was a harrowing truth. When I already was trying to distract attention from this subject, in order that no further application of this dictum of experience might be made, a gentleman continued it: "But in requital people commonly become fat when they are married." Poor girl! I however retained sufficient composure to adjoin, as lightly as a heavily armed man can, "But yet there are instances of the contrary," and mentioning the name of a man which was enough to produce laughter, I said "He has been married three times, and yet is thinner than I." People were pleased to laugh. She had time to collect herself. But such a torture destroys both soul and body.

Moreover, she is and remains without resignation. She underbids and underbids, but to conceive the problem sympathetically does not occur to her. When she is willing to cast herself away like a slave, like a naught, like

a burden, it appears to her that she is carrying resignation to extremes. God knows that in a way the thing is carried to very much greater extremes than I can bear to see it. On the other hand, she either cannot or will not understand what she ought to do, and that she tortures me in an unjustifiable way, for there never has been any dispute about her loveliness, and then too such conduct confirms me in my resolution, precisely out of solicitude for her.

What I fear most of all is that in her imagination she has concocted something great out of me. If that be so, then this humiliation of herself is the worst of all misfortunes. Here I have found a limit for my deceit. If in the form of bosh I were to talk about my insignificance, it would only confirm her in such an imagination, if she has it. Therefore, just as every eighth day I seriously challenge her to break the engagement, so too I have opened to her a little communication with my inmost thought with regard to this last hazard. Next to becoming her benefactor I rank the absurdity that I might be something great and disdain her. This communication is opened only for an instant, for as soon as I have said that she is always plenty good enough, the bosh begins again. I comfort myself in this respect by the thought that when I have forsaken her she will find the opinion confirmed by everyone that it was no great loss. With regard to my heartlessness in treating her thus, it is to be hoped that she will also find confirmation in everybody's condemnation of me.

It would be splendid if she could be brought to the point, or herself get the notion, of breaking the engagement. She would thus be spared the humiliation. I throw out hints of it, for with a whole voice and full passion I dare not talk of it, for thus she would discover how much she concerns me, and so would try all expedients over again. Hence I must talk with half a voice and a fictitious passion.

June 14. Midnight.

IN the Middle Ages people saved their souls by repeating the rosary a certain number of times. If I could save my soul by repeating to myself the story of my sufferings, I should have been saved long ago. If my repetition is not always prayerful — oh, yet preferably it ends in the consolation of prayer. In this she aids me in a singular way. If I were not to maintain myself in the passion of action, if this were past and I quiet, i.e. if in repose I dared to reflect upon the whole situation, then I would say that she has done me a good turn for the fact that in my humiliation at seeing her subject herself to me I find all the more joy in subjecting myself to a higher Power. Her misfortune was that she had nothing higher than a man. As the Scripture says that an idol is nothing in the world, so it may well be that I shall end by being nothing, because to her I was an idol.

But how strange the whole thing was, the situation is so dialectically illusive that any instant it might, as it were, escape me, so as to seem as if I had not left her because I loved her but because I loved myself! I find everything just as I wished it, her whole environment just as I had imagined it from first impressions. It suits me like nothing else, I might travel the world around and perhaps not find a situation so propitious for me. If another step is required before marriage, namely, a rational deliberation, then I venture to bear witness on my own behalf that I thoroughly tried out myself beforehand. Only I did not wish to offend her by reconnoitring. I find her rather different from what I had imagined, a little scene helps us, and she becomes in my eyes more lovable than ever — and then, behold, the whole difficulty comes from my side. But then perhaps I am light-minded? All my deliberation about her situation and that of her family before ever I took the step is proof to the contrary, and I dare testify on my own behalf that I entered into the relationship with an entirely honest will, convinced that I knew wherein the problem consisted, and perhaps a bit proud of being able to resolve it, by mastering my reserve and keeping it to

myself — and, lo, precisely this is my downfall, not meaning by this that I cannot do it, but that this is not the solution of the problem. After that little incident her devotion becomes more and more unrestrained in its expression, and becomes proof to me that my reserve means absolute incompatibility, that her union with me would be a *mésalliance* for her, even if she does not understand it so. That such is the state of the case is my pain, and yet for all that I cannot give up my reserve. I have employed fifteen years to form a life-view for myself and to attain proficiency in it. It is a life-view which stirred my enthusiasm and was entirely in accordance with my nature, and so I cannot suddenly be made over. I cannot even tell her that I wish such a thing, because such a wish is an undetermined determinant which cannot presume without great light-mindedness to dispose of her life. In proportion as she has struggled with all her might to show her devotion she has labored against herself with all her vital power.

And now I see clearly that my melancholy makes it impossible for me to have a confidant, and I know well that what the wedding ceremony exacts of me is that she should be precisely this. But this she never has been, and could not be even if I were to open myself ever so thoroughly, for we do not understand one another. This is due to the fact that my consciousness has one more register than hers. In the lower court of appeal, which properly is the sphere of everyday life and what is called reality, in that court where she essentially has her life, as surely the majority of men have, I am more than a little queer. Only by a long detour do I become again secure and composed like other men. I am not actually crazy, for I am perfectly capable of looking after myself, I have need of no confidant, I burden no one with my unhappiness, and it does not disturb me at all in my work. My melancholy searches in every direction for the dreadful. Then it grips me with its terror. I cannot and will not flee from it, I must endure the thought; then I find a religious composure, and only then am I free and happy, as spirit. Although

I have the most enthusiastic apprehension of God's love, I have also an apprehension that He is not a dear old grandpapa who sits in heaven and indulges people, but that in time and in temporal existence one must be prepared to suffer everything. It is my conviction that it is only a Judaizing reminiscence, a petty particularism in Christianity, or habitual cowardice and indolence, to think that one enjoys a special relationship to God and is exempted from such things. Bustling spiritual and worldly expedients for keeping the terror away are a disgust to me, because these expedients have no understanding of what the terrible is. True, he who is busy in willing to be or has become something in this finite world does well to keep the terror away, and he is compelled to do so lest it should transform his aim into nothing and prevent him from attaining the imagined greatness. But he who wills in a religious sense must have a receptive attitude to the terrible, he must open himself to it, and he has only to take care that it does not stop halfway, but that it leads him into the security of the infinite. This comes about little by little through the instrumentality of the particular terror. He becomes familiar with it, familiar with the thought that what he most fears will happen to him, but he also becomes expert in drilling this thought into conformity with his assurance of God's love. So the thought visits him perhaps off and on, but it lasts only a minute, that very instant he is religiously oriented in it, and the thing disturbs him no more. But then comes another terror, and he does not prate about it to men, but attends to his business, and in this case too he succeeds, etc.

If she had become mine, I am convinced that I should have stood beside her with the thought that one of us would die before night, or with some similar foreboding. I vouch that neither she nor anyone else would have observed it in my looks. Within myself too I should have been composed, but religiously composed, and yet I should have had the thought all the same. Lo, this is a deceit. In case I had a confidant, I would make this

inquiry of him: “Is it not a shame for a man who is melancholy to torture his wife with his melancholy ideas?” And he would reply, and with him perhaps all men: “Yes indeed, a man ought to repress himself and thereby show that he is a man.”

“Very well,” I would answer, “that is what I can do, I can look like a smiling hope; and yet it is precisely upon this I have come to grief, for it is a deceit which marriage does not tolerate, whether the wife in question understands it so or not.” And the misfortune is that I believed this was the task, until I learned to perceive that the wedding is a divine protest against it.

As for talking with a confidant, that I cannot do. A confidant will not think my melancholy idea so passionately as I do, and so will not understand that for me it is a religious starting-point. In order to live in intimacy with another person it is requisite, either that one has not such thoughts, that one’s world of consciousness ends with the “systematic,” hardly Greek and still less Christian, board fence, “the outward is the inward and the inward is the outward”; or else that such thoughts are not too stoutly held to yield to what one calls reasonable grounds. For most men have a fractional conception of the deceitful appearance of life; but then experience and probability come along and rivet the loose ends together, and so they attain security and have reasonable grounds for it. I know all about that. An elderly woman once got the idea that she would be buried alive. She confided in me. Quite naturally she had thought out three precautionary measures, but as she was distressed by melancholy, her distress had naturally taken all three away from her again, i.e. she could imagine the possibility that they might not suffice. Had she not been melancholy, she would have remained blissful in the assurance that there are such prudential rules and priceless truths which are able to secure something for a person in the finite. Then I had to help her to become

blissful in galimatias; for as I perceived that the infinite would perhaps put her to complete confusion, I chose the finite. I myself had once been worried by the same idea and so was bountifully supplied with prudential rules. This abundance had not helped me, for my melancholy had taken it from me, until I found comfort in the infinite. I suggested to her then the fourth and the fifth precautionary measures which she had not dreamt of, and she has never ceased to thank me; but I have never known whether I should laugh or weep at it.

If then I were married and my wife were my confidant — what then? I will suppose that it was that old woman's melancholy idea which worried me, and that it was in the period of suffering, before I had got myself into perfect training. So then I would talk and initiate her into this idea. Then as a matter of fact she would likely laugh, for it would be inconceivable to her how a person could get such ideas. Now in case my melancholy were not constantly the starting point for a religious satisfaction, in case it were an empty whim or crotchet from which nothing resulted, then perhaps this innocent laughter would be precisely the most healing medicine, for a lovable youthfulness has also a great power. But the religious satisfaction is to me of more value than all youthfulness, and therefore this would not help me, except to the point of sadly rejoicing in her happiness, which nevertheless I do not covet. But talk I must, for the easiest thing for me is to keep silent. So she would surely become concerned, and then she would make trial of the reasonable grounds. Suppose then she thinks out five precautionary measures which should take the wind out of my sails. The whole thing is so clear to me that I should like to hear her voice to convince myself that I have done right in preventing myself from hearing it. So she would enumerate the five precautionary measures, and then would say, "And finally thou hast me, who would then do everything for thee, trust me, I promise that it shall not occur, everything shall be done, as if the salvation

of my soul depended upon it — so be joyful again." It seems to me that this situation must be enough to make the stones weep. The poor wife! She has suggested everything she could think of. If I were to oppose her, she would believe that I have no confidence in her as being what she would seem to be, and this grieves her. And on the other hand, this then is the dialectic that is to bind me. Even the simplest objection, which would occur to everybody, that she might in fact die before me, she would not understand; for just because it is essentially characteristic of her to look forward to everything happy, and that it is in this "immediate" hope and faith and confidence she has her security in life, she would be speaking from the bottom of her heart were she to say, "How couldst thou think that? I know now why the notion of my dying before thee is so momentous to thee," etc. She would again make the stones weep by her genuine and heartfelt emotion; but on the other hand, this is the dialectic which is to bind him who for fifteen years, day and night, has practised himself in wrestling dialectically with thoughts, as an Arab manages his steed, as a juggler plays with sharp knives. What would be the end of it? That I could not bear to see her distressed, could not find it in my heart to let her go off with the mortification of thinking that I had no confidence in her. And what then? Why then I would let a day intervene, and then I would assume my disguise of deceit, would look as friendly as possible and say to her, "Yes, my dear, it is just as thou didst say. It is true, I have thee, and thou hast convinced me, if not by thy reasons, at least by what thou didst say about thyself." And then she looks so happy and delighted, she who is the joy of my eyes — and I have deceived her. And this I cannot endure, because in her place I could not endure it, and because I will and must love her as greatly as myself, which I do only by leaving her. In relation to other people a deceit is permissible, for they are not tied to me, and not divinely installed as my confidants; and if they are tired of me, they can go, as she cannot, if one day

she obscurely comprehends the incompatibility. — The question whether I really was composed when I talked to her thus is not to the point, for if I was composed, it would have been within myself. In this instance the incompatibility shows itself again. A melancholy idea cannot acquire for her the significance that it becomes the starting point for a religious satisfaction. If she has one opinion about a theatrical piece and I another, if the difference of opinion proved perhaps that I am an aesthetic critic and she anything but that, this by no means constitutes an incompatibility, and if it came to that, I would gladly give up my opinion for her sake. But the strange ideas of melancholy I do not give up; for these, which perhaps a third person would call crotchets, which she perhaps would sympathetically call distressing fancies, I call pulls — if only I follow them and hold out, they lead me to the eternal certainty of the infinite.

In my loneliness therefore these ideas are dear to me, even though they affright me; they have the utmost importance for me and teach me, instead of congratulating myself and rendering mankind blissful by peerless discoveries in the religious field — instead of this they teach me to my own abasement to discover as it were, and with endless contentment to be satisfied with, the very simplest things. — In the concept of godly fear it is surely implied that He is to be feared, and if it is dangerous for a man's soul to make God a despot, it is also dangerous for his religion to make Him a subject in reduced circumstances; and if it would be alarming to a man's soul if God were shut up in eternal silence, it is also dangerous to audit speculatively God's accounts and to prance prophetically through world history. Why is it indeed that in remote places where half a mile separates the little huts there is more godly fear than in the noisy town, that sailors have more godly fear than the inhabitants of the market town — why indeed unless it is because such men experience something, and experience it in such a way that there is no escape? When at night the tempest rages

and the hungry cry of the wolf is ominously heard therein, when in peril upon the sea a man has saved himself upon a plank, that is to say, must be rescued by a straw from certain destruction, also when no one can send a message to the next hut because no one will venture out at night, and one can spare oneself the trouble of shouting — then one learns to possess one's soul in patience, relying upon something else besides night watchmen and the police and the distress-gun of the life-saving station. In the great cities both men and buildings are crowded too close together. If one is properly to receive a primitive impression, there must either be an event, or one must have another way, as I have in my melancholy. If not, there is danger that the total outcome may be as follows: he had been young and still recalls many pleasant experiences of that time, many joyful days, then he was married, and all went well, only one time he was seriously ill, and at once a messenger went for the doctor, one fetched in haste whoever could be found, and so came Professor D., and one learned to know in him a very careful physician, who therefore became the family doctor; also in Pastor P. one found a serious spiritual guide, of whose deep religiousness and genuine piety one was more thoroughly convinced than of one's own religiousness, for which one valued him more and more and more highly from year to year; then one learned to know several like-minded families, attached oneself to them, and then died. And why should it not be a pretty thing to have had a happy youth and to remember it, why should it not be a joyful thing to have learned to know Professor D. and Pastor P. — but is this then the maximum when all is said and done? If so, I would prefer not to incommode either the professor or the pastor, but to have heard the howl of the wolf and to have learned to know God.

In love stories the messenger whom the lover employs is often a dwarf, a deformed person, an old crone. Who could believe it was a love message? So for me my melancholy ideas are messengers from my first love, from

what always must remain my only love. They terrify me, but they have never had permission from the sender to destroy me, to enfeeble my spirit, to let me become burdensome to others. Whether this is some time to occur, I do not know, whether it shall occur soon or late, I do not know, but this I know, that these messengers have led me on to the most blissful certitude — and so it may be the same with promotion, “whether one came limping or came hobbling, without glamor of pleasing appearance.” Even at this very instant the thought overwhelms me that I have been able to hold out. Oh, in loneliness I never have wished for death. I do not understand how men can suddenly become torpid enough to wish for death. For me on the contrary, the more it grows dark around me, the more I wish to live, in order to hold out by myself, to see if my enthusiasm was an empty word or a power, whether it was the strong drink which foams of itself or penny beer, which foams indeed — but by a foreign admixture. And if a man can understand how dreadful it might be for one who fights to become a king to think of the inopportune arrival of death just when he was nearest the goal, then I can understand that he whose life was troubled to the core, that he who had no confidant at his side and no *impressa vestigia* before his feet regards it as of the utmost importance for him that death may not come and render it impossible to get to know whether along that path he might press on, or whether he was infatuated by an illusion, whether his resolution which renounces declamation was just as completely fudge as that of the declaimers.

June 18. Midnight.

AM I guilty? Yes. How? By the fact that I began what I could not carry to completion. How is it thou dost understand it now? I understand now why it was impossible for me. What then is thy guilt? That I did not understand it earlier. What is thy responsibility? Every possible consequence that may follow in her life. Why say “every possible,” for this

seems an exaggeration? Because here there is no question about an occurrence and its consequences, but about an act and about ethical responsibility, against the consequences of which I dare not arm myself by being courageous, since in this courage consists precisely in laying myself open to them. What may serve as thy excuse? That my individuality as a whole disposed me to conduct which on all hands I find confirmed and which, were I to seek a confidant, I should find corroborated: "that a melancholy person should not worry his wife with his sufferings, but should keep them closely to himself like a man." What is thy comfort? That while recognizing this guilt I have likewise a presentiment of a divine governance in the whole affair. Precisely because I have considered the matter to the best of my ability and have acted as honestly as I could by virtue of this recognition, precisely for this reason I perceive a co-operation which led me on to a point where I understood myself as perhaps I never could have done in any other way, but also taught me this in such a way that I shall not become arrogant. What is thy hope? That it may be forgiven — if not here, at least in eternity. Is there no hitch with regard to this forgiveness? Yes indeed, there is the fact that I have not her forgiveness; and she is and remains a court of first resort which cannot be ignored. Her forgiveness cannot indeed justify me eternally, any more than a man's implacability can injure anybody but this man himself, but her forgiveness is part and parcel of the divine juridical procedure. Why hast thou not her forgiveness? Because I could not make myself comprehensible to her. It would indeed have been far easier for me if only I could have secured that and been exempted from the dreadful hovering in which I find no foothold but by assuming the utmost possibility of responsible obligation. No question was asked thee about the easiest or the hardest, for a man may choose the wrong even when he chooses the hardest — so then, why dost thou not possess it? Because I could not get it. When I dissolved my engagement to her by my

letter I made request for that. This she would not understand and therefore compelled me to employ the only means left for rescuing her, namely, to put the misunderstanding of deceit between us. My continuation in this course showed me that the deceit itself really expressed the truth, that she did not understand me. Her opinion of me was that I had more inclination for the world, that I wanted to have my freedom because the relationship was too narrowing for me. Precisely because this was her opinion it offended her pride, and therefore she was reckless in employing every expedient. To win me back again she had to rely essentially upon bringing me back to my duty and touching me sympathetically. If at that juncture I had talked plainly and said, “The maintenance of this relationship is my own wish” — then I would not have been allowed to say more, but she would have exulted somewhat in this fashion: “O my dear, thou dost not know how happy thou hast made me. It is thine own wish. Ah, I had given up hope of it and had learned to content myself with something less until it might again become thy wish; but now all is well, indeed it is splendid. It is thy wish and my wish, so every obstacle is removed.” What does that mead? It means that she does not understand me. So I did not elect to make myself understood, but understandable to her, for she could understand that I was tired of her, that I was a deceiver and a twaddler. Her salvation depended upon my holding fast to this. But what then would it signify if I were suddenly to beg for her forgiveness? It would sound like making a fool of her. The word forgiveness uttered between *us* puts everything upon a religious basis. To trick her out of an expression of forgiveness is not what is required of me. If I were to talk, I must admit my fault, but also, if the thing is to be serious, she must be able to understand my justification. As soon then as the talk began she would confine herself to understanding the first half, and thereupon understand nothing of the rest, that is to say, she would misunderstand the first part as well. If I could have been comprehensible to

her in my whole construction, and her forgiveness could thus be something more than a situation in comedy, her conduct towards me would have been so shocking that she rather would have been in need of my forgiveness, and so I did enough with that letter. But as the case then stood, every utterance of mine could only contribute to make the two months still longer, for she would be led thereby to become more and more vehement in her attack — although without gaining anything. Hence the few serious words I stealthily mingled with the confusion are what I most have to reproach myself for. So then I have no forgiveness. An official forgiveness between two persons who do not understand one another is an empty ceremony and as questionable as a written contract made between two persons of whom one can neither write nor read writing. The great reciprocal security of having a written rather than a verbal agreement vanishes in a double way: he who cannot read writing has nothing to rely upon but what he has heard, and whether it stands written as it was read to him he does not know; the other has the onus of vouching for both, although the document should be mutual. Before I can have real forgiveness she must be able to put herself in my situation, otherwise her forgiveness is like a written declaration by one who cannot read writing, indeed her forgiveness is still less than that, because the man who cannot read writing can nevertheless understand very well what the question is about, but forgiveness by one who cannot or will not understand what the question is about is just as meaningless as a grant made in response to a petition by one who does not know what the petitioner asked. Lo, it is for this reason I have no forgiveness. I believed that I did her more honor by not getting such a thing out of her by craft, I have done what I thought I owed to her, or rather the thing was done for her sake: forgiveness has been made as difficult for me as possible. My break with reality was of such a sort that it is a simple consequence from it that a

genuine forgiveness on her part is unthinkable, for this would define me as in continuity with reality.

This is the position of the case in time. As for eternity, it is my hope that we shall be comprehensible to one another, and that there she will forgive me. In time it remains a dialectic sting in my pain, which wounds me in many ways, inasmuch as it brings to confusion my life-view, as well in the direction of sympathy as in the direction of deceit. There is something alarming in the thought that a deceit, be it ever so pious and well meant, should have the ascendancy, and there always remains open the possibility that the deceit may acquire an epigrammatic power to satirize. The most poetical act is also the most ethical. On her part it would be the most poetical thing to remain devoted to me or to remain true to herself in her love, and this would also be the most terrible revenge upon me. Every prosaic revenge makes *eo ipso* my responsibility lighter, because it is less ethical.

How consistent existence is! There is nothing true in one sphere which is not true in the other. What a deep responsibility, that the laws of existence are such that everyone must serve them whether he will or no. The Governance which requires placability of every man knows also how to revenge itself, for precisely when the individual would revenge himself the case becomes easiest for the guilty one; and on the other hand, when the offended man chooses to be placable, Governance lays the emphasis of revenge upon this gentleness. Caesar performed many glorious deeds, but if there were recounted only one single word he is reputed to have said, I should admire him: “Cato deprived me of my most beautiful victory, for I should have forgiven him.”

What I demand of existence is that it would let it become clear to me whether I was ensnared in an illusion or loved faithfully, more faithfully perhaps than she. How long I am to hold out is not known. If the age of

oracles has long ago vanished, there is yet one thing about which the simplest and the profoundest man when talking of it must talk enigmatically, and that is time. It undoubtedly is the most difficult enigma, and is also to be accounted the profoundest wisdom, to arrange one's life as if today were to be the last one has to live, and at the same time the first in a series of years.

June 19. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Yet these tears which torture themselves out of her eyes, torture out the possibility of impossibilities from my brain. Even though it be a superfluous ceremony, I cannot help it. So I shout out into the world if anyone were to hear me: "I make my bid, I bid half my life for half a year of happiness with her, I bid it for a fortnight, I bid it for the marriage day — does not the hammer fall?"

No! — But I must to work. He who has a life sentence is employed in labors dangerous to life. So it is also with me and with my labor.

* * *

Today there fell from her lips the most remarkable line I have ever heard from any actress. In a sense it was a shot straight at the heart. In target shooting, when a shot falls in the center, the umpire first takes the precaution to ascertain whether it was not an accidental shot, a shot in the air, a shot without aim, a gun which perhaps went off without anybody firing it. She said to me that she really believed I was mad. But then upon examination it proved to be a wild shot; and there is perhaps no word of hers which more plainly proves to me our diversity. Yes, it is true, a melancholy man is in a certain sense mad, but it requires a great deal of dialectic and a great deal of pathos to comprehend this madness. One who makes this remark pretty much as one might say of a man ridiculously

dressed, “Oh, he’s mad,” proves eo ipso that he has not a trace of a presentiment as to what madness really is. The whole thing was a false alarm. It was a quick-tempered outburst which in its precipitancy didn’t know what else to say. And a little quick-tempered she is now and then. She says that I ant malicious, not kind. That she said again yesterday. Such a thing is desirable as an incitement to my palaver, which at once seized upon it. “Yes, I see that now. We understand one another. The thing is perfectly simple. Thy declaration is pretty much to this effect: ‘So help me God, the undersigned declares, I do indeed feel esteem, do utter and subscribe esteem’... or what was it I wanted to say? It was in fact esteem thou dost not feel, I am getting all muddled, in romances the lovers always have esteem — so then what thou wouldst say is, ‘I feel no esteem, genuine love cannot be conceived without esteem, therefore’ etc. That as thou dost perceive, can be argued in two ways. For when esteem and love combine against a man, then good night, Ole. On the other hand, either by the help of esteem or of love one can get out of the fix quite well. For if one will consider what esteem properly is” — here I was interrupted. She cannot help laughing when I am thoroughly launched upon the sea of galimatias. This comforts me. At bottom she suffers from this less than I who in a desperate way must work her loose.

June *24.* Midnight.

NOT even what I write here is my inmost meaning. I cannot so far trust myself to paper, although in the writing I see my meaning. Think of what might happen! The paper might get out of my hands, a fire might break out where I dwell and I be left in uncertainty whether it was burned or whether it existed, I might die and so leave it behind me, I might become insane and my inmost thoughts fall into the hands of a stranger, I might become blind and not be able to find it, not know whether I was holding it in my hands without asking another, and not know whether he lied, whether he read

what was written there or something else for the sake of inquiring into my affairs.

I can remember it, however, and more swiftly than the briefest fraction of an instant passes. Lessing was wrong after all when he said that the swiftest thing, swifter than sound or light, is the transition from good to bad. For still swifter than that is the *zugleich,* the "at once." Transition itself is a time, but that which is at once is swifter than any transition. After all, transition is a determinant of time, but the haste with which that is present which once was and never is forgotten, this haste, in spite of the fact that the thing is present, is the swiftest of all things, for it is so swift that its being gone was only a delusion.

June 20. Morning.

TODAY a year ago.

I bid my whole life for the wedding day; and indeed we are two who bid. No, that we are not, for she is willing to strive but would also have a future. Naturally she must not leave her honor and pride in the lurch. The hammer does not fall.

* * *

Day before yesterday the small talk kept on indefatigably as usual. We talked about my discharge, "and that would be the wisest thing she could do, if I might advise. The consequence would be that I should come back like a wet dog." This advice she received with a laconic "Indeed!," to which she added, "No, I don't trust thee over the threshold." I can see from this what a poor opinion she has of me after all, and what a mistaken overestimate she has of the importance of her personal presence. That is lucky. But then, just as the small talk was going on at its best, she burst into tears. He who is in desperate danger always possesses supernatural powers,

and therefore my mien remained entirely unchanged. Thereupon she said, "Let me weep, it is a relief." All torture is forbidden by law, but verily this is a dreadful torture. But I must show respect for the argument — only not in such a way that it disturbs me. And there is also a comfort in the fact that I did not shirk the sight of a thing from which ordinarily a man in my position who is about to appear in a despicable rôle would be inclined to excuse himself. Then the small talk got started again, and the whole thing certainly signifies not so much to her as to me.

Not to dare to utter a serious word! — for it would be crazy for me the guilty one to admonish or console. But is it not also crazy for me to sit here and look on? But one good thing about it is that it furnishes her with an incitement, even though it be against her will, to come out with such utterances. When I am away she would hardly do it, and perhaps would feel no impulsion to do it.

Suppose a third person had been a witness of this situation! Suppose that one who never did anything else but write riddles and one who had grown old in guessing riddles were to combine and make a guess which of the two suffers most, upon whom it makes the deepest impression! Tell me then, thou man of wide experience, about a whirlwind which brought existence to confusion — yet I have seen a confusion where it was as if the tumult would not harken to a rower of honest will. Talk about a dead calm which reduced all effort to despair — yet I saw a dead calm where a lover labored and labored and almost became the murderer of his beloved, not for maliciousness, not by accident, but in conformity with his most honest conviction.

June 30. Midnight.

WHAT is my life but a striving after wind? My existence is nothing but *molimina,* useless effort; I cannot return to myself. Whether in time that ever shall come about, I do not know. And if I become free, so that again I

can collect myself, I shall have trouble enough in separating from me the heterogeneous, which after all I do not wish to separate. If I become free, then in my close reserve there will still remain the distress that she has become changed.

So it is a mussel lies on the seashore; it opens its shell in search of nutriment, a child sticks a twig into it, so that it cannot shut. Finally the child grows tired of the play and would pull the twig out, but there remains a splinter. And the mussel shuts its shell; but deeply within its shell it suffers and cannot get the splinter out. That there is a splinter, no one can see, for the mussel has shut itself, but that it is there, the mussel knows.

But away with despondency. It is a fraud against her and is essentially foreign to my soul. If the Jewish high priest was forbidden to rend his garments as a sign of mourning, because this was too passionate and strong an expression, so also am I forbidden to be despondent, because it is too apathetic and too weak. But the fact that for an instant I have become despondent shows me that for the first time in my life I have trusted my common sense against her. What it might say to me I have always known, but I have not been willing to hear it. The impression of that meeting has given my common sense the predominance.

Yet sympathy reduces me at last to beggary. I am like that Englishman who got into pecuniary embarrassment although he had a five-hundred-pound note in his hand — but nobody could change it in the village where he was. But should the expression of sympathy be comparable to exchanging a coin of great value and paying it out in small bits? I supposed that sympathy was like that shilling in Fortunatus's purse, one constantly gives it out whole, and one constantly has the whole left, and if one would convert it into change, the magic vanishes. Behold, this consoles me.

July 2. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. An eyewitness of my situation would say to me, “Thou dost not know what love is, seeing thou dost behave thus.” Maybe, but this much I know, that I am acquainted with its pain. Its pleasures I am acquainted with also, but at a distance, at a very great distance. If it were possible, if only it were possible — I should wipe away every tear from her eyes, ah, as schoolchildren do, so that no one shall see that they have wept. Then the pain is forgotten, more than forgotten. Swiftly, by the omnipotence of love, as swift as the growth of the plant which is tended by fairies, she develops, more charming than ever, by her own force, by the burgeoning power of love, and by my breath upon her, and by the word which is whispered in her ear; then I take her upon my arm and rush out with her through the world — so far at least I understand love. But precisely this understanding I have of love might easily make me lose my understanding and go mad. Never in all my life until now have I felt the temptation of suicide. But the anguish of sympathy! — and with that to be the guilty one! This contradiction has just such an effect upon my soul as when in a physical sense a man’s joint is twisted out of its natural position. But what would be the use of suicide? Yes, it would prevent her from being mortified, for then she could live on as mine, if she would. But suppose one day she were to get to know it — that would be still more terrible. If she had understanding, she surely would perceive that she never ought to have brought me to this extremity. And so I would have made her guilty. And by such a step I perhaps would have determined her whole life, so that in finite existence she would not seek healing where properly she must seek it.

Spiritually speaking, she does not suffer so much. She is not so much exhausted as she is tired, with a little touch of feeling bored. Humanly speaking, this does not surprise me, for she has no confidant, and I am untiring in nonsense.

The days are numbered. Suppose she were now to fall ill before the last day had come. Suppose that in the delirium of fever she were to betray what was passing between us. Her closest kindred would believe that this was imagination — and I who knew that it was reality! And then when she recovered and we had to begin all over again.

July 3. Midnight.

WHEN shall we see one another again? In eternity. So there is time enough for reaching an understanding. When does eternity begin? What language is spoken there? Or is perhaps none spoken? Might there not be a little interim? It is continually bright daylight in eternity? Might there not be a morning twilight when one would find understanding in intimacy? What is the judgment of eternity? Is the judgment complete before eternity begins? How is eternity represented? Like the wide horizon where one sees nothing. So it is represented in the picture of the grave: the mourner sits in the foreground and says, “He went hence into the beyond.” But in the wide horizon I see nothing at all. So neither do I see her. This is impossible! I must see her. Is this no argument? Or is it a better argument, that whether I will or no, I must see her? Suppose she had forgotten me. Can we then see one another? Suppose she had not forgiven me. Then indeed she had not forgotten me. But can we then see each other? Suppose she were standing beside another. When she stands thus in time, I am in the way, and therefore I will withdraw. But if I stood in her way in eternity, whither shall I go away? Is time then stronger than eternity? Has time power to separate us eternally? I supposed that it only had power to make me unhappy in time, but must let me go as soon as I exchange time for eternity and am where she is, for eternally she is with me. If so, what then would time mean? It would mean that we two did not get a chance to see one another yesterday evening; and if she were to get another man, it means that we did not get a chance to see another yesterday evening because she was out somewhere

else. And who was at fault? Yes, the fault was mine. But would I or could I now act otherwise than as I did, if it is assumed that the first thing had come about? No! I regret the first. From that moment I acted in accordance with the most honest premeditation and with all my might, as I also did in the first act, until I perceived my error.

But does eternity talk so lightly about guilt? Time at all events does not; it still will go on teaching me what it has taught me, that a life is something more than a yesterday evening. But eternity will also heal all sickness, give the deaf hearing, the blind sight, and the deformed man bodily beauty, and so it will also heal me. What is my sickness? Melancholy. Where is the seat of this sickness? In the power of imagination, and possibility is its nutriment. But eternity takes away the possibility. And was not this sickness hard enough for me to bear in time, that I not only should suffer but become guilty through it? The deformed man has after all only to bear the,,pain of being deformed, but how dreadful if being deformed made him guilty!

So then, when for me time has come to an end, let my last sigh be to Thee, O God, for my soul's blessedness, the next to the last for her, or let me for the first time be again united with her in the last sigh.

July 6. Midnight.

TODAY I saw her. How strange a chance! A thunder shower obliged me to take refuge in the shop of my old pastry cook, where I had not been since those days of waiting: *erat in eo loco vicinio tonstrina quaedam*. Such a barber shop is the nearest equivalent, said the teacher, to what we know as a coffeehouse. *Eo sedebamus plerumque dum illa rediret.* The shower was soon over, the air mild and inviting, everything refreshed and rejuvenated. If I had not been absorbed in recollections, I scarcely would have stayed so long. The old pastry cook came out to greet me and entered into conversation. Everything combined to benumb my senses. I sat in my old seat and sometimes cast my eye out of the window — then she came

walking by. She was walking with another young girl, both engaged in lively conversation, she merry and hale and happy. Was she coming perhaps from her singing, my beloved songstress? Is she taking up her singing again? Is the song merely a different one?

Would that for half a year I might be transformed into a woman in order to understand her nature! The scale I apply is perhaps too great.

It seems like old times, she goes to her singing, she comes away from it, joyful as she used to be. But there is no one waiting for her. Here in the coffeehouse there is in a sense no one, but perhaps elsewhere. After all, one often hears of a girl overcoming pain and falling in love again. And in this case indeed the situation precisely prompts some such course, for in fact I was not her lover but a deceiver. One often hears also that a girl could not live without a man, and it was true, only it turned out to be not that man but another.

Thus we are back in the old situation, with an alteration, and I remain unaltered in it. I can truly say, “I remain,” etc., but it is not easy to say what I remain. I assume that she has become another’s, but what then do I remain? And yet not thus! I cannot thus let her go! That almost crazy wish to see the relationship reestablished is now resolved into another like it, that if she is to become another’s, this other might be her first love. Thus she has not broken with the idea and not lost my esteem. True enough, what does she care about losing my esteem? But she should not think thus, for my view is more considerate of her than is that of any other. Though all the rest of the world has another view, that is merely a signal for battle. But the misfortune is that I know nothing at all about such an earlier love. However, it must be remembered that I was too much absorbed in myself and too much occupied ethically to learn to know about such a thing. So it might be possible. It is a bit of a satire upon me if something of the sort was the case and I remained unaware of it. She did not feel called upon to say anything,

and perhaps my reserve influenced her in this way. So it might be possible. Would it were also actual! And if it were actually so, how lucky I did not know it. Perhaps I might have taken the affair too lightly, and the event would not have assumed for me the importance it has assumed.

What do I remain? Yes, that is not easy to say. But in case it were not I myself that had experienced this history, and another were to relate it, I should believe that he was talking about me, so perfectly does it fit my case.

With her I should less than ever be able to talk if she were to become the wife of another. Am I to modify the deceit a little and seek a mutual understanding based on the fact that so does Jack and so does Gill and so do they all? That indeed would be a new untruth, for I am entirely unchanged and it has never occurred to me to think of any other girl. Might I speak with the passion of truth and be satirical against my will? She herself is at fault for a part of the confusion, for she disturbed the erotic by playing false in the religious sphere. She would not rest satisfied with the erotic, with being loved or not loved, and what for her was the logical consequence of this, but she grasped at the religious sanction and became for me in responsibility a gigantic figure. Notoriously it has brought about a war between great powers that a prince sent back a king's daughter; for me my strife was still more terrible when I rejected her, for it was God who had betrothed her to me. So I have regarded the case. But the dreadful seriousness transforms the erotic into something almost comic; for, thinking pathetically, I might say that though she had been as ugly as original sin, as ill tempered as the day is long, yet for me she would have had the same significance — but this is speaking entirely unerotically. And whose fault is it that I must speak thus? It is hers who transformed an erotic relationship into a religious.

Only when I am silent can I keep my soul pathetically behind the deceit of the comic, or behind the cover of the pretense that I have long forgotten

the whole thing.

July 7. Morning.

TODAY a year ago. Let us see. My philosophy of life was that under my reserve I concealed my melancholy. It was my pride that I was able to do that, it was my determination to keep that up with all my might. I have come to wreck. Upon what? Upon the incompatibility of individual disposition and upon the wedding as a protest in virtue of that. What is it that confounds my life? That to me the maxim becomes meaningless: *ultra posse nemo obligatur.* What is my guilt? That I have ventured upon an undertaking I could not achieve. What is my fault? That I have made a person unhappy. In what way unhappy? In possibility — in such a way that I have a murder upon my conscience in consequence of her utterance and by virtue of possibility. What is my punishment? To endure this consciousness. What is my hope? That a merciful Governance will in actuality make this punishment less by helping her. What does my understanding say about her? That there is not exactly any probability of the worst. What consequence has this for me? None at all. An ethical obligation cannot be discharged by any calculation of probability, but only by assuming the utmost possible limit of responsibility.

* * *

I went to her. I approached her with an unusual appearance of gladness and declared that it was possible to do as she wished. It is easy to explain that so long as one is fighting, even if one is capable of understanding what sympathy enjoins, one can forget this consideration precisely because one is fighting. When one has conquered, sympathy commonly awakens most powerfully. I thought I ought to make trial of this extremest possibility, that maybe she, being moved to sympathy at having conquered, might resolve to

give me my freedom. No! she accepted this declaration, but without a word in the direction of sympathy. She even accepted it rather coldly. I am glad of that, for it proves that she is tired of the thing.

I went away. At noon I returned. An absolute resolution bestows calmness, the resolution which has gone through the dialectic of fear makes one unafraid. Coldly and decisively I announced to her that it was over. She wanted to abandon herself to the most vehement expression of passion, but for the first time in my life I spoke in a tone of command. It is dreadful to take that bold step, but it was the only thing. Though she had come near dying before my eyes I should not have been able to alter my resolution. My inflexibility helped her, and what was the rashest undertaking went off in due order. One more effort still she made to move me sympathetically. It was without effect. Finally she begged me to think of her sometimes. Perhaps she meant nothing much by it, but I in my turn meant it seriously.

So it is over. If she chooses to cry, I choose the pain; and one grows tired of crying aloud, perhaps she already is; for me the turn of pain will come and come again.

What does my understanding teach me with respect to her about the use I made of the two months? She will not sorrow dangerously. In part, her passion is not very dialectic in inwardness; in part, no one will be able to provide her with so favorable a situation as she has had — for affrighting me the guilty one, for moving me by her suffering. The concern of a sympathizer cannot give such emphasis to the pain as my presence did. Reflection will not easily get a hold on her, for she has now gone through a considerable course of it. What she herself may hit upon will not be much in comparison with what I already (to the point of disgust) have perfected her in. She will not be able to arouse in herself any sympathy for me, and if there is a little left, it will soon be quenched. It will never occur to her to ask whether she might have something to reproach herself with. Perhaps she

will fall ill, as one who has read too strenuously for examination falls ill after the examination is over. Of such a sickness one might die, but from this there follows no certain inference as to the *propter hoc.* — So far as I am concerned, she, by driving me to extremes, has helped me to withdraw my personality as far as possible out of her. If she, tired of the whole affair, were to find herself a new love, not only will I be extraneous to it, but so will be every picture of me, for she has none, at least none which has a trace of truth.

July 7. Midnight.

Lo, now I leave off for this time. My dormant period of repose with reference to her now begins. I have my discharge. The third of January the disquietude begins again. When one is discharged the command is: right face — left about — march! That is a bit satirical, for my misfortune is that I cannot do either right face, left about, or march.

The period of disquietude is the half year, which returns again and again until I become free. It is well that it was not a whole year, for then I should have had a sorrow-year in the sense that one has a church-year — the instant I was through with the old I should have to begin with the new.

An old woman used to say of the watchman when he shouted, “There is a man who is lost.” And indeed the man who is lost also shouts. So I in the period of disquietude am a shouter, a man who has lost his way.

My resolution, in faithfulness to her, is to remain faithful to the ideas and to my spiritual existence with all my might, that by experience I might be convinced that it is the spirit which giveth life, that the outward man may perish and the spirit triumph, the creature groan and the spirit exult, that I might become comforted and become joyful in spirit, renouncing all the consolations of finiteness, that I might hold out and not let the magniloquence of words end in the pettiness of deeds, and not make a deposition in high phrases and contradict myself in the deeds of finiteness. I

should have been more complete if I could have remained faithful to her, it would have been something greater if my spiritual existence had had the accompaniment in daily life of marriage, and I should have understood life more surely and more easily. This is first in the order of precedence. Next comes what I do. If she were to bleed to death in useless passion, if she were not to be saved by a help which is nearer than I know of, or at least comes near enough when it is needed, then I must so labor that my existence may count for two. If she helps herself in another way, my labor is superfluous.

Suppose there was a book which was already printed and could not be reprinted, and there was no opportunity to make corrections in it, but in the list of *errata* there stood a phrase which surpassed in significance what stood instead of it in the text — it might be satisfied to stand among the *errata,* but to stand there with its great significance. Suppose there was a weed which was separated from the useful plants, so it stood in fact apart, was in fact a weed, was in fact ashamed — but suppose its name was *Der stolze Heinerich.*

Here ends the diary for this time. It deals with nothing. But not in the same sense as the diary of Louis XVI, the alternating contents of which are said to have been: one day, "At the chase"; the second day, "*Rien*"; the third day, "At the chase." It contains nothing; but if, as Cicero says, the easiest letter is the one which deals with nothing, it is sometimes the hardest life which deals with nothing.

EPISTLE TO THE READER from Frater Taciturnus

MY DEAR READER,

In case thou hast any technical competence, thou wilt instantly perceive that the figure which here is conjured up is demoniac in a religious direction, i.e. with an approach to it. How honestly, how copiously indeed, he does his part by talking to enable thee to see him *(loquere ut videam),* no one knows better than I, who often exhausted, often bored, have been tempted to let him alone and lose patience, which means the same thing — whence also, by observing the stars and reading the future in coffee grounds, by virtue of my inspiration as a scald and my falcon eye, I make public the peerless prediction that of the few readers of the book two-thirds will fall away before they are half way through, which may also be expressed in this wise, that they will stop there and throw away the book for boredom.

Inasmuch as he stands upon the extremest dialectic pinnacle, one must be capable of reckoning with infinitesimal quantities if one would make observations upon him. No one for a round sum (be it never so great, if only it is round) can purchase entrée to his dialectic performances, and hence in such case one would do well not to consider it worth the trouble to make observations upon a manikin like this. And yet for all that there may be some significance in observing him, because in aberrations one can make a study of the normal, and always can learn this much, if nothing else, that religion is not a thing to be poohpoohed, or something for stupid people and unshaven striplings, seeing that it is the most difficult of all things, although absolutely accessible to all — which in itself is a difficulty for the understanding, like the contradiction that the same water at the same place

is so shallow that a sheep can wade it, and so deep that an elephant can swim.

The girl I have represented quite generically (as a special characteristic I have only let her lack religious presuppositions), and this I have done intentionally, in order that she might the better illuminate him and teach him to exert himself. It would require frightful exertions, it might perhaps even be impossible, to lift a small object with a jackscrew, or with a ship's derrick to hoist half a pound — and so I have reflected that if it were to come to a misunderstanding, it should be a thorough one.

However, the erotic and the erotic relationship is of minor concern to me. Essentially I employ it for orientation in the religious sphere, in order that one may not get all mixed up and suppose that religion is the first immediacy, a bit of one thing and another: instinct and natural impulse and youthfulness in which, by the addition of a little dose of spirit, fermentation has begun. — The girl is what one rightly calls a nice girl. In novels and in the drama, and that properly only in the fifth act, "such a girl" makes a man happy; in the fifth act of reality she does the best she can for him; in the psychological experiment she is unable to make him happy, not because she cannot do it (for she can), but because she cannot get to that point — hence they make one another unhappy. By equipping her differently I should merely have prevented my chief character from being adequately illuminated. By her lovableness she did him considerable service, more than any maid-of-all-work could, and that in itself is saying a good deal for a generic girl in a psychological experiment, for there she is out of place.

As a lover, the male figure would hardly get on in the world. His attitudes and his fidelity are so grandiose, so unpractical, and so awkward, that one might be tempted to ask in the words of a French writer, I think it is, whether he became mad because he was faithful to the girl, or whether he was faithful to the girl because he was mad; for as a lover he is mad. If

he really existed, and if I were capable of bestowing flesh and blood upon the figure in the experiment, if he lived in our time and with his introversion manifested in his external appearance and not disguised by deceit, it would be a comedy complete. How droll it would be to see such an owl, troglodyte, cave-dweller, come sneaking out, after listening to men's romantic talk, and lay claim to be an unhappy lover of the first rank! He would have the street urchins following him, that is perfectly certain. Such an anachronism in the nineteenth century! — when everybody knows that the unhappy lovers are like those serpents with seven heads which Lineus proved to be nonexistent, a mere cobweb of the brain. To take seriously all that which everybody knows about loving only once, making one another happy; and to act in virtue of it with the utmost expenditure of exertion, in such a way as only in a very young man might be pardonable, and that only for half a day; to work oneself to death in such an empty ceremonious service which aims at introducing ways and customs which are entirely antiquated — that indeed would be rich material for laughter. It is a matter of course that just as one learns languages in one's childhood, so also in one's youth one lays up provision for a whole lifetime, including a little store of pretty phrases and exalted turns of expression wherewith one serves oneself and others throughout life and is sociable in friendship and friendly in society and constantly friendly. That the phrase lasts through a whole life is quite natural, all the more because it performs a rather various service, is rather fantastically dressed up for youth in its happiest day, is a pleasantry when mamma says it, a witticism in the mouth of the old man; but that love has the same imperishable quality (not to speak of an unhappy love) betrays a negligent upbringing; I at least would say with Pernille, "I give thanks in my grave to my parents that I was differently brought up." Who indeed in these days would buy, as they did in the old days, one umbrella for a lifetime, or a silk dress, a thoroughly good piece one can wear as long as

one lives, or a serviceable cloak for eternity? One may willingly admit that the quality perhaps is not what it was in the case of that Chinese satin, one may willingly admit that the owner does not treat her clothes with the care which was shown for that Chinese satin, but the advantage of being able to procure the dress three or four times over, and the advantage of being able to treat one's clothes negligently, is after all very obvious. This wisdom must not be regarded as peculiar to elect individuals, fortunately (to the glory of our century) it is common among men. Hence, as rarely as one sees a cloak of Chinese satin, just so rarely does one see an unhappy lover. And then for this man to want to be an unhappy lover (although perhaps he isn't), to stake his honor upon it in fact, that is simply in sheer madness to want to take the world by the nose; the only insanity higher than this would then be that he supposed he was not the only one, but that there was a whole tribe of such people. Don Quixote believed, as is well known, that he was a knight errant. But this was not by any means the culmination of his madness. Cervantes is more profound. When Don Quixote was cured of his illness, and the Licentiate already began to hope for the recovery of his reason, he wanted to test him a bit. He talks to him about various things and suddenly intermingles with them the news that the Moors have invaded Spain. "Then," said Don Quixote, "there is only one way of saving Spain."

"What is that?" asked the Licentiate. Don Quixote will not tell him, only to His Catholic Majesty the King of Spain will he reveal his secret. Finally Don Quixote yields to the Licentiate's prayer, and he under oath of silence and with the gravity of a father-confessor receives the confession of the renowned knight: "The only way is for His Catholic Majesty to issue a summons to all knights errant." To be oneself a knight errant is, if one will, the act of a semi-lunatic, but to populate the whole of Spain with knights errant is verily *delirium furibundum.* In this respect my hero is more

reasonable, for he has so understood the age that he remains the only knight of unhappy love.

The erotic, as was said, is of minor concern to me. I have used it as Constantine Constantius attempted to do in a work entitled “Repetition.”

(Copenhagen, 1844), but he without success because he remained within the aesthetic. The collision that through a girl a man becomes a poet and therefore cannot become her husband lies within the aesthetic. The collision is one which can arouse concern only in a young man, and I do not understand why Constantine concealed from the young man what every practitioner knows, that the collision can be resolved without the least difficulty: he marries her, and so does not become a poet. That in fact is what he fears, he does exactly the opposite, and thereby perhaps become a poet. If not every girl can make a man a poet, it is certain that every female can prevent a man from becoming such if he marries her. That I vouch for — and especially and best of all the girl who was by way of making him a poet. For the poet’s intercourse with the muse is exceedingly different from the marriage relationship, and muses, as well as whatever other fanciful beings are associated with them, do well to keep themselves at a distance; and as there is nothing so embarrassing for a being having flesh and blood as to be a muse, the object of adoration will do everything to prevent him from becoming a poet, and second every attempt on his part to become a real husband. This whole collision is the sort of thing that might have been invented by my hero, something he had happened to think of to show civility to the girl. With this it is not my intention to disparage the young man, for in his youthfulness he might have had the best of intentions. My hero on the other hand could not entertain such a fancy, he was far too much developed for that. All the better, i.e. all the more strongly, does the misunderstanding reveal itself.

Fortunately my hero does not exist outside of my thought-experiment. He cannot be exposed to ridicule in real life. This in itself is fortunate enough, but still more fortunate it is for me that it cannot be my task to dispute with him or to dialecticize him out of his dialectic difficulty. Such a person as he in actual existence would be a handful for a *doctor seraphicus* and a *doctor contradictionum* combined into one, and in the end they would perhaps be unable to accomplish anything. Whatever they might hit upon, he would answer, "I have thought of that myself; now you have only to listen" — and with that he would develop the dialectic objection until little by little he had brought out of it a variation in his favor. Neither would it be of any use to affright him with pathos, for he is also man enough to give expression to the most opposite pathetic point of view.

It is therefore by no means my purpose in what I have written to convince him, but to remark upon something true in him and in much that he says. I let him pass for what he is, an enthusiast, and an enthusiast of a peculiar sort — not only for the reason that he arrives a few centuries too late. It has been well said by Borne that "the individual enthusiasts are related to one another like the sharers in a tontine insurance policy — in proportion as they die off, the share of the survivors is greater." What wonder then that as an enthusiast he is uncommonly enthusiastic, since the whole capital with accrued and compound interest fall to him. Yet it is not only in this degree he is an enthusiast of a peculiar sort, but also for the fact that he is not an enthusiast in the form of immediacy but in the form of deceit, under which he lives freely in his enthusiasm. This is a new expression for the degree of his enthusiasm, and it proves that his is the highest sort. An immediate enthusiast (and to this class belong substantially all known examples) will either press on jubilantly through all human opposition and plant the banner of victory, or he will weigh upon existence by his suffering, i.e. in spite of all his enthusiasm the enthusiast cannot get

along without the world. My hero has no desire for this. On the contrary, he would conceal his enthusiasm by an exterior the very opposite to it, and is so sure of his cause that he does not even have a mind to utter it, or, as he thinks, does not dare to.

I let him pass for what he is, and I go on to the matter I am concerned with. I will discuss it by directing attention to definite points, and in this I always have him *in mente.*

§ 1. WHAT IS UNHAPPY LOVE, AND WHAT IS THE VARIANT FORM OF IT IN THIS EXPERIMENT?

In unhappy love poetry has from immemorial times possessed a foil for its happy love. If, as someone has said, it was a mother at the sickbed of her child who invented prayer, which indeed is precisely apt for such a sufferer, so one might almost suppose that unhappy love was the invention of poetry. But then it is only fair that poetry should come to the aid of unhappy love, and it is not asking too much to expect that it would do so willingly.

Now it is characteristic of unhappy love that, love being assumed, there is a power which prevents it from expressing itself happily by the union of the lovers. Nothing is easier said than this, but from this trivial statement the distance is as long as the diameter of the earth's orbit to being a poet who fills this nothing by his divine pathos and his creative breath. Without pathos no poet. Pathos is primary, but the next thing, Standing in an essential and absolute relation to that, is to excogitate a profound opposition. If one were to enumerate all the obstacles to love's happiness, there would be, as on the scale of a thermometer, a plus and minus series. Beginning with the insignificant obstacles, one would reach a point where the change occurred and everything became different. For one can think of obstacles of such a sort that one might say "The task of love is to overcome them." If a poet makes choice of such obstacles as constituting unhappy

love, he is no poet, but is a satirist against his will. So then it must not be in the lover's power to remove the obstacle.

So the case stands, or rather, so it remained standing many years ago. Our later age has the general fault of limping on both sides: neither believing in love as an absolute passion, nor choosing obstacles of prime quality. People offer to compound with the creditors, and they agree to it — and the article "unhappy love" drops out of circulation, and instead of it there remains "tolerably happy love," there remains equality and *eins Bier* for everybody.

Poetry deals with immediacy and cannot therefore think an ambiguous situation. If for a single instant it is put in doubt whether the lovers are solvent *qua* lovers, are absolutely ready within themselves for the union of love — a single doubt of this sort, and with that poetry turns away from the guilty one and says, "To me this is an indication that thou dost not love, hence I cannot have anything to do with thee." And in this poetry does well, if it would not become a ludicrous power, as in these latter times it often enough has been through a mistaken choice of its task.

Without passion no poet, and without passion no poetry. If then one is to press out beyond the limitations of poetry, and if this exodus is not to mean that one is lost in common sense and pitiableness, it must come about by virtue of a higher passion. To take passion away from poetry and make up for this loss by decoration, charming rural scenery, much acclaimed sylvan picnics, enchanting theatrical moonlight, is perdition, just as it is to make up for the worthlessness of a book by the elegance of the binding, which properly is of no interest to readers, but at the most to bookbinders. To take away passion from the lines of a play, and to make up for that by letting the orchestra scrape a little, is a prostitution of poetry and is comic, just as though in real life a lover, instead of having pathos in his breast, were at the decisive moment to have a music box in his pocket.

Only when to the passion of poetry there is added a higher passion have we the ambiguous situation of which we are speaking here. The task then becomes dialectic in itself, and this never can or should be the task of poetry. It is true that unhappy love, for example, has its dialectic, but it does not have it in itself but outside itself. That which in itself is dialectic contains the contradiction within itself. On the other hand, the task of the poet is simple, because the contradiction comes from without. Left to himself, the unhappy lover must be happy. To the poet this is a certainty, but the misfortune is that outside there is a power which would hinder it. In poetry therefore love does not relate itself to itself but to the world, and this relationship determines whether it is to become unhappy. As soon therefore as the sonorous note of passion ceases to sound from a single source, as soon as there is conflict in passion itself, yea, even if a higher passion announces its presence by a new sonorous note, as soon as one senses in it the concurrent sound of ambiguity, the poet can no longer deal with it. If the passion is love, this must be undialectic in itself if poetry is to see in the man an unhappy lover. If the passion is patriotism, this must be undialectic in itself, and if the hero sacrifices an erotic relationship by virtue of his patriotic passion, he is not called an unhappy lover, but is named after the passion which is undialectic in him. Thus the patriotic hero in his enthusiasm for his fatherland does not relate himself to himself but to the world about him, including a relationship of love and a relationship of patriotic piety. Thus it is that poetry must understand it. The aesthetic hero must have his opposition outside himself, not within himself. The fact that this is not the case with Hamlet is perhaps precisely the trouble with him. But of this more hereafter.

To return to unhappy love. If one will observe the outstanding figures among those unhappy ones, the men and women whom song and legend have rewarded with renown, one will at once perceive that the passion is

immediate and the opposition is from without — pretty much as the priest in pronouncing the banns of betrothal thinks only of external impediments why they may not lawfully be joined together, for he too does not reflect that in the lover's own passion there might be a contradiction, for in that case he might like the poet feel prompted by a poetic vocation to say of the guilty one that he does not love. Petrarch sees Laura united to another; Abelard does not feel separated from Heloise by his clerical order (for love is the absolute passion), he is separated by Fulbert's wrath, and, alas, by his cruelty; Romeo does not feel the family hatred as the separating factor, as if through filial piety towards his father it became active in him, it is the family feud which objectively separates him from Juliet; Axel feels no scruple of conscience on account of the close kinship, and Valborg understands only that they love one another, it is the Church which separates them by its external power. Take away the impediments, and those lovers would have been the happiest of all lovers.

In our time unhappy love makes a sorry figure. One sees Romeo and Juliet but does not know quite what to make of it, at the most it is the gallery that really weeps, and moreover it is to Shakespeare rather than to Romeo and Juliet one sacrifices a tear, and at the theater one feels oneself in an almost painful situation. This is due quite simply to the fact that love, like all passion, has for the existing generation become dialectic. One cannot comprehend such an immediate passion, and even the grocer's apprentice could tell Romeo and Juliet astounding truths. It might seem then as if this inconvenience could be obviated by introducing the modern apprehension into the play and bringing it to consciousness, so that the public would not feel entirely foreign in the theater but would recognize itself at least in the grocer's apprentice. The misfortune is that this would be of no avail, for in that case the apprentice, a jejune philosopher, a director of sanitation, or whatever other representative of common sense one would

cite, must come off victorious. For the seamy side of the matter is that this is precisely the truth. If this were to occur, Romeo and Juliet would not only seem foreign to the spectators, but they would lose all esteem in their eyes as stiff-necked persons whose death was not tragic but well merited for contumacy against reason. Shakespeare, it is true, has opposite points of view represented in his drama, but his definite pathos makes him just as secure in dealing with them as Romeo and Juliet were undialectic in their passion.

So when men disdain poetry and yet have no higher passion, what consequence may follow from that? Naturally, that one runs wild in half-thoughts and is beatified by conceit and self-delusion, and becomes the most boastful but not the most judicious, the generation which above every other is full of promises and lies — a thing which could easily be proved a priori. Whereas now one almost never hears tell of an unhappy lover, there is all the more competition in the claim to have been such a thing, to have suffered — even more than once — what those unhappy ones suffered, but also to have overcome these sufferings, etc., etc., etc. Poetry can make no use of such people; it demands an essential expression for what one essentially has suffered, and is not satisfied with the asseverations of a few female friends that they had witnessed her sufferings, nor with the testimony of a clergyman, even if he had a speculative eye and had gone through the requisite development. Oh, tempting fruits for a comic poet! And if some day he comes, my only concern is lest he himself, enchanted by the sight of the inexhaustible theme, might die of laughing, and so be prevented from accomplishing anything. Precisely a poet would be an apt figure for the leading rôle in such a comedy, precisely Scribe, e g., is comic in spite of his perhaps peerless talent, and comic for the fact that he has not understood himself, that he would be a *poet,* and yet has forgotten that poetry and passion are inseparable, and comic for having satisfied the age

as a *poet* — the whole thing is comic in the sense of Aristophanes. Scribe's entire existence is a contradiction like that which is so often found in his plays. I will take for example *La Cameraderie,* his drawing-room piece, the masterly effect of which one cannot sufficiently admire. Here is described the base accord among a lot of ugly customers who in all sorts of despicable ways know how to push themselves forward by their effrontery; but a young advocate despises these ways, he therefore becomes the object of ill-natured and lying persecution — what comes of it? A young lady is so good as to take an interest in him, she is not unpracticed in intrigue, she succeeds completely, and the advocate comes to honor and high estate. So the result is that one coterie triumphs over the other, one intrigue gets the better of the other. Just as the rubric "unhappy love" went out of use, and instead of two opposites we got one single sort, "the tolerably happy love," so too has the opposition, honesty/dishonesty, virtue/baseness, gone out of use, and we get one sort, the tolerably honest, or the pretty nearly honest.

Now that love itself has become dialectic, poetry must give it up; for the fact that it has become dialectic signifies: first, that the poet cannot get at his task, cannot get to the point of beginning, because the introduction is such that the issue is critical; second, because there is no assurance whatever that the issue will be happy if only all outward obstacles are cleared away; and finally, because in case of death there is no assurance whatever that it is a heroic death for love's sake and for passion, since he dies perhaps of a fever incurred from catching cold.

If then the fact is brought to consciousness that love has been given up as an absolute passion, poetry must give it up, and where the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together — here in the form of novelists, feuilleton writers, hermaphroditic tragi-comic poets who do not definitely know whether they want to be authors of tragedy or comedy and hence are neither the one nor the other, for without passion no poet, not even a comic

poet. If poetry is to continue to exist, it must discover another passion which is just as legitimate a subject of poetry as love was. It would not be difficult to show that no such substitute exists because of the peculiar synthesis of the erotic. However, I will not develop this theme here, but neither will I require any man to believe that I can do it, seeing that I do not do it. Yet there are also other passions which in the eyes of poetry are legitimate. But the same thing which weakens men's faith in love, namely, a lack of a sense for the infinite, will also weaken faith in the other passions. Forsaken then by poetry men will work their way down in finiteness till they get to politics in the bad sense. If politics is conceived with the passion of infinity, it will of course be able to furnish heroes such as there were in old times when people also believed in love. In the world of infinity it holds good that he who offends in one thing offends in all; for he who has a sense for infinity has a sense for every infinity. The same reflection which has demolished love will also demolish the infinite passion of politics. The heroic man in such an age is the man who wants to labor for a finite aim, is ready, he says, to sacrifice his life for it, perhaps through an inadvertence actually comes to that, and through a new inadvertence is canonized as a hero. Such a figure, however, is quite unserviceable for poetry (unless he were to be used as the sausage maker is used by Aristophanes), he is unpoetic and contradicts himself. It is quite consistent of politics that in our day it does not prompt its votaries to enthusiasm for sacrifice, since it prompts no enthusiasm at all. With enthusiasm the sacrifices would come of themselves. It is a contradiction to sacrifice one's life for a finite aim, and such conduct is in the eyes of poetry pure comedy, just as it is to dance oneself to death, or to want to walk with spurs when one is bow-legged and trip over them and depart this life — rather than give up wearing spurs. Oh, tempting theme for a comic poet! He shall not lack material, for politics does not lack servitors. An apt figure for the principal rôle might be a

politician who in spite of all his shrewdness wants to be enthusiastic, wants to be a sacrifice, but is not willing to sacrifice himself, not willing to fall, but would himself be witness to the applause, and hence cannot get to the point of falling, and perhaps in the last resort is the only man who stands in his way — an enthusiast who has no inkling of what enthusiasm is. His pathos would culminate in this sentence, which inconceivably enough was not long ago posted in a public place: "I would sacrifice my life, no one shall say that I do not possess heroic courage, but this blind courage is not the highest, therefore I restrain myself" — and continue to live; therefore I restrain myself and let another less important person fall in my stead. Plaudite. It is natural that a shrewd politician is shrewd enough to perceive (what is hidden from simpler minds) how important his life is for the state, that if he lives long no one will come to want; but enthusiasm this is not. All enthusiasm is a consequence of the passion of infinity, where this great man and that for all their shrewdness vanish as a thing of naught. God help poetry! By the aid of politics it is put on a diet of bread and water. Already Aristotle has divided men into θεολογοι, φιλόσοφοι, πολίτικοι. Politicians come last — not to speak of the politicians of finiteness, who renounce the passion of infinity, they come last of all, or rather trailing on behind — that always makes pretty thin beer. There is no enthusiasm in believing in oneself, still less in believing in one's bit of shopkeeper-shrewdness; all enthusiasm is a consequence either of faith in one's passion or, more deeply, of faith in a providence which teaches one that even the death of the greatest man is a mere jest for a providence which has legions of angels in reserve, and that therefore he shall walk resolutely to his death, leaving his good cause to providence and his posthumous fame to the poet. As one rarely sees an unhappy lover in our time, so it is just as rare to see a martyr in the world of politics; but on the other hand there is a general competition about, "The devil take me if I'm not willing to be that, yes, to have been

that, if one did not perceive that it is greater," etc.; and politics has innumerable hosts of titular heroes and volunteer martyrs, not under arms but inter pocula. They all have that magnanimous willingness for heroic death, but with an equally heroic wisdom have perceived "that it would be better on the whole, for the community; that one owes it to mankind to live... and carouse." There is still one step left, and that is a veritable ne plus ultra — this is when such a life-assuring generation of parlor-politicians conceives that it is an injustice on the part of poetry not to choose its heroes among the worthy contemporaries. But it does poetry an injustice, or rather, it had better not stir it up too far, lest the thing end with its taking by the collar the first sausage maker that comes to hand and making him a hero à la Aristophanes. In no other way can poetry show its enthusiasm for swearing and bluffing at the card table.

So it seems as though the age of poetry were past, and especially tragedy. A comic poet will lack a public, since not even the public can be in two places at once — on the stage and in the audience. Moreover the comic poet has his stronghold in a pathos which lies outside the play, and he proves by his existence that the age of poetry is past. He who would set his hope upon a speculative drama serves poetry only in so far as he serves comedy. If a wizard or a sorcerer were to bring such a thing to pass, if by the support of a thaumaturge (for a dramaturge would not suffice) it were to satisfy the requirement of the age as a *poetic* work, this event would indeed he a good motif for a comedy, though it would attain the comic effect through the medium of so many presuppositions that it would not become popular.

That the age of poetry is past signifies essentially that immediacy is no more. Immediacy is not entirely devoid of reflection; as poetry conceives it, it has a relative reflection by having its opposition outside itself. But only then is immediacy really at an end when the immediate infinity shall be grasped by an equally infinite reflection. That very instant all tasks are

transformed and made dialectic in themselves; no immediacy is permitted to stand by itself or exposed merely to strife with another power, but must strive with itself.

To return to the subject of love. When love is not secure in itself, this means that it is not simply a given fact, as in poetry, having its obstacles outside itself, but finds its obstacle within itself. There thus presents itself a task which every poet must discard, but which nevertheless is very important. It is a problem which can be conceived in various ways, and one of these I have chosen in my psychological experiment. There love is assumed, no obstacle is to be seen, on the contrary there is peace and security, a dead calm favors it. But in the fact that it has to be introduced into the infinite reflection it stumbles upon difficulties. Thus the difficulties do not arise from collision with the world, but from the fact that love has to reflect itself in the individuality. The problem is so dialectic that the fact of love encountering in itself a stumbling block may tempt one to affirm that it is not love. In fact, if this is not a religious collision, the problem has no existence whatever except as prattle; for poetry is glorious, religion still more glorious, but what lies between them is prattle, no matter what talent is wasted upon it.

Love then encounters a stumbling block, or so it seems to the individual, and he says to himself that his is an unhappy love. I express myself very dubitatively and do not for my part possess the passion of my knight but am trying to understand him. The poet would now ask him, “What is the obstacle, is it cruel parents who must be mollified, is it a family feud which must be conciliated, is it a papal dispensation which must be obtained, another man who must be done away with, or (alas, I have reason to feel sorry for myself and for my poverty) is it a mite I must throw to thee, art thou in need of money in order to be happy? Very well (unless thou dost prefer to be in one of the first four cases), I will make thee unhappy but a

hero. The man in question answers, “No.” Then the poet turns away and says, “Well, my dear friend, then thou art not in love.” Poetry is willing to do everything for love, willing to beautify the happy, willing to chant the praises of the unhappy, but in its amiable naïveté it must know one thing surely, namely, love, lest when it has done everything, it might suddenly discover that was all in vain, because there were other obstacles.

In order to hold the problem fast one must continually perform double-movements. No one who is unable to do that can see the problem at all, and good luck to him if he has not also lost his pleasure in poetry. But if a man can do it, then he knows also that the infinite reflection is not something heterogeneous to him but is the transparency of immediacy to itself.

If it be assumed that love has happily passed through the infinite reflection, then there is something else, there is religion; if it comes to grief by the way, it comes to grief upon the religious. Perhaps this may not be perceived at once, because often enough under the name of infinite reflection one thinks of finite reflection. In comparison with every finite reflection immediacy is essentially the higher, and it feels offended at the assumption that it has to deal with such a thing. The poet understands this very well, and for this reason the obstacles come from without, and tragedy consists precisely in the fact that such obstacles as these have in a sense the power to triumph over the infinity of immediacy; and only Philistines and hermaphrodite poets think otherwise. But an infinite reflection is infinitely higher than immediacy, and in it immediacy relates itself to itself in the idea. But this phrase, “in the idea,” denotes a God-relationship in the widest circumference, and within this circumference there is a multiplicity of more definite determinants.

In immediacy there is the idea, the poet in fact sees it, but it does not exist for his hero, or he in his relation to it is not related to himself. Precisely on this account he is not free in his passion. Freedom indeed does

not mean that he is to give up his passion, but freedom means that he uses the passion of infinity whereby he might give it up in order to hold it fast. Such a thought the poetic hero is quite unable to think, and the poet does not allow him to think it, for that very instant he ceases to be a poetic figure.

So in the infinite reflection freedom is won — a freedom which may be affirmative of love or negative. In my experiment I have chosen protestation against the immediate passion of love, and with this the double-movement is clearly visible. At one and the same time he is holding fast to his love, encounters no opposition from without, where on the contrary everything smiles favorably and threatens to be transformed into horror if he does not follow his wish, threatens him with certain loss of honor, with the death of the loved one — so at one and the same time he is holding fast to his love, and yet in spite of all that he will not, he cannot realize it.

The situation is so dialectic that one must not be in too much of a hurry, for that would only produce confusion. But if it is true that the time of immediacy is past, then the thing is to win the religious, nothing intermediate is of any avail. And for the man of whom it is true that the time of immediacy is past the most difficult dialectic movement will be popular, though I am very willing to concede that in any other case my experiment is far from being of a popular character. People generally believe that what makes a presentation of thought unpopular are the many technical terms of scientific phraseology. That however is an entirely extrinsic sort of unpopularity, which scientific speakers have in common, e.g. with sea-captains, who also are unpopular because they speak a jargon, and by no means because they speak profoundly. Therefore time and again the phraseology of a philosophy may penetrate even to the common man, proving that its unpopularity was only extrinsic. A “systematic” handicraftsman may be unpopular, but he is not intrinsically unpopular, because he does not attach much thought to the exceedingly strange things

he says (and, alas, this is a very popular art); Socrates, on the other hand, was the most unpopular man in Greece, precisely because he said the same thing as the simplest man, but attached infinite thought to it. To hold on persistently to one thought, to hold on to it with ethical passion and intrepidity of spirit, to see the essential duplicity of this one thought without loss of equanimity, and at one and the same time to see in it the deepest seriousness and the highest jest, the deepest tragedy and the highest comedy, that at all times is unpopular for everyone who has not comprehended that the time of immediacy is past. But what is intrinsically unpopular is not a subject to be learned by rote. But of this more hereafter.

So this is the problem I have propounded to myself: a story of unhappy love where love is dialectic in itself and in the crisis of the infinite reflection acquires a religious aspect. One easily sees that this presents a different problem from that of any other type of unhappy love; one sees this easily when one sees both of the contrasted sides, otherwise one sees perhaps neither of them.

§ 2. MISUNDERSTANDING EMPLOYED IN THIS EXPERIMENT AS THE TRAGIC AND COMI-TRAGIC PRINCIPLE.

When Claudius says that misunderstanding is essentially due to the fact people do not understand one another, in this naïve humor which simulates immediacy, there lie hidden the distinctions which on being educed characterize the tragic and the comic; and hence this naïve pronouncement takes on a different significance according as one or the other of these opposite passions gives emphasis to it. The tautology in this saying may be an incitement to the comic as well as to the tragic passion. In itself, however, the saying is simply humorous. So Socrates might well have said ironically in the indeterminate situation of a colloquy, “By the gods, it is very strange, dear Polos, that we do not understand one another; there must

be some misunderstanding." An enthusiast would exclaim tragically, "Oh, misunderstanding! Oh, that we are not able to understand one another!" Viewed from the uniting point of the comic and the tragic the saying would not be humorous but profound. That is to say, a misunderstanding being posited between two people, they will not be able so long as they misunderstand one another to allege any other ground for it but misunderstanding. If the ground of misunderstanding is given, the *discrimen* of the misunderstanding is resolved. Hence the two might well continue to misunderstand one another, but yet understand one another fundamentally.

Now misunderstanding exists wherever the heterogeneous is brought together, but observe that it must be a heterogeneity such as does not exclude a relationship, for otherwise there is no misunderstanding. It can therefore be said that at the bottom of misunderstanding lies an understanding, i.e. a possibility of understanding. If impossibility is present, misunderstanding is not. But along with the possibility there is misunderstanding, and dialectically seen it is both comic and tragic.

Poetry cannot deal with this duality; it must employ misunderstanding either comically or tragically. To this extent it is justified in putting the ground of misunderstanding in an external factor with the removal of which the parties to the misunderstanding understand one another. For if the misunderstanding is implicit in the very relationship of the heterogeneous parties to one another, the relationship is dialectic, and the misunderstanding is just as comic as it is tragic. On the other hand, when it is an external factor which separates the two in misunderstanding, these two, essentially conceived, are not persons who misunderstand but who understand, as one sees when the external factor is removed.

Not to multiply examples and comparisons, I remark merely that when poetry employs misunderstanding in connection with an unhappy love it

places the misunderstanding in a fatal event, a mysterious occurrence, a wicked or foolish individual who by his interference puts misunderstanding between the two. Poetry must know that it is thoroughly assured of the possibility of real understanding, for otherwise it cannot begin at all. Take away therefore that event, that occurrence, that individual, and they understand one another, for the obstacle has merely the effect of keeping them from getting to that point. A misunderstanding such as that is not at the same time comic and tragic. The reference of the misunderstanding is plain, and what makes it tragic in the case of unhappy love is the fact that the content of love is given in the lovers' passion. Take from the two the substantial content, and then the misunderstanding is comic, the parties who misunderstand one another are precisely by the misunderstanding revealed in their emptiness, and the laughter visited upon them is the judgment by which existence is propitiated and appeased.

The fact that these two opposites exist at once is too dialectic for poetry. Even though romantic poetry puts the comic and the tragic together, it does so in the form of contrast, and at the utmost it finds a unity which is not furnished by poetry but is vaguely sensed as the negative unity of a particular philosophy of life. But this is not the same as being at once comic and tragic; on the contrary, the contrast is the separating factor which by the same pressure whereby it thrusts down the burlesque lifts up the lyrical. — In immediacy one of the two is regularly present, and the highest form of cohesion it knows is that when one has been the other follows. In the "Phaedon" this succession is beautifully expounded by Socrates, and that in a situation which made it perspicuous in the instance of a sense impression, the impression of the agreeable and the disagreeable, for one could see him sitting there and rubbing with delight the leg from which the fetter was removed and by its removal gave him delight, whereas it pained him when it was there; and he thought it would have been a task for Aesop to compose

a fable about how the gods, when they were not able to unite those contending powers in any other way, had tied them together at their extremities. It is true that with this Socrates admits that the agreeable and the disagreeable do not exist at one and the same time, but for his ironic consciousness they have a negative unity. The contrasts of poetry likewise merely resolve one another. Socrates' death therefore could never be conceived by poetry. Here everything is complete, and yet poetry would only be able to see the one side, in this case of course the tragic side. At the utmost it would be able to produce a comic contrast, though this perhaps is not easy. One cannot deny that Xanthippe constitutes a comic figure with her screaming and noise-making, and that her behavior recalls many a shrewish widow's contrite advertisement of the deceased, neither can one deny that Socrates very ironically lets a comic light fall upon the scene when one beholds Xanthippe transported out of doors with all her tenderness and the screaming emotion which for many years had been saved up and hidden away for this solemn moment; but this contrast would be rather unjust and inadequate. Perhaps it would be better to form a fantastic chorus of a certain class of philologists whose "tear-compelling" observations about this paragon of virtue and his martyr-death form a good contrast to Socrates' whole view of the case. But with that the historical reality would disappear. Even Socrates' friends are farther along than poetry can go; for Phaedon himself says that as a witness to the event he was in a strange condition, an uncommon blending of joy and sorrow, in fact that those present laughed at one moment and wept at another, especially Apollodorus. And what of Socrates himself? The fact that those present laughed *at one moment* and wept *at another* shows that they had not completely understood him. Socrates in fact exemplifies a duality which poetry cannot express. If poetry would take the pathos of tragedy in order to depict Socrates as suffering like a martyr, it had better beware, for in fact he

does not suffer, he already had conceived the drollery in the fact that such an ‘*άτοπος τις* comes to his end by being executed. Poetry cannot interpret him comically, for the fact that he himself has thought of all the comic in the situation proves precisely that he is not comic, and if ever there was a man who was not comic, it was Socrates. A tragic death as a hero is something simple, and that is what poetry loves; but if it gets an inkling at the same time that the man himself assumes that the case might also be comic, poetry must declare itself insolvent.

Before I bid farewell to poetry I must make still another observation about misunderstanding when it is employed aesthetically. Poetry may also employ misunderstanding in such a way that it applies to a single individual just because he has no point of connection with one person or more who misunderstand him. This may be either comic or tragic, according to the quality of the situation and the character of the passion involved, but it cannot be at once comic and tragic, because there is lacking the point of connection which would combine the parties to the misunderstanding in a unity, or whereby they combine in such a way that they at once hold together and yet fall apart in misunderstanding, yet cannot separate because there is this connection, and the fact that this connection is there makes the relationship at once comic and tragic. — It is tragic when an enthusiast talks to a race of old fogies and is not understood; but it is tragic only because there is no point of unity between them, for the old fogies pay no attention to the enthusiast. *Gulliver's Travels* is comic by reason of an imagination which verges upon madness, but the effect is merely comic, and it is comic because the content of qualitative passion is not present in the misunderstanding, even though in the poet the passion exists, for without passion no poet, not even a comic poet. If the misunderstanding has to do merely with things of no importance, it remains an idle jest. Life is rich in examples. A deaf man enters a hall while the meeting is going on, he does

not want to disturb it and therefore he opens the big folding doors very slowly. Unluckily the door possesses the property of creaking. This he cannot hear, he thinks he is doing so well, and by his slow movement he produces a protracted creak; the people become impatient, one of them turns and cries “Hush.” He thinks that possibly he has moved the door too rapidly, and its creaking continues. This situation is a jest, and hence neither comedy nor tragedy can make anything out of it. Yet there is in this case a point of union remotely suggested: he does not want to make a disturbance, the meeting does not want to be disturbed, and he disturbs it. By the addition of a little more emotion and other such elements we get the many situations in which one knows not whether to laugh or weep. This is the tragi-comic, in which, since no essential passion is involved, neither the comic nor the tragic is essentially present. In the comi-tragic they are both involved, and the spirit dialectically infinitized sees both aspects in the same thing all at once.

Now for my experiment. I have brought together two heterogeneous individualities, a male and a female. Him I have treated as impelled by the intensity of the spirit towards the religious, her I have kept in aesthetical categories. Here there is plenty of room for misunderstanding so soon as I posit a point of unity, that is, that they are united in loving one another. Here the misunderstanding is not referable to any third party, as though they understood one another and were separated by a foreign power. No, ironically everything favors their misunderstanding, there is nothing to hinder them from talking with one another intimately, but precisely with that the misunderstanding begins. If I now remove the passion, it is all an ironical situation with Greek *Heiterkeit]* if I posit passion, the situation is essentially tragic; if I contemplate it, I declare that it is at once comic and tragic. The heroine of course cannot see it thus, she is far too immediate for that. If she sees the comic side at all, this according to the law of succession

must occur at a later moment, when her own laughter would make her comic, for to laugh at a real error proves that one has fallen into a new error, and by laughing thus one is no more healed than "he is free who doth his chains deride." The hero indeed is promptly aware of the presence of the comic, which is what saves him from being comic, but for all that he is not able to see the thing as I see it who am the experimenter and have planned it all. This is due to the fact that he is in a state of passion, and the degree of his passion is showed best by the observation that because he is aware of the comic he confirms his pathos. He is in a state of passion. If I were to say to him, "Try to get out of it," he immediately would fall into another passion and say that it would be behaving basely towards the girl. So he is quite able to see the comic element in the relationship, and he can also see the misunderstanding, but he regards this view of it as a factor of subordinate importance, and out of it he develops his passion with more and more pathos. The conjunctive particle in their misunderstanding is that they love one another, but in their heterogeneity this passion must express itself in ways essentially different, and so the misunderstanding does not have to come from without but develops between them in the relationship itself. The tragedy is that two lovers do not understand one another, the comedy is that two who do not understand one another should love one another. That such a case might occur is not unthinkable, for indeed love itself has its dialectic, and even if it is a thing unheard of, an experimenter surely has plenary power to experiment. When the heterogeneity is presented as I have presented it, both parties have a right to say that they love. Love has an ethical and an aesthetic side. She says that she loves, and she possesses that love aesthetically and understands it aesthetically; he says that he loves, and he understands it ethically. So both of them love, and they love one another, and yet it is a misunderstanding. The heterogeneous is kept apart from other species by category, and so the misunderstanding is not like that of

novelistic barter and exchange or of reconsideration within the aesthetic categories.

The male figure in the experiment therefore sees the comic, but not as a hardened observer sees it. He sees the comic and is thereby confirmed in the tragic. That is what interests me especially, for thereby the religious is illuminated. By force of spirit to see at once the comic and the tragic in the same thing is the culmination of paganism. In the loftier passion which out of this unity elects the tragic, religiousness has its beginning, I mean the religiousness for which immediacy is a thing of the past — and indeed it is assumed that in our age it is for all men a thing of the past, so they say. As an animal, man has two legs (extremities), and likewise the comic and the tragic are extremities necessary for movement in the case of one who would exist by virtue of spirit after having given up immediacy. And one who has only one of these legs and yet would be spirit by virtue of spirit is ridiculous, however great a genius he may be. In the equable proportion between the comic and the tragic is to be found the condition for the proper gait; the disproportion can therefore be described here as lameness, bowleggedness, clubfootedness, etc. — My knight's misfortune is that when he is about to collect himself in religiousness he becomes dialectic at the extremest point. About this more is to be said in another paragraph. Here I say only that he does not become dialectic by reason of the fact that out of the comic and the tragic he grasps the tragically higher passion (for in that case I could make no use of him), but he becomes dialectic in the last expression of this very passion. Except for this I could make no use of him whatever; for precisely in this there is discoverable a demoniac trait approximating the religious.

In order to illuminate the experiment I will examine the structure of it.

By the form of the project the duality is exhibited. In the morning he remembers actuality, at night he deals with the same story, but now as it is

permeated by his own ideality. So this ideality is not an illusory anticipation which has not yet seen actuality, but it is an act of freedom after actuality. This is the difference between the aesthetic and the religious ideality. The aesthetic is higher than actuality before actuality, that is to say, in illusion; the religious is higher than actuality after actuality, that is, by virtue of a God-relationship. The duality is expressed. A poet or a lover may have an ideal conception of the loved one, but he cannot at the same time be conscious in actuality how far this is true, or be conscious in actuality how far it is not true. This contradiction is endurable only to the new ideality which comes after actuality.

So the story begins twice. I have allowed half a year to intervene, and I assume that during that time he has lived in a kind of stupor, until passion suddenly awakens on the third of January. Other interpretations might be advanced, my choice is made with a view to the general plan.

The two individualities are related to one another conversely. The critical point for her occurs in actuality, but he, who is essentially without any practical experience of the other sex, does not see this clearly, and only by theoretical exertion does he attain a presentiment of something of the sort. Shakespeare has said somewhere, I do not remember where, and I cannot quote, but it was something to this effect: The very instant before the healing of a violent disease, at the instant of convalescence, the fit is most violent; and every evil is at its worst when it takes its leave. The critical point for her, when the healing properly begins, is the moment when she has ventured everything to hold him fast, and when he thereupon, quite consistently from his point of view, ventures upon the extremest measures to fight himself free from her. The instant she felt the pain most deeply was the instant when, psychologically considered, her recovery began. His picture therefore fades even while he is present, and from the time of the separation it becomes more and more a recollection of the past. It is

actuality which must help her. In the time of actuality he is strongest because he has only her as an actuality. On the other hand, the moment he sees her again, not in actuality but in the illumination of his own ideality, she is transformed into a gigantic figure. What he did in actuality, namely, the deceit whereby he actually profited her (for the relationship is so dialectic that fundamentally the deceit is her truth, i.e. what she can best understand), he cannot hold fast in her presence as he evokes her in his thought. In order to believe in the importance of the deceit he has to stand in actual relation to her and actually see her. Hence his critical moment occurs on the third of January the year following, for he has to be healed religiously, and in this regard her actuality disturbs him, he must have her ideally. Having misunderstood one another from the beginning, the misunderstanding continues after the separation and precisely then displays itself clearly. At the very moment when she is about to forget him and is well along in convalescence, and he has become unimportant to her, at that very moment she has become to him most highly important, just because he does not see her. Wheji he sees her, is with her, talks to her, he is in possession of his understanding and is strong; but as soon as he himself constructs her he loses his understanding, dare not believe in it, and the religious must more definitely work itself out. A specter is always terrifying, and that is what she is for him. But what a difference between a young girl for whom his understanding is a match, and an ideal form which advances to meet him terrifyingly, and against which his understanding is of no avail! His individuality was ethicoreligiously planned. This is what he is to become. She helps him also, but not by her actuality. Herein consists also the significance of his melancholy. His melancholy is the condensation of possibility. But when it signifies something of that sort, then of course all the talk about a young girl's cheerfulness and the tendency of marriage to disperse melancholy is an idle tale, for it should not be dispersed. On the

contrary, the clouds should grow still darker before his soul, then he will be on the way to recovery. This she is unable to perceive, and she always acts in a manner consistent with her perception. Neither is he able to see it, for if he could, he would not receive the *coup de grace* in the way it falls with the most certain stroke by the force of his own guilt and of her peril.

The idea requires that he catch sight of her again, but in such a way, be it observed, that he does not see an actuality, for by that he would not be helped. Hence I have let him see her again several times. But these encounters were peculiar affairs. As he views the case, from his standpoint he is entirely consistent in holding the opinion that the infinity in her ought not to be troubled by intervening with half-measures. One can see at once that he is preoccupied with himself, and not with her as an actuality outside himself, for if he were thinking objectively of her, the deceit would again be in place. So then, lest he might trouble the infinity in her, he bewitches himself into a dreadful state of extinction or decease. From his standpoint this is just as energetic an expression of his love as was her vehemence, viewed from her standpoint. On both sides this of course was the most preposterous way they could behave to one another.

So then, he sees her again. But just because he holds himself like a departed spirit in order to be serviceable to her, he has prevented himself from obtaining a single direct impression. With this he is in the way of becoming normal, his aberration consists in the fact that he nevertheless concerns himself passionately about her. He never gets hold of any occurrence relating to her, or into direct connection with any such thing, never gets any certainty, but continuing passionately to concern himself about her, he picks up every report, even the most unimportant items, and he does not get a great deal more out of his dialectic exertions. [Note by Frater Taciturnus.] How exhausting such exertions must be I can see from the fact that it is exhausting even to construe the thing in thought without

forgetting his dialectic difficulty at a single point, a single comma. In the entry of February 13, midnight, instead of the dialectic prolixity we find there, these words would have been enough: "The physician's report is to the effect that on the whole she is in good health." Of the few readers of this book the hasty ones have noticed nothing here, and even of the few discriminating readers perhaps only a single individual has asked, "How did he get such a direct report? He must indeed have asked somebody! And, after all, his tense passion did not prevent him from doing what in the form of possibility he must regard as the most dreadful thing." [The translator cannot suppress his surprise that Frater Taciturnus did not observe how Quidam got this direct report without asking anybody.] That is to say, he becomes more and more absorbed in himself.

So far as the meetings are concerned, they actually prove nothing to him. The inferences he draws, nobody but he would draw; and the paleness he sees I don't believe in at all, at all events I have many other explanations. That it was the third time he saw her in Hauser Square on a Thursday, no one else in his place would have discovered, still less would infer from a fortuitous circumstance what he infers. Even the encounter in church is nothing to rely upon, and actually he learns nothing at all. He notices this himself, but consistently with his standpoint he does not credit his understanding — and this to do honor to her, out of his pride in her. But at the same time something else comes to pass in him, he is more and more religiously absorbed in himself. If he had entered into conversation with her, he again would have been in possession of his understanding, and the religious progress would have been hindered. This he himself does not see, he acts as he does in order to sustain her. — The meetings therefore correspond to his psychic situation, and the contact with actuality whereby he merely grazes it tangentially in a direction away from it keeps him in the state of hovering suspense in which the religious must consolidate itself. He

poetizes her now, but he does so by virtue of a religious ideality which comes after actuality. As a lover by virtue of an ideality which comes before actuality sees beauties in the loved one which are not there, so he, with the high-strung passion of repentance, sees terrors which do not exist. — Herein one perceives the good and uncommon qualities which distinguish him, but also the demoniac trait, the fact that he cannot attain rest and repose in the final religious resolution, but is kept constantly under tension. She decides his fate, he says, and that is true; but the untruth is that she is deciding it still, for it is decided. The fact that he remains *in suspenso* is at once a passionate expression of his sympathy and the demoniac trait. He ought to remain *in suspenso,* or at the apex of the wish, as he expresses it, but at the same time, in view of the fact that the decision is passed, he ought to possess his religious resolution in peace, and not let the decision remain dialectic by reason of her. But just because he is not like this, he illuminates by his hovering and aberration many a religious problem — though one must remember that his "lines" are the expression of an individual passion. — He had energy enough to maintain his deceit, energy enough to choose the religious, and up to the last instant, or in the utmost extremity of religious passion, he remains dialectic. It is as though there were a possibility that he would plan his life differently if he were free from the whole thing. Precisely here lies the daimonia, that because of a possibility vaguely sensed of healing for her, he would not relate himself to himself in the religious idea, but would conceive of her in aesthetic categories, and would defraud the ethical a little bit, as though he, if he were guilty, were less guilty because he got out of the scrape safely, less guilty even by reason of the fact that she perhaps was at fault in her treatment of him. But of this more in another place.

The heterogeneity between the two individualities is now to be shown in its decisive aspects. Heterogeneity will cause the relationship to be inverted

constantly, as the reader will have observed in the book itself.

1. *He is closely reserved/she cannot possibly be so.*

Why can she not be so? All close reserve is due to a dialectic reduplication which is quite impossible for immediacy. The language of immediacy is easily pronounced, like a language rich in vowels; the language of reserve is a language only in silence, or at the most it is like the language which places four or five consonants before a vowel. Because she is immediate in this degree, attestation of devotion is quite rightly the medium through which she gives expression to her passion, after having for a long while been overwhelmed by him and suffered injustice, and thereupon been precipitated into a little incident. Upon this devotion his reserve runs aground, that is to say, he is so much more dialectical that he perceives the incompatibility.

Reserve, however, may signify various things. His reserve is essentially a form of melancholy, and again the melancholy in his case is the condensed possibility which must be gone through with in the experience of a crisis if he is to become clear to himself in the experience of the religious. As for his melancholy, there is no passage where he declares what its content is. I have so represented him intentionally, partly because I only needed reserve as the limit, as the limit of understanding which posits misunderstanding, and partly because not even he could say what its content is. His reserve is in fact neither more nor less than the condensed anticipation of the religious subjectivity. The religious subjectivity has one dialectic factor more than all actuality has — not as anterior to actuality but as subsequent to it. He can therefore perfectly well exist in actuality, and he is assumed to have done so, but his reserve is a presage of a higher life. It follows therefore as a matter of course that such categories as “the outward is the inward and the inward is the outward” are, when applied to religion, the inventions of

Munchausens who have no understanding of religion, which I, an enthusiast for the understanding, can very well have without being religious. In these spheres they do just as much good as one who (to recall an old saying) sticks his tongue out of the window to get a taste of the weather.

His reserve therefore has for the time being no content, but it is there as the limit, and it holds him fast, and for the time being he is melancholy in his reserve. The most abstract form of close reserve is that which encloses itself. The psychologist knows well that the reserved man, although he can tell, and tell with ease, what *made* him reserved, does not tell and cannot tell what *makes* him reserved. Reserve therefore one hardly can take away from the reserved man, and properly he must be healed religiously in himself. This is the most abstract form of reserve when it is the anticipation of a higher life in the condensation of the possibility. Hence he never says what is the content of his reserve but only that it is a fact. From this standpoint of possibility one can strive after religious transparency, and this is what he must do. But this he does not know, and least of all does he suspect that the path of his development passes through the horror of giving up his relationship to her because of the incompatibility. If he had not found in himself strength for the desperate resolution, if he had not acted without understanding what significance his act had for himself, or rather without understanding anything else but that it was his own destruction, if he had not found strength for this act in sympathetic enthusiasm for her welfare, whether she understood it then or not, she would have conquered — and he would have been lost. The developing process of reserve would have been halted, he would have taken active steps with regard to his close reserve, would have closed it off, hidden it as a fixed idea in his inward parts' perhaps in the quiet form of madness, perhaps even in the form of guilt, for these are the two essential forms of the consolidated reserve. — He had her life upon his conscience, that helped him and will help him. She had upon

her conscience his whole spiritual existence — a thing she never dreamed of.

In order to throw light upon his reserve I have introduced in the diary passages in which he gropes as it were after an expression for his own reserve. He never expresses himself directly but indirectly. These expressions must therefore be understood indirectly. One of them is called "A Possibility," his decisive category, which therefore must be followed to the extreme limit. In the end it appears that the sense of guilt was a vain imagination, a feverish dream. He is groping here after the notion of sin. If he had had a real sin upon his conscience, if I had conceived him thus, it would have been far easier to clarify him out of it; but then the whole plan would not have turned out as I would have it.

2. *He is melancholy/she is light-hearted.*

But if his melancholy is of a sort that ought to be checked, then that is up to her, for then she could help him, as he himself declares so ardently. But it is not so. He does not know that this melancholy signifies something different. Although he himself is brought to naught, the smart of sympathy on her account still prevails, and he resolves to leave her, without any presentiment that precisely this must be of help to him. On the whole, his concern for this girl is pure fanaticism, in itself ludicrous, tragic because of his suffering, comic for the fact that he does the thing in the craziest way.

There is a difference between melancholy and melancholy. There is a melancholy which in the case of poets, artists, thinkers, is a crisis, and on the part of women may be an erotic crisis. So the melancholy of this lay figure of mine is a crisis anticipatory of the religious experience. If I take for example an artist, his melancholy, this critical melancholy, does not straightway express itself in lamentation that he is no good as an artist. Far from it. Sometimes it is a suspicious sign that the sufferer is thus aware

what ails him, a sign that perhaps his sufferings are only warmed-over sufferings. No, this melancholy may cast itself upon anything, the most insignificant thing, and only when the man’s essential destiny is determined is it evident that this was the secret of his melancholy. But the crisis must come later in the case of the religious man, that is to say, for the sort of religion in which immediacy has been overcome. This is because of the many postulates which this case exacts: he must be aesthetically developed in imagination and must be able to conceive the ethical with primitive passion in order to be properly offended at it, so that the pristine possibility in the religious man may break its way out in this catastrophe. Therefore melancholy must have accompanied him through the previous stages.

So it is with the personality represented in my experiment. It is precisely the horror of the situation which is to be of help to him. This he does not dream of, he thinks only of her and of his sufferings from a sense of guilt. His sympathy for her prompts him to enthusiastic punctiliousness in venturing the utmost. He leaves her — but not to give her up, rather to hold out in the hope that in the end this might be of help. This he will not say to her, for the hope is uncertain and insecure, it would be an affront to her to put her off with such a hope. This is entirely consistent, it is this that must help, but he knows not how. One word exchanged between them, and his development would have been disturbed.

The consequence will naturally be that in the mean while she reconsiders the situation. That is as it should be. His path does not point that way, and everything is so prepared for him that he may become a normal individual. — So it is I have planned the experiment, making it at once comic and tragic.

If she had conquered, he would have been lost. Even though her lightheartedness (which after all is a security which steadily depreciates) had been capable of making him a happy husband, this is not what he ought

to be. But of this he does not dream, and he only feels deeply his misery for the fact that he is incapable of being what every man is capable of — of being a husband.

He has her life upon his conscience, she has had upon her conscience his whole personality, and of course did not dream of it.

3. *He is essentially a thinker/she is anything but that.*

The word "thinker" sheds a rather comical light upon him, for only the fact that he was busied with thoughts serves to explain that, as the experiment assumes, he had been able to live on without the least experience of the world and especially of the other sex. If he had had such knowledge, especially of the latter sort, the experiment could not have been carried out, for one does not have to look far to see what he had to do, and especially how one ought to treat the terrifying pronouncements of a young girl, which are most duly honored by taking as a rule of life an old verse:

Cantatur haec, laudanter haec,
Dicunter, audientur;
Scribuntur haec, leguntur haec,
Et lecta negliguntur.

In the experiment therefore there falls upon him, as the reflection of his lack of knowledge of the world, a rather ludicrous light, but on the other hand his inexperienced veneration for the other sex has something touching about it, and at the same time a certain pungency as an epigram upon worldly knowledge.

To say that he is a thinker does not mean that he reads many books and purposes to ascend the cathedra as *Privatdocent.* That sort of a thinker could well unite divers activities and so attain mediation. He on the contrary is essentially a self-thinker, and that in the sense of always having to have the idea on his side in order to exist. This preoccupies him with all the

passion of a self-thinker, not with the affected assumption of solemn responsibility characteristic of the *Privatdocent.*

The girl has life and light for her part, with which she is graciously clothed. She has no objection to his studies though they were to include Syro-Chaldaic, but she cares not a pin for learned subjects, which in her is an amiable trait and not without charm. But what preoccupies him is not the Syro-Chaldaic tongue nor the Eleamitic; no, it is the very life itself in which he has his existence.

Consequently they cannot understand one another. What preoccupies him absolutely is entirely beyond her ken, and if he were to speak of it, she would be no more concerned about it than if he talked of Sennacherib and Shalmaneser. She requires nothing of the sort from him, and on her part this is an amiable trait, especially if her task had been the opposite of what it was, so that in order to be serviceable to him she should not concern herself about such things. Naturally she does not apprehend in the least that the things she requires of him and the things she dispenses him from have no weight in comparison with the ideas, and that not to express the idea is a thing which not only disturbs him but a thing which he regards as disparaging to her.

So it is he thinks. And he is capable of thinking that he may have a murder upon his conscience, but not to express the idea is something he is incapable of thinking. What a maiden's honor is means for the thinker consistency and idea, and for a self-thinker it means to hold fast to it in life. If he has her honor upon his conscience, she in turn has had upon hers his thought-existence. Naturally she had no inkling of it.

4. *He is ethico-dialectic/she aesthetically immediate.*

From each of these standpoints the conception of suffering is entirely different. He cannot understand what her suffering essentially is, if there is

any involved in losing possession of another person; she does not understand in the least what his suffering essentially is, namely, a sense of responsibility and guilt.

So they both become unhappy, and each has done the best thing for the other by way of becoming unhappy — he by severing the relationship, she by laying a murder upon his conscience. In fact he would have had that burden all the same, but nevertheless she did it.

5. *He is sympathetic/she is innocently self-loving in the sense of immediacy.*

The unsightly form of self-love is always recognizable by the fact that it involves reflection. In her nothing of this sort is discernable, but rather the instinct of self-preservation, which several Greek philosophers have regarded as a moral principle. Their mistake was that as a principle this involves reflection. She is without reflection, hence this self-love is not an unseemly thing and is an indication of healthiness.

Notwithstanding the partiality he commonly shows in his interpretation of her, he nevertheless does her in a way an injustice by saying that she has not a trace of resignation. Not that the dictum is unjust, for it is quite true, but the reason for it is that she has no notion what it means — and that may be an indication of healthiness, but at the same time it may perhaps indicate an erotic modesty. Moreover he hinders her from getting a notion of it. He employs deceit to hide his own sufferings, so that she may not be moved sympathetically. But then he forgets to take into account the deceit which in fact prevents her from becoming aware of the promptings of sympathy. But just as there is a contradiction here, his position here is also so dialectic, so ambiguous, that one might assume he was just as loath for her sake to see her sympathetically moved as for his own sake he was loath to have a vigorous expression of her magnanimity. This, however, he himself perceived, for he says that he had proposed to her an opportunity to give

him his freedom, as in fact he did, but it does not follow that at this point he was purely sympathetic, but rather that he was subjecting himself to what he considered a duty. Inasmuch as he made this proposition he is saved from becoming demoniac in the direction of the evil, but he is by no means purely religious, that is as yet only a possibility. The misfortune is that she will not understand him and only takes advantage of every new discovery of his feeling to cast herself upon him with her devotion.

It is sympathy for her (in the form, be it noted, which is consonant with his individuality, for his sympathy of course cannot talk in her idiom) which inspires him to take the step he otherwise would hardly have ventured to take. I might have left it at that, but in order to throw light upon him I allow the thought to enter his mind, and reality seemed to favor it, that the thing will end after all in a perfectly natural way by her becoming again freely at ease through a *restitutio in integrum.* Here it will appear whether he is sympathetic, or rather, since his disposition is by nature sympathetic, it will appear that he now almost suffers more than before because she seems to him to lose in ideality. His sympathy appears here in all its strength and in the way it must show itself in a thinker to whom idea-existence is the one and only thing. If he had possessed knowledge of the world and of the other sex, he would have got off more easily — supposing he was willing to make use of that knowledge.

So then he breaks off, and the wedding ceremony serves the strange purpose of being the separating factor. Misunderstanding appears again in the subsequent period. She, as was said above, was already on the way to recovery when he left her, and she recovers gradually; he suffers most afterwards. He is the active party, she the passive sufferer, so it seems; but in reality the inverse of this is true: he is the passive sufferer who would not venture to do what she did, to lay such a heavy responsibility upon another person. She thinks that he has affronted and mortified her by breaking the

engagement, and yet he had affronted her only by beginning the thing. His fault is (apart from beginning it) that he applied too high a standard, and this precisely is his title to honor. He is guilty, she is entirely innocent, he thinks. This, however, is not true: if he is to blame for having begun, she too is to blame for taking advantage of the ethical side of the relationship so as to bind him to herself, and for venturing to take a step the consequences of which she neither dreams of nor can calculate. He sees the comic side of the situation, but he sees this passionately, so that out of the situation he thooses the tragic side (this is the religious trait which explains the ability I am unable to understand of seeing both factors in equilibrium); she sees the tragic side, and sees it so clearly that she makes it comic. He produces no outward effect whatsoever, except what every male could accomplish just as well, namely, that a girl "wants to die," etc., he cannot even make a girl unhappy; she produces an immense effect. Upon this she does not reflect at all, for she thinks that if she had been permitted to make him happy, she then would have been doing something. Nor does he think of the consequences for him, for he must think that he has crushed her. He is sure of one thing, that it is the ruin of the girl to be united to him; perhaps the girl is shrewder in holding the opinion that she could make good use of him. She is sure of being able to make him happy; and yet, as has been shown, this would absolutely have been his ruin. He makes a fool of himself by his humble veneration; she makes a fool of herself by her great words.

But how was it after all that he began such a thing? This, I believe, I have indicated clearly. He begins with a whole life-view which he had formed. I have to make out of him an approximation to a religious individuality, and hence this life-view of his must be an aesthetic-ethical one in illusion. So it is too, and it is quite natural that this must have satisfied his individuality. He sees the girl, gets an erotic impression, and no more than that. She becomes a part of his existence, and he is not willing, as

he says, to affront her by learning to know more definitely about her. One perceives at once the fanatic enthusiast, and an enthusiast he is to become, but in another sphere. So time passes, he forms his resolve, but the erotic factor has not received due attention. Then he is in for it, and he conceives the situation ethically, whereas the religious possibility is constantly the deepest thing in his soul, as it already was in his first life-view, without his knowing it. The ethical now becomes clarified to him in reality, and he comes to grief. The offense he did her was not in breaking off, but it was that with such a view of life he wanted to be in love. The stages were arranged thus: an aesthetic-ethical life-view in illusion, with the dawning possibility of the religious; an ethical life-view which condemns him; he sinks back within himself — and there he is where I would have him.

I have now quite briefly made the circuit around my experiment. Round about it I am constantly moving; for I can well grasp the unity of the comic and the tragic, but I cannot conceive whence he gets the new and higher passion which is religiousness. Might it be the ethical which by its negative pressure helps him past the metaphysical (for that is where my place is) into the religious? I do not know.

The result of the whole process of misunderstanding is that after all they do not love. But this cannot be affirmed at the beginning, and each still retains a share of the factors of love. He fails to love because he lacks immediacy, in which love first has its place. If he could have become hers, he would have become a spirit who would have done everything to indulge her wishes, but not a lover. But if he lacks immediacy, he has the ethical, for which she has no understanding and no interest. She does not love; that is to say, she has the impulses of immediacy and perseverance in them, but in order to love she must also have resignation, so that it may become clear that she does not love herself.

With this the experiment is finished; but in another sense, even in this prolonged development of it, it is not finished or brought to an end. (As to the reason for this, more will be said later.) If I were to assume that what he had a presentiment of, and what in itself was probable enough, did actually occur, namely, that she fell in love anew — what then? Why then he possibly might have got over his aberration. I constantly put myself in his place and clearly perceive that he is not to be helped as I in such a case would long ago have helped myself. I have no mind to contend about that, I would only experiment. His aberration consists in permitting himself to be disturbed by her reality so that he cannot collect himself in the act of repentance, and so cannot attain peace in repentance because she makes this act dialectical for him. (About this more later.) As soon therefore as she is out of the way he will have only himself to deal with, and repentance unimpeded will acquire the ideality he has need of, without being disturbed by a pathetic passion which stimulates him to action or by comic visions which he himself does not produce. To definitely bound an individuality and set down the mathematical answer to the given problem is the task of great systematic thinkers who have such a broad field to hurry over. To allow him to exist in all his possibility is what interests the experimenter. Therefore, even if I were to relinquish this point of view, I can very well imagine that he might still become dialectic again. If this were to occur, he is in the way of becoming demoniac. It is not the dialectical which makes a person demoniacal, far from it, but it is persisting in this state.

The reader who is acquainted with the little book by Constantine Constantius will perceive that I resemble in a way that author but yet am very different, and he who experiments ought always to fashion himself in conformity with the experiment.

§ 3. THAT TRAGEDY FEELS GREATER NEED OF HISTORICAL REALITY THAN DOES COMEDY; AND ABOUT THE

DISAPPEARANCE OF THIS DISTINCTION IN THE “EXPERIMENT.”

I have often reflected upon the fact that the tragic poets, in order to be sure of making an impression upon the audience, to win for the play their confidence and trust, and their tears for the performance of it, rely upon the fact that their hero had performed great deeds, even though the poet does not confine himself to history. That this is a fact surely no one will deny or be inclined to appeal against me to Lessing, since Amelie Galotti is the exception which proves the rule, and there are many utterances of this author which show that he viewed the case precisely in this way. The almost universal practice is to use historical material, and, with considerable reservation, to understand it in the Aristotelian sense, regarding the poet as a greater philosopher than the historian, because he shows how a thing ought to be, not how it is. On the other hand, the comic poet has no need of such historical support. He gives his characters just what names he will, he lays the scene where he will, and if only the comic ideality is present, the people are sure to laugh. And conversely, he gains nothing by using Harlequin and Pierrot if he only knows how to use them as names.

Is this because men are more inclined to see the weak points of people than to see their greatness? Is it because it is more natural to laugh at something without a sufficient guarantee than to weep over it, considering that a fool will laugh at nothing? Or is the reason perhaps this, that the light-armed comedy hastens past the ethical to the unconcerned position of metaphysics and wants only to arouse laughter by making the contradiction manifest, and that tragedy on the other hand, heavyarmed as it is, remains mired in the ethical difficulty that though the idea triumphs the hero is destroyed — which is rather discouraging to the auditor in case he would like to be a hero, and it would be something of a satire upon him if he reflects that he has nothing to fear for his life since it is only the heroes that die.

However, be the reason what it may, the thing that I am interested in is not the reason but the fact that tragedy seeks support in the historical. This means that poetry does not believe itself capable by itself of awakening ideality in the auditor, does not believe that it is present in the auditor, but in the historical — that is to say, poetry expects to derive it from history.

With regard to the comical, on the contrary, it never occurs to the poet to want to appeal to history or to support the comic figure by the aid of history; for the auditor says quite rightly, “Show him to us as comic, and we will cheerfully make thee a gift of the historical.”

But does it then help one to believe in greatness to know that it was historical? No, not at all. This knowledge only helps one into an illusion which beguiles by the material fact. What is it I know historically? It is the material fact. Ideality I know by myself, and if I do not know it by myself, I do not know it at all; all historical knowledge is of no avail. Ideality is not loose cash which can be transported from one person to another, or something which is thrown into the bargain when one buys a big consignment. If I know that Caesar was great, I must know what greatness is, and this is what I behold, otherwise I do not know that Caesar was great. History’s report that reliable men assert this, that there is no risk involved in the acceptance of this opinion, that it must be regarded as certain that he was a great man, that the outcome proves it, is all of no avail. To believe ideality on the word of another is like laughing at a witticism not because one understands it but because another man said that it was witty. In that case the witticism might essentially be left just as well unuttered in the presence of a man who laughs out of belief in and respect for another person, for such a man would laugh with the same emphasis.

The reader will easily see from the title of this section that it is not my intention to remain in the aesthetic sphere but that I would proceed to the religious. What the tragic hero is in the aesthetic sphere, that the religious

pattern (I am of course thinking only of pious men etc., not of Christ) is for the religious consciousness. The poet in this case is an orator. Here again recourse is had to the historical. The pattern is presented, and now, says the orator, it is certain because it is historic, and the believing congregation believes everything, even that the orator knows what he himself is saying.

In order to grasp ideality I must be able to resolve the historical in the ideality, or to do what a pious expression says of God, "let light shine upon it." On the other hand I do not enter into the ideality by repeating the historical rigamarole. One therefore who in a given case cannot just as well grasp the conclusion *ab posse ad esse* as he can grasp the conclusion *ab esse ad posse* does not grasp the ideality in that given case. He feeds only upon imaginations. Ideality as the animating principle is as a matter of course not historical. What can be historically transmitted to me is a congeries of data which are not idealities, and so the historical is always raw material which he who appropriates it knows how to resolve in a *posse* and assimilate as an *esse.* There is therefore nothing more foolish in the religious field than to hear the common sense question asked when something is taught, "if the thing actually happened thus, for if so we would believe it." The question whether it actually happened thus, whether it was so ideal as it is represented, can only be tested by ideality, but this does not come conveniently bottled in history.

I have become conscious of this by composing the story of suffering which I have carried out in my experiment. Ah, if I were a renowned author, a reading world which is industrious in believing, indefatigably industrious, would be in a fix, for it would be concerned about the book and ask, "But then is this also actually so? — then we will believe it." What is it that it will believe? That it is actually so. Well, along that path one gets no further. In case an orator takes no account of this, he may perfectly well be able to make a profound impression upon his hearers but will also turn into a satire

upon himself what Socrates says of eloquence, that it is a deceitful art. The more he emphasizes that it is historical, and therefore etc., the more he deceives; and if it is a small living he has, so that it is not worth while talking of the money he gets, it is just as certain that he gives out fudge, perhaps a great deal of fudge — alas, for scanty pay. Such a historizing orator only does his part to make the learners unintelligent. For intelligence asks about two things: (1) is that which is said possible? (2) can I do it? But it is unintelligent to ask about two things: (1) is it actually so? (2) has my neighbor Christopherson done it, has he actually done it? And faith is the ideality which resolves an *esse* into its *posse,* and then draws the conclusion inversely with passionate ardor. If the object of faith is the absurd, it is not the historic which is believed, but faith is the ideality which resolves an *esse* into a *non posse* — and then *will* believe it.

In order to secure the religious paradigm more thoroughly the religious is kept strictly apart and conceived exclusively in the pathetic categories of immediacy. Here the situation of the orator is like that of the poet with his tragic hero. He dare not permit the comic to appear. Therefore the hearer knows definitely that this is seriousness, and if it is seriousness, he can well enough believe it. But suppose now that this seriousness were jest. Religious seriousness is, like religion itself, the higher passion which issues from the unity of the comic and the tragic. This I know precisely for the reason that I myself am not religious and have reached this standpoint (that of the unity of the two) without leaping over any preliminary stage and without finding the religious in myself. — If such be the case, the historical need not incommode itself, for it never can be of any assistance in reaching an ideality, least of all a dialectic ideality. If I were a reliable man, the prospect would be pretty bad for a reading world which cannot learn beforehand to know whether the thing is jest or earnest. I would be required

to give an explanation — there is some compensation after all for not being responsible.

They secure the religious just as they do the theatrical piece by the result — and my experiment in fact is not finished. So there is no result. "I beg a highly respected and intelligent public to consider what it means to publish a book without any result. Fortunately no one reads it since it is by an obscure author." Thus a reviewer would talk, in spite of the fact that I have besought him so imploringly to abstain — not to abstain from saying this, for if finally he has to talk, it makes no difference what he says. So then the result, which every bustling reader might reasonably require to have at his disposition in advance, does not come at all. Oh, that these considerations which I present here might make up a little for this lack.

Poetry depends upon the commensurability of the outward and the inward, and therefore it shows the result in the realm of the visible. The result is right there to be grasped. However, a little prudence is not out of place, for the result has the same dialectic as ideality. The religious lies in the inward sphere. In this case the result cannot be shown outwardly. But what does the orator do? He vouches for the result. Such a security must be regarded as satisfactory from every point of view — by serious and positive people.

The aesthetic result is in the realm of the outward and can be shown. It can be shown, and even by the nearsighted it can be seen by the aid of an opera glass that the hero conquers, that the magnanimous man falls in battle and is carried home dead (of course not all at the same moment), etc. This precisely is the defect of the aesthetic production. — The ethical result is already less visible, or rather it is demanded with such swiftness that one has not time to look around before it is there.

So when I make abstraction from everything else and think only of the ethical, I demand with ethical propriety to see the good'triumph with

infinite swiftness and to see punishment overtake the evil with infinite swiftness. Now this cannot be represented, at least not in five acts, and hence the aesthetic and the ethical have been combined. The ethical thought as a totality has been retained, and the infinite swiftness slowed down by aesthetic categories (fate — chance), and then in the ethical thought as a totality is to be seen at the end a world-order, divine governance, providence. This result is aesthetic-ethical and hence to a certain degree can be seen outwardly. This result nevertheless is precarious, for the ethical cannot show respect for the aesthetic in any other way than by regarding a union with it as a *mésalliance.* (It is surely for this reason that Boethius is so wroth at poetic representations, in Book I, cap. 9; for this reason surely that Solon prohibited theatrical plays as a deceit; for this reason surely that Plato wished to exclude poets from his state.) The ethical inquires only about guilty/not guilty, it is man enough to hold its own with anybody, it has no need of anything outward or visible, not to speak of anything so ambiguously dialectic as fate and chance, or of the judgment of any formal tribunal. The ethical is proud and says, “When I have passed judgment nothing more is needed.” That is to say, the ethical desires to be separated from the aesthetic and from the outwardness which is its imperfection, it desires to enter into a glorious alliance, and that is with the religious.

The religious then plays, though in a higher sphere, the same rôle as the aesthetic; it spaces out the infinite swiftness of the ethical, and development can take place; but the scene is laid in the interior, in thoughts and the mind which one cannot see, not even by the aid of a telescope. The principle of the spirit is that the outward and visible (the glory of the world or its wretchedness, an outward result or the lack of it for the agent) exist in order to test faith, and hence not to deceive, rather that the spirit may be put to the test by setting all this at zero and withdrawing itself. The outward counts

neither one way nor the other — and for one thing the result remains in the inward sphere, and, secondly, it is constantly deferred.

The aesthetic outcome is in the outward sphere, and it is this outward which provides assurance that the outcome is there; one sees that the hero has triumphed, has conquered the land, and then we are through with it. The religious outcome, indifferent to the outward result, is only assured in the inward sphere, that is, in faith. Indifferent to the outward which the aesthetic needs (that there must be great men, great objects, great events, so that it is comic when ordinary people are involved, or two shillings and eightpence) the religious is commensurable for the greatest man that ever lived and for the most abject, and equally commensurable; commensurable for the wealth of nations and for a farthing, and equally commensurable. The religious is simply and solely qualitatively dialectic and disdains quantity in which the aesthetic man discovers his task. Indifferent to the outward which the aesthetic needs for the result, the religious disdains such things and proclaims to each and every man that he who believes that he is perfected (that is to say, imagines it, since such a thing cannot be believed, because faith precisely is infinity) — has lost.

And now the orator who deals in results, what does he do? He does everything he possibly can to deceive the hearers. But the orator is "positive." Quite so — he also takes money for what he says, and this of itself is enough to inspire people with a certain confidence in him; for in case a man were to lay out money or to lose his reputation in order to speak the truth, what confidence could one have in him, indeed he contradicts himself, for might that be the truth which did not procure for a man money, reputation and similar things?

In case one were to say that to swim is to lie upon dry land and flounder about, everybody would regard him as mad. But to believe is exactly like swimming, and instead of helping a man to get to his feet on dry land the

orator should help him to get out upon the deep. So then if one would say that to believe is to lie upon dry land and go through the motions, he says the same thing as the above, only people perhaps do not notice it.

What is said here about the lack of a result in the religious sphere may also be expressed thus: the negative is higher than the positive. How lucky to be an obscure author when one experiments with such thoughts! An author of repute would be put to embarrassment, for because of his repute the positive people would presumably perceive at once that this was a positive result he had reached, and his positive repute would become still greater. Positive people, or (to indicate by the definite article more definitely what I mean) the Positives, have a positive infinity. That is quite so, a "positive" is finished, and when we hear that, we also are soon finished with them. Here we have result in superabundance. If one would seek enlightenment from Hegel the Master about what is to be understood by a positive infinity, one learns much, with prodigious pains one succeeds in understanding him — the only thing a laggard perhaps does not understand is how a live man or a man in a living body becomes such a being that he can be tranquillized by the positive infinity, which ordinarily is reserved for the Deity and eternity and the deceased. Consequently there is no other way I can understand the thing but by supposing that a result is missing which the negative ones who are not finished might *en passant* look forward to eagerly, wondering if long after the System has been finished astronomy might discover on those distant stars higher beings who could make use of it. It must be left to the higher beings what they will make out of it, but for men it would be the part of prudence not to be too positive, for this really means to be made a jest of by existence. Existence is cunning and possesses many means of enchantment to catch rash adventurers, and he who is caught, yea, he who is caught, out of him is not made exactly what could be called a higher being.

For a finite being — and that after all is what man is (cf. Balle's *Lesson Book*) — the negative infinity is the highest attainable, and the positive is a precarious assurance. Intellectual existence, especially for the religious man, is not easy, the believer lies constantly out upon the deep and with seventy thousand fathoms of water under him. However long he may lie out there, there is no assurance that little by little he will find himself lying upon land, stretched out at his ease. He may become calmer, more accustomed to his position, and find a sense of security which loves jest and the joyous mind — but up to the last minute he lies above a depth of seventy thousand fathoms. If immediacy is done away with, as in fact everybody loudly requires, then this situation comes about. There are to be enough difficulties in life for everybody. Let the poor feel the hard pressure of poverty and anxiety about a livelihood, he who elects a spiritual existence by virtue of the religious will have the comfort, which I well understand he needs, of knowing that he too suffers in life and that before God there is no respect of persons. For to become "positive" does not procure for any man personal respect in God's eyes, even though this has been accounted wisdom since the time Speculation took charge of religion by taking its life.

This I have understood well in spite of the fact that I myself am not religious, but at least I do not presume to take religion by force and merely try to understand with the cunning of an observer the object I experiment with. The religious seeks no support in the historic, still less than does the comic, and for a higher reason; it presupposes the unity of the tragic and the comic in passion, and with a new passion or with the same it chooses the tragic, and this situation again makes every historic support meaningless; it is never finished, at least not in time, and hence only as a delusion can it be so represented. So then, in case a man who had been steadily listening to an orator who talked of things religious were to go to him and say, "Are you,

sir, of the opinion that I now have faith, seeing that I have been listening to you so steadily?” Perhaps then the orator, in an access of what is called good nature, sympathetic concern, for which one receives thanks in letters to the editor, might reply, “Why, certainly that is my opinion. Only do not fail to hear my addresses, and come to me freely if again you are assailed by doubt,” etc. My experimental observation (devoid of all good nature and sympathetic concern) prompts me to the opinion that he would have done better to reply, “My dear man, would you make fun of me? I dare not even vouch for my wife, yea, not even for myself, for I lie constantly above a depth of seventy thousand fathoms of water.”

If only now no one would tempt me, promise me perhaps gold and forests green, the favor of maidens and the applause of reviewers — but then require an answer to the question whether my experiment is a real history, whether at the bottom of it there is something real. Why, yes, certainly there is something real at the bottom of it — namely, the categories. However, for an unknown author the temptation is not so great, everyone will easily see that the whole thing is a prank — which nevertheless it is not, for it is an experiment. Tragedy has the interest of reality, comedy has the disinterestedness of metaphysics, but the experiment lies in the invisible unity of jest and earnest. The dialectic tension between form and content and between content and form prevents any immediate relationship to it, and in this tension the experiment avoids the honest handshake of earnestness and the rollicking fellowship of jest. The experiment constantly addresses the reader as “you,” to indicate a ceremonious distance. The poetic hero would arouse enthusiasm by his triumph, would distress one by his sufferings (would have the interest of reality), the comic hero would awaken laughter, the *quidam* of the “experiment” desires nothing of the sort, without making any demands he is in every way “at your service,” he cannot annoy you, for in this respect also

he is “at your service,” willing to be ignored without any risk whatsoever on your part, and that all the more because it is absolutely indeterminable whether one who paid attention to him gained anything by it or suffered damage from it.

§ 4. REPENTANCE DIALECTICALLY PREVENTED FROM COMING TO A HEAD; AND THAT THE LAST CONFINE BETWEEN THE AESTHETIC AND THE RELIGIOUS LIES IN THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY.

Poetry can make no use of repentance, for as soon as it is posited the scene is transferred to the inward man. And the System of course can make no use of it whatever, for the System has to be finished, the sooner the better, it is unimpeachable only when it is finished, and in order to get finished it takes pains to be rid of repentance. The Systematic abbreviation of the pathological factors of life is simply ridiculous if it claims to have anything but a metaphysical significance. The System is therefore merely metaphysics, and that is all right, but it is not a system which embraces existence, for in that case the ethical must be included in it, and to abbreviate the ethical is to make a fool of it.

On the Systematic “gliding track” (as the *quidam* of the experiment expresses it) the thing goes on as follows: § 17. Repentance; § 18. The Atonement; § — . System Finished — concluding with some hints to the bookbinder about how it is to be bound: in half calf it is metaphysics, in full calf it is the System. So then one does not linger over repentance. No one, not even the man whose business requires the utmost haste, has cause to complain that “one paragraph need not be an eternity.” I on the other hand propose to linger a little instant over repentance. An experimenter has more time.

The demoniac trait in the *quidam* of the experiment is essentially this, that he cannot withdraw himself in repentance, that at the extremest point he remains stuck in a dialectic relationship to reality (see above). It is well known that Juno sent a gadfly to persecute Latona so that she could not give birth to her child — so is the girl's reality a gadfly, a perhaps, which teases him, a nemesis of reality, life's envy, which will not let him get away and thereby get absolutely into the religious.

When repentance is treated less systematically, i.e. more effectively, one generally has one's eyes opened to get the atonement brought forward all the same. This may be all very good, but existential difficulties lie also in another quarter. When repentance is posited, guilt must be presumed as clear and well ascertained. But the difficulty arises precisely when guilt becomes dialectic. Therefore I said before that if the *quidam* of the experiment had had an actual sin, it would have been far easier to clarify him out of it, for then one would have been able to avoid the dialectical.

It makes no difference to the experiment whether such a case occurs rarely or not at all. It might be possible, however, that this dialectic situation occurs very frequently but comes to nothing at all. For the strictly normal occurs perhaps solely in textbooks and lectures of men who do not exist at all in themselves, nor know how to peer into life and into other men.

The experiment has made the existential position as dialectic as possible. He may have a murder upon his conscience, or the whole thing may be wind; he has this burden for the fact that a young girl lays it upon him, and if there should be a little galimatias in this, then he has no murder upon his conscience. What is to determine this? Reality. But reality takes a little time, and when I experiment I am not in a hurry like the Systematic writer of a paragraph. How does he exist all this time? It is a thing to drive repentance to despair. With me the case is different, for I sit at my ease, cheerfully employed with my calculations, and look out over the tragic and

the comic: the tragic girl who dies, and the comic sinner who becomes a murderer, the tragic sinner who suffers, and the comic girl who lives. "A word is a word, and a man is a man," but the proverb applies only to men, who ought therefore to be prudent about talking of death. For it is true indeed, as a deceased man said of death, that it recognizes no class nor age; but from this it does not follow that we are to believe everybody's word.

The dialectic reader will observe at once that there is a difficulty which the *quidam* of the experiment did not take into account, or at least not sufficiently. By means of a deceit he would cunningly take away from her every impression of him she might have had. This deceit he carries out, but he forgets to reckon its consequences. He is sturdy enough to defy the terrors of reality, but he has not the strength to maintain the rôle when it reacts upon himself. He is superior to reality, as he shows in carrying out the deceit, for he shuns no argument she advances but persists in his course. By reason of the deceit, however, the argument becomes different from what it otherwise would have been. The moment the deceit is effective he is in fact misleading the girl and inciting her to express herself unsympathetically. She has no suspicion that he suffers, she must suppose that he is bent upon seeing the end of the engagement and so triumphing over her. So there is nothing to restrain her utterances. To this extent it is his own fault that the situation becomes so terrible as it does. Only it must be remembered that he attempted a milder solution before he had recourse to the deceit. But the fact that he himself by the deceit contributes to make everything more terrible for him, and hence the fact that he did not gain deceitfully any advantage for himself but only discomfiture, is for me a very important factor in the experiment. In an external sense he has conquered, the power with which reality challenges him does not prevail against him — but then a half year later he begins it all over again within himself, wounded as he is by that experience, and now he must give in. This

precisely is what illuminates the religious situation. The religiousness which is fetched directly from reality is a dubious religiousness; it may be that aesthetic categories are employed and worldly wisdom acquired; but when reality has not been able to crush an individual and he falls by himself, the religious factor is clearer.

In this fact then, which he does not sufficiently observe, I see again the unity of the comic and the tragic. The comic feature is not that he is a braggart, for then it must have been reality which made him bite the dust, but it is the fact that he survives the crisis of reality and then falls in conflict with himself. It is a problem for aesthetics to let one who imagines he is something become manifest in the face of reality as nothing. But if in the first instance the aesthetic has conceded that in reality he is great, it has then no superior power over him and must recognize him as a hero — but then the religious says, “Tut, tut, let us look a little more closely to see how it stands with him.” I am concerned about this in a thoroughly Greek way. I imagine the blissful gods creating such a man for the sake of enjoying a dialectic pleasure in observing him. They give him powers to deal with reality, but they give him also an inward disposition by which he gets into trouble. He really is capable of great deeds, but so soon as he has performed them the event is reduplicated within himself, and he topples over. And I imagine the gods saying to one another, “After all, we must have some sport for ourselves alone, and here is a thing which is not for the goddesses, who do not comprehend it and, if they did comprehend it, would not behold it without pity. This is not something to laugh at, like the inventions of a poet whom we honor with the guerdon of our laughter, and it is not a thing to weep over, as we do when the case deserves it, but this is a solemn pleasure, the dialectic pleasure of beholding equilibrium. He cannot complain of us, for indeed we have made him great, and it is we gods alone, in fact, who see at the same moment his nothingness.”

The *quidam* of the experiment does not see it thus, for in his passion he holds fast by faith to the Deity, and in his own annihilation he does not see as I do the unity of the comic and the tragic, and no more than that, but he sees his own resuscitation, he sees himself fall, not before reality but by God's hand, and therefore resuscitated. Speaking religiously, I might express myself in a different way, even though I speak in what to me is a strange tongue: Providence, which is infinitely concerned about every man, endows an individual with uncommon powers of dealing with reality; "but then," says Providence, "lest he might occasion too much harm I confine this power in melancholy and thereby hide it from him. What he is capable of he shall never learn to know, but I want to make use of him. He shall not be humbled by any reality, to that extent he is treated with more partiality than other men, but in himself he shall be sensible of annihilation as other men are not sensible of it. First in that position, and only there, shall he understand me, but then also he shall be certain that it is I he understands." As an experimenter I can well understand this, but not otherwise, for I am not tranquillized by passion but by dispassionateness.

So then repentance has become dialectic for him and remains so, because he must wait to be informed by reality what wrong he has actually done. The dialectic reader will of course be able to adduce many examples of such dialectic repentance, I would merely suggest one. David has resolved that Uriah shall be got rid of by the crafty means the Bible records so that Bathsheba may be his. I assume that he has sent a messenger with secret orders to the commander of the forces, I assume that it takes a messenger three days to reach the camp. The historic reality is a matter of indifference in this case. What happens? When David the very night the messenger departed would seek repose in sleep he does not find it, but horror awakens, it grips him, and he sinks down in repentance — in the next paragraph comes "The Atonement." No, halt! That same instant David perceives that

it might yet be possible to prevent the murder. A swift messenger is sent out, and David remains behind. I assume that in this case five days are required for the return of the messenger. Five days — how much is that? Indeed it is not so much as a clause in the paragraph, at the most it is a particle, a “meanwhile” which is merely the beginning of a sentence. But five days might very well turn a man’s hair gray. After all, there is a great difference between having wanted to be a murderer and being one. David is now in dialectic suspense, and the experimenter who would describe his condition can have use for very many paragraphs. — Meanwhile everyone will easily see that this is a far easier case than that of my experiment. After all, David wished to make himself guilty of a murder, but the *quidam* of the experiment wished precisely to save life, inspired by pure sympathy he ventures the utmost, and, behold, he gets a murder upon his conscience, or rather he gets into the dialectic embarrassment here described. This also is more dialectic than David’s situation, because the comic element absolutely cannot emerge in David’s case. It might have been an alleviation for David if he had succeeded in preventing Uriah’s actual death, but a jest it never could have become. On the other hand, the *quidam* of the experiment may almost become ludicrous if he does not parry with the idea.

Here the dialectic form of repentance is this: he cannot get to the point of repenting, because it is as though it were still undetermined what he is to repent of; and he cannot find repose in repentance, because it is as though he ought constantly to be doing something, undoing what was done, if that were possible. The fact therefore that he yields to this is the demoniac trait in him; he ought to fix his attention merely upon the possibility and withdraw repentance from it entirely. Insofar as he is kept *in suspenso* for the first reason (that it is not yet determined what he is to repent of) he is ironic; insofar as it is for the other reason (that he constantly must be doing something) he is purely sympathetic. — There is still another factor, a third

factor, in his situation as a penitent. In the System a man repents once for all in § 17 and goes on to § 18. But for the existing man, if healing is to come about, the moment must arrive when one lets the act of repentance go. This for an instant has a deceptive resemblance to forgetfulness. But to forget one's guilt is a new sin. Here lies the difficulty. To hold the guilt fast is the passion of repentance, and proudly, enthusiastically, it disdains the prate of forgetfulness about the alleviation it offers, and its deep concern makes it suspicious of itself. And the *quidam* of the experiment even thinks that by holding on to the sense of guilt he does honor to the girl — a seductive thought precisely for the reason that she is pretty. To let go of repentance, to put it at a distance, so that one does not have it equally near every instant, is a necessity for healing. Such a dialectic labor of treading water is not noticed when everything goes off so smoothly as when § 18 follows upon or out of § 17.

SUPPLEMENT. A SIDE GLANCE AT SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET.

Börne has written a brief critical appreciation of *Hamlet?* It is only a concluding utterance of his which concerns me, and I do not know whether he attached as much importance to it as I do. In general, such writers as Börne, Heine, Feuerbach, etc., have great interest for an experimenter. They are for the most part very thoroughly informed about the religious, i.e. they know definitely that they want to have nothing to do with it. This is a great advantage over the "Systematic" writers who, without knowing in what the religious properly consists, undertake to explain it, at one moment deferentially, at another superciliously, but always incompetently. An unhappy, a jealous lover can know about love as well as a happy one, and so too one who is offended at the religious can in his way know about the religious just as well as the believer. Therefore, since our age furnishes few examples of men who in a great sense are believers, one has reason to be

glad that there are some right clever men who are scandalized at religion. If a person, wishing to have something definitely explained, is so fortunate as to find one man who in the seventeenth-century sense is a strict believer, and a scandalized man in the nineteenth century, who both say the same thing (that is, the one says, "It is thus and so, that I know full well, therefore I do not want it," and the other says, "Thus and so it is, therefore I believe it," and these "thus and sos" agree completely), then one can confidently bring his observations to a conclusion. Two such consonant witnesses are more trustworthy than such as lawyers deal with.

Börne says of "Hamlet,"

"It is a Christian drama." This to my thinking is a peculiarly good observation. I would alter it only by saying "a religious drama," and then would say that its fault is, not that it is a religious drama, but that it did not remain such to the end, or rather that it ought not to be drama at all. If Shakespeare will not give Hamlet religious postulates which conspire against him to produce religious doubt (wherewith the drama should properly end), then Hamlet is essentially a victim of morbid reserve, and the aesthetic demands a comic interpretation. His great plan of being the avenger ("to whom vengeance belongeth," says Hamlet) he has conceived. In case one does not see him at the same instant sink under the weight of this plan (wherewith the scene becomes introspective and his unpoetic scruples, viewed psychologically, are a remarkable form of dialectic repentance, inasmuch as repentance comes as it were too early) — if this does not take place, one demands resolute action, for he has only to deal with outward circumstances where the poet puts no difficulties in his way. If the plan holds good, Hamlet is a dawdler who doesn't know how to act; if the plan does not hold good, he is a sort of self-tormentor who torments himself for and by wanting to be something great — and neither of these alternatives is tragic. Rötscher quite rightly regards Hamlet as a case of

morbid reflection. Rötscher's explanation is capital, and it has at the same time another interest for one who wishes to see how even "Systematic" writers are compelled to employ existence-categories.

If Hamlet is kept in purely aesthetic categories, one must see to it that he has demoniac strength to carry out such a resolution. His scruples are in this case of no interest at all; his procrastination and delay, his postponement and his self-deceitful pleasure in renewing his purpose when at the same time there is no outward hindrance, merely abase him, so that he does not become an aesthetic hero, and so becomes nothing at all. If he is conceived religiously, his scruples have great interest, they insure that he is a religious hero. People have sometimes had an entirely external conception of the religious hero; especially in the Middle Ages, for example, there lived perhaps many a man who had for the Church the same enthusiasm a Roman had for his country and became a tragic hero for the sake of the Church as the Roman did for his country, and then was regarded as a religious hero. That is, by the help of purely aesthetic categories he passed his final religious examination. No, the religious is in the interior, and therefore in this case scruples have essential importance.

If Hamlet were to be interpreted religiously, one would either have to let him conceive the plan and then let the religious doubt take it from him, or else (the alternative which to my thinking illustrates better the religious, for in the first case there might possibly be mingled also doubt as to whether in reality he was capable of carrying out the plan) one must bestow upon him demoniac strength to carry out his plan resolutely and vigorously and then let him collapse within himself in the religious experience, until he should there find peace. A drama can of course never be made out of this, a poet cannot use this theme, which would have to begin with the last phase and let the first glimmer through it.

About a single point one may have a doubt, a difference of opinion, and yet agree with one opinion which has been the opinion of one, two and three centuries, that Shakespeare stands unapproached — in spite of the progress the world is supposed to have made — and that one can learn from him, and learn the more the more one reads him.

§ 5. ABOUT THE HERO. ABOUT SUFFERING. TRAGEDY WOULD PURIFY THE PASSIONS BY FEAR AND PITY. THAT THE PITY OF THE SPECTATORS VARIES IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE VARIOUS WORLD-VIEWS.

The aesthetic hero is great for the fact that he *conquers,* the religious hero is great for the fact that he *suffers.* It is true that the tragic hero also suffers, but in such a way that he at the same time triumphs in the outward world. It is this triumph which exalts the spectator, whereas he has tears for the dying man. If the *quidam* of the experiment were to have been a kind of aesthetic hero, he must have been such in a demoniac sense (in the direction towards evil), and he might thus have become a hero; for the aesthetic is not so material that it essentially gives attention only to the shedding of blood or the number of murders in order to determine accordingly whether one is a hero. It has regard essentially to passion, only it is unable, because it is not emancipated from the external, to press on to that merely qualitative act of determination which is reserved for the religious, where a farthing counts for just as much as empires and kingdoms. If then he were to have been a hero, he must have acted by virtue of this reflection: "I see the idea of my existence brought to naught by this girl, *ergo* she must be got rid of, over her destruction passes my path to a great goal." It is not at all difficult to construct for him one or another splendid ideal which he would desire to realize. One might then see him attain the goal and see the world-order bring upon him a nemesis. Above all he must be egotistically sure of

himself, and this, one would perceive, accounted for his intrepidity and explained how it was he became supernatural — not like the religious man who becomes so by making sacrifices, but as the man who is demoniac in the direction of evil becomes so by demanding sacrifices. But above all he must not be, as in the experiment he actually is, a sympathetic nature, for then the aesthetic cannot comprehend his collision; and above all he must not, as in the experiment, regard it as a matter of prime importance that he manages to suffer more than she does and is assured, as he wishes to be, that even the step he takes will not be the girl's destruction but his own. The *quaedam* of the experiment lies essentially within the aesthetic sphere. The uncommon qualities which constitute an aesthetic heroine would in this case be: to have within herself sufficient ideality to hold fast to love, and through this strength which preserved love to be raised to something extraordinary and so to constitute herself a nemesis upon him. A girl of such quality of course I could not use in the experiment, where the important thing is to illuminate him and have the unity of the comic and the tragic as law for the construction. I chose therefore a girl of a more ordinary sort. His sympathetic nature has to be illuminated from all sides, and hence I had to have a feminine figure which is able to make the whole situation as dialectic as possible for him, and among other things is capable of putting him to the torture of seeing her, as he expresses it, break with the idea, although after all she does nothing more (if she does that) but to get for herself, *sine ira et studio* and without loss of her loveliness, a new cavalier for the dance of life. For if a person cannot get the one, then a person takes the other, without making any fuss about ideas, and precisely for this reason remains lovable. Such an event anybody could have foretold to him, but in his case that does no good. Of course like every girl she had the possibility of becoming something great, and there were moments during their engagement when I expected I might be able to bow before her in

reverence. For I who am an observer, and hence *poetice et eleganter* a sort of public watchman, have great joy in bowing and have never envied Napoleon his greatness but have on the other hand envied the two chamberlains who opened the door for him their good fortune of being the only ones to throw open the folding doors, bow profoundly, and announce, "The Emperor!" For the sake of her relationship to the experiment I could not represent her thus, and it is in proportional relationships I find my dialect satisfaction. How they chanced to begin, the fatality which compelled each of them, is not my interest. The moment I went into that I should be essentially influenced by his passion, and that would be the end of my equilibrium. As soon as I put passion aside and regard each one separately and the fate of each, I must say of *him* that he is the one who suffered most. He it was who began it and by beginning it offended her, inasmuch as he did not comprehend the specific peculiarity of a feminine existence. He began it, and hence his suffering was deserved. About *her* I must say that she is the one to whom life does the greatest injustice in the experiment, inasmuch as in having to do with him she always appears in a false light from the moment he prevents her by the deceit from expressing what sympathy there may well have been in her. Do what she will, even though she were to choose to remain true to him, a comic light falls upon her because she has her existence in the deceit. This injustice he feels acutely, yet he behaves with sympathetic passion from his point of view, and it is one of the sources of his suffering that from his standpoint he does his utmost and yet does the maddest thing, because they have no standpoint in common, are not adjacent angles. Neither from his standpoint nor from hers is there any give and take: on the one hand feminine loveliness, charm — on the other spiritual existence by virtue of the dialectic. His most desperate efforts are of no avail, do not bridge the disparity, for feminine loveliness makes a claim which demands precisely what he lacks. In this his

suffering consists. On the other hand, the opposite point of view might be maintained, that in relationship to feminine loveliness a spiritual existence by virtue of the dialectic might ask like the mathematician, "What does that prove?" This, however, he does not do, for he is not in equilibrium of spirit but in passion, and therefore concerns himself about the first (her legitimate claim) and chooses here his suffering.

Of suffering he has a plenty; but the aesthetic, by reason of the externality which is its element, has its own thoughts about suffering. Aesthetics says quite rightly that suffering itself has no significance and no interest, and only when suffering is related to the idea is it concerned with it. This is an incontrovertible truth, and hence it is quite right of aesthetics to reject such sufferings as toothache and gout. But when aesthetics has to explain to itself more precisely what it means to be related to the idea, it again must become evident, as was shown incidentally in § i, that it is only an immediate relationship which concerns aesthetics, in other words, that suffering must come from without, be visible, not having its origin and expression in the individual himself. Accordingly this view has been ably presented by accomplished writers on aesthetics and has become common property, accessible even to the lowliest newspaper scribbler, that not every suffering has aesthetic interest, for example, sickness has not.

This is altogether right, and the result of such reflections is that the aesthetic hero by reason of his quantitative differentiation must preeminently be in possession of the requisites for conquering, must be in good health, in full vigor, etc., so that the difficulty comes from without.

I recall a little polemic which was carried on in Germany where the one side appealed to the Greeks and the Greek aesthetic against a play in which someone had used blindness as a tragic motif, and the other side replied by appealing to the *Aedipos* of Sophocles. Perhaps the appeal might have been made with more reason to the "Philoktet," which in a way constitutes an

exception to the universal aesthetic rule, yet in such a way that it cannot by any means upset it but rather must itself fall.

This then is an established fact for aesthetics. When I now take leave of aesthetics I do away with its externality but retain the just principle, that only such suffering has interest as stands in relation to the idea. This remains true to all eternity. When a relationship to the idea is not visible in suffering, it must be rejected in the aesthetic field and condemned in the religious. But since the religious is only qualitatively dialectic and is commensurable for everything, and equally commensurable, every suffering may therefore *eo ipso* acquire interest, precisely for the reason that everyone may acquire a relationship to the idea.

A great deal has been said about poetry reconciling one with existence; rather it might be said that it arouses one against existence; for poetry is unjust to men by reason of its quantitative estimate, it has use only for the elect, but that is a poor sort of reconciliation. I will take the case of sickness. Aesthetics replies proudly and quite consistently, “That cannot be employed, poetry must not become a hospital.” That is quite right, so it must be, and it is only a bungler who would attempt to treat such subjects aesthetically. In this situation when people have no religion they are in a dilemma. Aesthetics culminates in the end by regarding sickness in accordance with the principle enunciated by Friederick Schlegel: “Nur Gesundheit ist liebenswürdig.” So too poetry must speak (when compelled to make answer to people — though the people are at fault in compelling it, as will be indicated later); if it would not degenerate into snivel and whining drama, it must say, “Wealth alone is lovable, or it is the *conditio sine qua non* of making use of my figures — unless I were to compose an idyl, but even here it is not poverty.”

It is true that poetry, hospitable and kindly as it is, invites everyone to lose himself in it, and in this way to be reconciled, but nevertheless it posits

distinctions and concerns itself only with the privileged sufferings, and thus demands more of the man who is tried by the unprivileged sufferings of life, requires of him more strength in order to lose himself in poetry. And with this poetry has already undermined itself, for it cannot be denied that he who is able to lose himself in poetry in spite of the unprivileged sufferings is greater than he who does the same thing but does not suffer in the same wray, and yet poetry must say that it does not find such a person a fit subject for its treatment, notwithstanding he is great.

So soon as one takes leave of poetry, which like a friendly power of divine origin is far from wishing to offend anyone and does its best to reconcile, so soon as I transport the aesthetic principle from the securely hedged meadows of poetry into the field of reality such a principle as that health alone is lovable is simply that of a despicable man. Such a man is despicable because he is devoid of sympathy, and because he is cowardly in his egoism.

In this dilemma, when what one has learned from poetry does not reconcile one with reality, the religious makes its appearance and says, "Every suffering is commensurable for the idea and so soon as the idea is present it has interest, otherwise it is culpable, and that through the sufferer's own fault. Whether the suffering consisted in not being able to see one's great plans realized or in being a hunchback, has nothing whatever to do with the case; whether it consisted in being deceived by a faithless lover or in being so unhappily deformed that even a good man cannot refrain from laughing when he sees it and no one therefore could fall in love with it, has nothing whatever to do with the case."

Thus it is that I as an experimenter have understood the religious. But what is the idea-relationship here in question? Naturally it is a God-relationship. Suffering is in the individual himself, he is no aesthetic hero, and the relationship is with God. But here we must draw the rein, for

otherwise the religious becomes so mettlesome that it goes straight to the opposite extreme and says, “The lame, the cripples, the poor are my heroes, not the privileged classes,” which would be unmerciful of the religious, which yet is mercy itself.

That such is the case with suffering as viewed from the religious standpoint I know from the fact that I can confront two men who say the same identical thing. Feuerbach, who pays homage to the principle of healthy-mindedness, says that the religious existence (more particu larly the Christian) is a constant history of suffering; he begs us merely to consider Pascal’s life, and that is sufficient. Pascal says exactly the same thing: “Suffering is the natural state of the Christian, just as health is that of the ‘natural’ man”; and he was a Christian and spoke out of his own experience.

A passion narrative also stands in relation to a reader, just as the aesthetic production does. (Only take notice of the dialectic difficulties which were emphasized in § 3 and brought to mind in the form of the experiment). About the relation of tragedy to the auditor we have the word of Aristotle the father of aesthetics: δι’’*ελεον και φόρου περαίνουσα την των τοιοντων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. J*ust as in the foregoing passage I removed from aesthetics is externality and retained in the religious sphere its principle, so too may these words be retained, but they must be understood more precisely. Aristotle’s meaning is clear enough. He assumes emotional susceptibility on the part of the auditor, and tragedy stimulates this by *φόβος* and, but this in turn takes away the egoistic from the individual thus affected, so that he loses himself in the suffering of the hero, forgetting himself in him. Without fear and pity he would be sitting like a clod in the theater, but if he gets no further than to fear for himself, he sits there as an unworthy auditor.

This is not difficult to understand, but it is already implied here that the fear and pity must be of a definite sort, and that not everyone who knows

fear and pity is able to behold a tragedy. The purely “natural” man has no fear at all for that about which the poet is concerned, so he feels at the play neither fear nor sympathy. Let him see a man walk a tightrope between the towers of Rosenborg Castle, and then he will fear, or with a man who is hung he will feel sympathy. The spectator of tragedy must have an eye also for the idea, then he sees the poetic, and his fear and pity are purified of all egoistic ingredients.

But the religious man has a different conception of what awakens fear, and therefore his sympathy is in another place. The aesthetic man is not concerned with sickness and poverty, he has no sympathy for these sufferings, he feels no solidarity with them, as Borne somewhere says, he himself is in sound health and does not wish to hear about sickness. But all healing art, that of poetry as well as that of religion, is only for the sick, since it is exercised through fear and pity. The last clause Börne should not have uttered, for in this case the aesthetic is already qualified by relation to reality, and so it is narrow-mindedness or obduracy not to be willing to know anything of it. When the aesthetic is confined to its pure ideality, one has nothing to do with such things, that is true, and the poet offends no one. It is a mistake therefore on the part of the religious man to be angry with poetry, for poetry is and remains lovable. With the spectator the case is different when he is aware that such things exist. It is of course stupidity or cowardly obduracy to wish to be unaware that poverty and sickness exist because for one’s own part one is in good health; for even if the poet does not point this out, yet anyone who has thought two healthy thoughts about existence knows that the next instant he may be in this case. It is not wrong of the spectator to want to lose himself in poetry, this is a joy which has its reward, but the spectator must not mistake the theater for reality, nor himself for a spectator who is nothing else but a spectator at a comedy.

Fear and pity again are operative in the religious sphere to purify these passions. But here the fear has become different, and so also has pity. The poet does not want the spectator to fear what vulgar men fear, and he teaches him to fear fate and to pity the man who suffers under it — yet the object of this pity must be great and quantitatively conspicuous.

The religious man begins at another place, he would teach the auditor not to fear fate, not to be absorbed in pity for him who falls before it. All such things have for him acquired less importance, and hence too he sees, as the aesthetic man does not, all men, great and small, equally exposed to the blows of fate. But then he says, "What thou art to fear is guilt, and thy pity must be for him who falls in this way, for only this is danger. Yet thy pity must not run wild, so that for concern about any other man thou dost forget thyself." He will teach the auditor to sorrow, as does the parish clerk, a lowly servitor under orders, a humbly proud right reverend high priest when with inward emotion he proclaims "that we should sorrow for our sins" — a thing which of course the parish clerk would not dare to say to his reverend superiors, the Docents in the pulpit. Fear and pity are to be aroused by the matter presented, and these passions also should be purified from egoism, not however by absorbing oneself in contemplation, but by finding within oneself a God-relationship. For the poet says, "This is egoism, that in seeing the tragic hero thou canst not forget the blow of fate which struck thee; this is egoism, that in seeing the hero thou dost become as timid as a tailor who dreads to go home."— "But to dwell upon thine own guilt," says the religious man, to fear for thine own guilt, is not egoism, for precisely thereby is man in a God-relationship!" Fear and pity are for the religious man a different thing, and they are purified not by turning one's mind outward but by turning it inward. The aesthetic healing consists in the fact that the individual by gazing dizzily into the aesthetic disappears from his own eyes like an atom, like a mote, which is simply part and parcel of

man’s lot in general, the lot of all mankind, disappears like an infinitely small element of sound in the spherical harmony of existence. The religious healing consists on the contrary in transforming the world and the centuries and the successive generations and the millions of contemporary men to an evanescent distraction, in transforming jubilation and acclaim and aesthetic hero-worship to a disturbing distraction, the notion of being “finished,” to a juggler’s illusion, so that the only thing remaining is the individual himself, the single individual, placed in his God-relationship under the rubric: Guilty?/Not guilty?

Such is the religious position, according to the results I have reached as an experimenter. But for my own part I do not see it thus, for in the relation between the aesthetic and the religious I see again the unity of the comic and the tragic which the two of them constitute when they are brought together. Thus in poverty I see the tragedy that an immortal soul suffers, and the comedy that it all turns on two shillings. I go no farther than the unity of the comic and the tragic in the equilibrium of life. I have a surmise that if I were to go farther and were to begin upon the religious, I should get into the difficulty of discovering that it was doubtful whether I am not guilty — hence I keep out of it. I am not one who is offended at the religious, far from it, but neither am I religious. The religious interests me as a phenomenon, and as the phenomenon which interests me most. Hence it is not for the sake of men in general but for my own sake I am sorry to see religiousness disappearing, because I want to have material for my observations. This I do not hesitate to say, and moreover I have plenty of time to make observations on the religious, for an observer always has time enough. It is different with the religious man. When he talks it is only a monologue. Being concerned solely about himself, he talks aloud — that is what preaching is. If there is somebody listening, he knows nothing of his relationship to this man, except this, that he owes him nothing, for what he

has to accomplish is to save himself. Such a right reverend monologue, which bears witness in a Christian way when by its emotion it moves the speaker, the witness-bearer, because he is speaking about himself, is what is called a sermon. World-historical perspectives, systematic results, gesticulation and wiping the sweat from the brow, strength of voice and vigor of fist, along with the deliberate employment of the same in order to *accomplish* something, are aesthetic reminiscences which do not know even how to accentuate properly fear and pity in the Aristotelian sense. For world-historical perspectives are no more apt to arouse fear than are systematic results, and strength of voice does not shake the soul, and pounding the pulpit and wiping away the sweat arouse at the most only sensuous pity for the sweater. A religious orator who is not moved within himself and talking about himself but about everything else is thinking of Geert Westphaler. Geert could talk about everything, knew much, and was very perfectable, so that he might perhaps have reached the point of knowing everything, one only thing he did not learn to know, that he himself was a *Schwätzer.* Yet Geert is blameless, for he did not give himself out to be a religious orator.

The religious orator who through fear and pity purifies these passions does not perform the amazing exploit of rending the clouds asunder in the course of his address, so as to display the heavens opened, the Judgment Day at hand, with hell in the background, himself and the elect triumphing — he performs the more simple, the more artless, the more lowly feat, which one would think so very easy: he lets the heavens stay closed, recognizes in fear and trembling that he himself is not “finished,” and he bows his head while the discourse pronounces judgment upon thought and heart. He does not perform the amazing exploit which upon his next appearance might give him a claim to be hailed with acclamation, he does not thunder with the intent that the congregation might at least be kept

awake and might be saved by *his* discourse — he performs the more simple, the more artless, the more lowly feat, which one might think so very easy: he lets God keep the thunder and the might and the glory; he talks in such a way that though everything were to go amiss he is sure nevertheless that there is one auditor who is seriously moved.. the speaker himself, that though everything were to go amiss there was nevertheless one auditor who went home fortified... the speaker himself, that though everything were to go amiss and everybody were to stay away there was nevertheless one who in the difficult complications of life longed for the edifying moment of the address... the speaker himself. He is not lavish in dispensing the abundance of the mouth and of information, but is niggardly in his use of the funds of edification, providing economically that the admonitions obligate him before they go on to somebody else, that the comfort and truth do not depart from him... in order to be communicated the more lavishly. “Hence,” says the religious man, “wert thou to see him all by himself in a lonely place, forsaken of all and convinced that he had accomplished nothing by talking, though thou wert to see him there, thou wouldst see him just as deeply moved as ever, if thou wert to hear his discourse, thou wouldst find it as powerful as ever, without deceit, without calculation, without striving after effect, thou wouldst comprehend that there was one person whom it must edify... the speaker himself. He will not grow weary of talking; for attorneys and orators who have a worldly aim, or a worldly sense of self-importance with relation to an eternal aim, grow weary when they cannot count upon their fingers what they accomplish, if existence does not cunningly deceive them with the illusion that they are accomplishing something, but the religious orator has always as his principal aim.. the orator himself.

So it is (as I have convinced myself by experimentation) that the religious man would work through fear and pity for the ennobling of these passions. Every other way of going about it brings things to confusion by

proposing semi-aesthetic categories: by making the orator aesthetically self-important, and by helping the auditors to become dizzy by losing themselves in something universal.

SUPPLEMENT. THE SELF-INFLICTED SUFFERINGS — SELF-TORTURE.

Viewed aesthetically, every heautontimorumenos is comic. Different ages produce different types of this ailment. Our age does not fall behind in this respect, for it is as though the whole generation were worrying itself with the fixed idea that it is called to some extraordinary task, as if at any instant there might come a delegation from the council of the gods with a summons to take their place in the assembly; for so much is certain, that being confidentially charged with looking after the future of the whole human race, it is as though every instant, like Hermann v. Bremenfeldt, it must be up and off to whisper in God’s ear what is the right thing for Him to do. And how deplorable it was too that Hermann v. Bremenfeldt never got a chance to talk with the Kurfürst of Saxony! It has, moreover, like all who suffer from fixed ideas, a great propensity to see espionage, persecution, everywhere, and just as rheumatic people notice drafts on all sides, so does it notice pressure everywhere, the abuse of power, and it knows how to explain in a way satisfactory to itself the feeble evidences of life in public spirit, not by the fact that its strength is only superficial and imaginary, but by the pretense that it is cowed by the governments, pretty much as when an idle busybody explains why he gets nothing accomplished all day, not by the fact that he is idle, but by the many affairs which overwhelm him. But enough of this.

Precisely because it is aesthetically correct to say that all self-torment is comic, one is psychologically justified in using the comic probe before treating self-torment by another method. Of course one does not at once get

the patient to laugh at his fixed idea, but by the employment of analogies one approaches nearer and nearer. If he laughs easily and heartily, one may be able perhaps to take him off his guard. How the method is carried out in detail can only be understood in actual practice, but in practice there is nothing more ludicrous than to see religious categories employed with profound and stupid seriousness where one ought to employ aesthetic categories with humor and jest. — The *quidam* of the experiment has, without knowing it, gone about the thing very correctly. With prodigious passion he conceives the plan of making his whole love-relationship appear a prank in the girl's eyes. What I have to laugh at from my standpoint is his prodigious passion — apart from this he is in the right. Danger to life is not always at hand because a person cries, "Murder!" If the *quaedam* of the experiment had been suffering tragically, she would have prevented him from getting an opportunity to employ the deceit. She would have collected herself within herself and held back. These are always the dangerous phenomena. Instead of that she went directly to the opposite extreme by opening her mouth as wide as possible and tormenting herself by wanting to be an unhappy lover on a big scale. But precisely this indicates that a comic treatment is correct; for a woman who is an unhappy lover on a big scale keeps silent. If she had been depicted in religious categories, she would not have acted as she did in that case she would have feared for herself, and therefore would have feared most the responsibility she incurred by making the thing as difficult for him as possible, not only by her personality, but by an erotic fraud which lays an attachment upon the ethical and the sense of duty. — If the *quidam* of the experiment had understood with equilibrium of spirit what he was doing, he would have been quite a different man. But his troubled passion made him tragic in the employment of the deceit, and I see the unity of the comic and the tragic precisely in the fact that he does the right thing, but not for the reason he supposes, namely, that in his

sympathetic enthusiasm he might have strength to tear away from her a real love-attachment. No, the comic thing is that his tragic foolhardiness triumphed for the reason that her love-attachment does not draw many fathoms of water.

The reason why the aesthetic consistently treats all self-torment as comic can be easily perceived, just because it is logically consistent. Aesthetics keeps the hero in an undamaged state by reason of the direct proportion between strength and suffering (the one within, the other from without). It therefore regards every inward direction of thought as desertion, and not being able to have the deserter shot it makes him ridiculous.

I now leave the aesthetic and go on to the religious. As an experimenter I merely set the categories in motion in order to behold at my ease what they require, without concerning myself with the question whether anybody has done it or can do it, whether Tom let it alone because he was weak, Dick because he was too shrewd, Harry because he saw that the others let it alone and that he also could let it alone and become loved and esteemed, seeing that he didn't want to be better than others — in short, without believing the life insurance wisdom, the gist of which is that when one sheep goes to the water the other does too, what the one ass does the other does too.

The religious does not consist in a direct proportion between strength and suffering, but in the inwardness where man relates himself to himself. The fact that "self" is emphasized here suffices to show that in the religious sphere self-torment is regarded differently, but it does not suffice, says the religious, to justify the fact that individuals who have their whole existence in the aesthetic jumble things up and that the religious orators, in spite of all their phrases and holy words, have no pure categories.

If self-torment as viewed aesthetically is comic, as viewed religiously it is culpable. A religious healing of this ailment is not attained by laughter but by repentance, by the recognition that self-torture is a sin like other sins.

But whereas the aesthetic, precisely because it has nothing to do with the inward, universally dismisses self-torment as comic, the religious is unable to do the same. The fear of the religious individual is precisely fear of and for himself; the religious healing consists first and chiefly in awakening this fear, and from this one can easily see that the thing becomes more difficult. But how does the individual manage to fear himself without *by himself* discovering the danger in which he is? A crafty religiosity, I admit, goes about the thing in a different way. It says, "One must not court danger, our Lord can easily send it when it is needed." That is easily said, but it will not do to say amen and end with that, for the saying is ambiguous. In spite of the religious expression, "our Lord" (instead of which one might prefer to say "our Saviour" in order to speak more religiously, as though the religious consisted in certain words and phrases) — in spite of this the categories are half aesthetic. Although the saying sounds religious, the individual is viewed only in an external relationship to God, not in an inward relationship to himself. The saying comes about to this: "Our Lord can well bring danger and misery to thy house, indeed He can take away thy fortune, thy loved one, thy child, and He will surely do this when it is serviceable to thee — *ergo,* since He has not done this, there is no danger." This is aesthetics with a spurious religious gilding.

Religiously viewed the greatest danger is that a man does not discover, is not always discovering, that he is in danger, even if he had money and the handsomest girl and lovely children and was king of the land or one of the simple folks free from all care.

That, as I have remarked, is easily said, but one must not say amen and end there, for then one deceives. This is evident when one considers the speech more closely. Here then we have a man, a perfect Pamphilius of fortune (this name is admirably suited to such a religious speech), tenderly nursed and coddled, without having acquaintance with fear, who is edified

by the consideration that our Lord... if. Oh, what a lucky favorite of the aesthetic, who in addition to aesthetic *Heiterkeit* obtains a religious guarantee! Every man, however, has to start with a thing called imagination; so then our lucky man learns by hearsay of the existence of poverty and misery in the world. So then he is willing to give and be praised for it. But imagination is not satisfied by this. It depicts to him suffering in the most terrible forms, and at the instant when it is most terrible of all the thought strikes him and a voice says to him, “This might also happen to thee.” If he has any chivalrous blood in him he says, “Why should I be exempted any more than others?” (Tieck has dealt with this theme somewhere in a novel, where a rich young man despairs over his riches, not in spleen, but out of sympathy for men.) The speech had nothing to say about this, and yet here lies the boundary between the aesthetic obduracy which would know nothing about the existence of misery, and the religious exaltation through suffering. About their being such a parting of the ways, that one does not buy oneself off by paying the poor-rate and giving a little something besides, nothing is said in the speech — and our Pamphilius ought to be joyous until our Lord, if it were to be found needful, might send danger. What is the orator doing here? He is deceiving. Instead of getting him launched into danger, he helps him to hide from life in a religious illusion. Every effort to obstruct receptivity for the fact that one is in danger is aesthetically misleading in the direction, not of poetry, but of aestheticism as it is when it has relation to reality, that is, it leads to hardening of the heart.

In case the speaker is rather more of a religious orator, he moves with ease in this difficulty and helps the hearer into it. He talks with light religious humor about fate and reverses of fortune — our lucky Pamphilius becomes a bit apprehensive, and the orator has not deceived him. Then he edifies by referring to the security of faith, and in his enthusiasm the

religious orator shouts to himself and to the other, “A religious man is always joyful.” This is the proudest word uttered anywhere in the world, in case it is true that no one, no one upon earth or in heaven, knows so well what danger is, and what it is to be in danger, as does the religious man, who knows that he is always in danger. He therefore who can say in one breath that he is always in danger and always joyful utters at once the most disconsolate and the most high-spirited word that can be uttered. And I who am only an observer, *poetice et eleganter* a public watchman, count myself fortunate in venturing to bow before such a man; but, to speak of myself in my categories, I would say that, if the gods have denied me the great gift, that which is infinitely higher than all I am capable of, they have bestowed upon me a far more than ordinary sagacity in sizing people up, so that I neither take off my hat before I see the man, nor take it off before the wrong person.

There is many a man who has always been merry and yet stands so low that even aesthetics regards him as comic. The question is whether he has not been joyful in the wrong place. And where is the right place? It is... in danger, above seventy thousand fathoms of water, many, many miles from all human help, there to be joyful — that is great! To swim in shallow water along with the bathers is not the religious.

It is now easily seen what the religious must mean by self-torment. The thing is to discover *by oneself* the whole possibility of danger, and *by oneself* to discover every instant its reality (this the aesthetic man would call self-torment, and the aesthetic lecture with spurious religious gilding would keep one from it), but the thing is at the same instant to be joyful. In what then does self-torment consist? It consists in halting halfway. It does not consist therefore in the first stage above mentioned, but it consists in the fact that one is not able to press through to joy. And this is not comic, says the religious, nor does it exist in order to draw aesthetic tears, for it is

culpable, and one *shall* press through. Everyone who does not get through is himself to blame for it. Here there are no hardhearted fathers as for the unhappy lover in the plays, there is not the superior force of the enemy before which the hero falls in the tragedy, here there is no betrayal by the person one trusted most, so that the man of distinction is caught in the trap, here there is only one who can be the betrayer... the man himself, and next to him, but infinitely far behind, the orator who would lead one to leave it alone, whereas the one and only thing he can do is to help one to get out upon the deep where there are seventy thousand fathoms of water, and when this has come to pass and he perceives that he can do no more, can render no further help to one whom he loves more dearly than his life (as one is able to love in the fable of the play), but only discovers in this distress that he himself has one hundred and forty thousand fathoms under him, there is, however, one thing he still can do, he can shout to the loved one, "In case thou dost not become joyful, know thou, know thou assuredly that it is thine own fault."'

Even though it be the opinion of many (supposing they were to give attention to what is here set forth) that such an orator must be regarded as a public nuisance, and that it would be the silliest thing of all to pay him for making one unhappy, yet this is not my opinion. Gladly would I pay him, and unembarrassed I would accept pay for it, if I could be such as he, but not with the understanding that I was rewarding him or being rewarded, because money is incommensurable with such instruction, and it is not of so much worth that one ought, as Socrates did, to lay accent upon it by not being willing to receive it.

So much for self-torture. It is extremely simple, everyone knows it; and precisely in this I see again the unity of the comic and the tragic, when I consider that *everyone* knows what a man *is,* and I the observer know what everyone is. For this is not aesthetic-comic for the reason that it is more

than a direct proportion (for the comic consists in the disproportion between an imaginary possibility and reality). Dietrich Menschenschreck is comic because his courage is an imaginary possibility and therefore dissolves his reality into nothingness. But the possibility here in question is a real possibility; man can, says religion, become the highest because he is planned for the highest. It is tragic that he is not this, but comic that he is this nevertheless, for that possibility planned by God Himself cannot be obliterated. Thus everyone knows that a man is immortal, the "observer" knows what everyone *is,* and yet everyone is and remains immortal. So the man's immortality was no imaginary possibility like the courage of D. Menschenschreck; and on the other hand, he who in all the terrors of time and custom, and in spite of their cunning, keeps the faith in immortality ever present to him does not become more immortal than every other man.

The *quidam* of the experiment is something of a self-tormentor. His first movement is good and correct, but he remains absorbed in the outcome, he does not get back quickly enough to joy in order to repeat this movement again. However that moment in which I have depicted him is also his crisis, it may perhaps go easier with him in case he is sensible enough to regard a whole life as appropriately spent in such a course of instruction, is ready to put up with being a dawdler among those who are quickly "finished," a backward child among those who go infinitely further. — That the girl assists him to get out upon the deep there can be no doubt, and viewed from my standpoint his whole relationship to her is a fortunate relationship. For the man is always fortunate in love who gets a girl who is precisely calculated to develop him. Thus Socrates was happily married to Xantippe. In the whole of Greece he would not have found her match; for that ancient grand-master of irony had need of such as she in order to develop himself. Hence if Xantippe has often had to hear herself ill spoken of in the world, I believe on the contrary that she has the triumph of asserting that the

supreme head of irony, who rises head and shoulders above the mass of mankind, owed no one so much as he owed to Xantippe's housekeeping, the arena in which Socrates maintained ironically his disputation *pro sumis in ironia honoribus* and thereby disputed himself into the ironic competence and equipoise by which he overcame the world. — So likewise is this girl perfectly suited to him, as was required in the experiment. She is lovable enough to move him, but weak enough to abuse her power over him. The first of these qualities binds him, the last helps him to get out upon the deep, but also saves him. If the girl had been more characterized by spirit and less by feminine loveliness, if she had been very magnanimous, she would have said to him as he sat pursuing his deceit, "My dear, thy cunning distresses me. I do not understand thee, and I do not know whether thou art frivolous enough to want to desert me, or whether thou art hiding something from me and art perhaps better than it seems. But be this as it may, I perceive that thou must have thy freedom; I am fearful on my own account if I were not to give it to thee, and I love thee too dearly to refuse it to thee. So take it, without any reproaches, without anger between us, without thanks on thy part, but with the consciousness on my part that I have done the best I could." If this had come to pass, he would have been crushed, he would have sunk to the ground in shame, for with his passion he can endure all evil treatment when he knows that he is the better one, but he would not have been able to forget that he was a debtor to such magnanimity, the greatness of which he would discover with demoniac keenness of sight. This would have been an injustice to him, for from his standpoint he too had meant well. In the experiment he is not humbled by a human hand but by God.

He who has inclination and capacity to calculate experimentally with categories without having need of a theatrical scene, meadows, many personages, "and then some cows," will perceive how many new

constructions might be made at this point by altering him or her a little to see what would follow for him and for her, how he might have been altered so as to crush her (if, e.g., he had cruelly made her responsible for his life and perhaps terrified her so that she never got over it), as in the experiment he is quite unable to do; or how both might have been constructed with a view to both of them being crushed (if, e.g., he had not had religious postulates and perhaps, being driven to despair by his pride, had ended by celebrating their union with a suicide), instead of both being helped as they are.

Readers of romances of course make other and greater demands. They think that when everything turns upon two people it must be tiresome, as indeed it is if it does not also turn upon the categories. If the categories are involved, one person alone can be entertaining, and 6,477, 378,875 people couldn't turn upon more than the categories. A reader of romances is of course only interested when there is something doing, as one says on seeing a riot. But suppose now that the riot turned upon nothing, then after all there was nothing doing.

§ 6. TO REPENT NOTHING IS THE HIGHEST WISDOM. — THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

In conformity with such negative rules of conduct as, to admire nothing, to expect nothing, etc., we have the negative rule, to repent nothing, or (if one would prefer to use another word which perhaps ethically has not so disturbing an effect) to regret nothing. The secret of this wisdom really lies in the fact that they have embellished an aesthetic principle to make it look like an ethical principle. Aesthetically understood it is quite true from the ethical point of view that the free and noble spirit should not set so much store by the aesthetic in all its compass that it regrets anything. So if one has become poor, it is said rightly that to regret nothing is the highest wisdom,

which means, to act in virtue of the ethical. This principle then means, to cut the bridge of the past behind one, in order to be able constantly to act at the instant. If with the best deliberation thou hast conceived a plan, and the outcome seems to show that the plan was a poor one, then the thing is to regret nothing and to act in virtue of the ethical. It is undeniable that much time is wasted in this world by such a looking backward, and to that extent the principle may be praiseworthy.

But if the plan was not made with the best deliberation, if there was fraud in it, what then? Is it then also the proper thing to regret nothing in order to suffer no delay? It depends upon what delay one might be fearful of. In case it is delay and prevention from sinking deeper and deeper that one fears, then the best thing would be to shout, "to regret nothing," and to understand the word of the poet, nulla palescere culpa as inculcating the impudence which does not blush at guilt; but then the principle is in the highest degree unethical. There are, however, many men who dash through life with the haste of dread. There is nothing they fear more than the dialectic, and when they say, "to repent nothing" with reference to the past, they might with as much justification say, "to deliberate nothing" with reference to the future. So it is not without wit that a cunning fellow in one of Scribe's comedies says that as he had never made any plan, neither had he suffered the distress of seeing it fail. Womenfolk also often act thus without deliberation — and come out of it very well. In another way a wise man sometimes acts without deliberation and by force of despair to attain his end. When one is stumped by something and does not know which way to turn, when everything has become deadly relative as if one were being smothered, it may be expedient to act suddenly at a single point merely to stir up life in all that dead clot. An examining magistrate, e.g., when the understanding is brought to a halt and everything seems equally probable, suddenly aims his interrogation at a single individual, not because he has

the most reason to suspect him, for a definite suspicion is precisely what he lacks — he follows this trace passionately, and sometimes a light flashes out, but at another spot. When one does not know whether one is sick or well, when this situation begins to be nonsense, one does well to venture upon something desperate. But notwithstanding one acts without deliberation, there is a sort of deliberation after all.

Otherwise the rule is to endure the dialectic tension, with deliberation as the antecedent and with repentance as the consequent term. Not till a man in deliberation has exhausted the dialectic does he truly act, and not till in repentance he has exhausted the dialectic does he truly repent. Hence it seems inexplicable that the mighty thinker Fichte could assume that a man of action has no time to repent, and all the more strange because this energetic and (in the noble Greek sense) candid philosopher had a high conception of man's actions as being only in the inward sphere. Perhaps it is to be explained by the consideration that on account of his energy he did not notice (at least in an earlier period) that this inward action is essentially passive, and that therefore a man's highest inward action is repentance. But to repent is not a positive movement out to or on till, but a negative movement in at, not a doing but a letting something befall one.

There are three existence-spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. The metaphysical is abstraction, there is no man who exists metaphysically. The metaphysical, ontology, *is* but does not *exist;* for when it exists it is in the aesthetic, in the ethical, in the religious, and when it *is* it is the abstraction of or the *prius* for the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. The ethical sphere is only a transitional sphere, and hence its highest expression is repentance as a negative action. The aesthetic sphere is that of immediacy, the ethical is that of requirement (and this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt), the religious sphere is that of fulfilment, but note, not such a fulfilment as when one fills a cane or

a bag with gold, for repentance has made infinite room, and hence the religious contradiction: at the same time to lie upon seventy thousand fathoms of water and yet be joyful.

Inasmuch as the ethical sphere is a transitional sphere (which however one does not pass through once for all), and as repentance is its highest expression, repentance is also the most dialectic thing. So no wonder one fears it, for give it a finger and it takes the whole hand. As Jehovah in the Old Testament visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children in subsequent generations, so does repentance go constantly further back surmising objects for its investigation. In repentance is the tug of this movement, and for that reason the movement is reversed. The tug signifies precisely that the difference between the aesthetic and the religious is that between the inward and the outward. This infinitely annihilating power of repentance one can best perceive in the fact that it is sympathetically dialectic. One seldom gives heed to this. I would not speak here of such pitiable instances as that of wanting to repent of a single act and then be a fine fellow again, or wanting to have done it and to have people believe one's assertion to this effect, notwithstanding every such utterance is proof sufficient that the resolver, the assertor, the believer have no conception of what repentance means. But even more competent treatises on repentance overlook its dialectic side in the direction of sympathy. An example to illustrate this. A gambler is brought to a halt, repentance seizes him, he gives up all gambling; notwithstanding he was close to the abyss, repentance holds him back, it seems to succeed, and now while he is thus living in retirement, possibly saved, he sees one day that they have dragged up from the Seine a dead man, a gambler such as he had been, and this gambler had nevertheless, as he knew, striven against his vice, had fought a desperate fight to resist his inclination. But my gambler had loved this man, not because he too was a gambler, but because he was a better man. What

then? There is no use in consulting romances and novels, but even a religious orator would perhaps break off my narrative a little earlier and let it end with my gambler going home shocked by the sight and thanking God for his own salvation. Halt! We should first have a little explanation, a judgment pronounced upon the other man. Every existence which is not devoid of thought is *eo ipso* engaged indirectly in passing judgment. If the other had been a hardened sinner, my man might well conclude that he did not want to be saved. But the other man was not that. Now my gambler is a man who has understood the old saying, *de te narratur fabula,* he is no modern fool who believes that everyone should court the objective and monstrous task of being able to patter something which applies to the whole human race, only not to himself. So then, what judgment shall he pronounce? For he cannot forbear to pass judgment, this *de te* is for him the most sacred law of existence because it is the covenant of humanity. If a religious orator, who to make up for the lack of ability to think is able at least to prate, were to be so deeply moved by human sympathy that he wished to help him with half-categories, my gambler is mature enough to see through the delusion — so that he must fight his way through. He stands at the decisive instant, he has to pass judgment with the humble expression of the doctrine of predestination (for the proud expression has its place in the aesthetic with spurious religious gilding) if he has hope for his own salvation. He who has no sympathy but has hydrophobia finds it of course unreasonable to take another man's fate so much to heart; but not to do so is unsympathetic, and it is guiltless only insofar as the reason for it is stupidity. Existence after all must have a law, the ethical world order is not a hurly-burly where one comes out well from the maddest enterprise, the other badly from the best. But now for the judgment. It is not meant here of course that he is censoriously inclined and feels compelled to condemn as a hen is to lay eggs. But he cannot himself be saved by an accident, that is

mere thoughtlessness, and if he says of the other that he sank in spite of his good will, then he himself sinks; and if he says that the other did not want to be saved, then he shudders, because after all he saw the good in him, and because this would seem as though he made himself out a better man.

I have intentionally pushed the case to extremes. By means of the dialectic of repentance in the direction of sympathy every man who is not stupid must at once run aground. Although I am not a gambler, this phenomenon is enough for me — in case I am not an angel. Though I have ever so little guilt upon my conscience, yet if I have merely a little bit of thought in my brain, all small talk about rescue exchanged by Tom and Harry, breaks like a thread until one finds the law of existence. A man who indefatigably goes through life relying upon the category that he is not a criminal but neither is he pure, is of course comic, and one must help the aesthetic to get him extradited if he has hidden in the religious sphere in order to have a part in that, and must help to have him delivered over to comic treatment.

It is very droll to see an author who, though he is not observant of the dialectic of repentance in the direction of sympathy, is observant of something resembling it, namely, the expression of sympathy — to see such an author heal this suffering by making the sickness still worse. Börne, seriously, and not without a certain emotion at the thought of how easily in a little town one becomes a misanthrope or even a blasphemer and a rebel against the wise governance of Providence, declares that in Paris the tabulated statistics of suffering and crime contribute to heal people by the impression they make, as presumably they have contributed to make Börne a philanthropist. Yes indeed, the tabulated statistics are a precious discovery, a glorious fruit of culture, a characteristic contrast to the antique de te narratur fabula. Thus Schleiermacher says enthusiastically that knowledge does not disturb religion, and that the religious man does not sit

in security under a lightning-rod and mock at God; but by the help of tabulated statistics one laughs at the whole of existence. And just as Archimedes sat absorbed in his calculations and did not notice that he was put to death, so, I think, does B — sit, and does not notice.... But what am I saying? Oh, far from it! Such a sensitive soul as B — will notice quickly enough when death comes so near to him, but so long as one is oneself saved from misfortune (for from sin B — can assuredly save himself by means of an unSocratic ignorance) one owes one's luxurious living to the possession of means whereby one holds the horror at a distance. To the poor indeed one can shut one's door, and if someone were to perish of hunger, one can find out from the statistical works how many die each year of hunger — and one is comforted.

An experimental psychologist has no use for tabulated statistics, but neither does he need such an immense concourse of people.

As an experimenter I have again propounded a problem for the religious man, the forgiveness of sin. To set immediacy and the forgiveness of sins cheek by jowl, in an immediate relationship, is a thing which might naturally occur to many people, they could also talk about it, they might also induce others to believe that they had experienced something of the sort, they might even prompt others to want to do the same and to want to have others think that they had done it. Why not? The only difficulty with this is that it is an impossibility. With respect to the bodily gait one does not have it so much one's own way, and if someone were to say that he walked on one arm, or even to say that everybody did so, people would soon discover that it was a false report, but a reporter has freer scope in dealing with the things of the spirit.

An immediate relation between immediacy and the forgiveness of sin means that sin is a single separate thing, and that this single thing forgiveness takes away. But this is not the forgiveness of sin. Thus a child

does not know what the forgiveness of sin is, for a child believes of itself that fundamentally it is a nice child, "if only that thing had not occurred yesterday," and forgiveness takes that thing away. But if sin is something radical (a discovery due to repentance, which always precedes forgiveness), this means precisely that immediacy is viewed as invalid, but if so viewed it is practically abolished ("resolved").

But how does one manage to exist by virtue of such an idea, if it is a little more concretely understood? — For to patter something is not difficult. I perceive indeed that speculative minds and prophetic seers who contemplate the whole future of mankind will regard me at the most as a seminarist who perhaps might be capable of writing a catechetical commentary to a textbook for primary schools. It may be so, but after all that is something. If only the seminarists in turn will not exclude me from their society because they know infinitely more, and if only in the end, if I were content to be a schoolchild, the enlightened seminarist and the world-historically concerned parish clerk would not say, "It is a thoroughly stupid boy, he asks such foolish questions." To me this matters very little, I am taken up only with the thought of some day approaching in conversation that wise man of Greece whom I admire, that Greek wise man who laid down his life for what he had understood, and would gladly risk his life again to understand more, since he regarded it as the most dreadful thing of all to be in error. And I am confident that Socrates would say, "Certainly that is a difficult problem about which thou dost inquire, and it has always surprised me that so many could believe they understood such a doctrine, but still greater is my surprise that not a few of them have understood far more. With these latter, would that I might fall into conversation, and although it is not usually my custom to defray the cost of a banquet and pay the musicians, I nevertheless would have saved my pennies for such a purpose, in order to be initiated into their high — not merely superhuman

but superdivine — wisdom. For Gorgias and Polos and Thrasybolos and the other Sophists who in my time had their shops in the market-place at Athens were only superhuman after all, were on a par with the gods, but from these men who outdo the gods and for this very reasonably receive not only money but adoration, from these men one might be able to learn much."

The thing that is difficult about the forgiveness of sin (if it is not to be determined on paper what it is, or by the living word in asseverations made at one moment with joyful emotion, at another with tears) is to become transparent to oneself to such a degree that at no point does one exist by virtue of immediacy, indeed even to such a degree that one has become another man — for otherwise the forgiveness of sin amounts to the same thing as my standpoint: the unity of the comic and the tragic.

But since immediacy is something simple (but also in the highest degree composite), it follows that by this one difficulty (i.e. that immediacy is abolished) as well as by the other which resembles it (that it is even abolished as sin) the signal is given for the question most *difficile,* which comprises all in one: how immediacy is to come back again (or whether the fact that immediacy is abolished for the individual signifies that he does not exist at all), what difference there is between this second immediacy and an earlier one, what is lost by it and what is gained, what it is the first immediacy can do which the second dare not do, what it is the first immediacy loves which the second dare not love, what is the certainty of the first immediacy which the second does not possess, etc., for this is a very prolix subject. In another sense it is a subject easily exhausted when one has no dread of living in error but has the modern foolhardiness in thinking that if only one says the thing, he is that — just as in a fairy-tale one by uttering a certain word becomes a bird.

Although I am not generally inclined to make wishes, and am by no means disposed to believe that the fulfillment of the wish would do me any good, yet for all that I could wish that a man with Socratic precision would let such an existing figure [i.e. a person who exists in virtue of the second immediacy] come into being before our eyes, so that we could see him as well as hear him. It is far from being my notion that by reading a narrative of such a thing a hundred times I should get one step further along, unless I were myself to approach that position by suffering. Praise be to the righteous rule and the just scale which does not let one acquire in mortal danger and with the utmost effort what another thoughtlessly sleeps into possession of by stupidity.

But the problem itself, the idea of the forgiveness of sin, lies outside the scope of that task which the experiment set itself, for its *quidam* is no more than a demoniac figure in the direction of the religious, and the problem surpasses both my understanding and my talents. I shall not avoid it with the excuse that this is not the proper place, as though it were only the place I lacked, or the time perhaps, or space on the paper, inasmuch as my way of thinking is this, that if once I myself had understood it, I could well enough find the place and the time and the space for the presentation of it.

CONCLUSION

MY DEAR READER! — But to whom am I speaking? There is perhaps not a single reader left. My case is inversely like that of the noble king whom the message of sorrow taught to make haste, whose swift ride to the side of the beloved one in danger of death the immortal ballad [A legend of Queen Dagmar.] has made immortal, when it sings of the hundred swains who followed him from Skanderborg, of the fifteen who rode with him across Randbol Heath, but when he crossed the bridge at Ribe their lord was alone. Pretty much so it is with me, but for the opposite reason, that enthralled by the one thought I have not budged from the spot, and all have ridden away from me. Maybe at the beginning the benevolent reader held in his swift courser and supposed it was an ambling steed I rode, but as I did not budge from the spot, the horse (i.e. that of the reader, or, if one will, the knight) became impatient, and I remained behind all by myself — a non-rider, or a *Sonntagsreiter,* from whom all ride away.

That being the case, there is no reason whatever for haste, I have plenty of time for myself and can, undisturbed and without incommoding others, talk to myself about myself.

The religious man, according to my view, is the wise man. But he who imagines he is a religious man without being that is a fool, and he who sees one side of the religious is a sophist. Of these sophists I am one, and even if I were capable of eating up the others, I should nevertheless not become fatter — which is not inexplicable as in the case of the lean kine in Egypt, for in the matter of religion the sophists are not fat kine but lean herring. I see the religious on all sides, but what makes me a sophist is that I do not become a religious man. The least in the sphere of religion is greater than the greatest sophist. My pain at this deprivation the gods have assuaged by

granting me many a fine reflection and arming me with a certain degree of wit, which will be taken from me in case I employ it against the religious.

The sophists can be assigned to three classes. (1) Those who start with the aesthetic and obtain an immediate relationship with the religious. In this case religion becomes poetry, story. The sophist himself is enthusiastic about religion, but poetically enthusiastic; in this way he is willing to make every sacrifice, even to stake his life, but for all that he does not become the religious man. When he enjoys the maximum of esteem he confuses himself and permits himself to be confused with a Prophet and an Apostle. (2) Those who start with an immediate ethic and come into immediate relationship with the religious. For them religion becomes a positive doctrine of duty, whereas in truth repentance is the highest work of the ethical, and that is definitely negative. The sophist remains untried by the experience of infinite reflection, is a paragon of virtue in a positive abridgment. This is the source of his enthusiasm, and he honestly finds joy in making others enthusiastic in the same cause. (3) Those who put the metaphysical in an immediate relationship with the religious. Here religion becomes history, a thing which is finished — and the sophist is finished with religion and at his maximum becomes discoverer of the System. — What the sophists are admired for by the human throng is that they magnanimously refuse to be concerned about themselves in comparison with the poetic intuition in which the one loses oneself, in comparison with the positive endeavor to attain the goal which beckons the second, in comparison with the prodigious result the third attains by putting together finished facts. But the religious consists precisely in being religiously concerned about oneself infinitely, and not about visions; in being concerned about oneself infinitely, and not about a positive aim, which is negative and finite, because the infinitely negative is the only adequate form for the infinite; in being concerned about oneself infinitely, and so not

thinking oneself finished, which is negative and perdition. — This I know, but I know it in equilibrium of spirit and therefore am a sophist like the others, for this equilibrium is an offense against the holy passion of the religious. But this equilibrium in the unity of the comic and the tragic, which is the infinite concern about oneself in the Greek sense (not the infinite religious concern about oneself), is not without significance as throwing light upon the religious. In a certain sense I am far more remote from the religious than are the three classes of sophists, who have all made a beginning at it, but in another sense I am closer to it, because I see more clearly where the religious is, and also do not make the mistake of laying hold of something amiss, but miss it by not laying hold of it.

So it is I understand myself. Contented with the lower thing, hoping that some day the greater thing shall be granted to me, busied with the occupations of the spirit, in which every man, it seems to me, must have plenty to do for the longest life, even if it were composed exclusively of the longest days. — I rejoice in existence, rejoice in the small world which is my environment. Some of my countrymen are maybe of the opinion that Copenhagen is a tiresome town and a small town. It seems to me on the contrary that, refreshed as it is by the sea on which it is situated, and without being able even in winter to dismiss the recollection of its beech forests, it is as favorable a place as I could desire to dwell in. Big enough to be a great city, small enough to have no market price set upon men, where the tabulated comfort one has in Paris that there are so and so many suicides, where the tabulated joy one has in Paris that there are so and so many persons of distinction, cannot penetrate disturbingly and whirl the individual away like foam, so that life acquires no significance, consolation lacks its day of rest and joy its holy day, because everything dashes off into space without content — or too full of it. — Some of my countrymen find the people who dwell in this town not vivacious enough. It does not seem so

to me. The speed with which in Paris thousands form a mob around one person may indeed be flattering to the one about whom they collect, but I wonder if that makes up for the loss of the quiet mind which permits the individual to feel that after all he too has some importance. Precisely because the individuals have not totally fallen in price, as though it took a dozen to make one man, and because fortunately the people are too indocile to comprehend the half-hour erudition which only flatters the desperate and the blind, precisely for such reasons is life in this capital so entertaining for him who knows how to find in men a delight which is more enduring and yields bigger dividends than getting a thousand men to acclaim one for half an hour. Its defect is perhaps rather that one individual dreams of foreign lands, a second individual is absorbed in himself, a third individual is narrow-minded and separatist, etc., and so all these individuals prevent themselves from taking what is abundantly proffered, from finding what exists in abundance when it is sought. He who is not willing to undertake anything, might nevertheless, if he had an open eye, lead a life rich in enjoyment merely by paying heed to others; and he who has also his own work to do, would do well to take heed that he be not too much imprisoned by it. But how pitiable if there were many who miss what costs nothing, no entrance fee, no expenses for banquets, no dues to one's society, no inconvenience and trouble, what costs the rich and the poor equally little and yet is the richest enjoyment, who miss an instruction which is not obtained from a particular teacher but *en passant* from any person whatsoever, from conversation with someone unknown, from every accidental contact.

That upon which one in vain has sought enlightenment from books is suddenly illuminated by a flash of light at hearing one serving-maid conversing with another; an expression which one has tried in vain to torture out of one's own brain, in vain has sought in dictionaries, even in the

"Dictionary of the Society of the Sciences," this one hears in passing — a raw soldier utters it, and does not dream what a rich man he is. And as he who walks in the great forest, amazed at it all, sometimes snatches a branch, sometimes a leaf, sometimes stoops to pluck a flower, now listens to the note of a bird — so does one walk in the midst of the human throng, amazed at the marvellous gift of speech, snatches now one and now another expression from a passer-by, rejoices in it and is not ungrateful enough to forget to whom he owes it; so one walks in the midst of the human throng, sees now one expression of a mental state, now another, learns and learns and becomes only more avid of learning. So let no one be deceived by books, as though the humane were of such rare occurrence, so let no one read of that in the newspapers, where the best part of the saying, the most lovable, the little psychological trait, is sometimes not preserved.

Some of my countrymen are of the opinion that their mother tongue is hardly capable of expressing difficult thoughts. This seems to me a strange and unthankful thought, as it also seems to me strange and exaggerated to be so zealous for one's language that one almost forgets to rejoice in it, to assert so zealously its independence that the zeal almost seems to indicate that one already feels one's dependence, and that in the end excitement is derived from the strife of words rather than refreshment from the joy of the language. I feel myself fortunate in being bound to my mother tongue, bound perhaps as few are, bound as Adam was to Eve because there was no other woman, bound because it has been impossible for me to learn any other tongue, and hence impossible to be tempted to look down proudly and haughtily upon the tongue to which I was born. But I am also glad to be bound to a mother tongue which is rich in original idioms, which expands the soul and delights the ear with its softer sounds; a mother tongue which does not puff and groan when it is held in the toils of a difficult thought (for which reason some think that it is incapable of expressing it), for it makes

the difficulty easy by uttering it; a mother tongue which does not sound strained and panting when it is confronted with the unutterable, but employs itself with it in jest and earnest until it manages to utter it; a language which does not find at a remote distance what is near, nor seek in a profound abyss what lies close to hand, because it is on such good terms with the object that it passes in and out like a fairy, and like a child comes out with the happiest expression without quite knowing it; a language which is vehement and emotional when the right lover knows how to incite manfully the feminine passion of the language, is self-confident and victorious in the strife of thought when the right ruler knows how to lead it, is supple as a wrestler when the right thinker will not let go of it and will not let go of thought; a language which if it seems poor in a single instance, is nevertheless not so, but is disdained as a false lover disdains an unassuming maiden who possesses in reality the greatest worth and above all is not sophisticated; a language which is not lacking in expressions for the great, the decisive, the conspicuous, yet has a charming, a winning, a genial preference for the nuances of thought, for the qualifying term and the small talk of humor and the thrill of transition and the subtlety of inflection and the concealed luxuriousness of modest affluence; a language which understands jest quite as well as earnest — a mother tongue which binds its children with a chain, "easy to bear... yes, but hard to break."

Some of my countrymen are of the opinion that Denmark lives by consuming the memory of its ancient greatness. This seems to me a strange and ungrateful opinion to which no one can assent who would prefer to be friendly and joyful rather than sullen and refractory — the only thing which consumes. Others are of the opinion that a peerless future awaits Denmark; some who think themselves undervalued and unappreciated also comfort themselves with the thought of a better generation to come. But he who is fortunate in the present generation and is quick in inventiveness when the

issue is to be satisfied with this has not many moments free for peerless expectations, and no more than he grasps at them is he inclined to be disturbed by them. And he who thinks that he is unappreciated by his contemporaries uses a wondrous argument in predicting a better generation to come. Even if it were true that he is unappreciated, and even if it is true that he would be recognized in a better age which would praise him, it is nevertheless unjust and a proof of prejudice to say of this later age that it is better because it thinks better of him. There is no such great difference between one generation and another; precisely the generation he censures finds itself in the position of praising what an earlier generation of contemporaries failed to appreciate.

Some of my contemporaries are of the opinion that to be an author in Denmark affords a poor livelihood. They do not merely mean that this is the case with such a questionable author as I am, who have not a single reader, and only a few who get as far as the middle of the book, and of whom therefore they are not thinking in passing this judgment; but they mean that it is the case even with distinguished authors. Now this land is only a little one. But in Greece was it so mean a position to be a magistrate, notwithstanding it cost money to be one? Suppose it were so, suppose it were to continue to be so, and that in the end it were to be the lot of an author in Denmark to pay a certain sum yearly for the labor of being an author. Well then, what if it were possible for foreigners to say, "In Denmark it is a costly thing to be an author, there are therefore no heaps of them, but then in turn they have not what we foreigners call catch-pennies, a thing so unknown in the realm of Danish literature that the language does not even possess an expression for it."

In case it were thinkable (as I do not assume) that there was one reader who had held out and so had got to the point of reading this Conclusion (a thing I could not have imagined, and, if I had, I would not have written

this), and in case he were to talk to others about what he had read, perhaps some of my countrymen would have said, “Pay no attention to such an author, do not listen to him, he is a seducer.” And one of these “some” would perhaps have continued thus: “Generally one thinks of a seducer in connection with women, and even in this connection he is commonly depicted secretive and sly, with a demoniac passion. But this is not the most dangerous sort of seducer, even in relation to women. No, if I am to imagine the most dangerous sort, I picture to myself a young man with much imagination and intellectuality. He desires no woman’s favor, and this indifference is not a cover for a secret passion, far from it, he aspires after no girl, but he is a fanatic. He does not dance with the girls — in this respect he is far behind — but he seeks out a place in the cabinet adjoining the ballroom or a corner in the drawing room. When the young girls are a little tired of dancing, or when the dusk of evening falls and labor reposes and thought would flutter, there he sits, now is his time. Then they listen to his talk, and by his power of imagination he allures them on into seductive ideals, and while he talks, the expectation of their aspiring souls and the urgency of presentiment he stretches to a higher pitch. He himself asks for nothing, and again they seek the pleasure of the dance, again they return to their occupations, but privately they ponder over the lofty thoughts he uttered, and they long to imbibe again the benumbing delusion. He himself remains unchanged, for his joy is only the longing of speech and thought for the ideal. And when he falls silent it seems to him as if there were a profound sorrow in his heart, in his melancholy it seems to him as if he were an old man whom speech like a child leads through life. Thus the young girls harken to him, and little by little they are seduced, they seek in vain for what he described, seek it in vain in him, seek it in vain in themselves, and yet they long for his talk and grow old by hearing it. And when a little earlier the old aunt said to the girls, ‘Beware, little children, do

not listen to him, he is a seducer,' they smiled and said, 'What, he! Why, he is the best man, and in his intercourse with us so circumspect, so reserved, as if he did not see us, or as if he were sorry for us, and what he says is so beautiful, oh, so beautiful!' A poet may be such a seducer. This author of course does not possess powers of this sort, just as he does not aspire after women, but yet in another sphere he is a seducer. Essentially he has nothing to say, is far from being dangerous, it is not for this that I warn against him, for as a profound philosophical friend said to me, 'He who regards him with a genuine speculative glance sees with half an eye that he, himself deceived' by life from being merely an observer, has become not a deceiver but deceit itself, the objective deceit, the pure negation.' Only at a time when men's spirits are so profoundly moved that the rule, 'He that is not with is against,' applies with double force, only in an age when the individuals, keyed up by the great crisis and the great decisions which confront them, might so easily be harmed, even by the most insignificant things, only in such an age could one be tempted to waste a word by giving warning against him, if that after all is necessary. He is in another sphere a seducer. Arrayed in jest, and by reason of that deceptive, he is inwardly a fanatic. So there he sits, close to the place where the company is assembled, so he prefers the quieter moment when the ear of the inexperienced youth eagerly drinks in the false teaching. Himself intoxicated by dreams and rendered strong by vain imaginations, as quiet as an observer, he would delude everyone into the belief that the individual possesses an infinite importance, and that this is the significance of life. Therefore do not listen to him, for he wishes, without any evil intention, to seduce you in a period of ferment to accept the undivided legacy of Quietism, with the idle notion that everyone should look after himself. He would induce you to shirk the great tasks which require united strength but also provide abundant reward for all. Behold, this he has not understood because he lacks objectivity and

positivity. His existence is sheer optical illusion, his speech is as powerless and impotent as that of a ghost, and all his views are only, as the poet would say, ‘Pearly hues upon the ancient gate, and like snow at the end of summer.’ But ye who are alive and are the children of the age, do ye not observe that existence trembles, hear ye not the martial music which beckons, are ye not sensible of the haste of the instant such as the hand of the clock is unable to follow? Why this roaring, unless something is seething in the depths? Why this dreadful anguish, unless it is a sign of pregnancy? Therefore believe him not, nor listen to him, for I suppose that in his jesting and tiresome way which he takes to be Socratic he would say that from the anguish one cannot directly conclude that delivery is at hand, since it is with anguish as it is with nausea, which is worse with an empty stomach. Nor does it follow that everyone who has pains in the belly is therefore in parturition, it might also be tympanitis; *item,* nor that everyone who has a pain in the belly is therefore in parturition, it might also be something quite different, as Suetonius reminds us when he says of a Roman emperor, *vultus erat nitantis.* So do not concern yourselves about him, let him not trouble you, he has not been able to legitimate himself as a plenopotentiary authority for the age, he is not man enough to hit upon the very least thing the age might require, he is not capable of making any single proposal or of stepping forth with positive seriousness and with an attitude of distress to face the great task of the moment. But do not incite him to anger, for then he might possibly become dangerous, let him go for what he is, a scoffer and a fanatic *in uno,* a Philistine *in toto,* a deceiver, the pure negation. If ye do that, then he is no seducer.”

Ah, what luck that there is no reader who reads the whole thing through! And if so be, the injury done a man by leaving him to shift for himself, when that is the only thing he wishes, is like the Wise Men of Gotham punishing the eel by throwing it into the water. *Dixi.*

APPENDIX

ORATORY; OR, SOMETHING ABOUT THE OCCASIONAL ADDRESSES OF THE CLERGY

by JOHANNES DE SILENTIO

(with constant reference to Aristotle's "Rhetoric")

WHAT I am here about to say might perhaps best be regarded as an introduction to a book, and if it is so regarded I desire in the next place to have it conceived of as the blurb on the dust cover which is not bound up with the book. The resolution to write it is in fact my own, otherwise I might give it up as an unwelcome task, but he who put this into my mind is Magister S. Kierkegaard, who expressly required it of me. For he has the intention of trying his hand on several discourses of this sort, and his wish was that this undertaking might need no introduction. Yet in bringing out the book he is afraid of seeing it subjected to the criticism of reviewers, and by connecting this introduction closely with his undertaking he fears that the book for all its unimportance might acquire a wrong kind of importance by means of this introduction which seems to invite criticism, and that this possibly would have the effect that the book might get too many readers, and, worst of all, not one uncritical reader. But this would be a sorry mistake. For, as it is required of a good speaker that he himself be his severest critic, so it is required of the good hearer or reader, though he were the cleverest head of all, that he renounce criticism. In relation to religion, the choice of the parson or of the book is perhaps not of so much importance as the deliberate and resolute choice to want to let oneself be edified. Therefore, without wishing in the following utterance to proclaim indulgence for the speaker, I am convinced that he who will let himself be

edified, even if he were to hear perhaps a mediocre parson, or to read perhaps a mediocre book — that man will be edified....

The manifold political, philanthropic, social, artistic, literary, Italian-Danish, Danish-Italian, Scandinavian, etc., conflicts which are carried on in our time I leave entirely out of account. But if one considers the field of *learning,* and of *theological* learning especially, one is aware of a continual skirmish going on, whether it be that speculation seeks to take possession, by force or by guile, of the material of theology, or whether it be that theology seeks to shun an impudent familiarity as one would shun drinking brotherhood with the hangman. No decisive battle seems yet to have been waged. But all the same the struggle more or less clearly has captivated the attention of many, and among the devotees of theology the more distinguished men are entering this conflict because they think that strength is needed here, and the high prelates who keep watch over the whole joyfully fix their attention upon one or another distinguished man with a view to bringing him to the point where the danger is.

I assume that as a matter of fact it is precisely the more capable and distinguished men who, as teachers in the universities or in whatever other learned way it may be, sustain the conflict at these points — so the rest of us are safe, the studious youth will not be led astray, for the distinguished men defend the good cause and teach youth the truth.

The studious youth on the average cannot of course be accounted so highly gifted as these distinguished men, but for this reason the life-task of these students as subordinate clergy will be far easier to perform. I assume hypothetically that the danger really lies here, and that this contentious age, vigilant and alert to the scientific strife, safely leaves the easier tasks (assuming hypothetically that the other is harder) to the less gifted.

Of the subordinate servants of the Church (I mean the parsons, for I am not thinking here of the gravediggers, etc., and between parsons there

should after all be only a relative distinction) — of these subordinate clergymen people think that they cannot require so much scholarly culture as of the docents in the university; and that is quite as it should be. But when with this they forget what properly is required of the Church's teachers, confusion results. For because not so much scholarly culture is required, there might all the more, along side of this more modest culture in exact learning, be required something else, which would make the demands upon the parson just as great as those upon the professor, and hence he would not continue to be evaluated in proportion to his relationship with the university for the reason that it was to this honorable institution he owed his youthful training as a student. If scientific scholarship is overestimated, not only the students but the clergy are ranked according to a possible relation to this maximum of being able to become or to be a theological professor.... But is there any justification for this conclusion, that a man who is not quite capable of being a professor but comes close to it would *eo ipso* be a distinguished servant of the Church?

So people see the *scientific danger*; but in the field where the man less strictly trained and less gifted has to put out at interest what he has learned, has to put it to use, has to make the sublime pronounceable, has to give a definite answer to a simple question, assume a definite position at the point where, as he heard from his professor, even learning wavers, and without daring to secure his position by showing his scholarly disdain for someone as not sufficiently learned (tasks which are all of them readily perceived to be the easiest) — in that field there is no danger!

Let us, however, make an experiment. Let us take a fairly competent theological professor whose lectures from a scholarly point of view are worthy of respect. Now we will make the experiment — he is asked to give an edifying lecture.... He can't do it. It is not impossible that the learned professor will himself admit this, and that thereupon everyone, every

clergyman who hears him, every deferential layman, will humble himself under the following dignified remark: “I can do it all right; it is not that I can’t do it, but the congregation can’t follow me.” That I am quite ready to believe; it is precisely upon this I found my conclusion: so then he can’t do it. Socrates, for example, was not great because he could talk so that nobody could understand him, nor because he could talk so that the sophists understood him, but because he could talk with everybody in such a way that everybody understood him, and in such a way, be it noted, that he constantly said the same thing....

So then, the reason the professor gave seems to me a vain utterance, well devised to save his skin. It is perfectly true that the professor should be proud of his scholarly knowledge, that he should say of it, “I do not want to make a fool of myself or of them, as though it were possible in half an hour to convey to everyone what costs me with my superior talents time and diligence year in and year out, and hence I disdain all dabbling at popular instruction.” That is quite right. It is perhaps to be wished that men of scholarship would sometimes talk that way in all seriousness. But in case the professor is not hide-bound, he will add: “On the other hand, there are different tasks, such as that of delivering an edifying discourse, a sermon, which I feel the need of hearing just as the simplest man does, and for that I have not the gifts and am not trained for it; but I understand very well that it may take the whole time and diligence of a distinguished man just as scholarly learning does mine.”...

THREE DISCOURSES ON IMAGINED OCCASIONS

Published, separately to "accompany" the Stages. *Here the translator reproduces as a specimen only one-third of the first discourse, "On the Occasion of a Confession."*

BY

S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen 1845 [April 29]

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MY DECEASED FATHER

MICHAEL PEDERSEN KIERKEGAARD

PREFACE

NOTWITHSTANDING THIS LITTLE book (of occasional addresses, as they might be called, although the occasion is lacking which creates the speaker and gives him *authority,* or the occasion which creates the reader and makes him a *learner)* is entirely uncalled for, and so in its unimportance is entirely without excuse, is without support from any external circumstance, and so is helpless in its detailed development, it is nevertheless not without hope, and above all not without a cheerful confidence. It seeks that individual whom I with joy and gratitude call *my* reader — or it does not even seek him: regardless of time it waits in quietness for that right reader to come as a bridegroom and bring the occasion with him. Each does his part, so it is the reader who does most. What really counts is appropriation. Hence the book's *joyful surrender.* Here there is no worldly mine and thine to separate, and to forbid one to appropriate what belongs to his neighbor. For admiration after all contains a little envy and so is a misunderstanding, and censure, however justified it may be, contains after all a little resistance and so is a misunderstanding, and recognition in the mirror is only a fleeting acquaintance and so is a misunderstanding, but to behold rightly and not be willing to forget as the impatient mirror does, that is appropriation, and appropriation is the *reader's* still greater, his triumphant *surrender.*

S.K.

WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK AFTER GOD

— inasmuch as without purity no man can see God, and no man takes notice of God without becoming a sinner.

In case the seeker seeks what lies outside him, as something external, something which is not within his power, then the thing sought is in a particular place. If only he finds the place where it is, then indeed it is well with him, then he grasps it, and his seeking is at an end. So it is that everyone knew once in his early youth that there were so many beautiful things in existence, but the place he did not know definitely. Ah, even though many a man has forgotten this childish wisdom, I wonder if all have therefore become wiser, and he too, I wonder, who instead of that beautiful unity of fullness has gained the duplicity of doubt and half-heartedness in resolution!

In case it is assumed that the seeker himself is able to do nothing at all to find the place, he is then a wisher. So was everyone once in earlier youth. Ah, even though many a man has changed, I wonder if all therefore have truly changed for the better, and he too, I wonder, who instead of the uncertain wealth of the wish has gained the certain wretchedness of mediocrity!

When the wisher sees his wish fulfilled he is struck with wonder, as already by being a wisher he was in wonderment. So was everyone once in his early youth — not easily allured, as they say unjustly of the young, into foolish enterprises, but easily allured into blissful and unrestrained abandonment to wonder, the honest requittal which the wisher scrupulously keeps in store for the instant of fulfilment. Ah, even though many a man has lost this impetuous haste to render like for like, as he has also learned to

think meanly of the wish, is therefore this higgling honesty which does not thoroughly wish and does not thoroughly wonder, and in this fashion renders like for like, is this a gain? — He who wishes also seeks, but his seeking is blind, not so much with respect to the object of his wish as with respect to the fact that he does not know whether he is approaching it or receding.

Now among the many goods there is one which is the highest, which is not to be defined by its relation to other goods, since it is the highest, and this the seeker knows without having a definite conception of it, for precisely as the Unknown it is the highest — and this good is God. The other goods have names and designations, but where the wish breathes most deeply, where this Unknown seems to show itself, there is wonder, and wonder is the sense immediacy has of God and is the beginning of all deeper understanding. The seeking of the wisher is blind, not so much with respect to the object (for this in fact is the Unknown) as with respect to the question whether he is approaching it or receding — all at once he is startled, the expression of wonder is worship. And wonder is an ambiguous state of mind which comprises fear and bliss. Worship therefore is mingled fear and bliss all at once. Even the most refined and rational worship of God is blissfulness in fear and trembling, confidence in the face of mortal danger, frank-heartedness in the consciousness of sin. Even the most refined and rational worship has the fragility of wonder, and it is not directly the greatness of the power and the wisdom and the performance which determines the magnitude of the God-relationship; the most potent is in the deepest impotence, the most pious sighs out of the deepest sense of need, the mightiest is he who rightly folds his hands.

The wonder of the wisher answers to the Unknown and so is entirely indeterminate, or rather infinitely determinable, may be just as loathsome as it is ludicrous, may be just as bewildered as it is childish. When the forest

darkens at the evening hour, when at night the moon loses its way among the trees, when in the forest the wonders of nature lurk for their prey, and then suddenly the pagan sees a wondrous effect of light which grips him, then he sees the Unknown, and worship is the expression of wonder; when the knarled tree-trunk forms a deceptive shape which is unknown to him, which resembles a human being and yet again in his amazement has only a supernatural resemblance, then he comes to a halt and worships; when in the desert he sees a track which does not belong to any man or to any being known to him, when the power of solitude impregnates his soul with wonder, then in this track he sees that the Unknown has been here, and he worships; when the sea lies still and inexplicable in its profundity, when wonder gazes dizzily down into it until it is as though the Unknown were rising up, when the waves of the sea roll monotonously towards the shore and overwhelm the soul by the power of uniformity, when the rush whispers before the wind and whispers again and so must desire to confide something to the listener — then he worships. — If the wonder defines itself, then its highest expression is that God is the inexplicable All of existence, as this is sensed by the presentiment of imagination, in the least things and in the greatest, everywhere. What once was the content of paganism is experienced again in the repetition of every generation, and only when it has been outlived is that which was idolatry reduced to a careless existence in the innocence of poetry. For poetry is idolatry refined.

In case it is assumed that the wisher himself is able to contribute something to the finding of what is sought, then he is a striver. With that both the wonder and the wish are about to encounter their test. Often deceived, since in fact the scope of wonder, precisely because it had a direct relationship to the Unknown, comprised the loathsome as well as the ludicrous, the bewildered as well as the childish — wonder, often deceived, would look ahead and no longer walk blindly. The direct relationship is thus

at the very first instant a broken relationship, without being however a breaking through to its object. It is broken by the fact that the way comes between as a determinant, whereas for the wisher there is no way. When the seeker does not walk blindly, he then does not wish only, he strives; for striving is precisely the way to the thing sought. So was everyone once in his earlier youth, high-soaring in purpose; ah, even though many a man has now learned to remain on the ground, I wonder if they therefore have all become wiser, he too, I wonder, who instead of the flight of a bird has gained the stooping gait of a four-footed beast! So was everyone once in his earlier youth, reckless in daring; ah, and even though many a man gave it up, I wonder if they all therefore became wiser, he too, I wonder, who instead of the race of recklessness after an uncertainty has gained the safety of the pedestrian upon the highway of mediocrity! So was everyone once in his earlier youth, undaunted; ah, and even though many a man learned to tone down his demands, I wonder if they all therefore became wiser, he too, I wonder, who was surfeited by fortune's favors, or he who from his environment learned pettiness, or he who in bondage to custom learned contentment! Oh, truly it is wise not to talk of fortune if one knows how to utter a holier name; but if not, it was indeed a misfortune that fortune vanished from human life, that it became weary of giving and taking, became weary of man who defrauded it of its wonder.

But in the world of freedom where in fact all striving has its source and all striving its life, there wonder meets one upon the way. The striving has various names, but that which is after the Unknown is directed toward God. The fact that it is toward the unknown means that it is infinite. Then the striver comes to a stop, he sees the deceptive track of a monstrous being which exists when it is past, which is and is not; and this being is fate, and the striving is like going astray. Worship is again the expression of wonder,

and its scope comprises the loathsome as well as the ludicrous, the bewildered as well as the childish.

In case it is assumed that the seeker can do everything to find the thing sought, then the magic is done away with, wonder is forgotten, there remains nothing to wonder at. And then, the next instant, the thing sought is nothing, and this is the reason why the man was capable of doing everything. So was everyone once at the turning point of youth, when he became an eternity old; ah, and even though many a man comforts himself with the thought that he has not experienced this horror, I wonder if they therefore have all become wiser, he too, I wonder, who was still a youth at the age of an old man! So it was with everyone once, in bidding farewell to youth, that life came to a stop and he was undone; and even though many a man brags of his youthfulness, I wonder whether he therefore too was wiser who defrauded the years and eternity of their rights and whose highest wisdom was to make a frivolous answer to the most serious question!

There was a time in the world when men, weary of wonder, weary of fate, turned away from the external and found that there was no object of wonder, that the Unknown was a naught and wonder a fraud. And what once was the content of life returns in the repetition of the race. Though someone were to deem himself wise in saying that there are superseded forms which were done with thousands of years ago — it is not so in human life. And thou, my hearer, surely art not disposed to think that I would waste thy time recounting great events and mentioning queer names and being prosaically self-important in the contemplation of humanity as a whole. Ah, no, if it is true that he is defrauded who only gets to know a little, I wonder if he too is not defrauded who got to know so much that he appropriated nothing at all! Man advances slowly. Even the most glorious knowledge is after all only a presupposition. If one would augment the presuppositions more and more, he is like the miser who heaps up money for which he has

no use. Even what is worthy of being valued highly, a happy upbringing, even that is only a presupposition, much time elapses before it is appropriated, and a whole lifetime is not too much if one would appropriate it. Ah, in case he was defrauded whose upbringing was neglected, I wonder then if not also he was defrauded who remained unaware that it was a presupposition, a treasure entrusted to him, a sacred heritage which should be acquired, who without more ado laid hold upon it and deemed himself to be what he had the name of being. If the better men have sometimes sighed because the thing sought was so far distant, thou surely, my hearer, hast comprehend that there is also another difficulty, that there is an illusion of knowledge which deludes the soul, that there is a security in which one is knowing... and yet deceived, that there is a remoteness from all decision where one without dreaming it is lost. Let terror seize its prey — ah, this security is a more terrible monster! Let the distress of poverty reduce to starvation — is it better to perish of overabundance? It was harrowing when wonder let go of a man and he despaired of himself, but just as harrowing it is that one can know of this, can know far more, and not have had this experience, and most harrowing that one may know everything and not have made a start with the least thing. And if it is so, ah, let me begin over again; return, thou youth, with thy wish and thy lovable wonder, thou wild striving of youth with thy recklessness and thy shudder before the unknown, seize me, thou despair which breaks with the wonderful and with the wonder of youth, but quickly, quickly, if it be possible, if I have wasted my best years without experiencing anything, teach me at least not to become indifferent, not to seek consolation with others, so terror at the last may be the beginning of my healing; however late it may be, this at all events is better than to live as a liar, deceived, not by what might seem calculated to deceive, and therefore, alas, horribly deceived — deceived by much knowledge.

So then, wonder was a thing of the past, it is a thing of the past; so it was said at one time, and so now the despairer speaks and repeats it in despair, and repeats it mockingly, and would comfort himself by mockery while this wounds others, as if all mockery were not a two-edged sword! But thou, my hearer, knowest that the discourse precisely now stands at the threshold of wonder. Hence the discourse has no wish to take thee by surprise, nor would it deceive thee by an optical illusion in the lightning flash of thought when everything is reversed, nor would it carry thee away in an amazed confusion. He who actually has experienced the foregoing easily sees through the confused medley of remembrance, and in case he has not experienced it, then to hear or to read a discourse will be of dubious benefit to him. But thou who thyself art in a state of wonder, thou knowest surely that this wonder came into existence when once that first wonder was consumed by despair. But where might there be found a worthier object of wonder than when the seeker with his wishing and striving, the desperate man about to perish in despair, suddenly discovered that he was the thing sought, that the misfortune is that he stands there and loses it! For take the wisher as he sits and dreams, call to him and say, "Thou hast the thing wished for"; stop the striver as he rushes along the way, stop him and say, "Thou hast the thing striven for"; break through the despair, that the desperate man may comprehend that he has it — ah, what emotion he feels when he is overwhelmed with wonder, and again at the same instant a second time overwhelmed because he loses again as it were the thing sought! The glory of the wish and the striving of recklessness do not a second time awaken wonder, this is prevented by the long hyphen of despair; but that the object of his search is a given fact, that it is in the possession of him who stands there in misunderstanding and loses it — this awakens the wonder of the entire man. And indeed what stronger expression is there for wonder than that the wonderer is as it were changed,

as when the wisher changes color, what stronger expression than this, that he *actually* is changed! And so it is with this wonder which changed the seeker, so it is with this wonder, that this thing of seeking became something different, yea, the very opposite: that to seek signifies that the seeker himself is changed. He does not have to find the place where the object of his search is, for it is right beside him, he does not have to find the place where God is, he does not have to strive towards it, for God is right beside him, very near, near on every hand, omnipresently near, but the seeker has to be changed so that he himself becomes the place where God truly is.

However, wonder, which is the beginning of all deeper understanding, is an equivocal passion which comprises fear and bliss. Or was it not fearful, my hearer, that the object sought was so near thee that thou wast not seeking God but God was seeking thee; was it not fearful that thou couldst not move without being in Him, and not be so unobserved but, lo, thou wast in Him, nor flee to the uttermost bounds of the world but that He was there and at every place on the way, nor hide thyself in the abyss but that He was there and at every place on the way, nor say to Him, “Only an instant,” seeing that He also was in the instant when thou didst say this; was it not fearful when the playfulness of youth and the immaturity of despair became seriousness at the instant when that which thou didst once point at and aspire after and of which thou didst say that it did not exist then came into existence, yea, was in existence everywhere about thee and embraced thee on every hand! But was it not blissful that the hand of the mighty could block thee up in the darkest hole and yet not shut out God; was it not blissful that thou couldst fall into the deepest abyss where one can see neither sun nor stars and yet can see God; was it not blissful that thou couldst go astray in the solitary wilderness and yet at once find the way to God; was it not blissful that thou couldst become an old man who had

forgotten everything and yet never forgets God because He cannot become something by-gone, that thou couldst become dumb and yet call upon Him, blind and yet see Him, deaf and yet hear Him, that He would not say as men do, “Only an instant,” because He was in the instant the instant He said it! — But he who leaves out fear, let him look well to it that he does not also leave out the finding. It is so easy, or if someone would prefer to say the same thing in another way, it is so hard to find God that people even go to the trouble of proving that God exists and find a proof necessary. Let the labor of proof be hard, especially let it cause trouble to him who is expected to understand that it proves something; the thing has become easy for the prover, for he has taken his position outside, he does not treat with God, but his is a treatise about God. If on the contrary this thing of seeking should signify that a man himself is to be changed, then let the seeker look well to himself. One has to learn wonder from a child and fear from a man; that is at all events a preparation, then comes fear enough when God comes and renders proofs superfluous. Or is this perhaps courage that one remains unconscious of danger, that the prover sits unchanged and proves and proves that the Omnipresent exists, the Omnipresent who therefore also at the instant of the proof sees through the prover — without however having any scientific opinion about the utility of the proof? Might the Omnipresent actually become like a rare freak of nature the existence of which the scholar proves, or like an irregular star which people observe at intervals of hundreds of years, the existence of which therefore requires a proof, especially for the intervening centuries in which it is not visible?

But the true wonder and the true fear one man cannot teach the other. Only when they constrict and expand the soul, thine, precisely thine, thine alone in the whole world, because thou art alone with the Omnipresent, only then do they truly exist for thee. Though an orator had the eloquence of an angel, and though he had an aspect which could strike the bravest heart with

terror, so that thou didst fall, as the expression is, into the profoundest wonder at his eloquence, and horror seized thee upon hearing him; it is not this wonder and not this fear which helps. It applies to every man, the least and the greatest, that neither an angel, nor legions of angels, nor all the terrors of the world, can instil the true wonder and the true fear, but they well may make him superstitious. The true wonder and the true fear is there only when he, precisely he, be he the meanest or the greatest of men, finds himself alone with the Omnipresent. The greatness of power and wisdom and performance does not directly determine the magnitude of the God-relationship. Or did not the magicians of Egypt perform almost as great signs as Moses? Suppose they had been greater — what inference could be drawn from that? None, no inference at all with respect to the God-relationship. But Moses feared God, and Moses wondered at God, and fear and wonder, or the fear in wonder together with its bliss determines the magnitude of the God-relationship.

It is true, as the understanding says, that there is nothing to wonder at, but precisely for this cause is wonder secure — because the understanding vouches for it. Let the understanding condemn what is transitory, let it clear the ground, then wonder comes in the right place, in ground that is cleared, in the changed man. Everything appertaining to that first wonder the understanding can consume; let it do so, in order that enigmatically it may help one to wonder, for it is indeed enigmatical, since it conflicts with the judgment of the understanding concerning itself. But if a man gets no farther, let him not accuse the understanding, nor let him be triumphant because it has been victorious. In case a prince sends a general against a foreign land, and that general conquers it, and thereupon himself takes possession of it as a rebel, then there is indeed no reason for accusing him because he conquered it, but neither is there any reason to be triumphant, since he himself retained it. And so, if a man by his understanding is

victorious over what was pretty indeed yet also childish, then let him not accuse the understanding; but if the understanding ends by making a rebellion, then let him not be triumphant. But the wonder is in the changed man.

As here is described, so it was once with every man at the instant of decision when the sickness of the spirit struck in and he felt himself imprisoned, imprisoned forever. Ah, though many a man comforts himself with the thought that he has avoided this danger, I wonder if he too was wiser who shrewdly and cravenly defrauded himself when he thought he was defrauding God and life! So it happened once to everyone, when it was all over with jest and illusion and diversion; ah, and though many a man boasts defiantly of his unconcernedness, I wonder if he therefore was wiser whose life ran riot in parasitic growth because he was not bound! So it happened once to everyone; ah, and even though many a man flatters himself that he had a more advantageous lot, I wonder if therefore he became wiser who, being unbound, did not know that just for this cause he was unfree!

When the thing sought is assumed to be given, seeking signifies that the seeker himself is changed so that he becomes the place where the object of the search can truly be. And the thing sought was in fact given, it was so near that it was as though again it were lost, without the certainty that it is lost — how a man loses ground! What a distance separates him from that time when he wished, when he recklessly dared, when the thing sought was far off, when self-complacency boasted defiantly that it did not exist — and now it has come so near that it is lost, and the loss dates back to a distant past! The seeker was to be changed; ah, and he was changed — how a man loses ground! And the changed state in which he is we call sin. So the thing sought *is,* the seeker is the place, but changed, and changed from having once been the place where the object of search was. Ah, now there is no

wonder, no ambiguity! The state of the soul when it comprehends this is fear and trembling in the guilty one, its passion is sorrow over remembrance, its love is repentance in the man of perdition. My hearer, was it not thus? The discourse does not mean to take thee by surprise, it possesses no authority to extort from thee any confession of sin. On the contrary, it cheerfully acknowledges its impotence in this respect, it is willing to say to a man that not all the eloquence of the world is capable of convincing him of his sin, but then also it would remind him not to fear the eloquence of sinners but the omnipresence of the Holy One, and still more to fear escaping from it. If a man is to understand his sin essentially, he must understand it because he remains alone, he alone, precisely he alone with the Holy One who knows all things. Only this fear and trembling is the true sort, only the sorrow which the remembrance of God awakens in a man, only the repentance His love fosters. Though an orator had a voice like the thunder of heaven, though he had an aspect which struck men with terror, though he understood how to accuse with his eye, and then as thou wast sitting there, my hearer, he pointed to thee and said, “Thou, thou art a sinner,” and though he did it with such power that thine eyes sought the ground, that the blood retreated from thy cheeks, and perhaps for a long time thou didst not recover from the impression — then thou didst know surely that he by his behavior transformed the scene into a booth at the fair where he performed his juggler’s tricks, and thou didst deplore that he disturbed thee from finding the stillness. Fear and trembling before an abomination, before a pious debaucheé, is not the true fear and trembling. As it is truly said that a man is not to seek his peace in another man lest he build upon the sand, so it is true also that he is not to rely upon the notion that it is the business of any other man to convince him that he is a sinner, though another may well remind him of his own responsibility to God, if he does not discover it himself. Every other understanding is distraction. And

it is mere jest if I were to judge thee, but this is seriousness if thou dost forget that God will judge.

So then, the object of the search is given, God is near enough; but no man can *see God without purity,* and sin is precisely impurity, and *therefore no man can take note of God without becoming a sinner.* The first is an inviting word, and the glance of the soul is upward towards the height where the goal is; but at the same instant there rings out the other word which indicates the beginning, and this word is a depressing word. And such is the case with him who would understand sin for himself.

So here the discourse arrives at the beginning. The beginning does not come about through wonder, but verily neither does it come about through doubt, for he who doubts of his guilt makes a bad beginning, or rather he continues what with sin was badly begun. "What comes with sin goes with sorrow," — this surely applies to sin itself: it goes with sorrow. Sorrow is therefore the beginning, and trembling is the vigilance of sorrow. The deeper the sorrow, so much the more does a man feel himself to be nothing, less than nothing, and this precisely for the reason that the sorrower is the seeker who begins to take note of God. It has always been said, even in paganism, that the gods do not sell the highest things for naught, that a divine envy which prompts the divinity to set store upon itself determines the conditions of the relationship — how might not then this thing of an individual man becoming aware of God, how might it not have its requirement? And this requirement is that a man become a sinner. And yet this is not, if I may say so, a courtesy man shows to God, that His holy presence reduces the individual to a sinner; no, the individual was a sinner, but he became such only by God's presence. He, however, who seeks to understand himself in the consciousness of sin before God does not understand this as a general proposition that all men are sinners, for it is not upon this generality the emphasis falls. The deeper the sorrow, so much the

more does a man feel himself as nothing, as less than nothing, and abatement of self-esteem is a sign that the sorrower is a seeker who begins to take note of God. In a worldly sense it is said that he is a poor soldier who does not hope to attain the highest rank; in a godly sense the reverse is true: the less one believes in oneself, not as man in general or as being a man, but of himself as an individual man, not with respect to talents, but with respect to guilt — so much the more distinct will God become in him. We would not increase guilt in order that God may become greater, but we well may increase the knowledge of guilt. And as the magistrate who sleeplessly watches over justice sometimes employs spies who themselves are guilty, so is everyone whom the Holy One employs himself a debtor, sometimes even a debtor in the strictest sense, a guilty man, so that the Holy One is concerned both for the salvation of the guilty one and about saving others by means of him.

Works of Love (1847)

SOME CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS IN THE FORM OF DISCOURSES

Translated by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, 1946

Works of Love was published under Kierkegaard's own name, as opposed to his more famous "pseudonymous" works. It deals primarily with the Christian conception of *agape* love in contrast with erotic love (eros) or preferential love (phileo) given to friends and family. Kierkegaard uses this value/virtue to understand the existence and relationship of the individual Christian. Having helped establish the concept of Existentialism, he combines it with a high-level of theology, citing the scriptures of the Christian Bible. Many of the chapters discuss examples of 'love' from the New Testament and examine reflections about the transfer of individuals from secular modes (the stages of the aesthetic and ethical) to genuine religious experience and existence. Since human experience is a key to understanding Kierkegaard, the actual relationships and experiences of disciples and of Christ are characterised here as tangible models for behavior.

CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

FOREWORD
PRAYER
I. THE HIDDEN LIFE OF LOVE AND ITS RECOGNITION BY ITS FRUITS
II. A. THOU SHALT LOVE
III. A. LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW
IV. OUR DUTY TO LOVE THE MEN WE SEE
V. OUR DUTY TO REMAIN IN THE DEBT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER

VOLUME TWO

I. LOVE EDIFIETH
II. LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS — AND YET IS NEVER DECEIVED
III. LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS — AND YET IS NEVER PUT TO SHAME
IV. LOVE SEEKETH NOT ITS OWN
V. LOVE COVERETH A MULTITUDE OF SINS
VI. LOVE ABIDETH
VII. MERCY, A WORK OF LOVE, EVEN IF IT CAN GIVE NOTHING AND CAN DO NOTHING
VIII. THE VICTORY OF THE RECONCILIATION IN LOVE, WHICH WINS THE VANQUISHED
IX. THE WORK OF LOVE IN REMEMBERING THE DEAD
X. THE WORK OF LOVE IN RECOMMENDING LOVE

CONCLUSION

VOLUME ONE

FOREWORD

THESE CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS which are the fruit of much reflection will be slowly but also easily understood, although they will certainly prove very difficult to anyone who by a cursory and merely inquisitive reading makes them so. “That individual” who first considers whether he will read them or not, should he finally decide to read them, will sympathetically consider whether the difficulty and the ease, when these are thoughtfully weighed on the balance, are rightly proportioned to one another, so that the Christian idea may not be given a false weight by making the difficulty or the ease too great.

They are “Christian reflections,” and therefore not about love, but about the works of love. They concern the works of love, not as if all its works were herein enumerated and described, far from it; not as if the particular works herein described were now described once for all — praise God, that is impossible! For that which in its whole wealth is essentially inexhaustible, is also in its least expression essentially indescribable, because it is essentially present everywhere in its wholeness, and essentially incapable of being described.

S.K.

PRAYER

HOW COULD ANYTHING rightly be said about love if Thou wert forgotten, Thou God of Love, from whom all love comes in heaven and on earth; Thou who didst hold nothing back but didst give everything in love; Thou who art love, so the lover is only what he is through being in Thee! How could anything rightly be said about love if Thou wert forgotten, Thou who didst make manifest what love is. Thou, our Saviour and Redeemer, who gave Himself to save us all! How could anything rightly be said about love if Thou wert forgotten. Thou Spirit of Love, Thou who dost abate nothing of Thine own, but dost call to mind that sacrifice of love, dost remind the believer to love as he is loved, and his neighbor as himself! O Eternal Love! Thou who art everywhere present, and never without testimony in what may here be said about love, or about works of love. For it is certainly true that there are some acts which the human language particularly and narrow-mindedly calls acts of charity; but in heaven it is certainly true that no act can be pleasing unless it is an act of love: sincere in its self-abnegation, a necessity for love, and, just because of this, without claim or merit.

I. THE HIDDEN LIFE OF LOVE AND ITS RECOGNITION BY ITS FRUITS

FOR EVERY TREE is known by its own fruit For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. — Luke 6:44

IF IT WERE TRUE, as a conceited cleverness believes, proud of not being imposed upon, that one should believe nothing that one does not see with the sensual eye, then must one first and foremost cease to believe in love. And if one did this and did it for fear of being deceived, would one then not be deceived? One may be deceived in many ways; one may be deceived by believing the false, but one may also be deceived by not believing the true; one may be deceived by appearances, but one may also be deceived by the appearance of shrewdness, by the flattering conceit which is absolutely certain it cannot be deceived. And which deception is the more dangerous? Whose recovery is the more doubtful, that of one who does not see, or his who sees and yet does not see? Which is more difficult — to awaken one who is sleeping, or to awaken one who, awaking, dreams that he is awake? Which sight is more distressing, one which immediately and unequivocally moves one to tears, the sight of the unhappy deception of love, or that which in a certain sense might occasion laughter, the sight of the self-delusion whose foolish conceit of being incapable of being deceived is certainly ridiculous and something to laugh at, were not the ridiculous here an even stronger expression for horror, because it indicates that the one self-deceived is not even worthy of tears?

To defraud oneself of love is the most terrible deception of all. It is an eternal loss for which there is no compensation either here or in eternity. For if otherwise, however else it may differ, the question is about being

deceived about love, then the victim still retains his hold on love, and the deception consists merely in there being no love where it was supposed to be. But the self-deceived has excluded and does exclude himself from love. Much has also been said about being deceived by life or in life; but one who self-deceived defrauded himself of living, has suffered an irreparable loss. Eternity may yet richly compensate a man who all his life had been deceived by life; but the self-deceived has prevented himself from gaining the eternal. Oh, what has one whose love made him a victim of human deception really lost if in eternity it appears that love abides while the deception has ceased! But the one who by shrewdness defrauded himself by cleverly falling into the snare of cleverness, even if throughout his whole life he conceitedly deemed himself lucky, what has he not lost if in eternity it appears that he defrauded himself! For a man may perhaps succeed in getting along in the temporal existence without love; he may succeed perhaps in getting through time without discovering the self-deception; he may perhaps succeed — how terrible! — in continuing in his self-conceit, glorying in it; but in eternity he cannot do without love, and he cannot fail to discover that he has forfeited everything. How earnest, how terrible existence is, just when it chastisingly permits the self-willed man to act for himself, so that he is allowed to live on, glorying in being deceived, until sometime he has to testify that he everlastingly defrauded himself! Truly, eternity will not be mocked; what is more, it does not even need to use force, but with supreme effectiveness it uses a bit of mockery to punish the presumptuous man most terribly. What is it which connects the temporal and the eternal, what except love, which just for this reason is before everything, and which abides when everything else is past? But precisely because love is the bond of the eternal, and because the temporal existence and eternity are heterogeneous, for that reason love may sometimes seem burdensome to the earthly prudence of the temporal existence, and therefore

in this existence it may seem a tremendous relief to the sensual man to cast off this bond of the eternal.

The self-deceived man certainly believes that he can rely upon himself, moreover, that he has more than conquered. In his fool's conceit it is hidden from him how distressing his life is. That "he has ceased to sorrow," we shall not deny. But what advantage is this to him when his chance of salvation lies in his beginning in earnest to sorrow over himself! The self-deceived man even thinks perhaps that he is able to comfort others who were victims of a perfidious deception. But what madness for one who had sustained an eternal injury to wish to heal someone who at most is sick unto death! Through a strange contradiction, the self-deceived man perhaps believes that he is sympathetic with the unfortunate victims of a deception. But if you listen carefully to his consoling speech and healing wisdom, then you will know his love by its fruits; by its bitter mockery, by the shrewdness of its reasoning, by its poisonous spirit of mistrust, by the cutting coldness of its obduracy; that is, it will be known by its fruits that there is no love in his sympathy.

We know the tree by its fruits; we do not gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles; if you try to gather them there, then you will not only gather in vain, but the thorns will prove to you that you gather in vain. For every tree is known by its own fruit. It may very well be that there are two fruits very closely resembling each other; the one is palatable and delicious, the other bitter and poisonous. Sometimes too the poisonous one is very palatable, the healthful one bitter to the taste. So also love is known by its own fruit. If a man makes a mistake, it must be either because he does not know how to judge rightly in this particular case, or because he does not know the fruits. Thus a man may make a mistake and call that love which is really self-love: when he is absolutely certain that he cannot live without the beloved, but he will listen to nothing about its being the task and

requirement of love that a man should deny himself and renounce the selfishness of love. Or he may make a mistake and call a weak complacency by the name of love; or a demoralized whining, or harmful connections, or natural vanity, or selfish associations, or the bribery of flattery, or momentary impressions, or relationships of the temporal existence, by the name of love.

There is a flower which is called the flower of eternity, but there is also, strange to say, a so-called everlasting flower which, like perishable flowers, blooms only at a certain time of year: what a misnomer to call the latter an everlasting flower! And yet at the time of blossoming it does not look so deceptive. But every tree is known by its own fruit, and love too is known by its fruit, and the love about which Christianity speaks is known by its own fruit because it has the truth of the eternal in it. All other love, whether, humanly speaking, it withers early and is changed, or cherished it endures throughout the temporal existence, is nevertheless perishable, it merely blooms. In this lies precisely its fragility and its sadness; whether it blossoms for an hour or for seventy years, it merely blossoms. But Christian love is eternal. Therefore no man who understands himself would think of saying of Christian love that it blossoms. No poet who understands himself would think of celebrating Christian love in song. For that which the poet sings must contain the sadness which is his own life's mystery: it must bloom — and, alas, it must perish. But the Christian love abides, and just for that reason it is: for what blooms perishes, and what perishes blooms, but what is cannot be sung, it must be believed and it must be lived.

However, when one says that love is known by its fruits, then one also says that love itself in a certain sense is in secret, and just because of this secrecy it can only be known by its manifest fruits. This is absolutely true. Every life, including the life of love, is hidden, but is revealed in another way. The life of the plant is hidden, the fruit is its manifestation. The life of

thought is hidden, its expression in speech is its revelation. The sacred words we read have a twofold meaning, while concealingly they speak only of one; obviously the statement contained one thought, but secretly it also contained another.

So let us then call attention to both thoughts, as we now speak about:

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF LOVE AND ITS RECOGNITION BY ITS FRUITS.

Whence comes love? Where is its source and its wellspring? Where is the secret place from which it issues? Truly, that place is hidden, or it is in secret. There is a place in the heart of man; from this place issues the life of love, for "out of the heart are the issues of life." But you cannot see this place; however far you penetrate, the source withdraws in distance and secrecy. Even when you push farthest in, the source is always on beyond, like the source of the fountain which just when you are nearest is farther away. From this place love issues forth in manifold ways; but by none of these ways can you penetrate its hidden source. As God dwells in a light from which every ray of light which illumines the world issues, yet by none of these ways can a man enter in order to see God; for the way of light changes to darkness if one faces toward the light: so love dwells in secret, or is hidden in the heart. As the spring-fed mountain stream by the murmuring persuasiveness of its rippling entices, almost begs, a man to follow it along its course, and not inquisitively try to force his way to its source and reveal its hidden secret; as the rays of the sun invite men by their radiance to behold the glories of the world, but reprovingly punish the presumptuous man with blindness if he inquisitively and audaciously faces about to discover the source of the light; as faith invitingly volunteers to be man's companion on the way of life, but petrifies the one who impudently turns around in order to try to understand it: so it is love's wish and prayer

that its secret source and its hidden life in the heart may remain a secret; that no one inquisitively and impudently shall try to force himself in disturbingly in order to see that which nevertheless he cannot see, but whose happiness and blessing he may certainly forfeit through his curiosity. It always causes the most painful suffering when the surgeon in operating is obliged to cut into the more vital and therefore the more secret parts of the body; so there is also the most painful suffering, and also the most demoralizing, when someone, instead of rejoicing in the manifestations of love, wishes to gratify himself by scrutinizing the love itself, that is, by disturbing it.

Love's secret life is in the heart, unfathomable, and it also has an unfathomable connection with the whole of existence. As the peaceful lake is grounded deep in the hidden spring which no eye can see, so a man's love is grounded even deeper in the love of God. If there were at bottom no wellspring, if God were not love, then there would be no quiet lake or human love. As the quiet lake is grounded darkly in the deep spring, so is human love mysteriously grounded in God's love. As the quiet lake invites you to look at it, but by its dark reflection prevents your looking down through it, so the mysterious origin of love in the love of God prevents you from seeing its source; if you think you see it, then you are deceived by a reflection, as if that which merely conceals the deeper source were the true source. As the ingenious cover, placed over a treasure for the express purpose of absolutely concealing the treasure, looks like the bottom of the receptacle, so that reflection which but conceals something even deeper, looks deceptively like the deep bottom.

So the life of love is hidden; but its secret life is itself in motion and has eternity in it. As the quiet lake, however placidly it lies, is really running water — for is there not a wellspring at bottom? — so love, however quiet it is in its concealment, is ever flowing. But the quiet lake can become dry if

its source sometime fails; the life of love, on the contrary, has an eternal wellspring. This life is fresh and everlasting; no cold can chill it, it is too fervent for that; and no heat can exhaust it, its coolness is too fresh for that. But it is hidden. And when the Gospel speaks of the recognition of this life by its fruits, then is not its meaning after all this, that one should not trouble and disturb this hiding-place; that one should abandon the observations which but "benumb the spirit" and retard the growth?

Yet this hidden life of love is recognisable by its fruits; moreover, it is a necessity of love that it should be known by its fruits. Oh, how beautiful it is that this word which indicates the greatest wretchedness at the same time indicates the greatest wealth! To need, to have need and to be needy, how reluctant a man is to have this said about him! And yet we are expressing the highest praise when we say of a poet that he needs to write; of an orator that he needs to speak; of a girl that she needs to love. Ah, even the most needy person who has ever lived, if he still has had love, how rich has not his life be compared with the life of the only poor man, who lived his life through and never felt the need of anything! For this is certainly the maiden's greatest riches, that she needs the beloved; this is the highest and truest wealth of the devout that he needs God. Ask them, ask the maiden if she could feel equally happy if she could get along just as well without the beloved; ask the devout if he understands or wishes that he could get along just as well without God! So it is with the recognition of love by its fruits, which precisely, therefore, if the relationship is right, is said to press forward, whereby again its richness is indicated. This might also cause the greatest agony if it were really true that in love itself there could be the self-contradiction that love commanded it be kept hidden, commanded that it should be unrecognizable. Would that not be as if the plant which felt the vigorous life and blessing of fertility, dared not let it be known, acted as if the blessing were a curse, kept it to itself, alas, as the secret of its

inexplicable withering! Therefore it is not true. For even if a single particular expression of love, if a love affair, were pushed back by love in a painful concealment: the same life of love would nevertheless produce a new expression of love, and would still be known by its fruits. Oh, ye quiet martyrs of an unhappy love! What you suffered from a love that must conceal a love indeed remained a secret; you never revealed it, such was the greatness of your love that made this sacrifice: and yet your love was known by its fruits! And perhaps just those fruits became precious, those which were matured by the quiet burning of a secret pain.

The tree is known by its fruits; for a tree is also known by its leaves but the fruit still affords the essential knowledge. If you, therefore, identified a tree by its leaves as being that particular tree, but in the time of fruit you discovered that it did not bear fruit, then you would know from this that it was not the tree it appeared to be from its leaves. This is true also concerning the recognition of love. The apostle John says, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but. in deed and in truth." And with what better can we compare the words and expressions of love than with the leaves of a tree? For words and expressions and the inventions of language can also afford a knowledge of love, but they are not reliable. The same words in the mouth of one person can be so rich, so trustworthy, which in the mouth of another can be like the vague whisper of the leaves. The same words which in the mouth of one can be like the "blessed nourishing corn," in the mouth of another can be like the unfruitful beauty of the leaves. But because of this you must not restrain the words any more than you must conceal the visible emotion when it is genuine. For one may ungenerously wrong a man if one withholds from him that which is his due. Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is the object of your affection, has also a right to an expression of this affection in words, if your heart truly prompts you. The emotion is not your own possession, but it

belongs to the other; its expression is his due, since you in your emotion belong to him who causes that emotion, and who is conscious that you belong to him. When the heart is full you must not enviously, arrogantly, unfairly to the other, injure him by silently compressing the lips; you must let your mouth speak out of the heart's abundance. You should not be ashamed of your feelings, and even less of honestly giving everyone his due. But one must not love in words and forms of speech, nor should one recognize love in this way. On the contrary, one will know by such fruits, or by the fact that there are only leaves, that love has not yet reached its growing season. Sirach says warningly: "If you devour your leaves you will drop your fruit and leave yourself standing like a dry tree." For precisely by the fact of words and expressions being love's only fruit, one knows that a man has unseasonably stripped away the leaves, so that he gets no fruit; not to mention the more terrible fact that one sometimes recognizes the deception just by the words and expressions used. Consequently immature and deceptive love is known by the fact that words and verbal expressions are its only fruit.

We say about certain plants that we must plant the heart; so we may also say about human love: if it is really to bear fruit, and hence be known by its fruit, then we must first plant the heart. For love certainly issues from the heart; but let us not, in considering this, forget that eternal truth that love plants the heart. Every man knows the fugitive impulses of an irresolute heart, but the impulses of the natural heart are infinitely different from planting the heart in the sense of the eternal. And how seldom is this true that eternity acquires so much authority over a man that the love in him is able to establish itself everlastingly, or truly to plant the heart. However, this is the condition essential for bearing love's own fruit by which it is known. As the love itself is invisible, a man must therefore believe in it; so

it is not to be known simply and unconditionally by any of its expressions as such.

There is no word in the human language, not a single one, not the most sacred, about which we are able to say: “If a man uses this word it unconditionally proves that he has love.” On the contrary, it is always true that a word used by one man can assure us that he has love, and an absolutely contrary word used by another can assure us that he loves just as much; it is true that a word can assure us that love dwells in the heart of the one who uttered it, and not in another who nevertheless used the same word.

There is no act, not a single one, not the best, about which we unconditionally dare to say: “He who does this proves unconditionally that he loves.” It depends on how he shows his love. There are, we know, deeds which in a special sense are called acts of charity. But truly, because one gives alms, because one visits the widow and clothes the naked, one’s love is not thereby proved or even recognizable. For one can perform acts of charity in an unkind, moreover, even in a selfish way, and when this is the case, the act of charity is not a work of love. You have certainly very frequently seen this distressing sight; you have perhaps caught yourself doing what every honest man must confess about himself, just because he is not unkind and hardened enough to overlook the essential thing, you have caught yourself forgetting in what you do, how you do it. Alas, Luther may have said that not one single time in his whole life had he prayed absolutely undisturbed by any irrelevant thoughts; so too the honest man acknowledges that however often and however many times he willingly and gladly gave alms, he never did it except imperfectly, perhaps influenced by some accidental impression, perhaps by a capricious partiality, perhaps to satisfy his conscience, perhaps with an averted face — but not in the scriptural sense without the left hand perhaps becoming conscious of it —

but thoughtlessly, possibly thinking of his own sorrow — instead of thinking of the affliction of the poor, possibly seeking personal relief through giving alms — instead of wishing to alleviate poverty: so the act of charity did not in the highest sense become a work of love.

Hence how the word is spoken, and above all how it is meant, hence how the act is performed: this is the decisive thing in determining and in recognizing love by its fruits. But here again the point is that there is nothing, no "thus," about which it can unconditionally be said that it unconditionally proves the presence of love, or that it unconditionally proves that love is not present.

And yet it is certain that love must be known by its fruits. But the sacred words of our text are not uttered for the purpose of encouraging us to occupy ourselves in judging one another; they are, on the contrary, spoken admonishingly to the individual (to you, my hearer, and to me), in order to encourage him not to permit his love to become unfruitful, but to work so that it may be known by its fruits, whether others do recognize them or not. For he certainly must not labor for the sake of having his love known by its fruits, but labor so that it may be known by its fruits; in this labor he must guard himself so that the recognition of the love does not become more important to him than the one thing needful: that it bear fruit, and hence may be known by its fruit. One thing is true, whatever clever advice one may give a man, whatever precautions one can recommend to prevent being deceived by others, the Gospel demands something different and something far more important of the individual, that he bear in mind that a tree is known by its fruits, and that it is he or his love which the Gospel compares with a tree. The Gospel does not say, as would the speech of the clever: "Some of you will know the tree by its fruits." But it says: "The tree shall be known by its fruits." The explanation is that you, you who read these words of the Gospel, you are the tree. What the prophet Nathan added to the

parable, “Thou art the man,” the Gospel did not need to add, since it is already evident in the form of the expression, and in the fact that it is the word of an evangelist. For the divine authority of the Gospel does not speak to one man about another man, not to you, my hearer, about me, or to me about you. No, when the Gospel speaks, it speaks to the individual; it does not speak about us men, you and me, but it speaks to us men, you and me, and it speaks about the love that is known by its fruits.

If therefore some eccentric and fanatical, or hypocritical, person were to teach that love was such a secret emotion that it was too select to bear fruit, or so secret that its fruit neither proved anything for nor against it, moreover, that not even the poisonous fruit proved anything, then we should remember the Gospel words: the tree is known by its fruits. Not for the sake of criticizing but to defend ourselves against such assertions, we shall call attention to the fact that that which always happens with respect to every apostolic utterance, happens here, that “he who acts in accordance with this word is like a man who built his house upon a rock.” “When the storms come” and devastate the select fragility of that sensitive love; “when the winds blow and beat upon” the web of hypocrisy: then will the true love be known by its fruits. For truly love shall be known by its fruits, but it does not therefore follow from this that you should presume to be the judge; the tree too must be known by its fruits, but it does not therefore follow from this that there is one tree which shall presume to judge the others; on the contrary, it is always the individual tree which must — bear fruit. But a man should fear neither the one who can kill the body, nor the hypocrite. There is but One whom a man should fear, that is God; and there is but one for whom a man should fear, that is himself. Truly one who in fear and trembling before God feared for himself, has never been deceived by hypocrisy. But he who busied himself in tracking down hypocrites, whether he succeeded or not, must vigilantly watch to see that this too is not

hypocrisy; for such discoveries are still hardly the fruits of love. On the other hand, the one whose love in truth bears its own fruit will involuntarily and unwittingly expose every hypocrite who comes near him, or else he will make him ashamed; but the lover will perhaps not even be conscious of this. The most mediocre defense against hypocrisy is shrewdness; moreover it is scarcely a defense, rather a dangerous proximity; the best defense against hypocrisy is love; and it is not merely a defense but a yawning chasm; through all eternity it has nothing to do with hypocrisy. And this is also a fruit by which love is known, in that it assures the lover against falling into the snare of hypocrisy.

But even if it is true that love is known by its fruits, let us not in our love for one another impatiently, suspiciously, condemningly, perpetually ask to see the fruits. The first point we developed in this discourse was that we must believe in love, otherwise we simply do not know that it exists; but now the discourse returns to that first point and says repeatedly: believe in love! This is the first and the last thing there is to say about love, if one wishes to know; but the first time it was said to oppose the impudent common sense which wished to deny the existence of love; now, on the contrary, after having explained its recognition by its fruits, it is said to oppose the sickly, timid, fastidious narrow-mindedness which in petty and wretched mistrust wishes to see the fruits. Do not forget that it would be a beautiful, a noble, a sacred fruit by which the love in your heart became recognizable, if in your relations to another man, whose love perhaps bore poorer fruit, you were loving enough to see his love as more beautiful than it was. If suspicion can actually see something less than it is, then love can also see something greater than it is.

Do not forget that even when you are rejoicing in the fruits of love, when you know by them that love dwells in the other man, do not forget that it is even more blessed to believe in love. Just this constitutes a new expression

for the depth of love, that when one has learned to know it by its fruits, one then returns to that first point, and returns to it as the highest, to believing in love. For the life of love is indeed known by the fruits which make it manifest, but the life itself is still more than the individual fruit, and more than all its fruits taken together, if you were to count them at any one moment. Therefore, the last, the most blessed, the unconditionally convincing characteristic of love abides: the love itself, which is known and recognized by the love in another. The like is known only by the like; only he who abides in love can know love as his love is also known.

II. A. THOU SHALT LOVE

BUT THE SECOND commandment is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. — Matthew 22:39

EVERY SPEECH, especially a portion of a speech, usually presupposes something from which it proceeds. He who desires to make the speech or the assertion a subject of reflection does well, therefore, to look first for this presupposition, in order to start from it. So there is also a presupposition contained in the text we read, which although it comes last is nevertheless the starting point. Therefore when we are told: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” then this statement contains the presupposition that every man loves himself. Consequently Christianity presupposes this, since Christianity, unlike those ambitious thinkers, by no means begins without presuppositions, or with a flattering assumption.

And would we dare to deny that what Christianity presupposes is true? But, on the other hand, could anyone so misunderstand Christianity as to believe it was its intention to teach that which worldly wisdom unanimously — alas, and yet divisively — teaches, that everyone loves himself best? Could anyone misunderstand this, as if it were the intention of Christianity to hold self-love in honor? On the contrary, it is its intention to strip us of our selfishness. This selfishness consists in loving one’s self; but if one must love his neighbor as himself, then the commandment opens the lode of self-love as with a picklock, and the man with it. If the commandment about loving one’s neighbor were expressed in some other way than by the use of this little phrase, “as thyself,” which is at once so easy to use and yet has the tension of eternity, then the commandment would not be able thus to master the self-love. This “as thyself” does not vacillate in its aim, and so it enters

with the condemning inflexibility of eternity into the most secret hiding place, where a man loves himself. It does not leave self-love the least excuse, the least loophole open. How strange! Long and shrewd speeches might be made about how a man ought to love his neighbor; and then, after all the speeches had been heard, self-love could still hit upon an excuse and find a way of escape, because the subject had not been absolutely exhausted; the alternatives had not been canvassed; because something had been forgotten, or not accurately and bindingly enough expressed and described.

But this "as thyself"! Certainly no wrestler can get so tight a clinch upon his opponent as that with which this commandment embraces the selfishness which cannot stir from its place. Truly, when selfishness has striven with this word, which yet is so easy to understand that no one should break his head on it, then it must perceive that it has been striving with the stronger power. As Jacob limped after he had wrestled with God, so shall the selfishness be broken when it has striven with this word, which, however, does not wish to teach a man that he ought not to love himself, but, on the contrary, simply wishes to teach him the proper kind of self-love. How strange! What struggle is so protracted, so terrible, so complicated, as the battle of self-love in its own defense? — and yet Christianity decides everything with a single blow. The whole is swift as a handspring, everything is decided, like the eternal decision of the resurrection, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye": Christianity presupposes that a man loves himself, and merely adds to this the word about loving your neighbor "as yourself." And yet there lies the difference of eternity between the first and the last.

But would this really be the highest form of love? Would it not be possible to love a man better than one's self? We hear such talk now and then, the expression of a poet's enthusiasm. Could it perhaps be true that it

was because Christianity was not able to soar so high, presumably also because it addresses itself to simple, commonplace men, that it wretchedly continues to stress the requirement of loving one's neighbor "as one's self"? Could that be why, instead of basing its demand on that object of ambitious love which poets celebrate, "a beloved," "a friend," it bases it on the apparently very unpoetical "neighbor"? For certainly no poet has ever sung about loving one's neighbor, any more than he has sung about loving him "as one's self." Could this perhaps be the case? Or should we, as we make a concession to the love which the poet sings as compared with the love commanded, humbly praise the circumspection of Christianity and its understanding of life, because it holds itself to earth more soberly and more enduringly, perhaps with the same import as that of the proverb which says: "Love me little, love me long"?

Be this far from us! Christianity knows a better answer to the question of what love is and about loving than does any poet. Precisely therefore it knows too that which perhaps escapes the attention of many poets, that the love they praise is secretly self-love, and that this explains its intoxicated expression: about loving another man better than one's self. Earthly love is still not the eternal love, it is the beautiful fantasy of the infinite, its highest expression is mysterious foolishness. That is why it even tries its hand at an even more fantastic expression, the "loving a man more than God." And this foolishness pleases the poet beyond all measure, it is delicious in his ears, it inspires him to song. Alas, Christianity teaches that this is blasphemy.

And what is true of love is also true of friendship, insofar as this too is a consequence of partiality: of loving this one man above all others, of loving him as distinct from all others. Therefore the objects of both love and friendship bear the nomenclature of this partiality, "the beloved," "the friend," who is loved above all the rest of the world. On the contrary, the

Christian teaching is to love the neighbor, to love the whole race, all men, even one's enemy, and to make no exception, either of partiality or of dislike.

There is only One whom a man may with the truth of the eternal love better than himself, that is God. Therefore it does not say, "Thou shalt love God as thyself," but it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." A man must love God in unconditional obedience and love Him in adoration. It would be ungodliness if any man dared to love himself in this way, or dared to love another man in this way, or dared to permit another man to love him in this way. If your beloved or your friend begged you for something which you, because you honestly loved him, had anxiously considered would be injurious to him: then a responsibility would rest upon you if you showed your love by acquiescing in his wish, instead of showing it by denying him its fulfilment. But God you must love in unconditional obedience even if that which He demands of you may seem injurious to you, moreover injurious to His own interests. For God's wisdom is incomparable with respect to your own, and God's guidance is not obliged to be responsible for your cleverness. You have only to obey in love. A man, on the contrary, you must only — yet, no, that is the highest — consequently you must love a man as yourself; if you can better perceive his best than he can, then you will not be able to excuse yourself by the fact that the harmful thing was his own wish, was what he himself asked for. If this were not the case, then there might quite rightly be something said about loving another man better than yourself; for this love would consist in: in spite of your own conviction that it would be harmful to him, obediently doing it because he asked it, or adoringly, because he wished it. But this you simply have no right to do; you are responsible if you do it, just as the other is responsible if he should misuse his relationship to you in this way.

Consequently— “as thyself.” If the most cunning deceiver who has ever lived (or we may invent one even more cunning than has ever lived) in order if possible to have the right to use many words and to become long-winded, for then the deceiver would soon triumph, were to persist year out and year in inquiring “temptingly’ of the “royal law,” “How shall I love my neighbor?” — then will the laconic commandment unchanged continue to repeat the brief phrase, “as thyself.” And if any deceiver — deceived himself all his life by all sorts of difficulties concerning this matter, then will eternity only reprove him with the brief words of the commandment, “as thyself.” Verily, no one will be able to escape the commandment; if its “as thyself” presses as hard on life as possible, so again “neighbor” is a category which in its offensiveness is as perilous to self-love as possible. That it is impossible to escape from these two categories, self-love itself readily perceives. The only escape is the one the Pharisee in his time attempted in order to justify himself: to make it doubtful who his neighbor was — in order to get him out of the way.

Who then is one’s neighbor? The word is evidently derived from “nearest,” so the neighbor is the one who is nearer you than all others, although not in the preferential sense; for to love the one who is preferentially nearer one than all others, is self-love— “Do not even the heathen the same?” The neighbor, then, is nearer to you than all others. But is he also nearer to you than you are to yourself? No, not so; but he is, or should be, equally near. The concept “neighbor” is really a reduplication of your own self; the “neighbor” is what philosophers would call the “other,” the touchstone for testing what is selfish in self-love. Insofar, for the sake of the thought, it is not even necessary that the neighbor should exist. If a man lived on a desert island, if he developed his mind in harmony with the commandment, then by renouncing self-love he could be said to love his neighbor.

“Neighbor” is itself a multitude, for “neighbor” implies “all men,” and yet in another sense one man is enough to enable you to obey the commandment. In a selfish sense it is an impossibility consciously to be two in being a self; self-love demands that it be one. Nor are three needed, for if there are two, that is, if there is one other human being whom, in the Christian sense, you love “as yourself,” or in whom you love the “neighbor,” then you love all men. But what the selfish definitely cannot tolerate is: duplication, and the words of the commandment, “as thyself,” are exactly a duplication. One who is burning with love can never because of or by virtue of this burning, endure the reduplication which here would mean the relinquishing of love, if the object of the love required it. Consequently the lover does not love the beloved “as himself,” for he is a claimant, but this “as thyself” precisely implies a claim upon him — and yet, alas, the lover still believes that he loves the other man better than himself.

“Neighbor” presses as closely as possible upon the selfishness in life. If there are only two men, the other man is the neighbor; if there are millions, each one of these is the neighbor, who is again closer to one than “the friend” and “the beloved,” insofar as those, as being the objects of preferential love, gradually become analogous to the self-love in one. We are ordinarily conscious that the neighbor exists and that he is close at hand when we believe that we have rights with regard to him, that we may claim something from him. If someone with this idea asks: Who is my neighbor? then will Christ’s answer to the Pharisee be a reply only in a very peculiar sense, for in the answer the question is first really transformed into its opposite, whereby it is intimated how a man ought to ask. After having related the parable of the good Samaritan, Christ says to the Pharisees, “Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?” And the Pharisees answer “rightly,” “The one who showed mercy

to him.” That is, by recognizing your duty to him, you readily discover who your neighbor is. The answer of the Pharisees is implicit in Christ’s question, which by its form compelled the Pharisee to answer as he did. He to whom I have an obligation is my neighbor, and when I fulfil my obligation I show that I am his neighbor. Christ does not talk about knowing one’s neighbor, but about one’s self being a neighbor, about proving one’s self a neighbor, as the Samaritan proved himself one by his compassion. For by his compassion he did not prove that the man attacked was his neighbor, but that he was the neighbor of the one who was assaulted. The Levite and the priest were in a closer sense the neighbors of the victim, but these refused to recognize that fact; the Samaritan, on the contrary, who through prejudice might have misunderstood, still rightly understood that he was the neighbor of the man who had fallen among thieves. To choose a beloved, to find a friend, those are indeed complicated tasks, but a neighbor is easy to know, easy to find, if we will only — recognize our duty.

This was the commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” but when the commandment is rightly understood, it also says the converse, “Thou shalt love thyself in the right way.” If anyone, therefore, will not learn from Christianity to love himself in the right way, then neither can he love his neighbor; he may perhaps, as we say, “for life and death” — cling to one or several other human beings, but this is by no means loving one’s neighbor. To love one’s self in the right way and to love one’s neighbor are absolutely analogous concepts, are at bottom one and the same. When the “as thyself” of the commandment has taken from you the selfishness which Christianity, sad to say, must presuppose as existing in every human being, then you have rightly learned to love yourself. Hence the law is: “You shall love yourself as you love your neighbor when you love him as yourself. Whoever has some knowledge of men will certainly admit that as he has often wished to be able to influence men to give up their self-love, so he has

also often wished that it were possible to teach them to love themselves. When the busy man wastes his time and energy on vain and unimportant projects, is this not because he has not rightly learned to love himself? When the frivolous man abandons himself, almost as a mere nothing, to the folly of the moment, is not this because he does not rightly understand how to love himself?

When the melancholy man wishes to be done with life, aye, with himself, is this not because he will not learn strictly and earnestly to love himself? When a man, because the world or another man faithlessly betrayed him, yields himself up to despair, how was he to blame (for we are not here speaking of his innocent suffering), except for not having loved himself in the right way? When a man in self-torment thinks to do God a service by torturing himself, what is his sin except this, of not willing to love himself in the right way? Ah, and when a man presumptuously lays his hand upon himself, does not his sin precisely consist in not loving himself in the way in which a man ought to love himself? Oh, there is so much said in the world about treachery and faithlessness, and, God help us! this is unfortunately only too true, but let us still never forget that the most dangerous traitor of all is the one every man has in his own breast. This treachery, whether it consists in a man's selfishly loving himself, or in the fact that he selfishly does not wish to love himself in the right way, this treachery is certainly a mystery because there is no outcry about it, as is usual in cases of treachery and faithlessness. But is it not therefore all the more important that we should repeatedly be reminded about the Christian teaching; that a man should love his neighbor as himself, that is, as he ought to love himself?

The commandment about love to one's neighbor uses one and the same word, "as thyself," about this love and about the love for one's self — and now the introduction to this discourse pauses at that which it desires to

make the subject of our consideration. That by which the commandment about love to one's neighbor and about love to one's self become synonymous is not only this "as thyself," but even more that word, "Thou shalt" It is about this that we wish to speak:

THOU SHALT LOVE,

for this is precisely the criterion of the Christian love and its characteristic, that it contains the apparent contradiction; that loving is a duty.

Thou shalt love, this is consequently the word of the "royal law." And, truly, my hearer, if you are able to form any conception of the world as it was before these words were uttered, or if you strive to understand yourself, and pay some attention to the lives and state of mind of those who, although they call themselves Christian, still really live under the categories of paganism: you will then humbly admit, with the wonder of faith, that with respect to this Christian word, as with all Christian expressions, such a commandment has not originated in any human heart. But now since this commandment has been in force through eighteen hundred years of Christianity, and before that time in Judaism; now since everyone has been brought up in it, and from the spiritual point of view is like a child brought up in the home of well-to-do parents, who quite naturally forgets that his daily bread is a gift; now since the Christian religion has many times been rejected by those who were brought up in it, because they preferred all kinds of novelties, just as wholesome food is refused by a person who has never been hungry, in favor of sweets; now since the Christian religion is everywhere presupposed, presupposed as known, as given, as indicated — in order to go on: now it is certainly asserted as a matter of course by everyone; and yet, alas, how seldom is it considered, how seldom perhaps does a Christian earnestly and with a thankful heart dwell upon the idea of what his condition might have been if Christianity had not come into the

world! What courage was not needed in order to say for the first time, “Thou shalt love,” or rather, what divine authority was not needed in order by this word to reverse the ideas and concepts of the natural man! For there at the border line where human language pauses and courage weakens, there the revelation breaks forth with divine primitiveness and proclaims what is not difficult to understand in the sense of requiring depth of understanding or human parallels, but which nevertheless does not originate in any human heart. It is not really difficult to understand when it has been said, and it wishes only to be understood in order to be obeyed; but it does not originate in any human heart.

Let us consider a pagan who has not been spoiled by having thoughtlessly learned to repeat the Christian commandments by rote, or spoiled by imagining that he is a Christian — and this commandment, “Thou shalt love,” will not only astonish him, but it will shock him, it will offend him. Just because of this that commandment of love, which is the Christian recognition that “all things are become new,” applies again here. The commandment is not in an accidental sense something new, or in the understanding of curiosity a piece of news; nor in the sense of the temporal existence something new. Love also existed in heathendom; but the idea that love is a duty is an everlasting innovation — and everything has become new. What a difference between the play of the emotions and impulses and inclinations and passions, in short, that play of the forces of immediacy, that glory celebrated in poetry in smiles or in tears, in wishing or in need; what a difference between that and that of eternity, the earnestness of the commandment in spirit and in truth, in sincerity and self-denial!

But human ingratitude! Oh, what a short memory it has! Because the supreme good is offered to everyone, one regards it as nothing, perceives nothing in it, to say nothing of really evaluating its precious quality, as if the

highest really lost something through the fact that everyone has or may have the same. If a family possesses one or another costly treasure which is closely associated with a definite event, then the parents tell their children about it from generation to generation, and their children in turn tell their children how this came about. But because Christianity has for so many centuries been the possession of the whole race, must therefore all talk about what an eternal change took place in the world because of its coming, cease? Is not every generation equally near to this, that is, equally bound to make it explicit? Is the change less remarkable because it happened eighteen hundred years ago? Has it, too, become less noteworthy that a God exists, because for several thousand years generations of people have lived who believed in Him? Does it therefore become less wonderful to me — if otherwise I believe this? And is it less wonderful for one who lives in our time, eighteen hundred years later, that he became a Christian, because it is eighteen hundred years since Christianity came into the world? And even if it is not quite so long ago, then he must surely be able to remember how he was before he became a Christian, and consequently know what change took place in him — if this change consisted in his becoming a Christian. Consequently no world-historic descriptions of heathendom are needed, as if it were eighteen hundred years since the overthrow of heathendom; for it is surely not quite so long since both you, my reader, and I were heathen, were that, of course — if we now have become Christian.

For this is surely the most distressing and the most impious kind of deception, to allow one's self through ingratitude to be defrauded of the highest good which one believes one possesses, and, alas, to find that one does not possess it. For what, indeed, is the highest possession, what is the possession of everything, if I never get the right impression of my possession of it, and of what it is that I possess! Because, according to the Scriptures, he who has worldly goods should be as one who does not have

them, I wonder if this is also right with respect to the supreme good: to have it and still be as one who does not have it. I wonder if that is right, yet, no, let us not be deceived by the question, as if it would be possible to have the supreme good in this way. Let us realize that this is truly an impossibility. The earthly goods are of no consequence, and therefore the Scriptures teach that when they are possessed they should be possessed as the unimportant; but the supreme good cannot and must not be possessed as the unimportant. Earthly goods are in an external sense a reality, therefore one can own them even while being as one who does not own them; but spiritual goods exist only inwardly, exist only in being possessed, and therefore one cannot, if one really possesses them, be as one who does not possess them; on the contrary, if one is such, then one simply does not possess them. If someone believes that he has faith and yet is indifferent to his possession, neither cold nor warm, then he can be sure that he does not have faith. If someone believes that he is a Christian and yet is indifferent to the fact that he is, then he truly is not a Christian. Or what would we think about a man who protested that he was in love, and also stated that it was a matter of indifference to him?

So therefore let us not forget, as little now as on some other occasion when we speak about Christianity, let us not forget its beginning, that is, that it did not originate in any human heart; let us not forget to mention it along with the origin of faith, which never, when it is present in a man, believes because others have believed, but because this man, too, has been gripped by that which has gripped countless multitudes before him, but certainly not therefore less primitively. For a tool that a handworker uses becomes blunted through years of use, a spring loses its elasticity and is weakened; but that which has the elasticity of eternity retains it through the ages absolutely unchanged. When a dynamometer has been used a long time, at last even a weak man can pass the test; but the dynamometer of

eternity, on which every man must be tested as to whether he has faith or not, remains through all the ages absolutely unchanged.

When Christ said: “Beware of men,” I wonder if that warning did not also imply this: “Beware lest through men, that is, through perpetual comparison with other men, through habit and externalities, you allow yourself to be defrauded of the supreme good.” For the artfulness of a deceiver is not so dangerous, besides one more easily perceives it; but to hold the supreme good in a sort of common fellowship, in the indolence of habit, moreover in the indolence of a habit which even wishes to posit the race instead of the individual, wishes to make the race the receiver, and the individual a participant as a matter of course by virtue of his belonging to the race: this is truly the terrible thing. Certainly the highest must not be mere plunder; you must not have it for yourself in a selfish sense, for what you merely have for yourself alone is never the highest good; but even if you, in the most profound sense of the word, have the highest in common with everyone else (and this is precisely what makes it the highest, that you can have it in common with all others), you must still have it for yourself in such a way that you keep it, not only when everyone else has it, but so that you retain it even if all others renounce it. Beware in this respect also of men, “be as wise as serpents” — in order to preserve the secret of faith for yourself, although you hope and wish and labor to make everyone in this respect like yourself. “Be innocent as doves,” for faith is exactly this simplicity. You must not use your ingenuity for the purpose of making faith into something else, but you must use it ingeniously toward men to defend the secret of faith within yourself, guarding yourself against men. Is a password not a secret because everyone knows it individually, because it is confided to everyone and kept secret by everyone? However, the secret password is one thing today and another tomorrow. But the essence of faith consists in its being a secret, in being for the individual. If each individual

does not preserve it as a secret, even when he professes it, he does not have faith. Could it be because there is something lacking in faith that it thus is and remains and must be preserved as a secret? Is this not also true of love, or is it just one of those fugitive emotions which manifest themselves immediately, and as quickly disappear, while the profound impression always preserves its secrecy? If that is so, then we are still right in saying that the love which does not make a man secretive is not really love.

That secretive love can be a symbol of faith; but the incorruptible inwardness of faith in the hidden man is life. He who wise as a serpent is on guard against men, so that harmless as a dove he may "preserve the secret of faith," has also, as the Scriptures say, "the savor in himself"; but if he is not on guard against men, then the salt loses its virtue, and how then can it be salt? And even if it happened that a secret love became the cause of a man's downfall, still faith is eternally and always the saving mystery! Behold that woman with the issue of blood; she did not press forward in order to happen to touch Christ's garment; she did not tell others what her intention was and what she believed: she said quite softly to herself: "If I only touch the hem of His garment, then am I healed." She kept the secret to herself, it was the secret of faith, which saved her both for time and eternity. This secret you may also have for yourself if you fearlessly profess faith; and when you lie helpless on a sickbed and cannot even move a limb, when you cannot even speak, you can still keep this secret with you.

But the primitiveness of faith is related to the beginning of Christianity. Extravagant descriptions of heathendom, its errors, its characteristics, are by no means needed; the signs of the Christlike are contained in Christianity itself. Make an experiment; forget for a moment Christian love, consider what you know about other love, recall what you read in the poets, what you yourself can discover, and then say whether it ever occurred to you to conceive this: Thou shalt love. Be honest, or, that this may not embarrass

you, I shall honestly confess that many, many times in my life it has awakened all my astonishment of wonder, that it has sometimes seemed to me as if love lost everything by this comparison, although it gains everything. Be honest, confess that this is perhaps the case with many people, that when they read the poets' glowing descriptions of love or friendship, these seem to them something far higher than the humble: "Thou shall love."

"Thou shalt love." Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly secure against every change; everlastingly emancipated in blessed independence; everlastingly happy, assured against despair.

However glad, however happy, however indescribably confident the love of impulse and inclination, the immediate love as such can be, it still feels, even in its most beautiful moment, a need to bind itself if possible even more closely. Therefore the two take an oath; they take an oath of loyalty or friendship to each other; and when we speak most solemnly, we do not say about the two, "They love one another," we say, "They swore fidelity to each other," or, "They took an oath of friendship to each other." But by what does this love swear? We do not wish to distract the attention and divert it by recalling the great distinction which the spokesmen of this love, the "poets," through their consecration know best about — for in respect to this love it is the poet who exacts a promise from the two, the poet who unites the two, the poet who dictates an oath to the two and lets them take it, in short, it is the poet who is the priest. Does this love then swear by something that is higher than itself? No, it does not. This is what exactly constitutes the beautiful, the moving, the mysterious, the poetical misunderstanding, that the two do not themselves discover it; and precisely because of this, the poet is their only, their beloved confidant, because neither does he discover it.

When this love takes an oath, it really gives, itself that significance by which it swears; it is the love itself which casts a glamor over that by which it swears, so it consequently not only does not swear by anything higher but it really swears by something lower than itself. So indescribably rich is this love in its loving misunderstanding; for just because it is itself an infinite wealth, a limitless trustworthiness, it happens that when it wishes to take an oath it swears by something lower, but it does not even discover this. That is why it again happens that this oath which certainly should be and which also honestly believes itself to be supremely serious, is still the most charming jest. And neither does the mysterious friend, the poet whose perfect confidence is this love's supreme understanding, understand it. Still it is certainly easy to understand, that if one will swear in truth then one must swear by something higher; only God in heaven is truly in a position to swear by Himself. However, the poet cannot understand this, that is, the individual who is a poet can understand it, but he cannot understand it insofar as he is poet, since "the poet" cannot understand it; for the poet can understand everything — in riddles, and can wonderfully explain everything — in riddles, but he cannot understand himself, or understand that he himself is a riddle. Should he be forced to understand that, then would he, if he did not become enraged and resentful, say sadly: "Would that no one had forced this comprehension upon me, which disturbs that which is most beautiful, which confuses my life, while I can make no use of it." And so far the poet is right, for the true understanding solves the vital question of his existence. There are in this way two riddles, the first is the love of the two, the second is the poet's explanation of it, or that the poet's explanation of it is also a riddle.

So this love takes an oath, and then the two add to the oath that they will love each other "forever." If this is not added, then the poet does not unite the two; he turns indifferently away from such a temporal love, or he turns

mockingly against it, whereas he forever belongs to that eternal love. There are then really two unions, first, the two who will love each other forever, and then the poet who will forever belong to those two. And in that the poet is right, that if two men will not love each other forever, then their love is not worth talking about, and certainly not worth celebrating in verse. On the other hand, the poet does not notice the misunderstanding that the two swear by their love to love each other forever, instead of swearing their love to each other by eternity. Eternity is the higher; if one wishes to take an oath, then must one swear by the higher, but if one will swear by the eternal, then one swears by the duty of loving. Alas, but that favorite of lovers, the poet! Even more seldom than the two true lovers is he himself the lover for whom he longs, he who is a marvel of lovableness. He is like the affectionate child, he cannot endure hearing this "shalt"; as soon as it is said to him, he either becomes impatient, or he bursts into tears.

Hence, this immediate love contains the eternal in the form of a beautiful fantasy, but it is not consciously grounded on the eternal, and therefore it can be changed. Even if it does not change, it still retains the possibility of change, for it depends on good fortune. But if what is true of fortune is true about happiness, which if we think of the eternal cannot be considered without sadness, it is like saying with a shudder: "Happiness is, when it has been." That is, as long as it existed, or was existing, a change was possible; only when it is past can one say that it existed. "Call no man happy as long as he is living"; as long as he is living his fortune may change; only when he is dead, and happiness had not forsaken him while he lived, can one know that he — had been happy. What merely exists, what has suffered no change, always has the possibility of change outside itself. Change is always possible; even at the last moment it may come, and not until life is finished can one say: "The change did not come" — or perhaps it did come. That which has suffered no change certainly has continuance, but it does not

have immutability. Insofar as it has continuance it exists, but insofar as it has gained immutability through change, it cannot become contemporaneous with itself, and then it is either happily unconscious of this disproportion, or it is inclined to sadness. For the eternal is the only thing which can be and become and continue contemporaneously with every age. On the other hand, temporal existence is divisive in itself, and the present cannot be contemporaneous with the future, or the future with the past, or the past with the present. As to that which by undergoing change gained immutability, one cannot merely say, when it has existed, “It existed,” but one can say, “It has existed while it existed.” Just this is what affords the security, and it is an entirely different relation from that of happiness. When love has undergone the change of eternity through having become duty, then it has gained immutability, and it follows as a matter of course that it exists. It is not a matter of course that what exists at this moment also exists the next moment, but it is a matter of course that the immutable exists.

We say that something has stood the test, and we praise it when it has met the test. But we are still talking about the imperfect, for the immutability of the immutable will not and cannot become apparent by undergoing a test — for it is immutable, and only the perishable can give itself the appearance of immutability by meeting a test. That is why it would never occur to anyone to say about sterling silver that it will stand the test of years, because it is sterling silver. So too with love. The love which merely has continuance, however happy, however blissful, however confident, however poetic it is, must still stand the testing of the years; but the love which underwent the change of eternity through becoming duty, won immutability; it is sterling.

Is this love which underwent the change of eternity therefore less practicable, less useful in life? Is sterling silver less useful? Surely not; but

language involuntarily and thought consciously honors sterling silver in a characteristic way, for one merely says of this that "one uses it." There is simply nothing said about testing it; one does not insult it by wishing to test it, for one knows already that sterling silver stands the test. Therefore if one uses a less reliable product, then one is compelled to be more tactless and to speak less simply; one is compelled to speak almost ambiguously, to say two things, that "one uses it and while he uses it, he is also testing it," for it is always possible that it might change.

Consequently, only when love is a duty, only then is love eternally secure. This security of eternity drives out all anxiety and makes love perfect, perfectly secure. For in that love which only has continuance, however confident it is, there is still an anxiety, an anxiety about the possibility of change. It does not itself understand, as little as does the poet, that it is anxiety; for the anxiety is hidden, and there is only the burning desire for the expression of love, which is just the admission that anxiety lies at the bottom. How otherwise does it happen that the immediate love is so inclined to, moreover, so enamored with the idea of putting love to the test? This is just because love has not, through becoming duty, in the deepest sense undergone the "test." Hence this, which the poet would call sweet unrest, wishes more and more rashly to make the test. The lover would test the beloved, friend would test the friend; the testing no doubt is based on love, but this violently burning desire to test, this wishful craving to put love to the test, nevertheless testifies that the love itself is unconsciously insecure. Here again is a mysterious misunderstanding in the immediate love and in the explanations of the poet. The lover and the poet think that this desire to test love is simply an expression for how certain it is. But is this really true? It is absolutely true that one does not care to test what is unimportant; but from that it does not follow that wishing to test the beloved expresses confidence. The two love each other, they love each

Other forever, they are so certain of this that they — put it to the test. Is this the highest certainty? Is not the relation here precisely what it is when love takes an oath and yet swears by what is lower than love? So here the highest expression of the lovers for the constancy of their love is an expression of the fact that it merely has existence, for one tests that which merely has existence, one puts it to the test.

But when it is a duty to love, there no test is needed and the insulting stupidity of wishing to test is superfluous; since love is higher than any proof, it has already more than met the test, in the same sense as faith "more than conquers." The very fact of testing always conditions a possibility; it is still always possible that that which is tested may not meet the test. Hence if someone wished to test whether he has faith, or tried to get faith, then this would really mean that he will hinder himself in acquiring faith; he will become a victim of the restless craving where faith is never won, for "thou should believe." If a believer were to implore God to put his faith to the test, then this is not an indication of the believer's having faith to an extraordinary degree (to think that is a poetic misunderstanding, as it is also a misunderstanding to have faith to an "extraordinary" degree, since the ordinary degree of faith is the highest), but it indicates that he does not quite have faith, for "thou shalt believe." There is no higher assurance, and the repose of eternity is never found anywhere but in this "shalt." However attractive it may be, "testing" is a disquieting thought, and it is anxiety which would make you imagine that the testing constitutes a higher assurance; for the idea of testing is in itself ingenious and inexhaustible, just as human wisdom has never been able to reckon all the chances, while, on the contrary, as earnestness so excellently says, "Faith has taken all chances into account." And if one must, then it is eternally decided; and if you are willing to understand that you must love, then is your love eternally secure.

And love is also through this “shalt” eternally secure against every change. For the love which merely has continuance can be changed, it can be changed in itself, and it can be changed from itself.

The immediate love can be changed in itself, it can be changed into its opposite, into hate. Hate is a love which has become its opposite, a love which has perished. At bottom love burns constantly, but the flame is that of hate; only when the love is burnt out is the flame of hate also quenched. As it is said about the tongue, that “out of the same mouth proceedeth both blessing and cursing,” so we must also say that it is the same love which loves and hates; but just because it is the same love, precisely therefore, it is not in the eternal sense the true love, which remains the same and unchanged, while that immediate love, if it is changed, at bottom is still the same. The true love which underwent the change of the eternal by becoming duty, is never changed; it is simple, it loves — and never hates, never hates — the beloved. It might seem as if the immediate love were the stronger because it can do two things, because it can both love and hate; it might seem as if it had a quite different power over its object when it says, “If you will not love me, then I will hate you”; still this is only an illusion. For is the changed really a stronger power than the unchangeable? And who is the stronger, the one who says, “If you will not love me, then I will hate you,” or the one who says, “Even if you hate me I shall continue to love you”? Moreover, it is certainly terrifying and terrible that love should be changed into hate; but I wonder for whom it is really terrible; is it not for the one to whom it happened that his love was changed to hate?

The immediate love can undergo a change; it can spontaneously become jealousy, can change from the greatest happiness into the greatest agony. So dangerous is the heat of this immediate love, however great its desire is, so dangerous, that this heat can easily become a sickness. The immediate love is like fermentation, which is so-called just because it has still undergone no

change, and therefore has not yet separated out from itself the poison which at the same time furnishes the heat of the fermentation. If love sets itself on fire through this poison, instead of separating it out, then comes jealousy; and, alas! the word itself indicates a desire to become sick, a sickness of desire [*Iver* — desire, *Sygdom* — sickness; hence *Iversyge*, desire-sickness, or jealousy]. The jealous person does not hate the object of love, far from it, but he tortures himself with the fire of reciprocated love, which sanctifyingly ought to purify his love. The jealous lover intercepts, almost imploringly, every ray of love from the beloved, but he focuses all these rays upon his own love through the burning glass of his jealousy, and he is slowly consumed. On the other hand, the love which underwent the change of eternity through becoming duty, knows no jealousy; it loves, not only as it is loved, but it loves. Jealousy loves as it is loved; in jealous agony about whether it is loved, it is as equally jealous for its own love, whether it may not be disproportionate to the other's indifference, as it is jealous for the expression of the other's love; anxiously tortured in its self-occupation, it neither dares to believe the beloved absolutely nor to resign itself absolutely, lest it give too much, and therefore it is always burning itself, as one burns himself on that which is not hot — except to the alarmed touch. It is comparable to spontaneous combustion. It might seem as if there would be quite a different kind of fire in the immediate love, since it can become jealousy; but, alas, this fire is just the appalling thing about it. It might seem as if jealousy held its object fast in quite a different way when it watches over it with a hundred eyes, while simple love has, as it were, but a single eye for its love. But I wonder if dispersion is stronger than unity. I wonder if a heart wrenched asunder is stronger than one perfect and undivided. I wonder if a perpetually grasping anxiety holds its object closer than the united forces of simplicity! And how does that simple love assure itself against jealousy? I wonder if it is not by virtue of the fact that it does not

love in a comparative way. It does not begin by immediately loving preferentially, it loves; therefore it can never love morbidly in a comparative way — it loves.

The immediate love can be changed from itself, it can be changed by the years, as is so often seen. Then love loses its ardor, its gladness, its desire, its primitiveness, the freshness of its life; like the river which sprang out of the rock when it later on spreads out in the sluggishness of stagnant water, so love is weakened by the lukewarmness and indifference of habit. Alas, perhaps of all enemies force of habit is the most crafty, and above all it is crafty enough never to let itself be seen, for one who sees the habit is saved from habit. Habit is not like other enemies which one sees and against which one strives to defend himself; the struggle is really with one's self in getting to see it. In its cunning it is like that familiar beast of prey, the vampire bat, which stealthily falls upon its sleeping victim; while it sucks his blood, its gently moving wings waft the coolness over him, and make his slumber even more refreshing. Such is habit — or it is even worse; for that animal seeks its prey among the sleeping, but it has no means of soothing the waking to sleep. Habit, on the contrary, has this power; it creeps soporifically upon a man, and when he has fallen asleep, then it sucks his blood, whilst it wafts the coolness over him and makes his sleep even more delicious.

So the immediate love can be changed from itself and become unrecognizable — for hate and jealousy are still perceptible in the love. So a man himself sometimes notices, as when a dream floats by and is forgotten, that habit has changed him; then he wishes to make good again, but he does not know where he can go to buy new oil to enkindle his love. Then he becomes despondent, irritated, bored by himself, bored by his love, bored by the wretchedness of things as they are, bored by the fact that he

cannot change them; alas, for he had not paid attention in time to the change of eternity, and now he has even lost the power to endure the healing.

Oh, we sometimes see with sorrow the impoverishment of a man who once lived in affluence, and yet how much more distressing than this change it is to see love changed into something almost abhorrent! — If, on the contrary, love has undergone the change of eternity by becoming duty, then it does not know the force of habit, then habit can never get power over it. As it is said of the eternal life, that there is neither sighing nor weeping, so we might add that there is also no habit; and thereby we truly are not saying anything less excellent. If you wish to save your soul or your love from the perfidy of habit — moreover men believe that there are many ways of keeping themselves awake and safe, but truly there is but one: eternity's "shalt." Let the thunder of a hundred cannon three times a day remind you to resist the thraldom of habit; keep, as did that mighty Eastern emperor, a slave who daily reminds you, keep a hundred; have a friend who reminds you every time he sees you, have a wife who reminds you early and late in love: but watch yourself lest this too becomes a habit! For you can become accustomed to the thunder of a hundred cannon, so that you can sit at table and hear the most insignificant remark more clearly than the roar of the hundred cannon you are — in the habit of hearing. And you can become accustomed to having a hundred slaves remind you every day, so that you no longer listen, because through habit you have developed an ear wherewith you hear and yet do not hear. No, only the "thou shalt" of eternity — and the listening ear which will hear this "thou shalt," can save you from the thraldom of habit. Habit is the most distressing change, and, on the other hand, one can accustom one's self to every change; only the eternal, and consequently that which underwent the change of eternity through becoming duty, are the unchangeable, but the unchangeable can never become habit. However firmly a habit is fixed, it never becomes

unchangeable, even if a man remains incorrigible; for habit is constantly that which should be changed", the unchangeable, on the contrary, is that which neither can nor should be changed. But the eternal never becomes old and never becomes habit.

Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly free in blessed independence. But is, then, that immediate love not free; does not the lover enjoy freedom in his love? And, on the other hand, could it be the intention of the discourse to recommend the desolate independence of self-love, which became independent because it did not have the courage to bind itself, and hence became dependent on its cowardice; the desolate independence which vacillates because it found no place of refuge, and is like "the one who wanders hither and thither, an armed brigand, who puts up wherever evening finds him"; the desolate independence which independently will not endure fetters — at least not visible ones? Oh, far from it; on the contrary, we have in the preceding discourse reminded you that the expression for the greatest wealth is to have a need; and this is also the true expression of freedom, that it is a need in the free. He in whom love is a necessity certainly feels free in his love; and just the one who feels himself so dependent on his love that he would lose everything in losing the beloved, just he is independent. Yet on one condition, that he does not confuse love with the possession of the beloved. If one were to say, "Either love or die," and thereby meant that a life without love was not worth living, then we should admit that he was absolutely right. But if by this he meant possessing the beloved, and consequently meant, either possess the beloved or die, either gain this friend or die, then we must say that such a love is dependent in a false sense. When love does not make the same demands upon itself as it makes on the object of its love, while it is still dependent on that love, then it is dependent in a false sense; the law of its existence lies outside itself, and hence it is dependent in the corruptible,

earthly, temporal sense. But the love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, and loves because it must love, it is independent; it has the law of its existence in the relation of love itself to the eternal. This love can never become in a false sense dependent, for the only one it is dependent upon is duty, and duty is the only emancipating power. Immediate love makes a man free one moment, and in the next moment dependent. It is like a man's coming into existence; by existing, by becoming a "self," he becomes free, but in the next moment he is dependent on this self. Duty, on the other hand, makes a man dependent and at the same time eternally independent. "Only the law can give freedom." Alas, we often think that freedom exists, and that it Is the law which restricts freedom. However, it is just the other way; without law freedom simply does not exist, and it is the law which gives freedom. We think, too, that it is the law which makes distinctions, because where there is no law there are no distinctions. Still it is the other way; when it is the law which makes the distinction, then it is exactly the law which makes everyone equal before the law.

Thus this "shalt" sets love free in blessed independence; such a love stands and falls not by some accidental circumstance of its object, it stands and falls by the law of eternity — but then it never falls; such a love does not depend upon this or that, it depends only on — the one liberating force, consequently it is eternally independent. There is nothing comparable to this independence. Sometimes the world praises the proud independence which believes it feels no need of being loved, although it also thinks that it "needs other men, not to be loved by them, but in order to love, in order to have someone to love." Oh, how false is not this independence! It feels no need to be loved, and yet it needs someone to love; consequently it needs another man — in order to be able to satisfy its proud self-esteem. Is not this as when vanity believes that it can dispense with the world, and yet

needs the world, that is, it needs that the world should become conscious of the fact that its vanity does not need the world! But the love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, certainly feels a need of being loved, and this need together with this “shalt” is therefore an eternally harmonious concord; but it can do without this love, if so it must be, while it still continues to love: is this not independence? This independence is dependent only on love itself through the “shalt” of eternity; it is not dependent on anything else, and therefore it is not dependent on love’s object as soon as this appears to be something else. However, this does not indicate that the independent love then ceased, transformed itself into a proud self-satisfaction; that is dependence. No, love abides, it is independence. The unchangeableness is the true independence; every change, be it the swoon of weakness or the arrogance of pride, the sighing or the self-satisfied, is dependence. If one man, when another man says to him, “I can no longer love you,” proudly answers, “Then I can also stop loving you”: is this independence? Alas, it is only dependence, for the fact as to whether he will continue to love or not depends on whether the other will love. But the one who answers, “Then I will still continue to love you,” his love is everlastingly free in blessed independence. He does not say it proudly — dependent on his pride; no, he says it humbly, humbling himself under the “shalt” of eternity, and just for that reason he is independent.

Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly secured against despair. Immediate love can become unhappy, cannot come to despair. Again, it might seem an expression for the strength of love, that it has the energy of despair, but this is only an appearance; for the energy of despair, however much it is recommended, is still impotence, its highest possibility is just its own destruction. Still, the fact that the immediate love can reach despair, shows that it is despairing, that even when it is happy, it

loves with the energy of despair — loves another man “better than himself, better than God.” About despair it must be said: only he can despair who is desperate. When immediate love despairs over unhappiness, then it merely becomes evident that it was — desperate, that in its happiness it had also been desperate. Despair consists in laying hold on an individual with infinite passion; for unless one is desperate, one can lay hold only on the eternal with infinite passion. Immediate love is thus desperate; but when it becomes happy, as we say, it is hidden from it that it is desperate, when it becomes unhappy it becomes evident that it — was desperate. On the other hand, the love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, can never despair, just because it is not desperate. Despair is, namely, not something which may happen to a man, an event like fortune and misfortune. Despair is a disproportion in his inmost being — so far down, so deep, that neither fate nor events can encroach upon it, but can only reveal the fact that the disproportion — was there. Therefore there is only one assurance against despair; to undergo the change of eternity by the “shalt” of duty; anyone who has not understood this change is desperate; fortune and prosperity may conceal it; misfortune and adversity, on the contrary, do not, as he thinks, make him desperate, but they reveal the fact that he — was desperate. Insofar as we speak otherwise, it is because we frivolously confuse the highest concepts. That which really makes a man despair is not misfortune, but it is the fact that he lacks the eternal; despair is to lack the eternal; despair consists in not having undergone the change of eternity by duty’s “shalt.” Consequently despair is not the loss of the beloved, that is misfortune, pain, suffering; but despair is the lack of the eternal.

How then is the love enjoined by the commandment assured against despair? Quite simply, through the commandment, through this, “Thou shalt love.” It consists first and foremost in the fact that you must not love in

such a way that the loss of the beloved would reveal the fact that you were desperate, that is, that you simply must not love despairingly. Does this mean that it is forbidden to love? By no means; that would indeed be a strange speech if the commandment which says “Thou shalt love,” should by its command forbid one to love. Hence the commandment merely forbids loving in a way which is not commanded; essentially the commandment does not forbid but commands that thou shalt love. Hence the commandment of love does not assure against despair by means of weak, lukewarm grounds of comfort, that one must not take things too seriously, and all that. And truly is such a wretched wisdom, which “has ceased to sorrow,” any less despairing than the despair of the lover, is it not rather an even worse form of despair! No, the commandment of love forbids despair — by commanding one to love. Who would have the courage to say this except eternity? Who is prepared to speak this “shalt” except eternity who, at the very moment when love would despair over its unhappiness, commands it to love? Where can this commandment arise except in eternity? For when it becomes impossible to possess the beloved in the temporal existence, then eternity says, “Thou shalt love,” that is, eternity saves love from despairing just by making it eternal. Suppose it is death which separates the two — when the one left would sink in despair: where then can he find help? Temporal consolation is an even more distressing kind of despair; but then eternity helps. When it says, “Thou shalt love,” then in saying that it says, “Thy love hath an everlasting validity.” But it does not say this consolingly, for that would not help; it says it commandingly, just because there is something wrong. And when eternity says, “Thou shalt love,” then it assumes the responsibility for guaranteeing that it can be done. Oh, what is all other consolation compared with that of eternity, what is all other deep-felt sorrow against that of eternity! If one would speak more gently and say, “Take comfort,” then the

sorrowing would have objections ready; but — moreover, it is not because the eternal will proudly brook no objection — out of solicitude for the sorrowful, it commands, “Thou shalt love.”

Wonderful consolation! Wonderful compassion! For, humanly speaking, it is indeed the strangest thing, almost like mockery, to say to the despairing that he ought to do that which would be his sole wish, but the impossibility of which reduces him to despair. Is there any other proof needed that the commandment of love is of divine origin? If you have tried it, or if you do try it, go to such a sorrowing one at the very moment when the loss of the beloved threatens to overwhelm him, and see then what you can find to say; confess that you wish to console him; the only thing it will not occur to you to say is, “Thou shalt love.” And, on the other hand, see if this does not, as soon as it is said, almost embitter the sorrowing, because it seems the most unsuitable thing to say on this occasion. Oh, but you who had the bitter experience, you who at the hard moment found human consolation empty and annoying — without consolation; you who with terror discovered that not even the admonition of the eternal could keep you from sinking down: you learned to love this “shalt” which saves from despair! What you perhaps have often verified in minor situations, that true edification is, strictly speaking, that which taught you in the most profound sense: that only this “shalt” forever happily saves from despair. Eternally happy — aye, for only that one is saved from despair who is eternally saved from despair. The love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, is not exempt from unhappiness, but it is saved from despair, in fortune and misfortune, equally saved from despair.

Lo, passion excites, earthly wisdom cools, but neither this heat nor this coolness, nor the blending of the heat and coolness is the pure air of the eternal. There is in this heat something ardent, and in this coolness something sharp, and in the blending of the two something indefinite, or an

unconscious deceitfulness, as in the hazardous season of spring. But this "Thou shalt love" takes away all the unsoundness and preserves the soundness for eternity. Thus it is everywhere; this "shalt" of eternity is the saving, the purifying, the ennobling. Sit with one who is in deep sorrow; you may soothe for a moment if you have the ability to give expression to the passion of despair as not even the sorrowing is able to do; but it is still false comfort. It may for a moment tempt refreshingly, if you have the wisdom and the experience to afford a temporary outlook where the sorrowing sees none; but it is still false comfort. On the other hand, this "Thou shalt sorrow" is both true and beautiful. I have no right to harden my heart against the pain of life, for I must sorrow; but neither have I the right to despair, for I must sorrow; and yet neither have I the right to cease to sorrow, for I must sorrow. So also with love. You have no right to harden yourself against this emotion, for thou shalt love; but neither have you the right to love despairingly for thou shalt love; and just as little have you the right to corrupt this feeling in you, for thou shalt love. -You must preserve the love and you must preserve yourself, and in preserving yourself preserve your love. There where the purely human would rush forth, the commandment retards; there where the purely human would lose courage, the commandment strengthens; there where the purely human would become weary and prudent, the commandment enkindles and gives wisdom. The commandment consumes and burns up the unsoundness in your love, but through the commandment you will again be able to enkindle it, when humanly speaking it would cease. There where you think yourself easily able to advise, there you must take the commandment for counsel; there where you despairingly would direct yourself, there you must take the commandment for your counselor; but there where you do not know how to advise, there will the commandment give counsel, so that all is well.

B. THOU SHALT LOVE THY *NEIGHBOR*

IT IS the Christian love which discovers and knows that the neighbor exists, and, what amounts to the same thing, that everyone is a neighbor. If it were not a duty to love, then the concept of neighbor would not exist; but only when one loves one’s neighbor, only then is the selfish partiality eradicated, and the equality of the eternal preserved.

The objection is frequently raised against Christianity, although in various ways and moods and with varying passions and purposes, that it supplants earthly love and friendship. Then again, some have wished to defend Christianity, and for this purpose have appealed to its teaching that one must love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. If the dispute is carried on in this way, it becomes fairly indifferent whether one disputes or agrees, inasmuch as a battle in the air and an agreement in the air are equally insignificant. Rather one must see how to make the issue really clear, in order to admit in its defense with all calmness, that Christianity has pushed earthly love and friendship from the throne, the impulsive and the preferential love, the partiality, in order to set spiritual love in its place, the love to one’s neighbor, a love which in earnestness and truth and inwardness is more tender than any earthly love — in the union, and more faithfully sincere than the most celebrated friendship — in concord. Rather one must see, to make it really clear, that the praise of earthly love and friendship belongs to paganism, that “the poet” really belongs to paganism, since his task belongs there — in order then by the steadfast spirit of conviction to give Christianity what belongs to Christianity, love for the neighbor, of which love paganism had no conception. Rather one must see how rightly to make the division, in order, if possible, to give the individual occasion to choose, rather than to confuse and jumble, thereby hindering the individual from getting a definite impression of which is which. And, above all, one must have done with

defending Christianity rather than consciously or unconsciously wishing to maintain everything — including the non-Christian.

Everyone who considers this matter with earnestness and insight will readily see that the point at issue must be posited thus: shall earthly love and friendship be love's highest expression, or shall this love be set aside? Earthly love and friendship are related to passion; but all passion, whether it attacks or defends itself, fights only in one way: either-or: "Either I exist and am the highest, or I do not exist at all, either all or nothing." The bungler and the confused (whom paganism and the poet are just as much against as is Christianity) advance the defense, that Christianity doubtless teaches a higher love, but that it also recommends earthly love and friendship. To speak in this way betrays the double-mindedness: that the speaker has neither the soul of a poet nor the spirit of Christianity. Concerning the spiritual relation one cannot — if he wishes to avoid speaking foolishly — talk like a shopkeeper who has a best quality of goods, but also an intermediate quality which he also ventures to recommend as very good, as almost equally good. No, if it is certain that Christianity teaches that love to God and the neighbor is the true love, then it is also certain that He who has put down "all high things which exalted themselves against the knowledge of God, and has taken every thought captive in obedience," has also thrust down earthly love and friendship. Would it not be strange if Christianity were as bungling and confused a teaching as many a defense wishes to make it, very frequently worse than any attack? Would it not be strange that there is nowhere found in the New Testament a single word about love in the sense in which the poet sings it and paganism idolized it? Would it not be strange that nowhere in the New Testament is there found a single word about friendship used in the sense in which the poet celebrates it and paganism exalted it? Or let the poet who recognizes himself as being a poet, go through what the New Testament

teaches about earthly love, and he will be brought to the point of despair because he will not find one single word which might inspire him — and if any so-called poet still found a word which he might use, then is this a mendacious use, a dishonest use, because instead of reverencing Christianity, he steals a precious word and perverts its use. Let the poet search through the New Testament to find a word concerning friendship which may please him, and he will search in vain to the point of despair. But let a Christian, who wishes to love his neighbor, seek, truly he will not search in vain, he will find each word stronger and more authoritative than the other, useful to him in enkindling this love and preserving him in this love.

The poet will seek in vain. But is the poet then not a Christian? We have certainly not said that, nor do we say it; we only say that insofar as he is poet, he is not Christian. Still there must be a distinction made, for there are also godly poets. But these do not sing of earthly love and friendship; their songs are to the glory of God, about faith and hope and love. Those poets do not sing of love in the same sense as the poet sings of earthly love, for the love to one's neighbor is not sung, it is acted. Even if there were nothing else which prevented the poet from celebrating the love for one's neighbor in poetry, this is still sufficient to hinder him, that by the side of every word in the Sacred Book there stands before him in invisible writing a disturbing note, for it says; "Go thou and do likewise" — does this sound like a poetic appeal, inviting him to sing?

Hence with the religious poet it is an individual matter, but of the worldly poet it holds good that insofar as he is poet, he is not Christian. And yet it is the worldly poets of whom we think when we speak of the poet in general. That the poet lives in Christendom makes no difference. Whether he is a Christian is not incumbent on us to decide, but insofar as he is poet he is not Christian. It might certainly seem that since Christianity has now

existed so long, it must by now have penetrated every relationship — and all of us. But this is an illusion. And because Christianity has existed so long, that is certainly not saying that we have lived as long, or have so long been Christian. The poet's existence in Christendom and the position which is conceded him (for rudeness and envious assaults upon him are certainly not Christian objections or arguments against his existence) are an earnest reminder about how much was received earlier, and about how easily we are tempted to imagine ourselves to be far in advance of ourselves. Alas! for while the Christian preaching is sometimes scarcely listened to, all listen to the poet, admire him, learn from him, are charmed by him. Alas! while one swiftly forgets what the preacher has said, how accurately and for how long a time does not one remember what the poet has said, especially when he has enlisted the aid of an actor! These remarks in no way suggest that the poet should be done away with, perhaps by force; for thereby we should only gain a new illusion. What would it avail to have no poets, if there were still so many in Christendom who were satisfied with the understanding of existence which the poet commands; so many who long for the poet! Nor is it asked of the Christian that in blind and doubtful zeal he should carry it to the point that he could no longer bear to read a poet — any more than it is required of the Christian that he should not eat the food customary for others, or that he should live apart from other men in a separate enclosure. No, but the Christian must understand everything in a different way from the non-Christian; he must understand himself in knowing how to make distinctions. A poet would no more be able to live exclusively according to the highest Christian concepts all the time than he would be able to live by eating only at the Lord's table. Therefore, let the poet exist, let the individual poet be admired as he deserves, if he really is a poet, but also let the individual in Christendom prove his Christian conviction by means of this test: how he regards the poet, what he thinks about him, how he reads

him, how he admires him. However, there is rarely anything said about such matters in these times.

To many, unfortunately, these reflections will perhaps seem neither sufficiently Christian nor sufficiently earnest, just because they deal with those things which, it is well to note, occupy men so much six days of the week, and even on the seventh day absorb more hours than do godly matters. However, we trust — both because we have been instructed and trained in Christianity from childhood, and also because in our mature years we dedicated our days and our best efforts to this service, although, as we have repeatedly said, our speech is "without authority" — we trust that we know what should be said in these times and how to say it. We have all been baptized and instructed in Christianity, consequently there is nothing to say about disseminating it. Far be it from us, on the other hand, to judge that anyone who says he is a Christian, is not; hence there is nothing to say about the professing Christian in contradistinction to the non-Christian. On the contrary, it is very profitable and necessary that the individual should carefully and conscientiously give heed to himself, and if possible help others (insofar as one man can help another, for God is the true helper) to a more and more profound understanding of what it means to become a Christian. The word "Christendom" as a general appellation for an entire people is a superscription which may easily say too much, and therefore may easily cause the individual to believe too much about himself. It is customary, at least in other places, to place signposts on the highway to indicate where the road leads. Perhaps at the very moment a man sets out on a journey he sees a signpost that says that this road leads to that distant place which is his own destination: has he therefore reached that place? So is it, too, with this guidepost, Christianity. It indicates the direction, but has one therefore reached the goal, or is one always merely — on the way? Or is it really progressing on the road if, for a single hour once a week, a man

walks along this way, while the other six days he lives in absolutely different conceptions, and meanwhile makes no effort himself to understand how this can be consistent?

And is this really earnestness: to keep silent about the true state of the case and the conditions, in order to speak with extreme earnestness about the more earnest matters, which nevertheless might well be omitted in the confusion, whose relation to this earnestness one — from sheer earnestness — does not explain? Who then has the more difficult task, the teacher who lectures on earnestness as something at a meteoric distance from daily affairs, or the disciple who wishes to make an application of this explanation? Is only that a deception: the keeping silent about what is earnest? Is it not an equally dangerous deception to mention it — but under circumstances, and to present it — but in a light totally different from the daily life of actuality? If it is true that the entire worldly life, its splendors, its diversions, its enchantments, can captivate and ensnare a man in so many ways, which then is earnestness: either, out of — sheer earnestness to keep silent in church about worldly matters, or to speak seriously about them in order, if possible, to strengthen men against worldly dangers? Would it really be impossible to speak about worldly matters in a solemn and truly serious manner? And if it were impossible, does it therefore follow that the godly address should keep silent about them? Ah, no, it would only follow that it should be prohibited in the godly address on the more solemn occasions.

Consequently we shall test the Christian conviction of the poet. What does the poet teach about earthly love and friendship? Here it is not a question about this or that particular poet, but only about the poet, that is, only about him insofar as he, as poet, is true to himself and his task. Thus, if a so-called poet has lost faith in the poetic validity of love and friendship, and in its conceptions, and has posited something else in its place, then he is

not a poet, and, perhaps that other thing that he posits instead, is also not Christian, but sheer bungling. Earthly love is based on an impulse which, explained as affection, has its highest, its unqualified, its poetically unqualified, exclusive expression in the fact that there is but one single object of love in the whole world, and that only the first time of falling in love is love, is everything, the second falling in love nothing. It is customary to say, speaking proverbially, that once is nothing; here, on the contrary, once is unconditionally everything, a second time the unconditional destruction of everything.

This is poetry, and the emphasis lies unconditionally upon the highest expression of passion; to be or not to be. To love a second time too is not loving, but is abhorrent to poetry. If a so-called poet would have us imagine that earthly love can repeat itself in the same man, if a so-called poet wishes to occupy himself with clever foolishness which presumably would exhaust the mysteriousness of passion in the "why" of cleverness, then he is not a poet. Nor is that which he posits in place of poetic love, Christian love. Christian love teaches love to all men, unconditionally all. Just as unconditionally and strongly as earthly love tends toward the idea of there being but one single object of love, equally unconditionally and strongly Christian love tends in the opposite direction. If a man with respect to Christian love wishes to make an exception in the case of one man whom he does not wish to love, then such love is not "also Christian love," but it is unconditionally not Christian love.

And yet there is much the same confusion in our so-called Christendom: the poets have given up passionate love, they yield, they relax the tension of passion, they knock off (by adding to) and believe that a man, in the sense of falling in love, can love many times, so that there are consequently several objects of love; the [so-called] Christian love also yields, relaxes the tension of eternity, lessens its demands and thinks that when one loves a

great deal, then it is Christian love. So both the poetic and the Christian love become confused; and that which takes their place is neither poetic nor Christian. Passion always has this unconditional characteristic, that it excludes the third party, that is, the third party makes for confusion. To love without passion is an impossibility; but the distinction between earthly and Christian love lies therefore in the one possible eternal difference of passion. Any other difference between earthly and Christian love cannot well be imagined. If a man, therefore, were to think that he could at one and the same time understand his life by the aid of the poet and by the help of Christian explanations, were to believe that he could understand these two explanations jointly — and in such a way that they gave meaning to his life — then he is in error. The poetic and the Christian explanations are exact opposites; the poet idolizes earthly affection, and therefore he is absolutely right in saying, since he constantly thinks only of earthly love, that to command one to love is the greatest of follies and the most absurd saying; as Christianity is always thinking only of the Christian love, it is also absolutely right when it pushes earthly love from the throne and sets this "shalt" in its place.

The poet and Christianity present exactly opposing explanations, or more exactly expressed, the poet really explains nothing, for he explains earthly love and friendship — in riddles; he explains earthly love and friendship as riddles, but Christianity explains love eternally. From this again we see that it is an impossibility to live at one time according to both explanations, for the greatest possible contradiction between two explanations is certainly that the one is no explanation, and the other is an explanation. Earthly love and friendship, therefore, as the poet understands them, involve no moral problem. Love and friendship are a matter of chance; it is fortunate, poetically understood (and certainly the poet has an excellent understanding of good fortune), the highest good fortune, to fall in love, to find the one

and only beloved; it is good fortune, almost equally as great a good fortune, to find the one and only friend. At most, the moral task lies only in being duly thankful for one's good fortune. On the other hand, the task is never that one must find the beloved, or find this friend; this cannot be done, as the poet very well understands. The problem consequently depends on whether fortune will furnish one with a task; but this is precisely the same as saying that morally understood there is no task.

If, on the other hand, one must love his neighbor, then the task is the moral task, which is again the source of all tasks. Just because Christian morality is the true morality, it knows how to cut short extensive reflections, to cut off the voluminous preambles, to do away with temporary delays, and to prevent wasting time. The Christian is immediately close to his task because he has it in himself. There is a great dispute in the world as to what is to be called the highest. But whatever is called so, whatever the demarcation is: it is incredible that there should be so many complications connected with apprehending it.

On the other hand, Christianity at once teaches a man the shortest way to find the supreme good: "Shut thy door and pray to God" — for God is certainly the highest. And if a man will go out into the world, then he may perhaps go far — and go in vain, travel around the world — and in vain, in order to find the beloved or the friend. But Christianity never suffers a man to take even a single step in vain; for the door you closed in order to pray to God, when you open it again and go out, then the first man you meet is your neighbor whom you must love. Wonderful!

Perhaps a maiden tries curiously and superstitiously to learn her future fate, to see her future lover; and a fraudulent wisdom makes her imagine that when she has done something so and so, then she will know him because he will be the first one she will meet on such and such a day. I wonder if it would also be so difficult to get to see one's neighbor — if one

did not prevent himself from seeing him; for Christianity has made it eternally, impossible to be mistaken about him; there is not in the whole world any single man who is so certainly and so easily recognizable as the neighbor. You can never confuse him with any other man, for all men are the neighbor. If you confuse another man with your neighbor, then in the last analysis, there is no mistake, for the other man is also your neighbor. It is your fault if you will not understand who your neighbor is. If under cover of darkness you save a man's life, believing that you are saving your friend's life — but instead it turned out to be your neighbor, then this is not a fault; alas, on the other hand, it becomes precisely a fault if you were only willing to save your friend. If your friend complains over the fact that you, as he believes, through an error did for your neighbor what he thought you would do only for him, then rest assured it is your friend who is wrong.

The point at issue between the poet and Christianity can be quite accurately defined in this way: Earthly love and friendship are partiality and the passion of partiality, Christian love is self-denying love, therefore it vouches for this "shalt." To exhaust these passions is bewildering. But the extreme passionate limits of partiality lie in exclusiveness, in loving only one; the extreme limits of self-denial lie in self-sacrifice, in not excluding a single one.

In other times when a man had made an earnest effort to understand Christianity, he believed that Christianity had something against earthly love because it is based on impulse; he believed that Christianity which, as spirit, has set dissension between flesh and spirit, hated earthly love as being sensual. But this was a misunderstanding, an overstraining of the spiritual. In addition, it can easily be shown that Christianity is very far from irrationally wishing to excite the sensual in a man by teaching him eccentricity; does not Paul say that it is better to marry than to burn! No, just because Christianity is in truth spirit, therefore it understands by the

sensual something different from what one naturally calls the sensual; and just as little as it has wished to forbid men to eat and drink, just so little has it taken offense at a natural impulse, which a man certainly did not give himself. By the sensual Christianity means the carnal, the selfish; there can be no imaginable dispute between spirit and flesh unless there is a rebellious spirit on the part of the flesh, with which the spirit then strives; thus there can be no imaginable conflict between the spirit and a stone, or between the spirit and a tree. Consequently the sensual is selfishness. And it is just because of this that Christianity harbors a suspicion about earthly love and friendship, because partiality in passion, or passionate partiality, is really another form of selfishness.

Lo, this too is something paganism never dreamed of. Because paganism has never had any idea of self-denying love for the neighbor whom one "must" love, therefore it classified it thus: selfishness is abominable because it is selfishness; but love and friendship, which are passionate partiality, are love. But Christianity, which has made manifest what love is, classifies it in a different way: selfishness and passionate partiality are essentially one; but love to the neighbor is love. "To love the beloved," says Christianity, "is that to love?" And it adds, "Do not even the heathen the same?" "To love one's friend, is that to love?" says Christianity. "Do not even the heathen the same?" If therefore someone were to believe that the distinction between heathendom and Christianity lies in the fact that the beloved and the friend in Christianity are loved with a wholly different loyalty and tenderness than in heathendom, then this is a misunderstanding. Does not paganism also show examples of love and friendship so perfect that the apprentice poet goes back to them? But no one in heathendom loved his neighbor. No one suspected that he existed. What heathendom, then, called love, as distinguished from selfishness, was partiality. But a passionate partiality is essentially another form of selfishness; so here again

one sees the truth of the saying of the venerable Fathers: “that the virtues of heathendom are shining vices.”

That passionate partiality is another form of selfishness will now be demonstrated, together with its converse, that self-denying love loves the neighbor as one should love. As selfishly as self-love closes about this only “self,” whereby it becomes selfishness, equally selfishly the passionate partiality of love closes about this only beloved, and the passionate partiality of friendship about this one friend. The beloved and the friend are therefore called, remarkably and profoundly enough, the other self, the other I — for the neighbor is the other you, or, to be quite accurate, the third person in the equilateral. The other self, the other I. But wherein lies the selfishness? It lies in the I, in the self. Would not then selfishness also stick at loving the other I, the other self? Truly one does not need to be any great judge of character in order, by the help of this clue, to make discoveries serious for others and humiliating to one’s self, about earthly love and friendship. The fire which exists in selfishness is spontaneous, the I ignites itself by itself; but in earthly love and friendship, poetically understood, there is also spontaneous ignition. True enough, as we say, it is only at times, and then morbidly, that jealousy shows itself; but from that it by no means follows that it is not at bottom always present in earthly love and friendship. Test it: introduce between the lover and the beloved the neighbor as the intermediate person one must love: interpose the neighbor between friend and friend as the intermediate person that one must love: and you will instantly see the jealousy. But nevertheless the concept of neighbor is precisely the middle term of self-abnegation, which enters between the I and I of selfishness, but also between the I and the other I of earthly love and friendship. That it is selfishness when a faithless lover wishes to get rid of the beloved, wishes to leave a friend in the lurch, paganism also realized, and the poet sees it. But only Christianity sees that the devotion with which

the lover gives himself up to this one, with which, moreover, he clings to him, is selfishness. But can devotion and limitless submission still be selfishness? Surely yes, when the devotion is to the other I, the other self.

Let a poet describe how earthly love must exist in a man so that he can call it love; he will mention much which we do not stop for here, but then he will add: “and then there must be admiration, the lover must admire the beloved.” The neighbor, on the contrary, is never mentioned as an object of admiration; Christianity has never taught that one should admire the neighbor — but one must love him. Hence there must be admiration in earthly love, and the stronger, the more intense the admiration is, the better, says the poet. Now to admire another man is certainly not selfishness. But to be loved by the only one admired, would not this relationship selfishly come back to the I who loves — his other I? And so too with friendship. To admire another man is certainly not selfishness, but to be the only friend of this only admired friend — would not this relationship in a serious way revert to the I from which it started? Is this not plainly the danger of selfishness, that when one has but a single object of admiration, that then the one admired reciprocally makes the admirer the sole object of his love or of his friendship?

To love the neighbor, on the contrary, is self-denying love and drives out all partiality, just as it drives out all selfishness — otherwise the self-abnegation would also make distinctions and feel partiality for partiality. Even if passionate partiality had no other selfishness in it, it still has this, that there is, consciously or unconsciously, wilfulness in it, unconsciously insofar as it is subject to natural laws, consciously insofar as it unrestrainedly abandons itself to and assents to the power of this law. However secret, however unconscious the self-will is in its passionate devotion to its “sole object,” this arbitrariness is everywhere manifest. That sole object was not found through obedience to that royal law, “Thou shalt

love," but through choosing, moreover by unconditionally choosing, that one single individual — for Christian love, too, has but one single object, the neighbor, but the concept of neighbor is as far as possible removed from being one single man, infinitely far from that, for the neighbor is all men. When the lover or the friend, as the poet delights to hear, can love only this one man in the whole world, then there is in this prodigious devotion a prodigious wilfulness, and in this impetuous, boundless devotion, which is really devotion to himself, the lover is really selfish. Self-abnegation wishes to root out this selfishness, this wilfulness, through the "thou shalt" of eternity. And the self-abnegation which in judgment enters in to test the selfishness is two-edged, so that it cuts equally both ways. We know very well that there is a selfishness which one may call faithless selfishness, but we know too equally well that there is a selfishness which may be called devoted selfishness. The task of self-abnegation is therefore twofold: to distinguish between these two forms. As regards the faithless selfishness which wishes to evade, the task is: sacrifice yourself; with respect to the devoted selfishness, the task is: renounce this sacrifice. And that which pleases the poet immeasurably, that the lover should say: "I cannot love anyone else, I cannot get along without love, I cannot give up this love, it would be my death, I should die of love," does not please the self-abnegation at all; it simply cannot bear to have such devotion honoured by the name of love, since it is selfishness. Self-abnegation first passes its judgment, and then sets the task: love thy neighbor, him thou shalt love.

Everywhere where Christianity exists there is also self-abnegation, which is Christianity s essential form. In order to live as a Christian, one must first and foremost become sober; but self-abnegation is exactly the transition through which a man, in the meaning of the eternal, becomes sober. On the other hand, wherever Christianity does not exist, the intoxication of self-esteem reaches its maximum, and this intoxicated

exaltation is what is admired. But earthly love and friendship are the highest expression of self-esteem; they are the I intoxicated in the other I. The more closely the two I's cling together to form one I, the more this united self selfishly excludes all others. At the supreme apex of earthly love and friendship the two actually become one self, one I. This is explicable only because partiality contains a natural force (impulse — inclination) and a selfishness which can selfishly unite the two in a new selfish self.

Spiritual love, on the contrary, takes away from myself all natural impulses and all selfishness, and therefore love for my neighbor cannot make me into one with my neighbor in a united self. Love for the neighbor is love between two beings, each eternally determined as spirit. Love to the neighbor is spiritual love, but two spirits can never become one self in a selfish sense. In earthly love and friendship the two love each other by virtue of their dissimilarities, or by virtue of their similarities which underlie the differences (as when two friends love each other because of a similarity in morals, character, occupations, training and so on, consequently because of the similarity by which they differ from other men, or by which they resemble each other in being different from other men), therefore the two can in a selfish sense become one self; neither of them is yet himself the spiritual determination of "self," neither of them has as yet learned to love himself in the Christian sense of the word. In earthly love the ego is sensually-psychically-spiritually determined, the beloved a sensual-psychical-spiritual determination; in friendship the ego is psycho-spiritually defined, the friend a psycho-spiritual determination. Only in love to one's neighbor is the self which loves, purely spiritually defined as spirit, and the neighbor a purely spiritual qualification. Therefore what we said at the beginning of this discourse by no means applies to earthly love and friendship, that only one man is needed who is recognized as neighbor, in order to cure a man of selfishness, if in this one man he loves his neighbor.

For in the beloved and the friend the neighbor is not loved, but the other I, or the first I, once more, even better. It is frequently as if a man, although selfishness is predominant, does not have the strength to be selfish alone, so that his selfishness does not really appear until his other ego is found, and the two egos in this union find strength for the selfish self-esteem.

If anyone thinks that a man by falling in love or by having found a friend, has learned to know the Christian love, then he is seriously mistaken. No, if anyone is in love and in such a way that the poet would say about him that "he really is in love," then the commandment of love may be changed a little when it is said to him, and yet say the same thing. The commandment of love may say to him: "Love your neighbor as you love your sweetheart." And yet, since he does not love his sweetheart "as himself," what does the commandment which speaks about the neighbor command? Certainly he loves, but the beloved he loves "as himself" is not the neighbor, the beloved is the other I. Whether we are speaking about the first I or about the other I, we do not thereby come a step nearer to the neighbor; for the neighbor is the first you. In its strictest sense selfishness at bottom loves the other I, for the other I is himself. And yet this is certainly selfishness. But in the same sense it is selfishness to love the other I, who is the beloved or the friend. And as selfishness in the strictest sense has been described as self-worship, so earthly love and friendship (as the poet understands them, and on his understanding this love stands or falls) are idolatry. For ultimately love to God is the decisive thing; from it stems love to the neighbor, but paganism never suspected this. They left God out; they made earthly love and friendship into love, and abominated selfishness. But the Christian commandment of love commands men to love God above all else, and next to love the neighbor. In earthly love and friendship partiality is the middle term. In love to the neighbor, God is the middle term; if you love God above all else, then you also love your neighbor and in your

neighbor every man. Only by loving God above all else can one love his neighbor in the other man. The other man, this is the neighbor who is the other man in the sense that the other man is every other man. Consequently, thus understood, the discourse was right when in the beginning it said that if a man loves his neighbor in one single other man, then he loves all men.

Love to the neighbor is therefore the eternal equality in loving, but the eternal equality is the opposite of partiality. This needs no extensive discussion. Equality precisely consists in not making distinctions, and eternal equality is unconditionally not to make the least distinction, unqualifiedly not to make the least distinction; partiality, on the other hand, consists in making a distinction, a passionate distinction, in making an unlimited distinction.

But has not Christianity then, when by its "Thou shalt love" it pushed earthly love and friendship from the throne, set something far higher in their place? Something far higher — however, let us speak with caution, the caution of orthodoxy. People have confused Christianity in many ways, but among others also, in that by calling it the highest, the most profound, they made it appear that the purely human is related to the Christian as the high or the higher is to the most high and to the supreme. Alas, but this is a deceptive way of speaking which falsely and indecently allows Christianity officiously to wish to ingratiate itself with human inquisitiveness or curiosity. Is there really anything of which humanity as such, anything of which the natural man is more desirous than of the highest! If but a newsmonger trumpets that his most recent news is of the highest importance, then he succeeds famously in attracting those worldly followers who from time immemorial have had an indescribable predilection for and have felt a deep need of — being deceived. No, the Christian is certainly the highest and the supreme category, but it is well to note too that to the natural man it is an offense. He who in qualifying the Christian as the

highest category, omits the intermediate qualification of offense, sins against it; he perpetrates an audacity more abominable even than if a modest wife were to array herself like a ballet dancer; even more terrible than if that austere judge, John the Baptist, were to dress like a dandy. The Christian category is in itself too heavy, too serious in its movements to whisk about like a dancer in the triviality of such easygoing speeches about the higher, the highest, the all-highest. The Christian Way is the way of offense. This is not to say that the approach to the Christian Way should be by giving offense: this would certainly hinder oneself in another way from apprehending Christianity; but offense guards the approach to the Christian way. Blessed is he who is not offended by it.

Now also as to this command about loving the neighbor. Only admit, or if it is embarrassing to you to speak in this way, then I shall admit, that many times it has offended me, and that I am still very far from imagining that I have fulfilled this commandment, which to flesh and blood is an offense, and to wisdom foolishness. If you, my hearer, are perhaps what we call an educated man, well, I too am educated. But if I think by the help of "education"' to come nearer this highest, then I am greatly in error. And the error lies just here; for we all wish for education, and education constantly has "the highest" on its lips; moreover, no bird that has learned one single word repeats this word more incessantly, and no crow repeats its own name more uninterruptedly, than the educated constantly harp on "the highest." But the Christian "highest" is by no means the "highest" of the educated, and the Christian "highest" disciplines precisely through the repulsion of offense. You will readily see this; for truly, has your education, or do you believe that any man's enthusiasm for an education, has taught him to love his neighbor? Alas, has not education and the zeal for acquiring it rather developed a new kind of difference, the difference between the educated and the uneducated? Only listen to what is said among the educated about

earthly love and friendship, what equality in education a friend must have, how a girl must be educated and just in what way. Read the poets who scarcely know how to preserve their independence as over against the powerful dominance of the educated classes; scarcely dare to believe in the power of love to break the chain of distinctions — does it seem to you that this speech, this poem, or that a life which is consistent with this speech and this poem, bring a man any nearer to loving his neighbor? Lo, here again the signs of the offense stand out.

For consider the most cultured man you know, about whom we all admiringly say, "He is so cultured," and then consider Christianity which says to him, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor!" Moreover, a certain urbanity in all relations, a courtesy toward all men, a friendly condescension toward inferiors, a confident bearing toward the influential, an admirably controlled freedom of spirit; truly that is culture — do you believe that it is also loving your neighbor?

The neighbor is your equal. The neighbor is not your beloved for whom you have a passionate partiality, not your friend for whom you have a passionate partiality. Nor, if you are an educated man, is your neighbor the one who is educated, with whom you are equal in education — for with your neighbor you have human equality before God. Nor is the neighbor the one who is more distinguished than yourself, that is, he is not your neighbor just because he is more distinguished than yourself, for loving him because he is more distinguished can then easily become partiality, and insofar selfishness. Nor is your neighbor one who is inferior to you, that is, insofar as he is humbler than yourself he is not your neighbor, for to love one because he is inferior to yourself can readily become the condescension of partiality, and insofar selfishness. No, loving your neighbor is a matter of equality. It is encouraging in your relation to a distinguished man, that in him you must love your neighbor; it is humbling in relation to the inferior,

that you do not have to love the inferior in him, but must love your neighbor; it is a saving grace if you do it, for you must do it. The neighbor is every man; for he is not your neighbor through the difference, or through the equality with you as in your difference from other men. He is your neighbor through equality with you before God, but every man unconditionally has this equality, and has it unconditionally.

C. *THOU* SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

SO then go out and practice it; forget the diversities and their like, so that you can love your neighbor. Do away with the distinctions of partiality, so that you can love your neighbor. This will not lead you to cease to love the beloved, oh, far from it! For in that case, the word "neighbor" would be the greatest deception ever invented, if, in order to love your neighbor, you must start by giving up your love for those for whom you feel affection. What is more, it would also be a contradiction, for since the concept "neighbor" embraces all men, certainly no one can be excluded — shall we say, least of all the beloved? No, for that is the language of partiality. Consequently if it is only partiality which must be taken away — and this does not also in turn apply to the neighbor, then you would love your neighbor with an extravagant partiality in contrast to the beloved.

No, as one says to the solitary, "Take care that you do not become ensnared in selfishness," so we may say to the two lovers: "Take care that your love does not ensnare you in selfishness." For the more decisively and exclusively partiality encloses one single man, the further he is from loving his neighbor. You, husband, do not subject your wife to the temptation arising from her love for you, of forgetting to love her neighbor; you, wife, do not subject your husband to this temptation! The lovers certainly believe that in their earthly love they have the highest possible. Oh, but it is not so, for in it they have not yet secured the eternal through the eternal.

It is true the poet promises the lovers immortality, if they are truly lovers; but who is the poet who gives them this promise? One who cannot even vouch for himself. The "royal law," on the contrary, the commandment of love, promises life, eternal life, and this commandment simply says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." And as this commandment wishes to teach every man how he ought to love himself, so it also wishes to teach love and friendship the right kind of love; preserve in loving yourself your love for your neighbor; preserve in your earthly love and friendship your love for your neighbor. This idea will perhaps repel you — then you will know that the signs of offense are always present to the Christian. But, nevertheless, believe this; believe that the Teacher who would not quench any smoking flax, will not extinguish any noble fire within a man; believe that He who was love, simply wishes to teach every man to love; believe that if all the poets united in one song in praise of earthly love and friendship, all they had to say would be as nothing in comparison with the commandment, "Thou shalt love, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!" Do not cease to believe because the commandment almost offends you, because the discourse does not sound as flattering as that of the poets who by their songs insinuate themselves into your happiness, but sounds repulsive and terrifying, as if it would snatch you out of your beloved retreat of partiality — do not therefore cease to believe it; consider that just because the commandment is thus and the discourse thus, just because of this, its object can be the object of faith! Do not indulge yourself in the conceit that you might be able to bargain, that by loving some men, friends and relatives, you would be loving your neighbor — for this would be giving up the poetic without apprehending the Christian, and it was for the sake of preventing this bargaining that the discourse attempted to place you between the pride of the poet, who disdains all bargaining, and the divine majesty of the royal law, which makes all bargaining an offense. No, love

your beloved faithfully and tenderly, but let the love for your neighbor be the more sacred in the covenant of your union with God! Love your friend sincerely and devotedly, but let your love for your neighbor be what you learn from each other in the confidence of friendship with God! Behold, death levels all differences, but partiality always retains the difference, yet the way to life and to the eternal is through death, and through the levelling of differences: therefore only the love to the neighbor truly leads to life.

As the joyous message of Christianity is contained in the teaching about mankind's kinship with God, so is its problem man's likeness to God. But God is love, therefore we can resemble God only in loving, as we also, according to the Apostle's word, can only be "God's fellow-laborers in — love." Just because you love your beloved, you do not resemble God, for with God there is no partiality, as you many times in your humility, but also many times in your self-satisfaction, have considered. Insofar as you love your friend you do not resemble God, for before God there is no difference. But when you love your neighbor, then you resemble God.

So, then, go out and act accordingly; forget the differences so that you can love your neighbor. Alas, perhaps it is not even necessary to say this to you, perhaps you found no one in the world to love, no friend on the way, so that your way lay in solitude. Or perhaps God took from your side and gave you a beloved, but death took and took her from your side; he took again and took your friend, but gave you no one in his place, so that now you walk alone, so that you have no beloved one to protect your weak side and no friend at your right hand. Or perhaps life separated you even if you continued unchanged — in the loneliness of separation. Perhaps change separated you, so that you walk alone in sorrow because you found, but also found what you found changed! How disconsolate! Moreover, only ask the poet how distressing it is to live in loneliness, to have lived in loneliness, without being loved and without having any one to love. Just ask the poet

whether he knows other than that it is comfortless when death steps in between the lovers, or when life separates friend from friend, or when a change of feeling separates them as enemies from one another. For certainly the poet loves solitude, he loves it — in order in solitude to discover the missing happiness of love and friendship, just as one who would gaze at the stars in wonder, seeks a dark place.

And yet if it were not his own fault that a man found no one to love; and if through no fault of his own he sought in vain to find a friend; and if the loss, the separation, the change in feeling, were not his own fault: under these circumstances what more does the poet know than that this is very distressing? But then the poet too is subject to change if he, the proclaimer of happiness, knows nothing else than the shriek of desolation in the day of need. Or are you not willing to call it change, do you wish to call it loyalty in the poet that he — disconsolately sorrows with the desolate sorrowing? Oh, well, we shall not quarrel about that. But if you wish to compare this human fidelity with that of heaven and eternity, then you will certainly admit that there is a difference. For heaven not only rejoices more than any poet with the glad, but heaven not only sorrows with the sorrowing, no, heaven has a new, a more blessed joy in store for the sorrowing. So Christianity always has consolation, and its consolation is different from all human consolation, in that human consolation is conscious of being only compensation for the loss of gladness: the Christian consolation is gladness. Humanly speaking, consolation is a later invention: first comes suffering and pain and loss of joy, and then later, alas, sometimes much later, man came on the track of the consolation. And the same thing is true of the individual life: first come suffering and pain and loss of joy, and then later, sometimes after a long time, comes the consolation. But the Christian consolation can never be said to come too late, for since it is the consolation of eternity it is older than all temporal happiness. And as soon as this

consolation comes, it comes with the impulse of the eternal, and swallows up, as it were, the pain, for pain and loss of happiness are the momentary — even if this moment is prolonged into years — are the momentary which is swallowed up in the eternal. And the Christian consolation is therefore not a compensation for the loss of happiness, since it is happiness; all other happiness is in the last analysis only despondency in comparison with the consolation of Christianity. Alas, if man's earthly life were not so perfect, so that the eternal happiness might be proclaimed to him as happiness he had and has himself forfeited! That is why the happiness of eternity can only be preached to him as consolation. As the human eye cannot stand looking at the rays of the sun except through a dark glass, so a man cannot endure the joy of eternity except through the dimness which comes from its being preached as consolation.

Consequently whatever your fortune was in love or friendship, whatever your need was, whatever your loss, whatever the despondency of your life in your confidence in the poet: the highest still remains — love your neighbor! Him you can easily find, that is certain; you can unconditionally always find him, that is certain; you can never lose him. For the beloved can behave toward you in such a way that he is lost, and you can lose a friend; but however your neighbor treats you, you can never lose him. It is true that you may continue to love the beloved and the friend, however they treat you, but you cannot continue truly to call them the beloved and the friend when they, so much the worse, have in truth changed. On the other hand, no change can take your neighbor from you, for it is not the neighbor who holds you fast, but it is your love which holds the neighbor fast; if your love for your neighbor remains unchanged, then the neighbor also remains unchanged just by the fact of existing. And death cannot deprive you of your neighbor, for if it takes one, then life at once gives you another. Death can deprive you of a friend, because in loving your friend you are really

united with the friend; but in loving your neighbor you are united with God, and therefore death cannot deprive you of your neighbor. If you have therefore lost everything in love and friendship, if you have never enjoyed any of this happiness: you still have the best left in loving your neighbor.

Love to the neighbor has, namely, the perfections of eternity. And is it really a perfection in love to have as its object the superior, the extraordinary, the unique? I thought that would be a perfection in the object, and this perfection of the object like a subtle misgiving against the perfection of love. Does it indicate a superior quality in your love if it can love only the extraordinary, the rare? I should think it would be an advantage to the extraordinary and the rare that it is extraordinary and rare, but not to love. And are you not also of the same opinion? For have you never thought about God's love? If it were to love's advantage to love the extraordinary, then, if I dare say so, God would be embarrassed, for the extraordinary simply does not exist for Him. The advantage of being able to love only the extraordinary is hence rather an accusation, not against the extraordinary, or against love, but against the love which can love only the extraordinary. Or is it an advantage to a man's sensitive well-being that he can feel well only in one single place in the whole world, surrounded by every favorable circumstance? If you see a man who has thus arranged his life, what is it then you praise? Of course, the convenience of his arrangements. But have you never noticed that it is actually true that every word you utter in your panegyric over this magnificence really sounds like ridicule of the poor man who can live only in this magnificent environment?

Consequently the perfection of its object is not the perfection of love. And just because the neighbor has none of those perfections which the beloved, the friend, the admired, the cultured, the rare, the extraordinary man has to so high a degree, just for that reason the love for the neighbor has all those perfections which the love for the beloved, the friend, the

cultured, the admired, the rare, the extraordinary man, does not have. Let the world dispute as much as it will about which object of love is the most perfect: there can never be any dispute about the fact that love to the neighbor is the most perfect love. And therefore all other love has the imperfection that concerning it there are two questions and consequently some ambiguity; there is first the question about the object and then about the love, or both questions are about the object and the love. But as to love for one’s neighbor, there is only one question, that about love, and there is only the single answer of eternity: this is love. For this love to one’s neighbor is not like the relation of one kind of love to other kinds of love. Earthly love is qualified by its object, friendship is qualified by its object, love to one’s neighbor alone is qualified by love. When the neighbor is every man, unconditionally every man, then are all the distinctions taken away from the object and consequently this love is recognizable by the fact that its object is without any closer qualifications of difference, that is to say, that this love is recognizable only by love. Is not this the highest perfection? For insofar as love can and may be recognizable in some other way, then this other way, by that very fact, makes this love suspect, in that it is not comprehensive enough, and hence not in an eternal sense infinite; this other love is a love which is even unconsciously predisposed to morbidness. In this suspicion, therefore, there dwells concealed the apprehension which makes love and friendship dependent on their object, the apprehension which is able to inflame jealousy, the apprehension which can drive one to despair. But love for one’s neighbor is without suspicion in the relationship, and therefore cannot become suspiciousness in the lover. Nevertheless, this love is not proudly independent of its object, its equality does not arise from the fact that love proudly withdraws into itself, indifferent to its object; no, the equality arises from the fact that love humbly turns out toward its

object, embracing everyone, and yet loving each one individually, but no one in particular.

Let us consider here what we developed in the preceding chapter, that love in a man is a necessity to him, is an expression of his wealth. Hence the deeper this need is, the greater his wealth; if the need is infinite, then, too, is his wealth. When a man's need for love is satisfied with loving only one, then we must nevertheless, although admitting that this need is wealth, say concerning it, that he really needs that man. On the other hand, when a man's need of love consists in loving everyone, then it is a need, and it is so powerful that it is almost as if it must be able to produce its own object. In the first case the emphasis lies on the particular object of love, in the second case on the essentiality of the need, and only in the latter sense is the need an expression of wealth; and only in the latter case are the need and the object in an infinite sense related to one another on equal terms, for to the first man every man is the neighbor, or there is in a special sense no object, while in an infinite sense every man is the object. If one feels a need to talk with a certain particular man, then he really needs this man; but if his need for talking is so great that he must talk even if he is placed on a desert isle or in solitary confinement; if his need is so great that any man is the one he wishes to talk to, then his need is wealth. And he who loves his neighbor, his love is a need, the deepest need; he does not need men in order to have someone to love him; but he needs to love men. Still there is no pride or arrogance in this wealth, for God is the middle term, and the "shalt" of eternity binds and directs this powerful need so that it does not go astray and become pride. But there are no limitations in the object, for the neighbor is all men, unconditionally every man.

The man who truly loves his neighbor, therefore loves also his enemy. This distinction, "friend or enemy," is a difference in the object of love, but love for one's neighbor truly has an object which is without discrimination;

the neighbor is the absolutely indistinguishable difference between man and man, or it is the eternal resemblance before God — and the enemy also has this resemblance. We think that it is impossible for a man to love his enemy, alas! for enemies can hardly bear to look at each other. Oh, well, then close your eyes — then the enemy absolutely resembles your neighbor; close your eyes and remember the commandment that thou shalt love, then you love — your enemy? No, then you love your neighbor, for you do not see that he is your enemy. That is, if you close your eyes, then you do not see the earthly difference; but enmity is also one of the earthly differences. And when you close your eyes, then your mind is not distracted and diverted at the very moment when you should listen to the word of the commandment. Then when your mind is not distracted and diverted by looking at the object of your love and at the difference in the object, then you become merely an ear for hearing the word of the commandment which said to you, and to you alone, that "thou" shalt love thy neighbor. Lo, then are you on the way of perfection toward loving your neighbor, when your eye is closed and you are become only an ear for hearing the commandment.

And it is true (as we have already explained where we showed that the idea of neighbor is a purely spiritual determination) that one sees the neighbor only with the eye closed, or by looking away from the differences. The sensual eye always looks at the differences. Therefore earthly prudence always cries early and late; "Look out, whom you love!" Alas, if one truly loves his neighbor, then it is better not to look out for everything; for this prudence, when it comes to testing the object, will actually bring it about so that you never get to see your neighbor because he is every man, any man taken quite blindly. The poet despises this seeing blindness of prudence which teaches that one should take care as to whom one loves; the poet teaches that love is blind; according to the poet, the lover will find his object in a mysterious, inexplicable manner, or fall in love and so become

— blind from love, blind to every fault, every imperfection in the beloved, blind to everything except this beloved — but yet not blind to the fact that this is the only beloved in the whole world. When this is so, then certainly earthly love makes a man blind, but it also makes him very particular not to confuse any other man with this one beloved; hence it makes him blind as regards the beloved, by teaching him to make a tremendous distinction between this one beloved and all other men. But love for one's neighbor makes a man blind in the deepest and noblest and most blessed sense, so that he blindly loves every man as the lover loves the beloved.

Love for the neighbor has the perfections of eternity — which is perhaps the reason why it sometimes seems to fit in so little with the relations of the earthly life, with the temporal difference of worldliness; that it is so easily misunderstood and subjected to hate; that in any case it is a very unthankful task to love one' s neighbor.

Even the one who is not ordinarily inclined to praise God and Christianity, nevertheless does so when he shudderingly contemplates the terrifying facts of how in paganism the discriminations of the earthly life, or how the caste system, inhumanly separate man from man; how this ungodly wickedness inhumanly teaches one man to disavow kinship with another; teaches him presumptuously and madly to say about another man that he does not exist, that he is "not born." Then even that man praises Christianity which has saved men from this evil by deeply and forever unforgettably emphasizing the kinship between man and man, because the kinship is assured by every individual's equal kinship with and his relation to God in Christ; because the Christian teaching applies equally to every individual, and teaches him that God has created him, and that Christ has redeemed him; because that Christian teaching calls every man aside and says to him, "Close your door and pray to God, then you have the highest a man can

have; love your Saviour, then you have everything both in life and death; and disregard the differences, they neither add to nor subtract from."

And I wonder if the one who from the mountain peak sees the clouds below him, I wonder if he is disturbed by this sight; I wonder if he is disturbed by the thunder storm that rages in the region down below him. And so high has Christianity set every man, unconditionally every man — for before Christ, as little as before the face of God, there is no number, no multitude, the innumerable are numbered to Him, the multitude is made up of individuals; so high has Christianity set every man, so that he may not harm his soul by becoming arrogant, or by groaning over the discriminations of the earthly life. For Christianity has not taken away the differences, any more than Christ Himself would, or would ask God to take the disciples out of the world — and this amounts to one and the same thing. There has never lived in Christendom, any more than in heathendom, any man who has not been arrayed in or clothed upon with the differences of the earthly life. As little as the Christian lives or can live without a physical body, just as little can he live outside the differences of the earthly life to which every individual by birth, by condition, by circumstances, by education and so on, specially belongs — none of us is the pure man. Christianity is too earnest to talk nonsense about pure man, it only wishes to make all men pure. Christianity is not a fairy tale, although the happiness it promises is more glorious than that in any fairy tale; nor is it an ingenious chimera which is intended to be difficult to understand, and which also requires one single condition, an idle head and an empty brain.

Consequently Christianity has a horror of that heathendom, and has once for all overridden it; but it has not taken away the differences in the earthly life. These must continue as long as the temporal existence continues, and must continue to tempt every man who comes into the world. For by being a Christian he is not exempt from the differences, but by triumphing over

the temptation of the differences, he becomes Christian. In the so-called Christendom, therefore, the earthly difference is always a temptation. Alas! perhaps it does more than tempt, so that one man becomes arrogant, the other defiantly envious. Both cases are rebellion, rebellion against the Christian. Far be it from us, in truth, to confirm anyone in the presumptuous error of assuming that only the powerful and the distinguished are guilty of this; for if the poor and the impotent man merely defiantly aspires to the advantages denied him in the earthly life, instead of humbly aspiring to the blessed equality of the Christian life, then he also harms his own soul. Christianity is not blind, nor is it one-sided; with the calm of eternity it looks dispassionately at all the differences of the earthly life, but it does not contentiously take sides; it sees, and certainly with sadness, that earthly busyness and the false prophets of worldliness will conjure up this appearance of equality in the name of Christianity — as if it were only the powerful who are tempted by worldly differences, as if the poor would be justified in doing everything to gain equality — not merely by becoming a Christian in deed and in truth. I wonder if by that way one could come any nearer to the Christian likeness and the Christian equality.

Christianity will not take the difference away, either the difference of rank or the difference of insignificance; but on the other hand, there is no temporal difference, not the most favorable and acceptable in the eyes of the world, with which Christianity will side in partiality. Whether the temporal difference, in which a man offends by clinging fast to it in worldliness, is in the eyes of the world revolting and shocking, or innocent and honorable, simply does not interest Christianity, which makes no worldly distinctions, which does not look at that thing by which a man harms his soul, but only at the fact that he does injure his soul — is that an insignificance? Perhaps; but the fact that he does injure his soul is certainly not insignificant. Between the extremes of distinction and insignificance there lie a great many closer

qualifications of worldly differences; but there are none of these closer and therefore less obvious differences of which Christianity makes an exception. The worldly differences are like a huge net in which the temporal existence is caught; the meshes in this net are of varying sizes, one man seems more bound and snared in the net of existence than another; but all these differences, the difference between difference and difference, the comparative difference, have no interest for Christianity, not the least; such an occupation and concern remains a worldly one.

Christianity and worldliness can never come to understand each other, even if for a moment — to a lesser scrupulousness, they may delusively seem to. To secure an equal place in the world with other men, to make temporal conditions as similar as possible for all men, those are certainly things that worldliness considers of extreme importance. But even in this respect, what we may venture to call the well-intentioned worldly effort never completely understands Christianity. The well-intentioned worldliness holds itself piously — if one wishes to call it that — convinced that there must be one temporal condition, one earthly difference — which one may find by the help of calculations and surveys, or in any other preferred manner — where there is equality. If this condition were to become the only one for all men, then equality would be brought about. But partly, this cannot be done, and partly, this common equality of all arising from having the same temporal differences, is not at all Christian equality; worldly equality, even if it were possible, is not Christian equality. And to bring about a perfect worldly equality is an impossibility. The well-intentioned worldliness itself really admits it; it rejoices when it succeeds in making temporal conditions more and more equal, but it recognizes that its attempt is a pious wish, that it has set itself a tremendous task, that the chances of success are remote — if it rightly understood itself it would see that this could never be attained in the temporal existence; that even if this

endeavor were carried on for a thousand years, it would never attain its goal. Christianity, on the contrary, by the help of the short cut of eternity, is immediately at the goal: it allows all the differences to continue, but it teaches the equality of eternity. It teaches everyone to rise above the earthly distinctions. Pay close attention to how equitably it speaks; it does not say that it is the humble who should lift himself up, while the mighty man should perhaps descend from his exalted position; ah, no, such a speech is not equitable. And the equality which is brought about by the mighty descending and the humble ascending, is not Christian equality, it is worldly equality. No, whether it was the one who stood highest, even if it were the king, he must lift himself above the differences of high place, and the beggar must lift himself above the difference of insignificance. Christianity always allows the differences of the earthly life to persist, but this equality in rising above earthly differences is implicit in the commandment of love, in the loving one's neighbor.

Because this is so, because the humble as completely as the distinguished and powerful, because every man in his own particular manner, may lose his soul by not being willing to rise above earthly differences in the Christian way, and, alas, because it happens in both and in the most diversified ways; therefore it happens that wishing to love the neighbor is frequently exposed to a double, moreover, a multiple danger. Everyone who has despairingly clung to one or another of life's earthly discriminations, so that his life is centered in it and not in God, he also demands that everyone who belongs in this same category, should ally with him — not in the good (for the good forms no union, unites neither two nor hundreds, nor all men together), but in an unholy union against the universal-human. The desperate call it treachery to wish to have fellowship with others, with all men. On the other side, those other men are again differentiated by other differences of the temporal existence, and then

perhaps misunderstand it if some who do not belong to their class wish to unite with them. For as regarding the differences of the earthly life, there is strangely enough, due to misunderstanding, both strife and unity at the same time; one man wishes to do away with one difference, but he wishes to have another in its place. The difference can, as the word says, indicate the great difference, the supreme difference; but everyone who contends against discrimination in such a way that he wishes to abolish one definite discrimination in order to substitute another, he indeed fights to maintain discriminations. Whoever, then, wishes to love his neighbor, consequently does not concern himself in abolishing this or that discrimination, or, from a worldly point of view, in doing away with all of them, but is devoutly concerned in interpenetrating his own difference with the saving thought of Christian equality: he easily becomes as one who does not fit into the earthly life, not even into the so-called Christendom; he easily becomes exposed to attack from all directions; he becomes like a lost sheep among ravening wolves. Everywhere he turns he meets natural differences (for as was said, no man is pure man, but the Christian rises above earthly differences); and those worldly ones who have clung fast to temporal differences, any of them would be like those who are ravening wolves.

Let us take some examples from the differences of the earthly life, in order to make the matter clear, and let us proceed very carefully. And may you only have the patience to read, as I devote my time and industry to writing; for since being an author is my sole occupation and my sole task, I both can and am in duty bound to employ a precise, a petty, if you will, but certainly also a rewarding carefulness which others are not able to, since in addition to being authors, they must also use their possibly longer day, their possibly richer gifts, their possibly greater skill in other ways.

It is true that the time is past when only the powerful and the distinguished were men, the others thralls and slaves. This is due to

Christianity. But this does not imply that the powerful and the distinguished can no longer become a snare to a man, if he looks too long at these differences and harms his soul, forgetting what it means to love his neighbor. If this should take place, it must certainly happen in a more hidden and secret way than before, but at bottom it remains the same. Whether a man openly, enjoying his arrogance and his pride, indicates to other man that they do not exist for him, and desires for sustaining his arrogance that they should feel it when he demands the expression of slavish submission from them — or whether cunningly and secretly by avoiding every contact with them (possibly also for fear lest the manifestation of his arrogance might arouse them and become dangerous to him), he shows that they do not exist for him; at bottom these are one and the same thing. The inhuman and the un-Christlike is not determined by the way in which it is manifested, but by a man's wishing to disavow his kinship with all men, with every man unconditionally. Alas, alas, to keep one's self unspotted from the world is the problem and teaching of Christianity — God grant that we may all accomplish it! But to cling in worldliness to this inhumanity, as if it were the most glorious of all differences, just that is defilement. For it is not the rough labor that defiles — if it is performed in purity of heart; and it is not humble circumstances which defile — if you reverently take pride in living quietly; but silk and ermine can defile, if they cause a man to injure his soul. It is defilement if the humble so shrinks from his misery that he does not have the courage to wish to be edified by the Christian teaching; but it is also defilement when the distinguished man so swaddles himself in his distinction that he shrinks from being edified by the Christian teaching. And it is also defilement if one whose distinction consists in being as most people are, never overcomes this difference in Christian elevation.

So this distinguished depravity wishes to teach the distinguished man that he exists only for the distinguished; that he must live solely in their restricted circle, that he must not exist for other men, just as these must not exist for him. But take care, it says, he must know how to do this as easily and adroitly as possible, so that it may not provoke men, that is to say, the secret and the art consist precisely in keeping this secret to himself. The avoiding of contact with others must not seem to be intended, nor must it be done in an obvious way, which would attract attention; no, it must be done evasively, and consequently as cautiously as possible, in order to make sure that no one notices it, to say nothing of any one's taking offense at it. Therefore he must walk with downcast eyes (alas, but not in the Christian sense), when he mingles in the throngs of men; proudly — and yet stealthily, he must flee from one distinguished circle to another; he must not look at these other men — so that they will not look at him; he must conceal the interest in his eyes if he should meet a fellow creature or an even more distinguished man; his glance must waver vaguely, hesitantly, over all these men, so that no one may catch his eye to remind him of their kinship; he must never be seen among the humbler classes, at least never in their society, and if this cannot be avoided, then must he display an aristocratic condescension — yet in its lightest form — in order not to offend or excite; he must be ready to employ exaggerated courtesy toward the humbler classes, but he must never associate with them as equals for that would indicate that he was — a human, but he is an — aristocrat. And if he can do this easily, skillfully, elegantly, evasively, and yet always preserve his secret (that other men do not exist for him, or he for them), then will the aristocratic snobbery vouch for him that he has — good form. Yes, the world has changed — and the form of snobbery has also changed; for it would still be overhasty if we were to believe that the world has become good because it has changed. If we imagine one of those proud, wayward

figures who took pleasure in this ungodly sport of openly letting "those men" feel their wretchedness, how astonished would he not be if he came to know how much caution had now become necessary in order to preserve this secret! Alas, but the world has changed; and gradually as the world changes, the forms of snobbish depravity become more cunning, more difficult to detect — but they truly do not become better.

Such is the aristocratic snobbery. And if there were a distinguished man whose life by birth and circumstances belonged to the same earthly classification, a distinguished man who would not consent to this conspiracy of dissension against common humanity, that is, against the neighbor; if he could not find it in his heart to consent to it, if he, perceiving very well the results of this conspiracy, still trusted to God to give him strength to endure these things, while he did not have the strength — to harden his heart: experience might well teach him what he risked. First the aristocratic snobbishness would accuse him of treason and selfishness — because he wished to love his neighbor; for maintaining his connection with snobbery would be love and loyalty and sincerity and devotion. And if then, as so often happens, the lower class, in turn, from the standpoint of their differences, misunderstood and misjudged him, him — who did not belong to their synagogue, rewarded him with mockery and insults — because he wished to love his neighbor: then, indeed, he would stand there in a twofold danger. Had he been willing to place himself at the head of the lower classes — so that by means of a rebellion he might have swept away the class distinctions: then they might possibly have loved and honoured him. But he did not wish to do this; he wished only to express what to him was a Christian need, the need to love his neighbor. And this was why his lot was so dubious; the twofold danger came from this.

Then the aristocratic snobbishness might exultantly ridicule him, derisively condemn him and say it served him right. It would use his name

as a bugbear to prevent inexperienced aristocratic youth from straying away — from the good form" of snobbishness. And many of the better men among the aristocrats, under the powerful influence of the "good form" of snobbishness, would not dare to defend him; would not risk being laughed at by the "counsel of the scornful," and this ridicule would reach its maximum if anyone were bold enough to defend him. Thus we might easily imagine that an aristocrat within the inspired circle of aristocrats might eloquently defend the idea of love to one's neighbor, but when it actually came to the point, he might not be able to subject his mind in obedience to the view he had perhaps successfully defended. However, to defend an opposing view within the partition wall of the differences, to defend behind this wall a view which, in the Christian sense (not in the sense of raising a rebellion), wishes to take the differences away, that is simply to preserve the differences. In the company of the learned, or within a circle of associates which assures and emphasizes his distinction as such, the scholar might perhaps be willing to deliver an inspired lecture on the equality of all men; but that is simply maintaining the differences. In the company of the wealthy, in surroundings which simply make the advantages of wealth obvious, a rich man might perhaps be willing to make every concession about equality between men; but this also means preserving the differences. The distinguished man who might possibly victoriously succeed in overriding all objections arising in that exclusive company out of court, would perhaps snobbishly and cowardly avoid coming in contact with real objections to the differences. "Go with God!" We use this expression as a salutation — if that better-intentioned man among the distinguished, instead of proudly avoiding men, were to go out with God among men, then he would perhaps try to hide from himself — and consequently from God, what he got to see — but what God saw that He hid. That is, if one walks with God, then one certainly walks free from danger; but one is also

compelled to see, and to see in a quite peculiar manner. When you walk in company with God, then you need see but one wretched man, and you will not be able to evade what Christianity wishes to have you understand, the human equality.

Alas, but perhaps that superior man would not quite dare risk having to endure this walking in company with God and the impression it made upon him; he would perhaps withdraw — while, nevertheless, that same evening in the exclusive society of his friends, he would again defend the Christian view of life. Moreover, this walking with God (and it is only in company with God that one discovers his “neighbor,” for God is the middle term) for the sake of learning to know life and to know himself, is a serious walk. Then honor, power and glory lose their worldly glamor; in company with God you cannot take pleasure in worldliness. If you unite (for union is not always for the good) with some other men with a definite standing and position in life, even if it is only with your wife, then the worldly tempts you; even if it may not have great significance in your eyes, it tempts you comparatively in respect of persons; perhaps it tempts you for her sake. But when you walk with God, when you unite only with God, and in all that you understand, you understand that God is underneath: then you discover — shall I say to your own hurt? — then you discover your neighbor; then God compels you to love him — shall I say to your own hurt? For loving your neighbor is a thankless task.

It is one thing to let thought fight against thought; it is one thing to fight and conquer in a dispute; it is another thing to conquer one’s self when one fights in the realities of life; for however closely one conflicting thought presses on the other in life, however closely one contender presses on the other in a dispute, all this conflict is still carried on at a distance, like a battle in the air. On the other hand, this is a measure of a man’s disposition, of what he is; how far it is from what he understands to what he does; how

great a distance there is between his understanding and his actions. At bottom we all understand the highest things; a child, the simplest man, the wisest man, they all understand the highest things, and all understand the same things; for it is, if I dare say so, a lesson set for us all. But that which makes the difference is whether we understand it only remotely — so that we do not act accordingly; or near at hand — so that we do act accordingly, and "cannot do otherwise," cannot refrain from doing it, like Luther, who understood quite definitely what he had to do, when he said: "God help me, I cannot do otherwise. Amen."

At the distance of a quiet hour from all the turmoil of life and of the world, every man understands what the highest is; when he starts out, he has understood it. When life looks like fair weather to him, he still understands it: but when confusion begins, then the understanding flees, or it appears that this understanding was at a distance. To sit in a room where everything is so still that one can hear a grain of sand fall, and understand the highest, is something every man is able to do; but, speaking figuratively, for one to sit in a kettle while the coppersmith hammers upon it, and then to understand the same thing about the highest: to do this one must have his understanding in himself; otherwise it will appear that his understanding was at a distance — because he was absent-minded.

At the distance of a quiet hour from the turmoil of life, the child and the simplest man and the wisest man understand, and almost equally easily, what every man ought to do — what every man should do; but in the midst of life's confusion, when the only question is about what will do, then it perhaps appears that that understanding was at a distance from him — was at the distance of humanity from him.

While a dispute is still remote from action, while the lofty resolutions are still awaiting action, while the solemn vows are unfulfilled and repentance still not proved, every man understands what the highest is. Within the

habitual security of unchanged conditions, everyone can understand that a change is desirable, for this understanding is remote from the change. Is not the unchanged a tremendous distance from the change?

Alas, in the world there is perpetually the pressing question about what one can do and what one cannot do: eternity which speaks of the highest, calmly assumes that every man can achieve it, and therefore asks only whether he did so. From the height of his superior condescension, the great man understands equality between man and man. From the height of their mysterious superiority the scholar and the educated men understand equality between man and man; granted a little advantageous concession, the man whose difference consists in being like most other people, understands equality between men at a distance the neighbor is recognized by everyone: God alone knows how many really recognize him, that is, close by. And yet at a distance the neighbor is merely a figment of the imagination; he who is neighbor by virtue of being nearby, is any man, unconditionally every man. At a distance the neighbor is a shadow who in imagination passes through every man s thought — but, alas, perhaps he did not discover that the man who at that very moment really did pass by him, was his neighbor. Everyone knows his neighbor at a distance, and yet it is impossible to see him at a distance; if you do not see him so close at hand that, before God, you see him unconditionally in every man, then you do not see him at all.

Let us now consider the differences in the lower classes. The times are past when what one calls the lower classes had no conception of themselves, or only the conception of being slaves, not merely poor men, but actually not even men. The wild rebellions, the horror which followed on horror, are perhaps also past; but I wonder if viciousness cannot therefore lie hidden in a man. If so, then the vicious inferiority complex will make the poor man imagine that he sees an enemy in the powerful and the

rich, in everyone who is favored by some advantage. But caution, it says, for these enemies still have so much power that it might easily become dangerous to break with them. Therefore the hidden viciousness will not teach the poor man to raise a rebellion, or absolutely refuse every expression of deference, or let his secret become manifest; but it will teach him that the deference shall be expressed and still not expressed, expressed and yet expressed in such a way that the powerful will find no pleasure in it, while he is still not able to say that this homage is refused him. Therefore in this submission there must be a cunning defiance which secretly embitters, a reluctance which secretly says “no” to what the tongue affirms; a dissonance of suppressed envy in the jubilation which honors the powerful. There must be no force used which might become dangerous; there must be no breach which might become a source of danger; but a secret hidden bitterness, a remotely suspected, painful dejection must make the power and the honor and the distinction into a torment for the powerful, the honoured, the distinguished m, who yet is not able to put his finger on any definite cause of complaint; for therein lies exactly the art and the secret of the resistance.

And if there was a poor man whose heart did not harbor this secret envy, and who was unwilling to permit this viciousness from without to get this power over him; a poor man who without being servilely submissive, without fear of man, modestly but above all gladly, gave every advantage of the earthly life its due, happier and more joyful in the giving perhaps than the one frequently is and can be who will receive it: then he would also surely discover the twofold danger. His equals will perhaps thrust him out as a traitor, despise him as servilely minded; and those favored of fortune will, alas, perhaps misunderstand him and make fun of him as a boot-licker. What in the preceding relationship might be regarded as too belittling for

the distinguished — to love his neighbor, would here be regarded as too presumptuous for the humble — to love his neighbor.

So perilous a task it is to wish to love one's neighbor. For there are still distinctions enough in the world; there are distinctions everywhere in the temporal existence, which is precisely the different, the manifold. Perhaps too a man may be successful by virtue of his own personality, in getting on well with all the differences in a gentle and complaisant agreement which strikes a little off from one place and so requires a little again in a different place: but the equality of eternity, the willing to love one's neighbor, seems both too little and too much, and therefore, as applied to this love for the neighbor, does not really pertain to the relations of the earthly life.

Imagine a man who arranged a banquet and to it invited the halt, the blind, the lame, the beggars: now far be it from me to think that the world would find this anything but beautiful, even if peculiar. But imagine that this man who gave the banquet had a friend to whom he said: "Yesterday I gave a great banquet" — is it not true that the friend would first and foremost wonder that he had not been among those invited? Then when he came to know who had been invited: then far be it from me to think that the friend would regard it as anything but beautiful, even if peculiar. Still he would wonder, and he would perhaps say: "It is a strange use of words to call such a gathering a banquet, a banquet — where your friends are not present, a banquet — where the question is not about the quality of the wine, the choice of the company, the number of servants who waited on the table," that is, the friend would think one might call such a feeding an act of charity, but not a banquet. For however good the food they received had been, even if it had not been merely as "strengthening and palatable" as that of charitable institutions, but had really been choice and costly, aye, even if they had received ten kinds of wine: the company itself, the idea of the whole affair, a certain something lacking, I know not what, would preclude

calling such a gathering a banquet; it is contrary to custom — which draws distinctions. Suppose now that this man who had given the banquet, answered: “Then I still believe I had usage on my side; do we not read in Luke’s Gospel these words of Christ: ‘When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors: lest they also invite you again, and you receive recompense. But when thou makest a banquet, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind’; for here not only is the word ‘banquet’ used in this way, but at the beginning a less festal expression is used, ‘the midday or the evening meal,’ and not until the speech refers to inviting the poor and the crippled, is the word ‘banquet’ used. Does it not seem to you that it is as if Christ wished to indicate that to invite the poor and the lame is not only what we should do, but is also something far more festal than eating at midday or evening with friends and relatives and rich neighbors, which one ought not to call a banquet; for to invite the poor, that is really to give a banquet? But I perceive that our usage of words is different, for as commonly used, a list of those who are invited to a banquet is sufficient: friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors — who are able to reciprocate. But so scrupulous is the Christian equality and its usage, that it requires not only that you shall feed the poor, it requires that you shall call it a banquet. If, however, in actual daily life you wish to stand strictly on this usage, and do not think that in the Christian sense it is a matter of indifference under what name the meal is served to the poor, then will men laugh at you. But simply let them laugh, they laughed, too, at Tobias; for the fact of wishing to love one’s neighbor is always exposed to a twofold danger, as we see from the example of Tobias. The ruler had forbidden under pain of death that he should bury the dead; but Tobias feared God more than the ruler, he loved the dead more than his own life: he buried him. This was the first danger. And then when Tobias dared this heroic deed — then ‘his neighbors laughed at him.’ That was the

second danger…" Thus spoke the man who gave the banquet. My hearer, does it not seem to you that he was right? But might there not be something else to object to in his conduct? For why so insistent on inviting only the halt and the poor, and, on the other hand, why take such pains, even almost defiantly, to omit to invite friends and relatives, when he might equally well have invited all? Undeniably. And if he was thus insistent, then we shall not commend him or his choice of words. But according to the words of the evangelist, the meaning is, however, that these others would not come. For that reason, too, the friend's surprise at not being invited also ceased as soon as he heard what company had been invited. Had the man, according to the friend's use of words, made a banquet and not invited him, then he would have been angry; but now he was not angry — for he would not have come anyway.

O my hearer, does it seem to you that what we have discussed here is only a dispute about the use of the word "banquet"? Or do you not see that the dispute is about loving your neighbor? For he who feeds the poor, but does not at the same time triumph over his own feelings so that he may call this feeding a banquet, he sees in the poor and the humble only the poor and the humble; he who gives a "banquet," he sees in the poor and humble his neighbor — however laughable this may seem in the eyes of the world. Alas, for it is still not so unusual for us to hear complaints in the world against this or that man because he is not earnest; but the question is, what the world understands by earnestness, whether it does not almost understand by it the pressure of the worldly concern. And the question is whether the world through constantly confusing earnestness and vanity, is not, in spite of its earnestness, so facetious that if in the highest sense it became earnest enough to see from this that one should thereby set about it earnestly, the question is, whether the world would not quite involuntarily burst into laughter. So earnest is the world! If the many and complicated

distinctions of the temporal existence did not make it equally as difficult to see whether one loves his neighbor as it is difficult to see “the man”: then would the world always have cause for laughter — if there were otherwise a sufficient number of those who loved their neighbor.

To love the neighbor, while allowing the earthly difference to continue, is, as was here pointed out, essentially to wish to exist equally for every man unconditionally. Manifestly, merely wishing to exist for other men in proportion to the advantages provided by earthly distinctions, is pride and presumption; but the clever idea of not being willing to exist at all for others, in order secretly to enjoy the advantage of distinction in union with equals, is cowardly pride. In both cases there is dissension; but he who loves his neighbor is calm. He is calm through being satisfied with the conditions of the earthly life assigned to him, be they those of distinction or of poverty, and for the rest, he allows every earthly distinction to retain its power, and to pass for what it is and ought to be here in this life. For you shall not covet that which is your neighbor’s, not his wife, nor his ass, and hence not that advantageous position vouchsafed to him in life. If it is denied you, then you should still be glad that it was granted to him. In this way one who loves his neighbor is reassured; he does not servilely avoid the more influential men, but he loves his neighbor; nor is he supercilious to the humble, but he loves his neighbor, and wishes essentially to live equally for all men, whether he is actually known by many or not. It is undeniably a considerable wing-stretch, but it is not a proud flight which soars above the world; it is the humble and difficult flight of self-denial near the earth. It is far easier and far more comfortable to creep through life by living in more aristocratic seclusion, if one is a distinguished man, or in inconspicuous privacy if one is poor; moreover, one may, however strange it is, even seem to accomplish more by this surreptitious mode of life, simply because one exposes himself to much less opposition. But even if it is so pleasant for

flesh and blood to avoid opposition, I wonder if it is also consoling in the hour of death? In the hour of death the only adequate consolation is that one has not evaded life, but has endured it. What a man shall accomplish or not accomplish, does not lie in his power to decide; he is not the One who will guide the world; he has only to obey. Everyone has, therefore, first and foremost (instead of asking which place is most comfortable for him, which connection is the most advantageous to him), to assure himself on the question of where Providence can use him, if it so pleases Providence. The point consists precisely in loving his neighbor, or, what is essentially the same thing, in living equally for every man. Every other point of view is a contentious one, however advantageous and comfortable and apparently significant this position may be. Providence cannot use one who has placed himself there, for he is plainly in rebellion against Providence. But he who duly took that overlooked, that despised and disdained place, without insisting on his earthly rights, without attaching himself to just one single man, essentially existing equally for all men, he will, even though he apparently achieves nothing, even if he becomes exposed to the derision of the poor, or to the ridicule of his superiors, or to both insult and ridicule, yet in the hour of death, he will confidently dare say to his soul: "I have done my best; whether I have accomplished anything, I do not know; whether I have helped anyone, I do not know; but that I have lived for them, that I do know, I know it from the fact that they insulted me. And this is my consolation, that I shall not have to take the secret with me to the grave, that I, in order to have good and undisturbed and comfortable days in life, have denied my kinship to other men, kinship with the poor, in order to live in aristocratic seclusion, or with the distinguished, in order to live in secret obscurity."

So let the one who, by the help of his associations and by not living for all men, accomplished so much, look well to it that death does not alter his

life for him when it reminds him of his responsibility. For he who did his best to make men attentive, the humble or the distinguished, he who in his teaching, acting, striving, lived equally for all, he is not responsible if men, by persecuting him, showed — that they had become attentive. He has no responsibility, no, he has even benefited, for the condition through which one might derive benefit is always, first and foremost, that one become attentive. But the one who in cowardice would only exist within the partition wall of associations where he would accomplish so very much and gain so many advantages; the one who in cowardice dared not attract the attention of men, the poor or the rich, because he suspected that the attention of men was a dubious good — if one has something true to communicate; the one who in cowardice carried on his famous activities within the security of respect for persons: he bears the responsibility — that he did not love his neighbor. If such a one were to say: "Well, what good does it do to plan one's life according to such a standard?" then I should answer: "How do you think this excuse will help you in eternity?"

For the command of eternity is infinitely higher than any clever excuse. I wonder, too, if a single one of those whom Providence has used as instruments in the service of truth (and let us not forget that every man should and ought to be so used, at least he ought to plan his life so that he might become an instrument) has ever planned his life in any other way than for existing equally for every man. No such man has ever joined himself in alliance with the poor or with the distinguished, but has lived equally for the distinguished and the humblest. Truly, only through loving one's neighbor can a man accomplish the highest; for the highest consists in being capable of being used as an instrument in the hand of Providence. But as was said, everyone who has placed himself at some other point, everyone who forms parties and factions, or joins such, he steers on his own responsibility, and all his achievement, even if it were the transformation of

the world, is a delusion. Nor will he have great joy from it in eternity, for it is certainly possible that Providence might make use of it, but, alas, it would not have used him as an instrument; he was a self-willed, a conceited man, and Providence also uses the efforts of such a man by accepting his difficult labor and letting him lose the reward.

However laughable, however slow, however inexpedient, loving one's neighbor may seem to the world, it is still the highest act a man is able to accomplish But the highest has never quite fitted into the relations of the earthly life, it is both too little and too much.

Look sometime at the world which lies before you in all its diversified manifestations; it is as when you look at a stage, except that the variety is far, far greater. Every individual of this innumerable multitude is someone in particular through his difference from others; he represents something definite, but essentially he is something different. However, you do not get to see this in life; here you see only what the individual represents and how he does it. It is as it is in a play. But when the curtain falls on the stage, then the one who played the king and the one who played the beggar, and so on severally, they are all much alike, all one and the same: actors. And when in death the curtain has fallen on the stage of reality (for this is an ambiguous expression, if we speak about the curtain being rolled up on the stage of eternity in the moment of death, for eternity is not a stage, it is truth), then they too are all one, they are men, they are all what they essentially were, which you did not see because of their differences; you see that they are men. The professional theater is an enchanted world; but imagine some evening that through a general absent-mindedness, the players all became confused so that they believed they actually were what they represented: would this not be what we might call, in contrast to the artistic enchantment, the enchantment of an evil spirit, a black art? And so too if in the enchantment of reality (for we are all under this spell through being

fascinated by its differences) our fundamental ideas became confused, then would we believe that we essentially are what we represent. Alas, but is this not exactly the case? That the differences of life are only like the player's costumes, or like a traveling cloak which everyone ought to take care of and see that the strings with which this overgarment is fastened are loosely tied, and particularly not in hard knots, so that when the time comes to change, it may easily be thrown off: this seems to be forgotten. And yet we all have artistic understanding enough to be critical, if at the moment when he should cast off his outer garment, the player has to run off the stage to get the strings untied. Alas, but in actual life one fastens the upper garment of his difference so tightly that it completely conceals the fact that this difference is an outer garment, because the inner glory of the likeness to others never or so very infrequently shines through, as it nevertheless should and ought to do. For the player's art is the delusive one, the art of make-believe, the art of deceiving and being deceived on an equally large scale; therefore we must not be able or wish to see the player through the costume; therefore it represents the highest art when the player becomes identical with the character he represents, because this is the supreme delusion. But the reality of life, even if it is not, like eternity, the truth, ought to be truthful, and therefore the other man, who everyone essentially is, ought always to be glimpsed through the disguise. Alas, but in actual life, the individual in his temporal growth grows together with the temporal differences; this is the opposite of the growth of eternity which grows away from the differences; every such individual is crippled, is in the sense of eternity a deformity. Alas, in real life the individual grows fast to his differences, so that at last death must use force to tear them away from him.

Nevertheless, if one is truly to love his neighbor, he must remember every moment that the difference between them is only a disguise. For, as was said, Christianity has not wished to storm forth to abolish the

differences, neither those of distinction nor of humbleness, nor has it wished in a worldly sense to effect a worldly agreement between the differences; but it wants the difference to hang loosely about the individual, loosely, like the cape the king casts off to reveal himself; loosely, like the ragged cloak in which a supernatural being has concealed itself. When the difference hangs thus loosely, then that essential other is always glimpsed in every individual, that common to all, that eternal resemblance, the equality. If it were this way, if every individual lived in this way, then would the temporal existence have attained its highest point. It cannot be like eternity; but this expectant solemnity, which, without halting the course of life, renews itself every day through the eternal and through the equality of eternity, every day saves its soul from the differences in which it still continues: this would be the reflection of eternity. Then you would indeed see the ruler in real life, gladly and respectfully offer him your homage; but you would, nevertheless, see in him the inner glory, the equality of glory which his magnificence merely conceals. You would indeed see the beggar, perhaps in your sorrow for him suffering more than he, but you would still see in him the inner glory, the equality of glory, which his shabby cloak conceals. Moreover, wherever you turned your eyes, you would see your neighbor. For there neither is nor has there ever been from the beginning of the world, a man who was a neighbor in the same sense as a king is a king, a scholar a scholar, your relative your relative, that is, in particular, or what amounts to the same thing, in the sense of discrimination; no, every man is your neighbor. In being king, beggar, scholar, rich, poor, man, woman and so on, we do not resemble one another, for just therein lie our differences; but in being a neighbor we all unconditionally resemble one another. The difference is the confusion of the temporal existence which marks every man differently, but the neighbor is the mark of the eternal — on every man. Take a number of sheets of paper; write something different on each

of them so that they do not resemble each other; but then take again each individual sheet, do not be confused by the different inscriptions, hold it up to the light, and then you see a common mark in them all. And so the neighbor is the common mark, but you see it only by the light of the eternal, when it shines through the differences.

My hearer, there can certainly be no doubt that this must seem glorious to you, that it must constantly appear thus to you, whenever in quiet exaltation of spirit you allow the thought of the eternal to counsel you, and give yourself up to meditation; only then are you near this understanding. Oh, but might this not seem so glorious to you that for your part you would decide to make this agreement with God; that you wish to unite with Him in order to maintain this understanding, that is, to express in your life that with Him you will maintain this understanding as the only true understanding, whatever may befall you because of it, even if it should cost you your life; that with God you will hold it fast as your victory over all indignities and injuries. Remember that he, who in truth chose the one thing needful, wished the truly good, he has this blessed consolation that one suffers but once, but one conquers eternally.

Lo, the poet knows how to say much about the beginning of love, about what an ennobling power loving and being loved exercises over a man; about the transfiguration which penetrates his whole being; about what a heavenly difference, according to the poet, there is between one who is in love and one who has never felt the transforming power of love. Oh, the true consecration is nevertheless the one which surrenders all claims on life, all claims to power and honor and advantage, all claims — but the happiness of love and friendship are indeed the strongest claims — hence which surrenders all claims, in order to understand what a tremendous claim God and eternity have upon one’s self. He who will accept this understanding is prepared to love his neighbor. A man’s life begins with the

illusion that a long, long time and a whole world lie before him, and he begins with the foolish conceit that he has plenty of time for all his many claims. The poet is the eloquent, inspired advocate of this foolish but beautiful conceit. But when in the infinite transformation a man discovers the eternal so near to life that there is not a single one of its claims, not a single one of its evasions, not a single one of its excuses, not a single one of its moments at a distance from what he must do at this very moment, this very second, this very instant: then he is in the way of becoming a Christian. The sign of childishness is to say: "Me wants, me — we"; the sign of youth is to say: "*I*" — and "*I*" — and "*I*"; the sign of maturity and the introduction to the eternal is to will to understand that this "I" signifies nothing if it does not become the "thou" to whom eternity unceasingly speaks, and says: "Thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt." The youth wishes to be the only "I" in the whole world; maturity consists in understanding this "thou" for itself, even if it is not said to any other single man. Thou shalt, thou shalt love thy neighbor. O my hearer, it is not you to whom *I* speak; it is to me, to whom eternity says: "Thou shalt."

III. A. LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

Love is the fulfilling of the law. — Romans 13:10

TO PROMISE IS HONEST, but to keep it is difficult," says the proverb; but by what right? It is manifestly the keeping of a promise that is honest, and in that the proverb is right, that the keeping of a promise is honest and also difficult. But what is promising? The proverb, in the words quoted, says nothing about what a promise is; perhaps then a promise is nothing at all; perhaps it is less than nothing. Perhaps the proverb is even warning against promising, as if it would say: waste no time in promising; the keeping a promise, which is the honorable thing, is certainly difficult. And truly, the promising is certainly far from being honesty, even when the promise is by no means dishonesty intended. Should one not hesitate to give "the fact of promising" the name of honesty, hesitate in a world which deceitfully promises so much, in a generation which is only too inclined to promise and honestly deceives itself in promising? Should one not hesitate for the sake of the proverb itself, since there is another proverb which worldly men are also familiar with and know from experience, that "A penny loaned," if — according to the promise — it is repaid, "is a penny found"? One might rather go to the opposite extreme and say that promising is dishonest, assuming that the characteristic of true trustworthiness is precisely that it does not make promises, that it wastes no time in promising, does not flatter itself by promising, and then claim a twofold credit, first for promising, and then for the fulfillment of the promise. Nevertheless, one may prefer to try to center the attention exclusively and decisively upon the keeping the promise, while, as a preamble, a stimulating and authoritative reminder warns against promising.

There is a parable found in the Holy Scriptures which is but rarely referred to in the godly discourse, and which, nevertheless, is very instructive and stimulating. Let us consider it a little. There was a man "who had two sons"; therein he resembles the father of the prodigal son, who also had two sons. Moreover, the resemblance between these two fathers is even greater; for one of the sons of the father of whom we are speaking was also a prodigal son, as we shall learn from the story. The father went to the first and said: "Son, go out and work today in my vineyard." But he answered and said: "I will not"; but afterward he repented and went. And the father went to the other son and said likewise. But he answered and said, "Lord, I go," and he did not go. Which of the two did the father's will? We might also ask it in another way, "Which of these two was the prodigal son?" I wonder if it was not the one who said "yes," the obedient one, who not only said "yes," but said, "Lord, I will," as if to show his unconditional, obedient submission to his father's will. I wonder if it was not the one who said "yes," who was secretly lost, so that no notoriety attached to him as there did to that prodigal son who wasted his substance on harlots, and ended by herding swine, but who also ended by being reformed. I wonder if the one who said "yes" does not conspicuously resemble that brother of the prodigal son whose righteousness is made suspect in the Gospel, although he regarded himself as the righteous, or the good son; so, too, this brother (we have in our language a peculiar expression which for the sake of brevity we might use about him), this "yes-brother," regarded himself as being the good son — did he not say "yes," did he not say, "Lord, I go"? — and as the proverb says, it is honest to promise! The other brother, on the contrary, said "no." Such a "no," which still implies that one will do precisely what one said "no" to, may sometimes be caused by an inexplicable peculiarity. An honesty exiled and alien to the earth sometimes hides itself in such a simulated negation,

whether because the speaker is so disgusted with repeatedly hearing the "yes," which signifies that one will not do what one says, that he has accustomed himself to saying "no" where others say "yes," in order to do then what the yes-brother leaves undone; or it is because the speaker has a troubled mistrust of himself, and therefore avoids promising anything, lest he promise too much. Or is it because the speaker, in a sincere zeal for doing good, wishes to abjure the hypocritical appearance of a promise? Still, in the Gospel this "no" is not mentioned in any way except as being intended to show that it really was disobedience on the part of the son; but he repents and goes out and does his father's will.

But I wonder if what the parable wishes to emphasize is not how dangerous it is to be over-precipitate in saying "yes," even if it is intended to mean "in a moment." The yes-brother is not represented as one who was a deceiver when he said "yes," but as one who became a deceiver because he did not keep his promise, and, still more exactly, as one who just through his readiness in promising became a deceiver — that is to say, his promise became a snare. If he had not promised anything, he would perhaps have been quicker to do it. When one says "yes," or promises something, then one so easily deceives himself and also easily deceives others, as if one had already done what he had promised, or as if by promising, he had already done some part of what he had promised to do, or as if the promise in itself was something meritorious. And then if one still does not do what he promised, then the road becomes very long before he comes back to the truth again, and only makes a beginning by still doing a little of what he had promised. Alas, what he had promised to do was perhaps complicated enough, but now, through the unfulfilled promise, he finds himself at an illusory distance from the beginning. It is now no longer as it was at the moment when he lost his way, and instead of beginning on the labor, swung about by the aid of the promise. He must traverse the whole circuitous way

back before he again reaches the beginning. On the contrary, the way from having said “no,” the way through repentance to making good again, is much shorter and easier to find. The “yes” of the promise is soporific, but the “no” uttered and hence heard by one’s self is arousing, and repentance really not far away. He who says, “Lord, I will,” immediately seems virtuous in his own eyes; he who says “no” becomes almost afraid of himself. But this difference is very significant in the first moment, and very critical in the second; yet the first moment is the judgment of the immediate, the second moment is the judgment of eternity. That is why the world is so given to making promises, for the world is the immediate, and a promise at first looks so good. That is precisely why eternity is suspicious of promises, as it is suspicious of everything immediate. If we assume that neither of the brothers went and did his father’s will, then he who said “no” was still nearer to doing it, inasmuch as he at least realized that he was not doing his father’s will. A “no” does not conceal anything, but a “yes” so easily becomes a delusion, a self-deception, which of all difficulties is perhaps the hardest to overcome.

Oh, it is only too true that the “way to perdition is paved with good intentions,” and it is certain that the most dangerous thing of all is for a man to backslide by the aid of good intentions, that is, by the way of promises. It is so hard to realize that it actually is retrogression. When a man turns his back and goes away, then it is easy to see that he is going away; but if a man hits on the idea of turning his face toward that from which he is going away, hits upon the idea of going backwards, while with face and glance and voice he greets one, protesting again and again that he is coming at once, or even saying incessantly, “Here I am” — although, mind you, he is withdrawing farther and farther backward: then it is not so easy to realize it. And so, too, with the one who, rich in good intentions and swift to promise, withdraws farther and farther from the good. Aided by good intentions and

promises, his direction is toward the good, he is turned toward the good, and yet with this tendency toward the good, he yet is going back farther and farther away from the good. Every time he renews his intention and his promise, it looks as if he took a step forward, and yet he does not merely remain stationary, but he actually takes a step backward.

The vain intention, the unfulfilled promise, leaves a despondency, a dejection, which perhaps soon blazes up again in an even more fiery purpose, only to die away again in an even greater languor. As a drinker constantly needs stronger and stronger stimulation — to become intoxicated, so he who forfeits his promises and good intentions constantly needs greater incitement — in order to go backward. We do not commend the son who said "no," but we endeavor to learn from the Gospel how dangerous it is to say, "Lord, I will." A promise may be compared to the dealing with a changeling — caution is needed. Just at the moment the child is born, when the mother's joy is greatest because her suffering is past, when just because of her joy she is perhaps less perceptive, then, as the superstitious believe, a hostile power comes and leaves a changeling in place of her child. And at the great but also dangerous moment of beginning, when one ought to begin, then comes the hostile power and slips the changeling promise into one's hand, preventing one from actually making the beginning. Ah, how many have not been deceived in this way, deceived by the changeling promise!

That is why it is so important for a man in all his relations, in his every task, immediately to center his complete undivided attention upon the essential and the decisive. So too with love, so that it may not at any time acquire the power to seem other than it is, or the changeling appearance be able to establish itself firmly and become a snare. For love does not come to have a good time, or to amuse itself with flattering conceits, but it is immediately in line with the task and is forced to understand that every

previous moment was a wasted moment and more than merely wasted time, that any other expression of it is retardation and retrogression. This is exactly expressed in the words of our text:

LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW, and we shall now make these words the subject of our reflection.

Hence if someone asks, “What is love?”, Paul answers: “It is the fulfillment of the law,” and any further questioning is immediately halted by that answer. For the law is already a complicated matter, but to fulfil it — moreover, you yourselves perceive that if this is to be accomplished, then there is not a moment to waste. The world has certainly many times asked out of curiosity, “What is love?” and as many times there has been some idler who by answering joined himself with the curious, and these two, curiosity and idleness, liked each other so much that they almost tired each other out in asking and answering questions. But Paul pays no attention to the questioner, least of all to the difficulties; on the contrary, by his answer he catches the questioner in obedience under the law; by his answer he immediately gives the direction and gives the impetus to act accordingly. This is not only the case with this answer of Paul’s, but it is true of all Paul’s answers and with all of Christ’s answers; this method of replying, swinging far away from the direction of the question in order immediately to bring the task the questioner has to perform as near to life as possible, is simply characteristic of the Christian method.

That simple wise man of antiquity who by encouraging the pursuit of knowledge doomed paganism, he understood the art of asking questions; he knew how through his questions to ensnare in the web of their ignorance those who answered. But the Christian who does not restrict himself to knowledge alone but to action, is peculiarly able to answer and by his answer to commit everyone to the task. This was why it was so dangerous for the Pharisees and the sophists and the hairsplitters and the dialecticians

to question Christ; for the questioner always received an answer, but through the answer he also learned in a certain sense far too much; he received an embarrassing answer which did not cleverly elaborate on the question, but which seized upon the questioner with divine authority and pledged him to act in accordance with it, whereas the questioner perhaps had only wished to satisfy his curiosity or his inquisitiveness or to define his own ideas, while keeping at a distance from himself and from — doing the truth. How many have not asked, “What is truth?” and have secretly hoped that it would be a long time before the truth came so close to them that it would in that very moment decide what it was their duty to do at once. When the Pharisee “in order to justify himself” asked, “Who is my neighbor?”, he certainly thought that it would call for a very long investigation, that it would perhaps require a very long time, and even then perhaps would end with the admission that it would be impossible to define with absolute accuracy the concept “neighbor” — and this was exactly why he had asked the question, in order to find an excuse for wasting time, in order to justify himself. But God takes the wise in their own foolishness, and Christ took the questioner captive in the answer which included the task.

And so with every answer of Christ. He does not warn against unprofitable questions by long, tiresome speeches which only breed quarrels and evasions, for the long elaborate speech would not be much better than the one it is designed to counteract. No, as He taught, so too He answers with divine authority, for the authority simply consists in setting the task. The hypocritical questioner got the answer he deserved, but not the one he desired. He did not get an answer which would encourage curiosity, nor one he could run with, for the reply has the remarkable quality that when it is spoken it at once commits the individual to whom it is spoken unequivocally to the task. Even if someone presumptuously wished to

repeat erne or another of Christ's answers, merely as an anecdote, it is no good, it cannot be done; the answer catches by making the one to whom it is repeated responsible for the task. In the case of a clever answer which appeals to human ingenuity, it is of no consequence who has said it or to whom it was said. Every answer of Christ has exactly the opposite quality, which is, however, two-edged: it is infinitely important that it is Christ who has said it, and when it is said to an individual, it is precisely to him that it is said, the whole eternal emphasis is on that him, even if in a way it is said to all individuals. Human ingenuity is introspective, and inasmuch as it is blind, it is ignorant of whether anyone looks at it or not, and whether anyone comes close enough to look at it; the divine authority, on the contrary, is like the pure eye; it first compels the accused to see with whom he is talking, and then it fixes its piercing glance upon him and with this glance it says: "It is you to whom this is said." Therefore men will readily have dealings with ingenuity and intellectuality, for one can play blindman's bluff with them, but they are afraid of authority.

And this is why men will perhaps not so readily have anything to do with Paul's answer, which, as was said, is ensnaring. As soon as anything else is said in answer to the question about what love is, then there is also time, an interval, an idle moment, which then becomes a concession to curiosity and idleness and selfishness. But if love is the fulfillment of the law, then there is no time for a promise — for the fact of promising is here used as an expression for the last thing which wishes to turn love in the wrong direction away from doing, away from immediately beginning upon the task; the promise lies exactly at the beginning, and resembles it deceptively, yet without being the beginning. Therefore even if this promise about love were not so apt to be a momentary excitement, which in the next moment is a disappointment, an immediate blazing up which leaves a languor behind, a springing forward which leads backward, an anticipation which

delayingly retards, an introduction which does not lead to the matter — even if all this were not so, the promise is still a dwelling upon love, a dreaming or gratifying or light-minded or conceited dwelling upon love, as if it must first collect itself, or consider itself, or as if it wondered at itself, or at what it was able to do; the promise is a dwelling on love, and therefore a jest, a jest which may become dangerous, for taken earnestly love is the fulfillment of the law. But the Christian love which gives everything away, has just for that reason nothing to give away, no moment and no promise. Still this love is not a busyness, least of all a worldly busyness, and worldliness and busyness are now inseparable ideas. For what does it mean to be busy? We generally think that the way in which a man occupies himself determines whether he can be called busy. But this is not so. It is only within more narrow limitations that the manner of occupation is decisive, that is, not until the object of the occupation is determined. He who occupies himself only with the eternal, uninterruptedly, at every moment, if this were possible, is not busy. Hence the one who really occupies himself with the eternal is never busy. To be busy is, dividedly and distractedly (which follows from the object of the occupation) to occupy one's self with the whole manifold, in which it is absolutely impossible for a man to be undivided, undivided as a whole, and undivided in any individual part of the whole, which only the insane succeed in doing. To be busy is dividedly and distractedly to occupy one's self with that which makes a man divided and distracted. But Christian love, which is the fulfillment of the law, is completely and undividedly present in its every utterance; and yet it is perpetually active; it is, consequently, just as far from being idleness as it is from being busyness. It never takes up something in advance and gives a promise instead of acting; it never satisfies itself by making believe that it has finished the task; never lingers with enjoyment on itself; never sits idly wondering about itself. It is not that hidden, secret,

mysterious feeling behind the lattice of the inexplicable which the poet wishes to lure to his window; not a mood of the soul which fondly knows no law, wishes to know none, or wishes to make its own law, and only listen for the songs: it is sheer action, and each of its deeds is sacred, for it is the fulfillment of the law.

Such is the ideal Christian love; even if it does not or did not manifest itself in this way in any man (while yet every Christian by continuing in love, strives that his love may become such), it still was true in Him who was love, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the same apostle says about Him, that "Christ was the end of the law." What the law could not bring to pass, any more than it could save a man, that Christ could do. Whereas the law, therefore, through its demand became the destruction of everyone, because they were not able to fulfil it, and only through it learned to know sin: Christ became the destruction of the law, because He was what it demanded, its destruction, its end; for when the demand is fulfilled, the demand exists only in the fulfillment, but hence it no longer exists anywhere as demand. As thirst when it is quenched exists only in the relief which follows the refreshment, so Christ did not come to abolish the law, but to perfect it, so that from this time forth it exists in its perfection.

Moreover, He was love, and His love was the fullness of the law. "No one could convict Him of any sin," not even the law which knows every conscience; "there was no deceit in His mouth," but everything in Him was truth; there was in His love not the hairsbreadth of a moment, of an emotion, of an interval between His purpose and the demand of the law for its fulfillment. He did not say "no," like that one brother, or "yes," like the other brother, for His meat was to do His Father's will; thus He was one with the Father, one with every demand of the law, so its perfecting was a necessity to Him, His sole need in life.

The love in Him was perpetually active; there was no moment, not one single instant in His whole life when His love was merely a passive feeling which seeks expression while it lets time pass; or a mood which produces a self-satisfaction and dwells on itself while the task is neglected. No, His love was expressed in perpetual activity; even when He wept, was this not redeeming the time? For not even Jerusalem knew what belonged to its peace, but He knew; if those who stood at the grave of Lazarus sorrowing did not know what was about to happen. He knew what He would do. His love was as completely present in His least as in His greatest acts; it rallied itself no more strongly in some single great moment than in the hours of daily life outside the demands of the law. It was equally present at every moment, not greater when He breathed His last upon the Cross than when He let Himself be born. It was the same love which said, “Mary has chosen the better part,” and the same love which with a glance rebuked — or forgave, Peter. It was the same love when He accepted His disciples who gladly left their homes to perform miracles in His name, and the same love when He found them sleeping. There was in His love no demand upon any other man, not on another man’s time or strength or assistance or reciprocal love; for what Christ demanded of him was solely the other man’s good, and He demanded that only for the sake of the other man. No man lived with Him who loved Him as deeply as Christ loved him. There was in His love no bargaining, no indulgent, partial agreement with any man except the agreement which was to Him the infinite demand of the law. There was in the love of Christ no exemption demanded for Him, not the poorest, not a farthing’s worth.

His love recognized no differences, not the tenderest between His mother and other men, for He pointed to His disciple and said, “This is my mother.” Again His love made no difference between His disciples, for His sole wish was that everyone should become His disciple, and He wished this for their

own sakes. And again His love made no difference between the disciples, for His divine-human love was exactly the same to all men, in wishing to save them all, and equally for all men, who would allow themselves to be saved.

His life was pure love, and yet this whole life was only a single working day; He did not rest until the night came when He could no longer work; His labor did not cease with the changes of day and night, for when He was not working, then He watched in prayer. Thus was He the fulfillment of the law. And for a reward He demanded nothing, for His only requirement. His only purpose throughout His whole life from birth to death, was to sacrifice Himself as an innocent victim — which not even the law in its most extreme demand — dared to demand. Thus was He the fulfillment of the law. The only one privy to His life, as it were, who was even able to follow Him, who was attentive enough and sleepless enough to follow Him, was the law itself, which followed Him step by step, hour by hour, with its infinite demand; but He was the fulfillment of the law.

How poverty-stricken never to have loved! Oh, but the man who became richest through his love, how poor was not all his wealth of love in comparison with this fullness! And yet, not so. Let us never forget that there is an everlasting difference between Christ and every Christian; even if the law has been done away with, it still stands in power and fixes an everlasting yawning gulf between the God-man and every other man, who cannot even understand, but who can only believe what the divine law must admit, that He was the fulfillment of the law. Every Christian believes this and appropriates it in believing, but no one has known it except the law and He who was the fulfillment of the law. For what weakness in a man is present in his strongest moment, that weakness far more strongly and yet proportionately would be present at every moment — that fact a man can understand only in his strongest moment, but the next moment he cannot

understand it; and that is why he must believe and cling to his faith, so that his life may not become confused through being able to understand at one moment, but not being able to understand at many other moments.

Christ was the fulfillment of the law. From Him we should learn how to understand this thought, for He was the explanation, and only when the explanation is what it explains, when the one who explains it is the thing explained, when the explanation is the transfiguration, only then is there the right relationship. Alas, if we are not able to explain in this way; for if we can do nothing else, we can learn from this, humility before God. The frailty of our earthly life must divide it into explaining and being explained, and this, our weakness, is an essential expression of our own attitude toward God. Let a man, humanly speaking, love God in all sincerity of heart, ah, God has first loved him, God is an eternity ahead — so far is the man behind. And so with every task of eternity. When a man finally comes to begin, what an infinite time has not already been wasted, even if for a moment we forget all the deficiencies, all the imperfections in the struggle which has finally begun! Let a man, humanly speaking, aspire first in all sincerity of heart to the kingdom of God and His righteousness, yet how long a time elapsed before he merely learned to understand this in the right way, and hence how infinitely long before he first aspired to the kingdom of God and His righteousness! And so at every point, before every human beginning, there is wasted time. We are accustomed to speak concerning worldly conditions, about the distressing fact that in order to prepare himself for some career, a man often must run in debt; in the God-relationship, man begins with an infinite debt, even if we forget how that debt increases daily after the beginning. Only too often this is forgotten in our daily life, and why should it be unless it is because God too is forgotten? So one man measures himself by another, and the one who has understood more than the other prides himself on being something. Oh, that

he might himself understand that before God he is nothing. And since men are now so anxious to be something, what wonder that they, however much they talk about God's love, are so reluctant to have anything to do with Him, just because His demand and His standards make them into nothing.

For use one tenth part of the strength that is yours when you exert it to the uttermost, then turn your back on God, compare yourself with men — and in a very short time you will be distinguished among men. But turn around, turn toward God, use ten tenth parts of your strength, torture if possible every last makeshift into your service — and you will still be as nothing, at an infinite distance from having gained anything, in an infinite debt to God! Lo, therefore we have a right to say that in a certain sense it does not help to speak to a man about the highest, because a revolution must precede it, absolutely different from that which any speech can produce. If, for instance, you wish to have good times and easily get to be something, then forget God, never really notice Him, nor allow yourself to understand clearly that it was He who created you from nothing; start with the presupposition that a man has no time to waste in considering the One to whom he infinitely and unconditionally owes everything. Nor would one man be justified in asking another about it; hence, let it be forgotten, and shout in chorus with the multitude, laugh or weep, be busy from morning to night; be loved and respected and esteemed as friend, as officer, as king, as pallbearer; above all, be a serious man through having forgotten the only serious matter, that of maintaining your relation to God by becoming nothing. Oh, but consider then — still it does no good to talk, but God grant that you may understand what you lost, so that this annihilation before God may be blessed in such a way that you again retrace your way back to this annihilation every moment more strongly, more fervently, more inwardly than the blood returns to the place from which it was forced out. But to worldly wisdom this is and must be the greatest folly. Therefore never cling

to God (for we must speak so, if in so many words we would reveal the secret of the indecision which with lying words also pretends to cling to God), “never cling to God, for by clinging to Him you lose what no man who clung to the world ever lost, not even the man who lost most — you unconditionally lose everything.” And this is true, for the world truly cannot take everything, simply because it cannot give everything; only God who takes everything, everything, everything — in order to give everything, who does not take piecemeal little or much, or immeasurably much, but infinitely everything, only God can do this, if you truly ding to Him. “Therefore, flee from Him! A king may certainly be dangerous to approach, if you wish to be something, the proximity of a powerfully endowed spirit is dangerous, but God is infinitely more dangerous to approach.”

Still, if God is left out and forgotten, then I do not know what meaning there can be in such an expression, or what meaning other than arrant nonsense there could be in any talk about this expression: that love is the fulfillment of the law. So let us not in timidity and treachery to ourselves deprive ourselves of understanding these words, as if we were afraid of that which the natural man, however much he shouts about his desire for knowledge and insight, fears — of getting to know too much; for to speak of love being the fulfillment of the law is an impossibility, without at the same time recognizing one’s own guilt and making every man guilty.

Love is the fulfilling of the law, for the law is, despite its many provisions, still somewhat indeterminate, but love is its fulfillment; like a powerful speaker, who despite his exertions still cannot say everything, so is the law, but love is the fulfillment of the law.

It might seem strange to say that the law is indeterminate, for its strength lies in its provisions; it owns and rules over all the provisions. And, nevertheless, it is so, and therein also lies the weakness of the law. As a shadow is weak in comparison with the powerful reality, so is the law; but

as there is always something vague about a shadow, so too is there vagueness in the outline of the law, however meticulously this is executed. Therefore in the Holy Scriptures the law is called, “a shadow of things to come,” for the law is not a shadow which follows the reality of love; the law is assimilated in love, but the law is the shadow of things to come. When an artist outlines a plan, a sketch for his work, however exact the sketch is, it is always somewhat indefinite. Only when the work is finished, can one say: “Now there is not the least thing indefinite, not one line, not a single indefinite point.” There is, therefore, only one sketch that is absolutely definite, that is the work itself, but that is saying that no sketch is or can be absolutely and unconditionally definite. So the law is the plan, love the fulfillment and the absolutely definite; in love the law is absolutely definite. There is only one power which can carry out the work for which the law furnishes the preliminary sketch, and that is love. Still the law and love, like the sketch and the finished work, are by one and the same artist, from one and the same source; they are not at variance with one another anymore than the finished work of art, which completely corresponds to the sketch, is at variance with that, because it is even more clearly defined than all the outlines of the sketch.

Therefore Paul says in another place, “The end of the commandment is love.” But in what sense is this said? It is said in the same sense as it is said that love is the fulfillment of the law. In another sense, it is the sum of all the individual commandments, “Thou shalt not steal,” and so on. But try to see if in this way you can find the sum however long you continue to count, and you will see that this is labor in vain, because the concept of the law is inexhaustible, endless, irresistible in its provisions; every provision produces an even more exacting provision, and then from that another still more exacting, and so on interminably.

Here love stands in the same relation to the law as reason does to faith. Reason counts and counts, reckons and reckons, but it never attains the certainty which faith possesses: so too with the law, it makes provisions and more provisions, but it never reaches the end, which is love. When the sum is mentioned, the very expression seems to suggest counting; but when a man has become tired of counting, and yet is even more anxious to find the sum, then he understands that this expression must have a deeper significance. And so, too, when the law has sicked all its provisions on a man and pursued him to exhaustion, because there are provisions everywhere, and yet every provision, even the most definite, has the uncertainty of interpretation that permits it to be made even more definite (for there is perpetually a vagueness in the provisions and an anxiety caused by their numbers, which never dies): then a man becomes trained to understand that there must be something different which constitutes the fulfillment of the law. But there is no more conflict between the law and love than there is between the sum and those numbers whose sum it is; as little as there is conflict between the vain attempt to find the sum and the successful finding of it, the happy decision that it has been found.

Man groans under the law. Wherever he looks he sees only its demand, never the limitation of its demand; like one who looks out over the sea and sees wave after wave, but never an end to them; wherever he turns he meets only the severity which can always become infinitely more severe, never the boundary where it passes over into mildness. The law is starving, as it were; by its aid one does not attain fullness, for it provides simply for taking away, for imposing demands, for exhausting to the uttermost, and the vagueness constantly inherent in its multitudinous provisions is the inexorable collecting of the claims. In each of its provisions the law demands something, and yet the number of provisions is unlimited. The law is, therefore, the exact opposite of life, but the life is the fulfillment. The

law resembles death. But I wonder if life and death do not really know one and the same thing; for just as accurately as life knows everything that makes for life, just so accurately does death know everything which makes for life. There is, therefore, in a certain sense no dispute between the law and love as regards knowledge, but love gives, the law takes, or, that we may express the relationship more properly, the law demands, love grants. There is not one provision of the law, not a single one, which love wishes to abolish; on the contrary, it is love which first gives them all fulfillment and definiteness; in love all the provisions of the law are far more clearly defined than in the law. There is no more conflict between them than there is between hunger and the blessing which satisfies that hunger.

Love is the fulfillment of the law, for love is no shirker of tasks; no indulgence, which demanding immunity or making excuses, coddling or being coddled, slips in between love and the fulfillment of the law, as if love were an idle emotion, too superior to express itself in action, an exigent incapacity, which neither can nor will give satisfaction. Only folly speaks thus about love, as if there were a conflict between the law and love, as there certainly is, but in the love there is no conflict between the law and the love which is the fulfillment of the law; as if there were an essential difference between the demands of the law and love, as there certainly is, but not in the love in which the fulfillment is completely one and the same with the demand. Only folly sows dissension between the law and love, believes it speaks wisely when it whispers between them, or even maligns one of them to the other.

Fulfillment of the law — still, what law are we speaking about? Our text is the apostolic word, we are speaking about Christian love; hence this discourse can only refer to the law of God. In this the world (insofar as this is different from what we have called "folly") and God, worldly wisdom and Christianity, agree that there is a law which love must fulfil in order to

be love, but they disagree about what the law is, and this disagreement is an infinite difference. Worldly wisdom believes that love is a relationship between man and man; Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between man — God — man, that is, that God is the middle term. However beautiful a love-relationship has been between two or among many, however absolutely this love has been to them the source of all their happiness and all their blessedness in mutual sacrifice and renunciation, whether all men have praised this relationship — if God and the God-relationship have been neglected, then from the Christian viewpoint it has not been love, but a mutually enchanting illusion of love.

For to love God is in truth to love ones self; to help another man to love God is to love the other man; to be helped by another man to love God is to be loved. Worldly wisdom certainly does not believe that the one who loves will arbitrarily determine what he wishes to understand by love. Love truly means devotion and sacrifice; therefore the world thinks that the object of love (be it the beloved, or a friend, or all those loved, or a social union, or one's contemporaries, which for the sake of brevity we shall hereafter call "the beloved") must decide whether self-sacrifice and devotion are displayed, and whether the self-sacrifice and devotion displayed are love. Hence it will depend on whether the men who do the judging know how to judge correctly. If the object of love, the judge, does not before God have a true conception in himself of what it means to love himself, that it means to love God, then neither will the beloved have any true conception of what it means to be loved by another man, that it means to be helped to love God; but if this is true, then, as a result, the beloved will take a false kind of devotion and self-sacrifice for true love, and true love for false love. The merely human judgment about love is not a true judgment, for to love God constitutes the true self-love. If God, on the other hand, is the middle term in judging love, then there follows a final and twofold judgment, which still

only, although the only one at bottom decisive, begins where the human judgment has finished and has decided whether it is love or not.

The judgment is this: is it really love, from the divine standpoint, to show such a devotion as that demanded by the object of love? Next, is it, from the divine standpoint, really love to demand such devotion from the object of love? Every man is a bond servant unto God; therefore he dares not belong to anyone in love unless in the same love he belongs to God, or to own anyone in love unless this other and he himself in this love belong to God: a man dares not belong to another man in such a way that this other man is everything to him; a man dares not permit another to belong to him in such a way that he is everything to the other. If there were a love-relationship between two people or among many, so happy, so perfect, that a poet must rejoice over it, moreover, so blissful that one who was not a poet must become one from wonder and joy at this sight: that by no means ends the matter. For now Christianity enters and inquires about the God-relationship, whether each individual has first established a relationship with God, and whether the love-relationship maintains itself in God. If this is not the case, then will Christianity, which is still the protector of love, or just because it is, not hesitate to break up this relationship in the name of God, until the lovers are willing to understand it. And if only one party is willing to understand it, then Christianity, which still is the protector of love, will not hesitate to carry him into a horrible conflict, such as no poet has dreamed of or ventured to describe. For just as little as the poet will have anything to do with the Christian teaching of loving one's enemy, just as little, and even less if possible, can he accept the Christian teaching of hating the beloved from love and in love. Still Christianity does not hesitate in the name of God, to strain the relationship so intensively. Christianity not only does this in order, as it were, to collect the outstanding debts due to God (since God is indeed the master and owner of bound men), but He does

it out of love for the lovers; for to love God is to love one's own self; to love another man like God is to deceive one's self; and to allow another man to love one like God, is to deceive that other man. To such an extreme madness, humanly speaking, can Christianity drive its demand, if love is to be the fulfillment of the law. Therefore it teaches that the Christian must, if required, be able to hate father and mother and sister and the beloved — I wonder if it really means that he should hate them! Oh, may such an abomination be far from Christianity! But certainly in that sense, love, the divinely understood, steadfast and sincere love, may be looked upon as hate by the beloved, the neighbor, the contemporaries, because these will not understand what it means to love themselves, that it means to love God, and that to be loved means to be helped by another man to love God, whether this is actually achieved or not by the lover submitting to being hated. Lo, worldly wisdom has a long list of diversified expressions for sacrifice and devotion; I wonder if among these, this is also found: hating the beloved from love; hating the beloved and insofar himself from love; hating the contemporary and insofar his own life from love. Lo, worldly wisdom knows many and highly diversified cases of unhappy love; I wonder if among all these you find the suffering that might seem to hate the beloved, that might have hate as the last and sole expression of its love, or that suffering which for a reward of its love must be hated by the beloved, because there is the infinite difference of the Christian truth between that which the one party understands by love, and that which the other understands by it.

Whatever the world before the time of Christianity had seen of unhappy love, whatever it had seen of the collision of love with appalling events, whatever it had seen of its collision with what, within the same fundamental conceptions of what love is, is the converse of love, whatever it had seen of its collision with partially divergent ideas within the common fundamental

idea: before the time of Christianity the world had never seen that in loving, there was a collision possible between two conceptions between which there is an eternal difference — between the divine conception and the merely human conception. But if there is such a collision, then it is, divinely understood, precisely love to cling to the true, the eternal conception, to love by virtue of it, whereas that one, or those, who were loved, if they had only the human conception of love, must regard it as hate. If we may be permitted to speak quite humanly about the highest, we are unfortunately easily tempted to imagine in our so-called Christendom, that one believes that which one does not even have an impression of, at least not noticeably so; if we may be permitted to speak quite humanly about the highest, yet never forgetting that the one about whom we speak is separated by an eternal distance from every other man: the life of Christ is really the only unhappy love. He was, divinely understood, love. He loved by virtue of the divine understanding of what love is; He loved the entire race; He dared not — on account of His love, give up this. His understanding, for that would precisely be to deceive the race. Therefore His whole life was a terrible collision with the purely human understanding of what love is. It was the ungodly world which crucified Him; but even His disciples did not understand Him, and constantly sought to win Him to their conception of what love was, so that even to Peter He was obliged to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Unfathomable suffering in the terrible collision: that the most sincere, the most faithful disciple, when he, not only meaning well — oh, but burning with love — wishes to counsel Him for the best, wishes only to express how greatly he loves the Master — that this disciple, then, because he had a false conception of love, spoke in such a way that the Master must say to him: "You do not know it, but to me your words are as if it were Satan himself who spoke!" Thus Christianity came into the world, and with Christianity came the divine explanation of what love is.

Oh, we often complain about misunderstanding, especially when it is most bitterly mixed with love; when in each one of its expressions we know that the love is unhappy, that we are certainly loved but not understood; that everything is so bitter because it is done by love through a misunderstanding: but to be misunderstood as no other man was ever misunderstood by another man, to be thus misunderstood as Christ was — and then to be love as Christ was! We pretend that it was only the ungodly who were offended at Christ. What a misunderstanding! No, the best and most kindly man, humanly speaking, who has ever lived, must be offended at Him, must misunderstand Him; for what love is, divinely understood, this the best of men could learn only from Him. The love of Christ, humanly understood, was not self-sacrificing — anything but that; He did not make Himself unhappy, in order, humanly understood, to make His disciples happy. No, He made Himself and His disciples, humanly speaking, as unhappy as possible. And He who had had it in His power to establish the kingdom of Israel and make everything so pleasant for Himself and His followers, as every contemporary could see clearly enough!

Consequently He could have done it, consequently He would not do it, consequently the fault must have lain in Him, in His heart, that He would not sacrifice His ideas and His conceptions, but cruelly preferred to sacrifice Himself and His followers, that is, to forfeit His own life and the lives of those He loved! He did not establish any kingdom on earth, or sacrifice Himself so that the apostles might inherit the established kingdom. No, humanly speaking, it was indeed madness: He sacrifices Himself — in order to make the beloved equally unhappy with Himself! Was this really love: to gather some poor, simpleminded men about Him, to win their devotion and love, as no other had ever won it, to pretend for a moment to look out for them, as now the prospect of the fulfillment of the proudest dream is revealed to them — in order suddenly to reconsider and change the

plans; in order without being moved by their prayers, without paying the least attention to them, to plunge them down from this seductive height into the abyss of all dangers; in order, without resistance, to give His enemies power; in order, under mockery and insult while the world rejoiced, to be nailed to the Cross as a criminal! Was this really love?

Was it really love: to be thus separated from the disciples, to leave them forsaken in a world which hated them because of Him, to drive them out as wandering sheep among ravening wolves, whose bloodthirstiness He had Himself aroused against them: was this really love! What does this Man want, what does He want of these honest, simple-hearted even if simple-minded men whom He so cruelly deceives? Why does He call His relation to them love? Why does He continue to call it love? Why does He die without confessing that He deceived them, so that He therefore dies asserting that it was, nevertheless, love — alas, while the disciples with bruised hearts, but with touching loyalty, do not venture to have any opinion of their own about His conduct, presumably because He had overborne them? Meanwhile every other man can easily see that, whatever He was to the rest of the world, perhaps excusable as a fanatic, in relation to His disciples He acted like a deceiver! And yet He was love, and He exalted love above everything, and wished to make men happy, and how? Through their relationship to God — for He was love. Yes, He was love, and He knew in Himself and in God, that it was the sacrifice of reconciliation that He brought, that He truly loved His disciples, loved the entire race of men, or at least everyone who would permit himself to be saved!

The fundamental error in the merely human apprehension of love is, that love is deprived of its relation to God, and thereby of its relation to the law to which it refers when it says, “Love is the fulfillment of the law.” By a strange misunderstanding one is perhaps inclined to believe that love for a neighbor must not be without a relationship to God; but only earthly love

and friendship. As if Christianity were something halved, as if it could not penetrate every relationship, as if the teaching about love for the neighbor did not exactly count on this, and therefore transformed earthly love and friendship; while many, through a strange misunderstanding, perhaps believe that they need God's help to love their neighbor — the less lovable object, but as to earthly love and friendship, they believe that, on the contrary, they can best help themselves — alas! as if God's intervention here would even be disturbing and inconvenient!

But no love and no expression of love may, in the merely human and worldly sense, be deprived of a relationship to God. Love is a passionate emotion, but in this emotion, even before he enters into a relation with the object of his love, the man must first enter into a relationship with God, and thereby realize the claim that love is the fulfillment of the law. Love is a relation to another man or to other men, but it is by no means and dares by no means be a matrimonial, a friendly, a merely human agreement, however steadfast and tender the connection between man and man. Everyone individually before he in love enters into a relation with the beloved, with the friend, the loved ones, the contemporaries, has first to enter into a relation with God and with God's demands. As soon as one leaves out the God-relationship the questions at issue become merely human determinations of what they wish to understand by loving; what they will require of one another; and their mutual judgment because of this becomes the highest judgment. Not only the one who listens absolutely to the call of God will not belong to a woman, in order not to be delayed through wishing to please her; but also the one who in love belongs to a woman, will first and foremost belong to God; he will not seek first to please his wife, but will first endeavor to make his love pleasing unto God. Hence it is not the wife who will teach her husband how he ought to love her, or the husband the wife; or the friend the friend, or the contemporary the contemporary, but

it is God who will teach every individual how he ought to love, even if his love still only lays hold on the law referred to when the apostle says, “Love is the fulfillment of the law.” This makes it quite natural that the one who has only a worldly, or a merely human conception about what love is, must come to regard that as self-love and unkindness which, understood in the Christian sense, is precisely love. When, on the other hand, the God-relationship determines what love is between man and man, then love is kept from pausing in any self-deception or illusion, while certainly the demand for self-abnegation and sacrifice is again made more infinite. The love which does not lead to God, the love which does not have this as its sole goal, to lead the lovers to love God, stops at the purely human judgment as to what love and what love’s sacrifice and submission are; it stops and thereby escapes the possibility of the last and most terrifying horror of the collision: that in the love relationship there are infinite differences in the idea of what love is.

Merely humanly understood this collision can never enter, for merely humanly understood, the fundamental conception of what love is must essentially be a common conception! Only when understood in the Christian way is the collision possible, since it is the collision between the Christian and the purely human understanding. Nevertheless, Christianity knows how to steer through this difficulty, and no other doctrine has ever taught how to persevere so long in love as has Christianity. Unchanged and immovable, it teaches, precisely for the sake of the beloved, how to hold fast to the true conception of what love is, and then be willing to find the reward for its love in being hated by the beloved — for there is indeed the difference of infinity, an eternal difference in language, between what one party understands by love, and what the other party understands by it. To yield to the conception of the beloved as to what love is, that is humanly regarded as loving, and if one does it, then one is loved. But to hold out

against the beloved's purely human conception of what love is by denying the wish, and insofar, also against what the lovers, from the human standpoint, must themselves wish, in order to hold fast the God-idea: that is the collision. It can never occur to the purely human apprehension of what love is, that a man through being loved as intensely as possible by another man, might be an obstacle in the way of the other man. And yet from the Christian standpoint this is exactly possible, for to be loved in this way may interfere with the God-relationship of the lovers. But what is there then to do?

That the beloved should wish to caution against this will certainly not help much, for that would only make him even more lovable — and consequently the lovers would be even more deceived. Christianity knows how to remove the collision without breaking off the love; there is required only the sacrifice (that is certainly in many cases the hardest thing possible, and always very hard): of being willing to find the reward for his love in being hated. Wherever a man is so loved, so admired by others, that he is in the way of becoming dangerous to their God-relationship, there is a collision; but where there is a collision there is also demanded the sacrifice which the merely human conception of what love is does not suspect. For the Christian conception is: truly to love one's self is to love God; truly to love another man is by every sacrifice (even to one's self being hated), to help the other man to love God or in loving God.

This is certainly very easy to understand; in the world, on the contrary, it certainly meets with great difficulties, because a contrary view of what love is, a worldly, a merely human, but withal a both effectively ingenious and poetical view, either explains that all this about the God-relationship is really a delusion, a retardation, or else, in speaking about love, it keeps silent about the God-relationship. As in these times there is an effort made in so many directions to free men from all restraint, even the beneficial

restraint, so there is an effort to free the emotional relation between man and man from the bonds which bind him to God, and which bind him in everything, in every expression of life. One wishes in relation to love, to teach men something entirely new, something for which the now outmoded Holy Scriptures already have the significant expression — one wishes to teach men the liberty which "is without God in the world." The abominable age of serfdom is past, so one thinks to go farther by the aid of the abomination: to abolish man's bondage with relation to God, to whom every man — not by birth, but by his creation from nothing — belongs as a serf, and thus as no serf has ever belonged to an earthly master, who does still admit that the thoughts and emotions of his serfs are free: but he belongs to God in every thought, the most hidden, in every feeling, the most secret, in every movement, the most inward. Still, one finds this serfdom to be a troublesome adjunct, and therefore more or less openly considers setting God aside and establishing man — in the rights of man? No, that is not needed, God has already done that — Whence in the rights of God; consequently the place remains vacant, if God is dismissed. Lo, as a reward for such presumption, one will in this way tend more and more to transform the whole of existence into doubt or turmoil.

After all, what is the law? What does the law require of a man? That must be decided by men. Which men? Here the doubt begins. Since one man does not essentially stand higher than the other, then the condition is entirely left to me as to whom I wish to agree with in determining what the highest is, insofar as I might not by myself be able, if possible even more arbitrarily, to hit upon a new provision, and as promoter gain support for it. It is likewise left to my decision to select one requirement of the law today, another tomorrow. Or shall the determination of what the law requires perhaps be an agreement between men, a common decision of all men, to which agreement the individual must then subject himself? Excellent! If it

were otherwise possible to select a place and fix the moment for this assembling of all men (all living, all? — but how about the dead?), and if that were possible, which is manifestly impossible, possible that they would all agree on one thing! Or is perhaps an agreement of a majority, a certain number of votes sufficient for a decision? How great a number is needed then? And, above all, if the purely human determinations of what the law requires is the requirement of the law (yet not the individual man's, for thereby we fall into the purely arbitrary, as was shown), how can the individual come to begin to act; or if it is not left to chance, where does the individual happen to begin, instead of everyone starting at the beginning? Before the individual can begin to act, he must first learn from "the others" what the law requires; but each one of the others will again as individuals have to learn from "the others." In this way, all human life transforms itself into one huge excuse — can this possibly be what we call the great, matchless, common undertaking, the great achievement of the race? The category of "the others" becomes fantastic, and the fantastically aspiring determination of what the law requires a false alarm.

And if now this inhumanly extensive effort toward a common agreement among all men were not finished in a single evening, but dragged along from generation to generation, then as a consequence it would be quite accidental as to where the individual happened to begin; it would depend, so to speak, on where he came into the game. Some would begin at the beginning, but would die before they reached the halfway mark; others would begin midway, but die without seeing the end, which no one would ever really see, for that would only come when the whole thing was past and world history ended; only then would one completely learn what the requirement of the law was. What a pity that human life should not be forced to begin until just as it is over, and in consequence have to be carried on by all men without complete knowledge of what the law required!

When of seven men who are all suspected of having committed a crime which could not have been committed by anyone else, the seven each say: "It wasn't me, it was the others," then we understand that "the others" refers to the other six, and so on. But now when all seven, each severally, have said, "It was the others," what then? Is there not a phantasm conjured up which has doubled the actual seven, and which would have us believe that there were many more, although we know that there were only seven? So, too, when the whole race, each individual severally, hits upon the idea of saying "the others," then a phantasm is conjured up, as if the race had once existed before the time which marks its actual existence; but here it becomes so difficult to prove the falsity, the dazzling appearance of profundity, because the race is innumerable. Nevertheless, the situation is entirely the same as in what we might be tempted to call a fairy story about the seven and the seven others. For this is exactly the situation that arises when the purely human determination of what the law's requirement is, constitutes the law's requirement: one helps one's self up by using that romantically fantastic "the others," and down below they assist each other by forming a little union. For certainly if there is to be a second existence of the human race, but not a fantastic one, its existence the second time must be its existence in God, or rather this is its first existence, wherein each individual learns from God the requirement of the law. The actual existence is the second existence.

But what then does that confused condition described resemble? I wonder if it is not like a mutiny. Or should we hesitate to call it by that name if at a given moment it were the whole race who became guilty of this, and we then, it is well to note, add that it is a mutiny against God? Or is the moral so subordinated to the accidental that when a great number do wrong, or we all do wrong, then this wrong becomes the right? This explanation would again be merely a repetition of the mutinous thought, or

of its thoughtlessness, for if it is still, in the final analysis, men instead of God who determine what the law's requirement is, he who forgets this is not only guilty of rebellion against God on his own account, but he also assists others in becoming guilty, so the mutiny gets out of hand. For who could halt such a mutiny if it started? Should we perhaps, only in a new pattern, repeat the error of the mutiny, and everyone in particular say, "I cannot stop it, 'the others' must"? I wonder if every individual is not pledged to God to halt the mutiny, naturally not by shouting and imaginary self-importance, not by ruling and wishing to force others to obey God, but through his own unconditional obedience, his own unconditional laying hold on the God-relationship and the God-requirement, and thereby expressing for himself personally that God exists and is the only ruler, he, on the contrary, the unconditionally obedient.

Only then is there sense and meaning and truth and reality in existence, when all of us, each one personally, if I may say so, accept our orders at one place, and then, each one personally, unconditionally obey this same order. Since it is one and the same order, then to that extent one man might be able to learn it from another — if it was certain, or at least reasonably certain, that this other man would communicate it rightly. However, there would still be a confusion everywhere, as it is in conflict with God's order, for God wishes, for the sake of certainty and equality and responsibility, that every individual should learn the law's requirement from Him. When this is so, then there is stability in existence, because the stability has God in it; there is no turbulence in it, for each individual does not begin with "the others," and consequently not with excuses and evasions, but he begins with the God-relationship, and hence he stands firmly, and thereby he also checks, as far as he can reach, the capriciousness which is the beginning of mutiny.

So, too, in relation to the law of love — when there is sense and truth and stability in existence, when we all, each one personally, learn from God

what the requirement is to which we must conform, and when, for the rest, we all, each one personally, defend ourselves against the human confusion (it goes without saying that if we all did this, there would then be no confusion), aye, if necessary, defend ourselves against the beloved, against the friend, against our nearest, who are, nevertheless, especially the objects of our love, insofar as these in some way wish to teach us a different explanation, or help us on a bypath; on the other hand, indebted to them if they wish to help us in the right direction. Let us not forget this, let us not deceive or be deceived by vague, misty conceptions of what love is, but let us heed God's explanation, indifferent as to whether the beloved, the friend, or the loved ones believe or do not believe — yet no, not indifferent, on the contrary, inwardly concerned if they disagree with us, but still calmly and unchanged continuing to love them.

There is really a conflict between what the world and what God understand by love. It is easy enough to bring about an apparent agreement (as is already apparent in the use of one and the same word, "love"); on the other hand it is more difficult really to detect the disagreement; but this difficulty is inevitable if we are to know the truth. There is a saying current in the world: "Selfishness is the wisest policy." Certainly this saying does not give one the most favorable opinion of the world; for that is scarcely a good world in which selfishness is the wisest policy or that which brings the greatest advantage. But now, even if the world regarded selfishness as the wisest policy, it by no means follows that it might not in turn regard love as the nobler quality. It does this too, only the world does not understand what love is. Again, it is easy enough to bring about a surface agreement between God and the world's interpretation of love; it is even apparent in the use of the familiar expression that "love is noble." Still, misunderstanding hides in this. What good does it do to commend love as noble, as Christianity also does, if the world understands by love something different, and hence also

understands something different by the word “noble”! No, if the world will be explicit, it must say: “Not only is selfishness the wisest policy, but if you wish to be loved by the world, if you wish it to praise your love and you as noble, then you must, in the Christian sense, be selfish, for that which the world calls love is selfishness.” The distinction which the world makes is, namely, this: If one wishes to be alone in being selfish, which, however, very rarely happens, then the world calls it selfishness; but if in his selfishness he unites with some other selfish people, especially with many other selfish people, then the world calls it love. The world can never get any further in determining what love is, because it has neither God nor the neighbor as the middle term. What the world honors and loves under the name of love, is a union in selfishness. The union also demands sacrifice and devotion from the one whom it will call affectionate; it demands that he shall sacrifice a part of his own self-love in order to unite in the united selfishness; and it demands that he shall sacrifice the God-relationship so that in worldliness he may enter into the union which excludes God, or at most accepts Him for the sake of appearances. On the contrary, God understands by love sacrificial love; in the divine sense, sacrificing love, which sacrifices everything in order to secure God a place, even if the heavy sacrifice became even heavier because no one understood it, which, however, in another sense, is proper for true sacrifice; for that sacrifice, which is understood by men, truly has its reward in their approbation, and insofar is not the true sacrifice which must unconditionally be without reward. Therefore we dare not in our understanding of the apostolic word, that love is the fulfillment of the law, assent to the superficial saying that if a man really has love, then he will also be loved by men. He will far more probably be accused of selfishness, just because he will not love men in the same sense in which they selfishly love themselves. The facts are these: the highest degree of self-love, the world also calls selfishness; the self-love of

the union, the world calls love; a noble, sacrificial, magnanimous, human love, which yet is not the Christian love, is ridiculed by the world as foolishness; but the Christian love is hated and abominated and persecuted by the world. And so let us not again, through a doubtful compromise, conceal irregularities by saying: “That is the way of the world, but it is otherwise with the Christian.” For this is quite true, but if every baptized individual is a Christian, and a baptized Christendom sanctifies the Christian, then the “world” simply does not exist in a Christian land, which in such a case is proved by the help of the lists of the sexton and the superintendent of police.

No, there is really a conflict between what God understands by love and the world’s understanding of it. Oh, but if it is inspiring to fight for home and fatherland, then it is also inspiring to strive for God, which he does who before God and in His sight, holds fast to the God-relationship, and its definition of what love is! It is true God does not need any man, any more than He needs the whole race, or everything which exists at the moment, which to Him is the nothing from which He created it; but he fights for God who fights the good fight, in order to express the fact that God exists and is the Lord, whose explanation must unconditionally be obeyed.

The God-relationship is the sign by which the love for men is recognized as genuine. As soon as the love-relationship does not lead me to God, and as soon as I in the love-relationship do not lead the other man to God, then is the love, even if it is the greatest happiness and delight of affection, even if to the lovers it is the highest good of the earthly life, still not the true love. The world can never get this into its head, that God does not thus merely become the third party in every love-relation, but really becomes the sole object of affection, so it is not the husband who is the wife’s beloved, but it is God; and it is the wife who is helped by her husband to love God, and conversely, and so on. The merely human interpretation of love can

never get any further than reciprocity: the lover is the beloved, and the beloved is the lover. Christianity teaches that such a love has not yet found its right object — God. A love-relationship is threefold: the lover, the beloved, the love; but the love is God. And, therefore, to love another man is to help him to love God, and to be loved is to be helped to love God.

What the world says about love is confusing. When it is said to a youth who is going out into the world, “Love, then you will be loved,” this is quite true — especially if the journey he entered upon were into the eternal, into the land of perfection. But the youth must go out into the world, and therefore it is deceitful to speak thus, without reminding him about laying hold on God in order to learn what love is, and in order to learn that the world, if it had not learned the same lesson from God (alas, for then it would have been the land of perfection the youth entered!), has a completely different conception. If Christ had not been love, and the love in Him the fulfillment of the law, I wonder if He would have been crucified! If He had abated His demand for Himself and had agreed with those who make love anything but the fulfillment of the law, divinely understood; if instead of being the world’s Teacher and Saviour, He had in conformity with the world’s conception, transformed His conception of what it means to love: I wonder if He then would not have been loved and praised by everyone, even idolized (oh, terrible madness!) by His followers. If the apostles had not held fast to the idea that love is the fulfillment of the law, and hence something different from the fulfillment of the human agreements and participation in the human society; if they had not held fast in this same sense to loving men without being willing to accommodate themselves to the world’s conception of what it means to love: I wonder if they would have been persecuted! For what is it the world loves and calls love, what other than indecision and completely earthly union in worldliness, which from the standpoint of eternity, is precisely indecision?

I wonder if any man ever became more notorious for selfishness than the One who really held to the God-requirement, and, faithful to this, loved men, and therefore also continued to love them, although persecuted and misjudged. Is it not also natural that the world should be angry if there is One who is loved more dearly by such a man. One in love to whom such a love exists for men? When one's endeavor is exerted to gain earthly advantage, then one certainly complains unjustly about the world if one complains about not finding friends; for at that price one can be loved enough, gain friends, have many or few with whom — one affectionately associates.

But when a man's endeavor is put forth unconditionally in a total sacrifice, in the sacrifice of everything, impoverished, despised, excluded from the synagogue, in order to unite with God in loving men: then you can, for that matter, advertise in the paper that you are looking for a friend — if only you add the conditions, and hence with special emphasis, "that it is not for the sake of advantage"; you will have trouble in finding anyone. We ourselves marvel that Christ chose such humble men for apostles, but, disregarding what was certainly intentional in the choice, the humbler the apostle was as man, the stronger the impression of that which the divine authority granted to him. I wonder if it is not almost more wonderful that Christ nevertheless got them, hence that He really succeeded in forming a union of eleven, whose purpose was to unite in their readiness to let themselves be scourged, persecuted, mocked, crucified, beheaded, and whose purpose too was not mutually to flatter one another, but, on the contrary, mutually to help one another in humility before God. I wonder if this would not sound like a terrible mockery of what the world understands by love, but I wonder if it might not besides act like a beneficial awakening, if in these times, when so many societies are being formed, someone were to advertise that he planned to establish such a union of love! For that there

are a lot of people, if someone wishes to make all sacrifices, who would indolently like to take advantage of his sacrifices, that is something the world can understand; the kind of participation which is for one hundred per cent profit but less than half of that for the work, is common enough in the world. And it goes without saying that there is also true participation to be found here on earth, but where you find it, you will find it hated and persecuted by the world.

Try it. Imagine a man (and you need not even think of him as possessing the perfection which distinguished that glorious One who, repudiated by the race, became the honor of the race), imagine a man who was or became, or was and became, so unhappy that earthly goods and earthly advantage had lost their allurement for him; so unhappy that he, "weary of his groaning," as we read in the Holy Scriptures about the unhappy Sara— "so distressed she wished to hang herself" imagine that then, just in his darkest hour of need, it became quite clear to him that in spite of his unhappiness, which certainly would not be alleviated by gaining the goods of the whole world, since their possession by encouraging happy enjoyment would be to him a painful recollection of his wretchedness, and would really not be augmented by worldly adversity, which, like dark weather for the melancholy, would harmonize with his mood; imagine that it became quite clear to him that the highest even still remained to him in wishing to love men, in wishing to serve the good, in wishing to serve the truth for the sake of truth alone, the only thing which could truly cheer his anxious heart and fill him with an eternal joy of life — imagine such a one in the world, and you will see it will go hard with him. He does not gain the love of the world, he will not be understood or loved by the world. In proportion as men belong a little more or less to the world, some will pity him, some smile at him, some will prefer to get rid of him because they would feel the sting, some will envy him and yet not envy him, some will feel attracted to him but also repelled by him;

some will work against him, but yet have everything in readiness to honor him after his death. Some young women will feel themselves fascinated by him, but those only a little older will not completely understand him. But the world would simply and plainly prove his selfishness because he secured no earthly advantage either for himself or others, not for a single other man. The world is not better; the highest it recognizes and loves, when it aims highest, is: to love the good and men, but in such a way that one also secures an earthly advantage for one's self and some others. Anything more the world, even with the best of intentions — now this is of course only playing with words — cannot grasp; one step too far and you have lost the friendship and love of the world. Such is the world and its love. No scientist who tests with a hydrometer the specific gravity of a liquid, can more certainly vouch for how many degrees it registers, than I am willing to vouch for this appraisal of worldly love, which is not entirely evil, as it is sometimes passionately represented to be, or entirely sound, but to a certain degree both good and bad. But from the Christian standpoint this "to a certain degree" is evil.

Nevertheless, we do not say this in order to judge; let us not waste time on it. Reflection only seeks by the aid of thought and by the help of a little knowledge of human nature, to penetrate the illusion, or to understand that apostolic saying with respect to the daily life, where the illusion exactly belongs. Certainly no time is needed in order to be deceived; one can be deceived immediately and continue to be so for a long time; but it takes time to notice that one is deceived. It is certainly easier hastily to imagine what love is, and then satisfy one's self in the imagination; it is far easier hurriedly to get some kinds of men to associate themselves in selfishness, loved and honoured by them to the last: there is after all nothing so easy and nothing so sociable as tins going astray. But if this is your ultimate and highest ambition, to get life made easy and sociable, then never have

anything to do with Christianity; flee from it, for it wishes exactly the opposite, wishes to make life difficult for you, and to do it just by making you solitary before God. No earnest man therefore becomes tired of tracking down illusions; for insofar as he is a thinker, he fears most of all being in error — however convenient the arrangement, however pleasant the company might be. And as a Christian, he fears most of all being lost without knowing it — however flattering, however brilliant the environment and the company are.

That such pretentiousness is not love seems so easy to perceive that one might believe that no one would think of supporting it. Still this is not always the case, and here is precisely an example of an illusion insofar as the merely human judgment might be decisive. If the pretentious man himself were to think of calling it love, then one would certainly raise a protest, since there was no illusion; the illusion arises only when others wish to become the object of this pretentiousness, regard it as love, praise it as love, and the pretentious man as kind. Without pretending to be any great judge of human nature, it is not difficult to point out life-relationships where a man can be so placed that there are those who, just to gain his good will, simply praise his love if in the name of love he wishes to demand everything from them. There are indeed men who really know nothing about love other than that it is petting. Such men would like to have the one they love and are fond of, be pretentious. There are men who have inhumanly forgotten that every man ought to develop himself through that divine resemblance common to all men, and that therefore, whether a human being is man or woman, poorly endowed or richly endowed, lord or bond servant, beggar or rich man, the relation between man and man should never and dare never be such that the one adores and the other is adored. This is so easy to perceive that one perhaps thinks that this abomination can originate only from the misuse of superiority, hence in the supercilious.

Alas, it can also arise in the impotent, in the one who himself desires it in order thus to have some significance for the superior.

Take away the equality of eternity and its divine satisfaction, that is, assume that it is forgotten: then the weak woman in her relation to the supercilious man, the man poorly endowed who is yet vain of his relation to the mighty man, the poor man who has but a worldly concern in his relation to the "big man," the very subservient and yet worldly-minded man in his relation to his master — none of them know any other way to express this relationship except by abjectly prostrating themselves. And since they still, because they wish to know nothing higher, know nothing higher, therefore they themselves desire this abomination, desire it passionately. Their desire is to exist for the powerful; as power cannot be secularized, so subserviency becomes the thing desired. Is it perhaps not apparent that a girl would prefer ruthlessly to throw herself away and worship the idolized (desiring only one thing from him, that he would ruthlessly demand everything from her, and under these circumstances she would highly praise his love), rather than to understand that before God all these human differences are a joke, are nonsense, often leading to perdition? And yet the girl would call it selfishness for the adored to try to impart this knowledge to her. Have we not seen that the man weak through forgetting God, the debased man, had but one wish, that he might cast himself in the dust before his lord in order to exist for him; only one desire, that the lord will tread upon him so that he may joyfully praise the gracious love and goodness of his lord! Have we not seen that the vainglorious man, who had quite forgotten God, desired only some relation to the distinguished man and readily called the most debased actions a sign of his love! And if the distinguished man does not desire this, if he wishes to prevent this by helping that man to the blessed equality before God, this is called selfishness. Oh, if the eternal is taken away from a man, or is in him as if it were not present, the eternal which can at once cool

the unsound passions in the relation between man and man, but which can also enkindle when the temporal existence would chill; if the eternal is taken away from a man, then there is no assurance that it will not occur to him to call the most abominable practices by the name of love, and even passionately desire to be the object of these abominable practices. One can ruthlessly wish to make himself indispensable through his power, but he can also do this through his weakness, and therefore, cringing and begging, call another man's superciliousness love.

But the demand of eternity will not excuse a man from fulfilling the law of God, even if the whole world were to excuse him, even if the whole world were to love his pretentiousness but misunderstand his love, because perhaps only through despair can the despairing learn to hold themselves to God, instead of through their importunities injuring their own souls. The demand of eternity will prevent love from lingering in any self-deception, and from being satisfied with any illusion; and it will be no excuse to say that the men themselves wished it, that they themselves called it love, and believed that being loved consisted in being the object of such pretentiousness. It is God who has implanted love in man, and it is God who must decide what in every case is love.

But then when your friend, your beloved, your loved ones, your contemporaries, notice that you wish to learn from God what it means to love, instead of learning it from them, then they will perhaps say to you: "Spare yourself; give up this overstraining; why will you make your life so hard? Lessen your demands; then we shall live a beautiful, a rich, a significant life in friendship and joy." And if you give way to the suggestions of that false friendship, then you will be loved, be praised for your love. But if you will not do it, if you will not in loving be a traitor to God or to yourself or to the others, then you may find yourself being called selfish. For your conviction that to love yourself is in truth to love God, that

loving another man is helping him to love God, this, your conviction, your friend will perhaps not trouble about. He notices indeed that your life, if it truly conforms to the God-demand, contains, even if you say nothing, a reminder, a demand upon him — this he will have nothing to do with. Your reward is, therefore, the sacrifice of your friendship and your reputation for being a friend.

In the world the worldly has, so much the worse, the upper hand to the dee that when one talks about false friendship, one immediately thinks of some deception with respect to worldly advantages, or a faithlessness regarding earthly goods. And this was certainly not your friend's intention or meaning. He only wished to defraud you of the God-relationship, and that you as his friend would be helpful to him in deceiving himself: then in the deception he would loyally unite with you for life and death. We speak about the duplicity of the world, and in so doing at once suggest that it deceives one with respect to earthly goods, disappoints one's great expectations, mocks one's bold plans. But, if in this respect it honestly fulfils its obligations almost more abundantly than it had promised, that this is just the time when it can deceive most dangerously, that this its most dangerous duplicity, one more rarely thinks about: that the world through its — sincere friendship (for false friendship would consist in its defrauding one of the temporal things), wishes to teach one to forget God. They talk about making a covenant with evil, and if one asks what advantage is offered as compensation, then people will mention power, glory, honor, the satisfaction of desires and so on. But that one can by such a covenant also win the love of men, be praised for one's love, that is something they forget to speak about and to think about. Nevertheless, this is the case — for the converse is and would indeed be the case, that they who in love to God loved men, would be hated by the world. As the world by offering power and might has wished to tempt a man to forget God, and then has treated the

same man as refuse because he endured its temptation: so has the world also temptingly offered a man its friendship, and then hated him because he would not be its friend. The eternal, the God-demand for love, the world will not readily hear anything about, even more reluctantly will it see it expressed in life. But I wonder if the world therefore says about itself that it is selfish. By no means. And then what does the world do? The world says about the one who insists on maintaining his relation to God, that he is selfish. The way out is old: sacrifice one, if all the others can profit thereby.

In this God and the world agree, that love is the fulfilling of the law; the difference is that the world understands by law something it hit on itself; and he who agrees to this and observes it faithfully, he is kind. How many a man has not a maiden's love, from the divine standpoint, destroyed, just because he, defrauded of his God-relationship, remained too true to her, while she in turn was unlimited in her eulogies over his love! How many a man has not been corrupted by family and friends, while yet his corruption did not appear to be so, for now he was loved and praised for his love — by his family and friends? How many a man has not an age corrupted, the age which for compensation adored his affectionate disposition because it made him forget the God-relationship, and transformed it into something one can vociferously make a show of, rejoice over and effeminately admire without being consciously reminded of anything higher? For, in order to raise another and truly earnest question, and also in order not even to point at the highest pattern but to be content with a humbler one, which yet in the so-called Christendom unfortunately is adequate enough: why, I wonder, did that simple wise man of antiquity when, accused before the court of frivolity by the worldly and selfish, he was condemned to death, defend his life; why, I wonder, did he compare himself to a "gadfly" at the same time he called himself a divine gift; and why, I wonder, did he love the young so much? Was not the first because, as a pagan could, he had loved men in

some higher sense, hence because he had really awakened, and had not in any way allowed himself to be seduced by the temporal existence, or by anything human; not by a dull or fiery union in love, in friendship, in agreement with others or with an age, but he had preferred to be the selfish, the teasingly annoying man whom no one loved! Was not the latter because he perceived that the young still had the susceptibility to the divine which is so easily lost with the years in business, in love and friendship, in submission to a merely human judgment and to the demands of the times? Hence, because through his concept of the eternal and through "something divine," he had prevented his love for men from halting in self-deception and illusion; hence, because through keeping himself close to the demand, he had made himself a demand on men.

If, therefore, in some way, even if in human frailty, you aspire to fulfil the apostolic saying that "Love is the fulfillment of the law," then give heed to men! Does this mean that you would be loved by them? Oh, how absurd! How then could your love become the fulfillment of the law? But give heed that it does not become more important to you that you should be esteemed for loving them than that you do love them! Take care that being loved is not more important to you than the fact of loving each other! Take care that you do not deprive yourself of the highest, because you cannot bear to be called selfish! Do not appeal to men's opinions of you in order to prove your love; for the opinion of men has validity only insofar as it harmonizes with God's demand; otherwise men are only your accomplices! Learn also, and never forget the lesson, this sad truth of the earthly life, that no love between man and man ever can or will be perfectly happy, will ever dare to be perfectly confident! For, divinely understood, even the happiest love between man and man has still one danger which the merely human understanding of love does not consider, the danger that the earthly love might become too intense, so that the God-relationship would be interfered

with; the danger that the God-relationship, when humanly speaking there is nothing but peace and no danger even in sight, may exact even this, the happiest love, as a sacrifice. And from this possibility of danger it follows that even in the happiest love-relationship, you must always anxiously watch, although this concern is not the fear that you might grow tired of the beloved or the beloved of you, but lest you should both forget God, or that the beloved might do so, or you yourself. And from the possibility of this danger it follows, recalling the introduction to these reflections, how difficult it may be in the Christian sense, to promise love, when the fact of keeping the promise may signify that you will come to be hated by the beloved. Only God, who, as we have explained, is also the only true object of love, is always happy, always blessed in loving; you must not watch in concern, but watch only in adoration.

Love is the fulfillment of the law. But the law consists of an inexhaustible multitude of provisions. How then could we be prepared to speak about them? So let us then assemble the multitude of decisions. The demand of the law must therefore be twofold, partly a demand for inwardness, and partly a demand for continuity.

What then is the required inwardness? The merely human understanding of love also requires inwardness, devotion, sacrifice, but it defines these only humanly. The devotion of inwardness is: that every sacrifice should satisfy the conception of the beloved (the object of love) as to what love is, or, on its own responsibility, venture to decide what love is. But divinely understood, inwardness believes that loving one’s self is loving God, and that truly loving another man is being helpful to him for or in loving God. Hence inwardness is not here determined merely by the love-relationship, but by the God-relationship. The inwardness demanded is then the inwardness of self-abnegation, which is more closely defined, not according to the understanding of the beloved (the object of affection) about love, but

with regard to helping the beloved to love God. It follows as a matter of course that the love-relationship may, as such, be the sacrifice which is demanded.

The inwardness of love must be sacrificial, and consequently must not demand any reward. The purely human understanding of love teaches also that love demands no reward — except that it wishes to be loved, as if that which constitutes the entire relationship, yet not within the category of the relation between man and man, were no reward. But. the inwardness of Christian love is willing, as the reward of its love, to be hated by the beloved (the object of affection). This proves that this inwardness is a pure God-relationship; it has no reward, not even the reward of being loved: thus it belongs absolutely to God, or absolutely to man in God. The self-abnegation, the self-control, the self-sacrifice, which are still but media of exchange within the temporal, within the human horizon, are not truly Christian; they are as a jest in comparison with the Christian earnestness; they are like the first start toward a Christian decision. One will sacrifice this or that or everything, but one still hopes that this sacrifice will be understood and have sense and meaning for men, who then must recognize and rejoice at one's sacrifices. One is willing to forsake everything, but still one does not think that along with that his sacrifice should be forgotten in the conversation and understanding of men.

The promptings of the sacrifice then become apparent; it pretends to abandon the world, but it still remains within the world. We by no means wish to disparage this. Oh, even this merely human sacrifice is perhaps met with seldom enough. But from the Christian standpoint, we must say that it remains standing at the halfway mark. It ascends to a high place, for, humanly speaking, the sacrifice stands high; it throws everything away in order to ascend to this exalted place, whose elevation admiration discovers, while the sacrifice perceives that it is seen. But to stand upon this exalted

place (for truly, sacrifice is elevation) accused, despised, hated, ridiculed almost worse than the most debased among the base; hence superhumanly taxed in attaining the lofty place, to stand there in such a way that it seems to everyone as if one stood at the lowest level of the contemptible: from the Christian standpoint this is sacrifice, and from the human point of view it is also madness. Only One sees the true connection, and He does not admire; for God in heaven does not admire any man.

On the contrary, while true sacrifice has but one single place of resort: God, so he is as if once more forsaken by God, for he understands that before God he is simply without merit. But humanly he also understands that had he but sacrificed a half of what he did sacrifice, then men would have understood him, loved and admired him, and yet, in a certain sense, that before God this partial sacrifice would have the same significance as the true sacrifice, for before God no sacrifice, not one, has merit. This is sacrifice according to the Christian standpoint, and also, humanly understood, it is madness. This is loving from the Christian standpoint; if it is true that loving is the highest happiness, this is indeed the hardest suffering — if then the holding of one's self to God were not the highest bliss!

The other requirement of the law is for the continuation of love for the duration of time. The merely human conception of love also demands this; still from the Christian standpoint it is a different demand, since the inwardness demanded is different. The demand for the continuation in time means that the same inwardness of love shall be preserved throughout the duration of time, which insofar is in a certain sense a new expression for inwardness. As soon as you think that you have done enough in your love, or have loved long enough, and now may ask something from the other, then through that you discover that your love is prepared to become a demand, as if, however devoted and sacrificing your love is, there were still

a limit where it must at bottom appear to be a demand — but love is the fulfillment of the law. For it is not some great moment of self-abnegation that we are speaking about; the law demands the same inwardness for the duration of time. The duration of time! But is not this, as it were, to do violence to one's soul, and a self-contradiction in the demand, at the same time to demand continuation in such different directions, in the direction of length and in the direction of depth? Lo, the arrow flies swiftly forward through the air, but if at the same time it ought to bore itself down into the earth and still continue to fly with the speed of an arrow: ah, what a demand! Lo, in the great moment of enthusiasm, then the eternal tarries, but then when time begins its restless activity, when it continues to pass — then not to go enthusiastically with time, but to go hurriedly with the haste of time, and yet slowly with the lingering of eternity! To lie on one's deathbed (and when a man in self-renunciation has been obliged to make the heaviest sacrifice: and for a reward of his love is hated by its object, then he is like the one who lies at the point of death), and then to have a future, a long life before one, although everything is past, hence, at once and at any moment, lying on his deathbed to have to stand erect and go forward: what a demand! To lie down is exactly the opposite of walking upright, but to lie upon one's deathbed is certainly the most decisive expression for lying down, and hence the farthest possible removed from standing erect. Have you ever seen a weary traveler bearing a heavy burden, fighting at every step in order not to sink to earth? He holds himself erect only with the greatest difficulty, he struggles in order not to sink down. But to have sunk down, to lie down, to lie upon his deathbed, and then to hasten confidently forward with the stride of the erect: wonderful! And the demand may require this, and also require its continuance for the duration of time.

Alas! in the world of the spirit there is something fraudulent, for which there is nothing analogous found in the external world. We say for instance

that a child must learn to spell before it can learn to read. Fortunately or unfortunately, this is undoubtedly a necessity. It has never happened to any child that through a phenomenon, an illusion, it had occasion to imagine that it could already read long before it could spell. But in the spiritual relation, how seductive! For here does not everything begin with the great moment of the resolve, of the purpose, of the promise — where one reads as fluently as the most accomplished reader, the one best trained in reading by book? And so, if the next comes first, what is the use of the very petty things, the plainly commonplace things, which simply do not make any strong impression, or wish to help one by the daring context? Alas! on the contrary, it is like the spelling which tears the words apart into letters, so that there are long, long hours when one cannot arrive at the meaning, and vainly waits to see the connection. To strive with one's self in self-abnegation, especially if one must conquer, is regarded as the most difficult struggle; and to strive with time, if one would completely conquer, is regarded as an impossibility.

The heaviest burden laid upon a man (for he has laid, the burden of sin upon himself) is in a certain sense, time — do we not say, too, that it can be deadly long! And yet, on the other hand, how gentle, how soothing, how seductive a power time has! But this alleviation, this seductiveness, is a new danger. If a man became guilty of something — let but a little time pass, especially if he seems to have made some progress toward betterment: how much more trivial his guilt appears! But is this really so? Is it then also true that if the next moment the thoughtless has forgotten his own guilt, it is then forgotten?

Tell me then if it is possible to speak about this saying, that love is the fulfillment of the law, without judging against one's will, if one's will is merely to judge one's self! Is there any more precise way of expressing how infinitely far a man is from fulfilling the law than this, that the distance is so

great that he really cannot even compute it, cannot make up his reckoning! For not only is so much neglected daily, not to speak about what is deserved, but then when some time has passed, one is not even able to state the debt exactly, as it appeared to one's self, because time changes and softens one's judgment about the past — alas! but time never changes the demand, eternity's demand: that love is the fulfillment of the law.

B. LOVE IS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. — I Timothy 1:5

IF IN A SINGLE WORD we wished to point out and indicate the victory Christianity has won over the world, or even more correctly, the victory whereby it has more than overcome the world (since Christianity has never wished to conquer in the worldly sense), that infinite change at which Christianity aims, whereby everything has in truth remained as it was and yet in an infinite sense has become new (for Christianity has never been the friend of neo-mongering) — then I know no briefer or more decisive expression than this: it has made every human relationship between men into a matter of conscience. Christianity has not wished to tumble governments from the throne in order to set itself in their place; it has never in an external sense striven for a place in the world of which it is not a part (for even if it finds a place in the heart's room, it still has no place in the world), and yet it has infinitely changed everything which it permitted and does permit to continue.

As the blood pulses in every nerve, so Christianity in the conscience-relation wishes to penetrate everything. The change is not in the external, not in the obvious, and yet the change is infinite. As if a man instead of having blood in his veins had that divine elixir of which paganism dreamed,

so Christianity wishes to inspire the everlasting life, the divine in the human race. That is why someone has said that the Christians were a people of priests, and that is why, when we consider the conscience-relation, we might say that the Christians are a people of kings. For take the humblest, the most downtrodden servant, imagine what we call a really simple, poor, wretched charwoman who makes her living by the humblest kind of labor: she has, from the Christian standpoint, the right, moreover we urgently beseech her in the name of Christianity to exercise it, she has the right while she is carrying on her work, to speak with herself and with God, which in no way retards her work; she has the right to say: "I do this work for a daily wage, but that I do it as carefully as I do, that I do — for conscience's sake!" Ah, from the worldly point of view there is only one man, only one, who recognizes no other obligation than that of conscience: that is the king. And yet that poor woman, from the Christian viewpoint, has the royal right to say to herself before God: 'I do it for conscience's sake!" If the woman is dissatisfied because no man will listen to this speech, then it merely proves that she is not Christ-minded. Otherwise, it seems to me that it would still be enough that God has permitted me to speak thus with Him — covetously to desire freedom of speech in this respect would be a great folly on my part. For there are certain things, and among them particularly the mysteries of inwardness, which lose through being made public, and which are quite lost when the publicity has become the thing of supreme importance to one; moreover there are mysteries which under such circumstances are not merely lost, but straightway become altogether meaningless. Christianity's divine intention is to say in confidence to every man; "Do not worry about the changing forms of the world or about your condition, as if in order to become an example, instead of being a poor workingwoman, you had to be called 'My Lady.' Oh, no, dedicate yourself to the Christian way, and then it will show you a point outside the world; by the aid of this point you will be

able to move both heaven and earth, moreover, you will accomplish the even greater miracle, you will move heaven and earth so quietly, so easily, that no one notices it."

This is the miracle of Christianity, more wonderful than that one of changing the water into wine; this miracle in all stillness, without any change of rulers, moreover without a hand being moved, of making every man, divinely understood, into a king, so easily, so smoothly, so miraculously, that the world in a certain sense does not need to know it. For in the world outside, there the king will and ought to be the only one who rules according to his conscience; but to obey — for conscience's sake will be permitted everyone; moreover, no one, no one can prevent it. And there within, there far within, where the Christian dwells in the conscience-relation, there is everything changed.

Lo, the world raises a tumult just to bring about a little change; it sets heaven and earth in motion for nothing, like the mountain which brought forth a mouse; Christianity in all stillness brings about the change of the infinite as if it were nothing. It is so quiet, quiet as nothing worldly can be; as quiet as only the dead and inwardness can be; and what else is Christianity but inwardness!

Thus Christianity transforms every relation between men into a conscience-relationship, and thus also into a love-relationship. It is this we now wish to contemplate, that, according to the Christian understand love is a matter of conscience.

In the apostolic words we read, there are evidently contained two premises. First, "The end of the commandment is love." In the preceding deliberation we developed this when we associated the deliberation with another expression, that "Love is the fulfillment of the law." But next there follows in our text; if love is to be the end of the commandment, then it must be from a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of an unfeigned

faith. Nevertheless, we prefer to focus our attention on the one provision, that love is a matter of conscience, in which the other two are essentially contained, and to which they essentially refer.

That a certain kind of Christian love is made a matter of conscience is familiar to everyone. We speak about marriage. Before the minister unites the two in die wedlock which has been their hearts' choice, about which, however, he does not ask them; he asks them first, each one individually: "Have you consulted with God and with your conscience?" Hence the minister refers the love to conscience, as he speaks in a manner strange to them, without using the familiar "thou"; he lays upon the hearts of the two, each one in particular, that it is a matter of conscience; he makes an affair of the heart into a matter of conscience. More clearly and definitely this cannot be expressed, and yet there is still an expression for the same consideration in the form of a question, or in that which each one is specially asked. To ask — the individual is the more general expression for the conscience-relation, and therefore it is also Christianity's essential consideration of the human race, first and foremost to consider all these countless numbers each for himself, each especially as the individual.

Consequently, the minister asks the two, each severally, whether he has consulted with God and his conscience. This is the infinite change which in Christianity takes place in all love. It is, like all Christian transformations, so gentle, so secret — because it belongs only to the inwardness of the hidden man, to the incorruptible essence of a soul at peace. What abominations has not the world seen in the relation between man and woman, so that she, almost an animal, was a contemptible being in comparison with the man, a being as of another kind; what a battle there has been to give woman equal rights with man in worldly matters: but Christianity brings about only the change of the infinite, and therefore in all stillness. The external remains in a manner the old; for the man must be the

woman's lord, she submissive to him. But in inwardness everything is changed, transformed by the aid of this little question to the woman, as to whether she has consulted with her conscience, so that she will have this man — for lord, for otherwise she does not get him. Still the question of conscience about the matter of conscience makes her in inwardness before God absolutely equal with the man. What Christ said of His kingdom, that it was not of this world, applies to all things Christian. Like a higher order of things, it will everywhere be present, but not apprehended. As a friendly spirit everywhere surrounds those dear to it, follows their every footstep, but may not be pointed out: so will the Christian spirit be a stranger in life because it belongs to another world, a stranger in the world because it belongs to the inner man. Foolish men have foolishly busied themselves in the name of Christianity to make it evident to the world that woman should be installed in equal rights with man: Christianity has never asked or desired this. It has done everything for women, if she will in a Christian spirit be satisfied with the Christian; if she does not wish this, then she gains only a moderate compensation, for what she loses in trifling externals she can in a worldly sense gain by threats.

So with marriage. But because Christianity through marriage has made earthly love into a matter of conscience, it still does not seem to follow that on the whole it has made love into a matter of conscience. However, there are some who are of a different opinion, in error concerning the Christian teaching. Christianity has not made earthly love, with rare exceptions, into a matter of conscience, but because it has made all love into a matter of conscience, earthly love has also been included. And besides, if any kind of love would be difficult to transform into a matter of conscience, then surely earthly love which is based on impulse and inclination. For impulse and inclination seem to be alone sufficient for the decision of the question of whether love is present or not, and insofar seem to object as strongly to the

Christian as the Christian does to them. If, namely, two human beings love each other, something they themselves must know best, and there is otherwise nothing to prevent their union, then why raise difficulties, as Christianity nevertheless does, by saying: “No, they must first answer the question as to whether they have consulted with God and their conscience”? Christianity never cares to make external changes, it never wishes to abolish impulse and inclinations; it wishes only to make an infinite change in the inner man.

And the change of infinity (which is the inwardness of the secret man, which has its direction inward toward the God-relationship, and so is different from the inwardness that is directed outward) Christianity wishes everywhere to bring about; therefore it wishes also to transform all love into a matter of conscience. Therefore it is a wrong conception of Christian love that thinks it is an individual kind of love which, as a rare exception, is made a matter of conscience. After all, one cannot make any individual thing into a matter of conscience; either one must make everything so, as Christianity does, or else nothing at all. Conscience has the inward power of expansiveness, like the omnipresence of God: one cannot restrict it to a single place and say that God is omnipresent in that single place, for that is simply denying His omnipresence. And in the same way to restrict the conscience-relation to something in particular is really to deny the conscience-relation.

If we were to consider a starting point for the teaching of Christianity about love (although it is impossible to fix a starting point in a circular motion), then we cannot say that Christianity begins by making earthly love a matter of conscience, as if this matter had primarily attracted the attention of scholars, who have something quite different to think about than getting people married. No, Christianity began with fundamentals, and therefore with spiritual teaching about what love is. In order to determine what love

is, the teaching begins either with God or with the neighbor, which is the essential Christian teaching, since in order in love to find one's neighbor one must start from God, and in the love for the neighbor must find God. Starting from this fundamental principle Christianity now seizes upon every expression of love, and is zealous for itself. We can therefore just as well say that it is the teaching about man's God-relationship which has made earthly love into a matter of conscience, as to say that it is the teaching about love to one's neighbor. Both statements are equally the Christian protest against the wilfulness of impulse and affection. Because man primarily belongs to God before he belongs to any other relationship, he must first be asked whether he has taken counsel with God and with his conscience. Likewise with the woman. And because man, even in relation to the beloved woman, is primarily her neighbor and she is primarily his neighbor, therefore both he and she must be asked severally whether they have consulted with their consciences. In the Christian understanding there is an equality between all men before God, and in the teaching about loving one's neighbor there is equality of all men before God. One perhaps believes that love for a neighbor is something like a castoff earthly love; alas, love for one's neighbor is the last and the highest love, and must therefore be assured a place before the first and highest moment of the lovers themselves.

This is the Christian love. The idea on the contrary, that we should first busy ourselves in finding the beloved, so that in loving the beloved we shall first love the neighbor, is very far from being Christian love. To impulse and inclination this is certainly a strangely chilling preposterousness; but still it is the Christian idea and not more chilling than the spirit is with respect to the sensual or the sensual-psychical, while for the rest it is simply a spiritual attribute to be burning without blazing. Primarily your wife must be your neighbor, the fact that she is your wife is then a closer definition of

your special relation to each other. But that which is the foundation of the eternal must also lie at the bottom of every expression of the special.

If this were not so, then how could one find a place for teaching about love for one's neighbor? — and yet one quite commonly does forget it. One speaks heathenishly, without really even noticing it, about earthly love and friendship, arranges his own life in this respect as if he were a heathen, and then one adds a little of the Christian teaching about loving one's neighbor, that is, some other men. But he who does not take care to see that his wife is his neighbor before she is his wife, will never come to love his neighbor, no matter how many men he loves; he has made his wife an exception. This exception he will now either love too ardently his whole life through, or he will at first love her too ardently and then too coldly. For certainly a wife is loved differently from the friend, and the friend differently from the neighbor, but this is not an essential difference, for the fundamental likeness lies in the category "neighbor." It is with "neighbor" as with the category "human." Every one of us is human, and is thus again the difference he especially is; but the fact of being "human" is the category. No one must look too long at the difference, so that, cowardly or arrogantly, he forgets that he is human; no man through his special dissimilarity is an exception to the fact of being human, but he is first human and then he is the specially different. So Christianity has nothing against the husband loving his wife specially, but he must never love her so specially that she is excluded from being his neighbor, which every human being is; for then he disturbs the Christian category: then his wife is not his neighbor, and therefore the rest of men are not his neighbors. If there were a single living man who by his dissimilarity was excluded from being human, then would the concept "human" be confused: the exception is not human, and neither are the other men human.

One talks about a man loving his own wife conscientiously, or his friend, or his nearest kin; but one often speaks in such a way that what he says involves a great error. Christianity teaches that you shall love every human being, therefore also your wife and your friend, conscientiously; it is a matter of conscience. When, on the contrary, one speaks about loving his wife or his friend conscientiously, then one generally means in the discriminatory sense, or, what amounts to the same thing in the sense of the context, in loving them so preferentially that one has nothing at all to do with other men. But this kind of conscientiousness is from the Christian viewpoint, unconscientiousness. We see too that it is the wife or the friend who will consequently determine whether the love manifested is conscientious. Herein lies the falsity, for it is God who by Himself and by the help of the middle term, "neighbor," looks to see whether the love for wife or friend is conscientious love. Only then is your love a matter of conscience; but still this is clear, that one can only be truly conscientious in a matter that involves the conscience, for otherwise one might speak of being conscientious in receiving stolen goods. Love must first be determined to be a matter of conscience before there can be anything said about loving conscientiously. But love is not defined as a matter of conscience until either God or the neighbor is the middle term, hence, not in earthly love and friendship as such. But if the love in the earthly love and friendship, as such, is not defined as a matter of conscience, then is the so-called conscientiousness precisely increasingly doubtful, the more firmly established the connection is.

Christian love must not be regarded as a more precise definition of what in paganism and elsewhere has been called love, but as a fundamental change. Christianity has not come into the world in order to teach you some change or other as to how you shall specially love your wife or your friend, but in order to teach you how in common humanity you shall love all men.

And it is also this change which in a Christian way changes earthly love and friendship.

One sometimes hears it said that to ask one about his earthly love is an indiscreet question. But frequently this is not understood quite correctly. The reason it is an indiscreet question is because a man in his earthly love primarily belongs to God. Therefore no one is angry when the priest asks this, for he asks it in the name of God. But this is usually not considered; on the contrary, they only suggest that love is such a personal matter that any third person is an irrelevance, any third person — even God, which from the Christian standpoint is a lack of conscience. Still it is an indiscreet question, altogether inconceivable regarding a matter in which a man does not have a God-relationship; for a God-relationship simply means having a conscience. Therefore a man could not have anything upon his conscience if God did not exist, for the relationship between the individual and God, the God-relationship, is the conscience, and that is why it is so terrible to have even the least thing upon one's conscience, because one is immediately conscious of the infinite weight of God.

Love is a matter of conscience, and hence is not a matter of impulse and inclination; nor is it a matter of emotion, nor a matter for intellectual calculation.

Worldly or merely human reflection is familiar with many kinds of love, and is well-informed about every individual difference, and how the individual differences mutually differ from each other; worldly reflection absorbs itself in the difference of the differences, loses itself — that is, if it is ever possible to lose one's self in superficiality. In Christianity the converse is the case. It really knows only one kind of love, spiritual love, and it does not pay much attention to elaborating on the different ways in which this fundamentally common love may manifest itself. All the

distinctions between the different kinds of love are essentially swept away in the Christian love.

The merely human consideration interprets love either merely as purely immediate love, as impulse, inclination (earthly love), as affection (friendship), as emotion and affection with one or another discriminating additions of duty, natural relations, custom and so on, or as something which is to be aimed at and acquired, because the reason perceives that being loved and favored is an earthly good, just as having men one loves and favors is an earthly good. All this Christianity is not really concerned with, either with the immediate kind of love, or with the convenient kind. Christianity allows all this to have validity, to have its own significance in external matters; but at the same time it wishes through its teaching about love, which is not calculated on convenience, to let the transformation of the infinite take place inwardly.

There is something wonderful, and perhaps for many something strange, something incomprehensible, in the fact that the eternal Christian power is so indifferent to recognition in externals, something wonderful in the fact that this is precisely earnestness, that the inwardness just for the sake of earnestness thus plays ‘stranger’ in worldliness. There have therefore been times in the course of Christianity when people have believed that it was necessary to betray the secret, and thereby secure Christianity a worldly expression in worldliness. So someone wished to abolish marriage and lived no doubt — hidden in the cloister. Nevertheless, the secret of inwardness, or the inwardness of the hidden man who “holds the mystery of faith,” is a far more certain hiding place. The concealment of the cloister in the solitude of the forest, or remote on the inaccessible mountain top, and the hiding place of the quiet dweller in the cloister, were therefore childishness compared with the true Christian inwardness, a childishness like that of a child who hides itself — so that someone shall come and find it. The cloister’s hidden

occupant informed the world that he had hidden himself, that is, from the Christian point of view he had not seriously hidden himself, but he was playing hide-and-seek. By a similar misunderstanding of the Christian teaching, by a similar childishness, people then believed that it was Christian to betray the mystery, worldly to express the Christian indifference to friendship, to family relations, to patriotism — which nevertheless is untrue, for Christianity is not indifferent to anything secular, on the contrary, it is solely spiritually concerned for everything.

Still to express indifference in such a way that one is eager that those concerned should get to know about it, is not exactly to be indifferent. Such an indifference is as when one man goes to another and says: “I don’t care about you.” Whereupon the other replies: “Then why do you take the trouble to tell me so?” That, too, would be childishness, it would be a childish way of being conscious of the Christian teaching. But Christianity is too earnest to notice this. Externally it does not wish to bring about any change at all in the external; it wishes to understand the external, to purify it, to consecrate it, and so make everything new, while everything remains old. The Christian may freely marry, freely love his wife, especially as he ought to love her, freely have friends and love his fatherland; but nevertheless there ought to be in all this a basic understanding between himself and God in the Christian sense, and this is Christianity. For God is not like a man; it is not important to God to inspect the matter, to see for Himself whether His cause triumphs or not; He sees in secret just as well. And it is far from necessary for you to help God to learn that it is He who must help you to learn whether you are weaned from the worldliness which wishes a demonstration. Had Christ felt any need of a demonstration, then would He indeed have acted. He would have summoned the twelve legions of angels. This He simply did not want; on the contrary, He rebuked the disciples who wished to act in the matter because they did not know what

manner of spirit they were when they wished for a decision in the external. Christianity simply does not wish a decision in external matters (except insofar as it wishes to establish one or another symbol, which is to worldliness a sign of offense, as, for example, the sacraments); it wishes, on the contrary, in the absence of this, to test the faith of the individual, to prove whether the individual will hold and be content with the mystery of faith. The secular always presses for a decision in externals; distrustful, it does not believe that otherwise there is a decision. But the cause of this distrust is precisely the temptation in which faith must be tested. From the worldly point of view, would it not be a far more certain way to decide, and to make it absolutely certain that God exists, to have an image of Him set up — so that one might then see that He existed? or that a false god existed, which yet does not exist?

Would it not have given a far greater assurance to worldliness if Christ in an external manner, perhaps by showy processions, had tried to prove who He was, instead of assuming the humble form of a servant, yet always inconspicuously, so that He looked exactly like any other man, and from the worldly point of view utterly failed in His task? But this is just the temptation by which faith is tested. And so, too, as touching the Christian interpretation of love. Worldly misunderstanding is insistent to have it expressed in an outward way that Christian love is spiritual love — alas, but this cannot be expressed outwardly in any externality, for spiritual love is precisely inwardness. But this is an offense to worldliness, like everything Christian, and therefore, as it were, the opposite, so that Christianity makes one arbitrarily external symbol the sole decision in the external, like the water in baptism. The world is always dead against; where Christianity wishes to have inwardness, there will secular Christendom have the external; and where Christianity wishes to have the external, there secular

Christendom will have inwardness, which may be explained by the fact that where the Christian is, offense stands at his side.

Nevertheless, Christianity knows only one kind of love: spiritual love; but this can lie at the bottom of and be present in every other expression of love. How strange! For this, the Christian thought of life, has something in common with the thought of death. Imagine a man who wished to gather together all his impressions of the discriminations of life, as between men, which he had seen, and then, when he had reckoned these up, would say, "I see all these different men, but I do not see the man." It is the same with Christian love in relation to the different kinds of love; it is in them all, that is to say, it may be, but the Christian love itself you cannot point out. You know earthly love by the fact that a woman is the beloved, friendship by the friend, love for the fatherland by the object; but the Christian love you cannot even know by the fact that it loves its enemy, for this manifestation of love may also be a secret form of resentment, as if someone did it for the sake of heaping coals of fire on his head. Nor can you know it by the fact that it hates the beloved, for it is really impossible for you to see this, if you are not the one concerned, and you are in the secret with God. From God's side, what confidence, in a certain sense, in a man, and what earnestness! We men, we take care to have certain and infallible signs by which love is known. But God and Christianity have no distinguishing marks — is this not having great, moreover all possible confidence in men! When we in regard to some man waive the sign by which his love is known, then we say that we show unbounded confidence in him, that we will believe in him in spite of all appearances. But why do you think that God shows such confidence? Is it not because He sees in secret? How earnest!

But you never see, nor has any man ever seen, the Christian love, just as no one has ever seen the "human." Nevertheless, "human" is the essential category, and Christian love is the essential love, as, from the Christian

viewpoint, there is only one kind of love. For, to repeat, Christianity has not changed anything in what men had formerly learned about loving the beloved, the friend, and so on; it has neither added a little to it, nor taken anything away, but it has transformed everything, has transformed all love. And only to the degree that this fundamental change is followed by a change of inwardness in love and friendship, only insofar has it changed those. And it has done this by making all love a matter of conscience, which with respect to earthly love and friendship, and so on, can just as well indicate a cooling of the passions as it indicates the inwardness of eternal life.

Love is a matter of conscience, and must therefore be of a pure heart and of an unfeigned faith.

"A pure heart." Generally we mention provisionally that a free heart is required for love or in order to give itself up in love. This heart must not belong to anyone or anything else; moreover, even the hand which gives it away must be free; for it must not be the hand which takes the heart by force and gives it away, but on the contrary, it must be the heart which gives away the hand. And this heart, free as it is, will then find complete freedom in giving itself away — not the bird you release from your hand, not the arrow released from the bowstring, not the branch which has been bent, when it recovers its direction, nothing, nothing is as free as the free heart when it freely gives itself. For the bird is still free only because you release it, and the arrow speeds forth only because it leaves the bowstring, and the branch again grows erect because the restraint ceases; but the free heart does not become free by the cessation of resistance; it was free, it had its freedom — and yet it found its freedom. Beautiful thought, blessed freedom, which finds what it has! However I talk almost like a poet, which may also be permissible if the main point be not forgotten, if it is done precisely to illuminate this — for this is why we endeavor to speak

ingratiatingly, if possible, about what it generally pleases men to hear, precisely so that it may not tempt anyone, as if it were lack of sense or ability to speak about this, which held us back from speaking about it, or from speaking exclusively of it as of the highest, forgetting the principal thing: the Christian freedom.

A pure heart is not in this sense a free heart, or it is the free heart which does not here come under consideration; for a pure heart is first and last a bound heart. Therefore it is not as pleasant to speak about it as it is to speak about the blessed self-esteem of freedom, and the blessed pleasure of the self-esteem in the boldness of renunciation. A bound heart, moreover in the most profound sense a bound heart — no ship which lies at anchor is so bound as that heart must be which will be pure — this heart must be bound to God. And no king who bound himself by the harshest charter, and no man who bound himself by the most rigorous pledge, and no day-laborer who bound himself for every day, and no private tutor who bound himself for every hour, is so bound. For everyone thus bound can still say how far he is bound, but the heart must be bound inimitably to God, if it will be pure. And no power can bind like this; for the king can die and escape his charter, and the lord can die so the pledge of the day-laborer ceases, and the time of instruction can pass — but God does not die, and the bond which binds to Him is never broken.

Thus must the heart be bound. You who burn with the desire for earthly love, or with the craving for friendship, remember that what you say about freedom has never been denied by Christianity; but yet there must first be this infinite bond, if the heart of the beloved and your own will be pure! Consequently, first the infinite binding, and then the talk about freedom may begin. There is a strange word which is much used in philosophy, but even more in ordinary business; it is heard so often in the streets and alleys, in business circles and in the mouths of businessmen: it is the word

“priority”; for philosophy talks much about God’s priority, and businessmen talk about priorities. So let us use this strange word to express the thought so that it will most certainly make the right impression; let us say: Christianity teaches that God has the first priority. Philosophy does not speak quite this way about God’s priority; it would rather forget what businessmen know about priorities, that a priority is a claim. God has the first priority, and everything which a man owns, is pledged as a security for this claim. If you remember this, then for the rest you may talk as much as you please about the pleasure of freedom. Oh, but if you really remember this, then this pleasure will not tempt you.

The free heart has no consideration for anything; heedless, it plunges into the pleasure of renunciation; but the heart infinitely bound to God has an infinite consideration; and not even the one who every moment must use the most manifold consideration is so bound by consideration as the heart which is infinitely bound to God. Wherever it is, in solitude by itself, or filled with the thought of others or with others, whatever an infinitely bound heart otherwise occupies itself with, it is always considerate. You who speak so beautifully about how much the beloved means to you, or you to the beloved, remember that this consideration must first be in your soul as in the beloved’s, if a pure heart will be given away in love! This consideration must be the first and the last; from this consideration there can be no separation without guilt and sin.

The free heart has no history; when it renounced itself it acquired no history of its love, happy or unhappy. But the heart infinitely bound to God has a preceding history, and therefore it understands that earthly love and friendship are but an interlude, a contribution to this, the sole history of love, the first and the last. You who know how to speak so beautifully about earthly love and friendship, if you understood that these constitute only a very little section within that eternal history; how brief you would be

compared with the brevity of the section! You begin your history with the beginning of love and you end with a grave. But that eternal history of love began far earlier; it began with your beginning, when you came into existence from nothing, and as truly as you do not become nothing, so truly the history does not end with the grave. For when the deathbed is prepared for you, when you have gone to bed, never more to rise, and they only wait for you to turn to the other side to die, and the stillness grows about you — when gradually the nearer friends go away, and the stillness grows because only the dearest remain, while death comes nearer you; then when the dearest go softly away, and the stillness grows, because only your own family remain; and when then the last one has bent for the last time over you and turns away, for now you turn to the side of death: there yet remains One by that side. He the last at the deathbed. He who was the first, God, the living God — if for the rest your heart was pure, which it became only by loving Him.

There is this to be said about the pure heart and about love being a matter of conscience. If love and earthly love constitute the chief pleasures of life, so that the happy man can say with truth: “Now for the first time I live,” so it is the joy of life merely to hear the lover talk about his happiness, about life, that is, about its pleasure: then must the dead speak about that conscientious love, the dead who, it is well to note, did not become tired of life, but simply won the joy of eternity. But it is a dead man who speaks, and this seems so forbidding to many that they dare not listen to his glad message, while everyone is glad to listen to one of whom we say in a superior way, “He is alive.” And yet death must come, and just at the moment when his contemporaries are joyfully wishing the happy man a long life, eternity says, “Die,” if otherwise your heart will be pure. For no doubt there was someone who became happy, indescribably happy, or

unhappy, by loving a human being; but no man’s heart ever became pure unless it became so through loving God.

“An unfeigned faith.” Could there ever be any more abominable combination possible than love — and duplicity? Still such a combination is an impossibility, for to love deceitfully is to hate. And this not only holds true about duplicity, but it is impossible to associate the least lack of sincerity with the idea of loving. As soon as any sincerity is lacking, then there is always something concealed, but the selfish self-love hides itself in this concealment, and insofar as this self-love is present in a man, he does not love. In sincerity the lover offers himself to the beloved; and no mirror is so accurate in catching the least trifle as sincerity is, if it is true sincerity; or if in the lovers there is the true fidelity which is reflected in the mirror of sincerity, which love holds between them.

But now if two men are thus able to become in sincerity intelligible to each other, is it not somewhat arbitrary for Christianity to speak about an unfeigned faith in another sense, insofar as by that it means sincerity before God? Is it not exactly necessary, if two men are to love each other in an unfeigned faith, that this must be preceded by an individual sincerity toward God? For is there dissimulation only when a man consciously deceives himself or others? Is it not also dissimulation when a man does not know himself? And can such a man promise love from an unfeigned faith, or can he — keep what he promises? Aye, he may do that, but if he cannot promise, can he then keep what he cannot even promise? And one who does not know himself cannot promise love from an unfeigned faith.

The thought of confidence contains in itself a reduplication, and it is this: the one with whom a man has the most intimate relationship, hence the relationship which best fitted him to be the object of confidences, or of confidential communications, only in him can this man really confide or trust, or open his heart to him in confidence. But thus the confidence keeps

itself to itself, and thus there is, as the essential in the confidence, the unutterable, instead of a man having to believe that the confidence lay in the stating of it. Thus if, humanly speaking, a wife has her most inward relationship with her husband, she may reveal one or another thing in confidence to her parents, but this confidence is a confidence about something confidential. The wife will therefore feel that she is far from being able to confide everything to them or to confide it to them as she confides it to her husband with whom she has her most intimate relationship — but also her most confidential one, and to whom alone she can really open her heart concerning her most intimate relationship, which is her relation to him. Business affairs and unimportant external matters one cannot talk about confidentially, or at least only foolishly and irresponsibly. But see, if a wife wished to tell someone else about her most intimate concern, her relation to her husband, she would herself perceive that there was only one in whom she could completely confide, and this one was the same as the one in whom and with whom she has this relationship.

With whom now has a man his most intimate relationship, with whom can a man have his most intimate relationship? Is it not God? But hence all confidence between men finally becomes only confidence about confidence. Only God is confidence, just as He is love. When then two men sincerely pledge their faith to each other, is this then to promise faith to each other, if they first, each one severally, promise and have promised their faith to another? And yet, on the other hand, this is necessary if they, in the Christian sense, would love from an unfeigned faith. If two men absolutely confide in each other, is it absolutely confiding in each other if they first, each one individually, have confided in a third? And yet this is necessary if they wish absolutely to confide in each other, even if in each individual's confidence in God there is the unutterable, which is exactly the sign that their relation to God is the most inward, the most confidential.

How inviting, how attractive the talk sounds about the confidence of two lovers in each other, and yet there is dissimulation in this speech as in this confidence. But if love from an unfeigned faith is to be spoken about, then must the dead speak, and it sounds at first as if it wrought a division between the two, although they will still be united in the most intimate and confident companionship. Moreover it is like a separation, and yet it is the confidence of eternity which is set between them. Many, many times two have become happy in a confidential relation to each other, but never has any man loved from an unfeigned faith except through the confidence of the separation in God, which is also God’s consent to the confidence of the lovers. — Only when it becomes a matter of conscience is there love from a pure heart and from an unfeigned faith.

IV. OUR DUTY TO LOVE THE MEN WE SEE

IF A MAN say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? — I John 4:20

HOW DEEPLY IS THE NEED for love grounded in man's being! The first thing, if we may speak in this way, which was said about man, and said by the only One who in truth could say it, by God Himself, and about the first man, says just this. We read in the Holy Scriptures: "God said, it is not good for man to be alone." So woman was taken from the side of man and given to him for a companion — for love and companionship first take something from a man before they give. Therefore throughout all ages everyone who has thought more deeply about the nature of man, has therefore recognized in him this need for companionship. How often it has been said, and repeated again and again; how often has one cried woe upon the loneliness, or pictured the pain of loneliness and its wretchedness; how often has one, wearied by the vitiating, noisy, confused associations of everyday life, wandered out to the solitary place — only to learn again to hunger for companionship! For thus one always returns to that thought of God's, that first thought about man.

In the busy, teeming multitude, which as company is both too much and too little, man becomes tired of company; but the cure does not consist in discovering that God's thought was wrong, not at all; but the healing consists in learning from the very first to understand one's self in the yearning for companionship. So deeply is this need entrenched in human nature that it has remained unchanged since the creation of the first man; no new discovery has been made, but that first observation, one and the same,

has been confirmed in many ways, varying from generation to generation in the form of expression, or in the way in which it was presented, or in the turn of the thought.

So deeply is this need grounded in man's nature, and so essentially does it belong to the fact of his being human, that even He who was One with the Father, and in community of love was One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He who loved the whole race, our Lord Jesus Christ, still humanly felt this need to love and be loved by an individual man. He was indeed the God-Man, and so eternally different from every other man, but He was, nevertheless, also true man, tried in everything human. And, on the other side, the fact that He experienced all this, is exactly the expression for the fact that He was essentially human. He was an actual man, and can therefore have sympathy with all things human; He was not an airy form which beckoned in the clouds, without understanding or wishing to understand what humanly befalls a man. Oh, no. He could have pity on the multitude who needed food, and that in the purely human sense, He who had Himself hungered in the wilderness.

And so too He could sympathize with men in their need to love and to be loved, sympathize in a purely human way. We find this pictured in the Gospel of John. Jesus says to Simon Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter answers Him: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." How touching this is! Christ asks: "Lovest thou me more than these?" It is almost like a prayer for love. Thus speaks the One to whom it is all important to be the best-loved. Peter himself is conscious of this inconsonance, like that when Jesus would be baptized by John. Therefore Peter not only answers, "Yes," but he adds, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." This reply indicates the inconsonance. For ordinarily if a man knows that he is loved, because he has heard it asserted before, then he is more than willing to hear it again, and therefore wishes to hear it again,

although he knows it in many other ways than by this mere assertion, to which he once more returns, anxious to hear it again. Of course it is in another sense that Christ can be said to know that Peter loves Him. Still, Christ again a second time says to him: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Peter answers Him: “Aye, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.” What else is there to answer, while the inconsonance only becomes clearer because the question is asked a second time! Christ says to him the third time: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Peter was grieved because He said a third time to him, “Lovest thou me?” and Peter said to Him: “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” Peter does not carry his answer further; instead, in his reply he refers to what Christ must know from experience about Peter’s feeling— “Thou knowest that I love Thee,” he answers, “Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.” Hence Peter says no more, he almost shudders at the inconsonance; for a “yes” is like a real answer to a real question, whereby the questioner learns to know something or learns it more definitely than he knew it before. But One who “knows all things,” how can He get to know something, or through another’s assurance get to know it more certainly than He knew it before? And yet, if He cannot do this, then neither can He love quite humanly, for this is just the mystery of love, that there is no higher certainty than the beloved’s renewed assurance; humanly understood it is unconditionally to be certain of being loved, not of loving, since it is superior to the relation between friend and friend. Terrible contradiction: that the One who is God, loves humanly; for to love humanly is indeed to love an individual man and to wish to be the one best loved by this particular man. That is why Peter was grieved at the question being asked a third time! For in a similar relation of love between men, there is a new joy in the question being asked three times, and a new joy in answering three times; or else the question repeated too often grieves, because it seems to

betray mistrust. But when He who knows all things asks three times, hence finds it necessary to ask three times, then must it not be because, since He knows everything. He knows that the love is not strong enough, not inward enough, not ardent enough, in the one who is questioned, the one who would also deny Him three times? Peter must certainly have thought that this was the reason the Lord found it necessary to ask the question three times — for it truly could not be because the Lord Himself felt the need to hear this "yes" three times; such a thought would be beyond man's power to imagine. Even if the thought is allowed, it is simply out of the question. Oh, but how human! He who answered not a word to the high priests who condemned Him to death, He who answered not a word to Pilate who held His life in his hands — He asks three times if He is loved; moreover. He asks if Peter loves Him— "more than these"!

So deeply is love rooted in human nature, so essentially does it belong to the human-, and yet men so frequently find excuses in order to deprive themselves — of this blessedness, hence they elicit deception — in order to deceive themselves, or to make themselves unhappy. Sometimes the excuse assumes the form of sadness; one sighs over men and over his own unhappiness; one can find no one to love. For to sigh over the world and its unhappiness is always easier than to beat one's breast and sigh over one's self. Sometimes the self-deception sounds like an accusation; one accuses men of not being worthy of love — one "groans against" men; for it is always easier to be the accuser than the accused. Sometimes the self-deception lies in the proud self-satisfaction which believes that it seeks in vain for a worthy object of its love — for it is always easier to show superiority by being fastidious about others than by being strict with one's self. And yet, yet we are all agreed that this is an unfortunate attitude, and that such behavior is wrong. And what is it then that is wrong? What other than the constant seeking and rejecting by these men! Such men do not

notice that their talk sounds like a mockery of themselves, because the fact of their not being able to find any worthy object for their love among men, indicates that they are themselves utterly lacking in love.

Is it really love to wish to find it outside one's self? I supposed love consisted in bringing it with one. But he who has love in himself when he is seeking an object for his love (and otherwise it is not true that he seeks an object — for his love), he will easily, and the greater his love the more easily, find an object, and find it to be such that it is lovable. For the ability to love a man in spite of his weaknesses and faults and imperfections is not the perfect love, but perfect love consists in being able to find him lovable in spite of and with his weaknesses and faults and imperfections.

Let us understand each other. It is one thing to be finicky and wish to eat only the most delicate and rarest dishes, most exquisitely prepared, and even when they are of this kind, then to be finicky in finding one fault or another in them. It is quite a different matter not only to be able to eat the more modest fare, but to be able to find this simpler fare the choicest, because the problem set for him is not to develop his fastidiousness, but to transform himself and his tastes.

Or if there were two artists, and one of them were to say: "I have traveled a great deal in my time and have looked about a good bit in the world, but I have looked in vain for a man who was worth painting. I have never found a face which pictured such perfect beauty that I could decide to draw it; in every face I have always found one or another little defect, and therefore I have sought in vain." Would this be a sign that he was a great artist? On the other hand, the second artist said: "Now I do not really pretend to be an artist. I have not traveled in foreign countries, but have remained in the little circle of people who were my neighbors; among these I have not found a single face so insignificant or so irregular that I could not distinguish a more beautiful side and discover something pleasing in it.

Therefore the art I practice gives me pleasure and satisfies me, without my claiming to be an artist." Would this not indicate that this man really was an artist, who by bringing a certain something with him found at home what the much-traveled artist found nowhere in the world, perhaps because he did not bring a certain something with him! Hence the second man was the artist.

Would it not be distressing if that which was intended to embellish life were only to be a curse upon it, so that "art," instead of beautifying life for us, merely fastidiously discovered that none of us was beautiful! And how much more distressing as well as confusing it would be if love should only become a curse, because its requirement alone revealed that none of us was worthy of love, instead of love being precisely recognizable by the fact that it is loving enough to find something lovable in all of us, hence loving enough to be able to love all of us.

It is a distressing absurdity, which is, however, altogether too general, always to be perpetually talking about how the object of love ought to be, in order to be worthy of love, instead of talking about how love ought to be in order to be love. It is so common, not only in daily life, but, oh, how often is it not seen, that even the one who calls himself a poet ascribes all his merit to the refined, soft, aristocratic fastidiousness which, in contrast to loving, cold-bloodedly knows how to reject and reject; assumes it to be his task in this respect to initiate men into all the abominable mysteries of fastidiousness. Still some are inclined to do this; many are still so disposed, so inquisitive to learn this, that is, to get a knowledge which really only serves to embitter life for themselves and others! For of how much in life does it not hold true that if one had never learned it, then one would have found everything beautiful, or at least more beautiful than one does. But after one has been infected with the taint of fastidiousness, how difficult it

becomes to regain what he lost, the natural gifts of good nature and love, with which God has fundamentally endowed every man!

But if no one else can or will, an apostle always knows how to lead us in the right way in this respect, the right way which both leads us to do right to others and to make ourselves happy. So we have chosen some words of the apostle John: “If any of you say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” We shall make these words the object of our reflection, as rejoicing in the task, we choose to speak about

THE DUTY OF LOVING THE MEN WE SEE.

But this is not to be understood as if the discourse were about loving all the men we see, for that is the love for the neighbor which we discussed earlier. On the contrary, let it be understood that the discourse concerns the duty of finding those in the actual world whom we might love in particular, and in loving them to love the men we see. If this is our duty, then the task does not consist in finding — the lovable object; but the task consists in fielding the object already given or chosen — lovable, and in continuing to find him lovable however changed he is.

However, we shall first consider a little difficulty respecting the Gospel passage read, a difficulty which it might occur to an earthly shrewdness, perhaps conceited at its own cleverness, to raise, whether it actually does so or not. When the apostle says: “He who does not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” then a clever man might raise the objection that this is a deceptive turn of thought. For he had really assured himself that the brother he had seen was not worthy of love, but from this fact (that he did not love the one he regarded as undeserving of love) how could it be inferred that there was anything to prevent such a man from loving God whom he had not seen? And yet the apostle believes that there is something which prevents such a man from loving God,

although by this word "brother" he certainly is not speaking about some quite definite individual man, but chiefly about the matter of loving men. The apostle believes that it is a divine contention that is submitted against the unreliability of a man's assertion about loving the invisible, when it appears that this man does not love the visible; whereas it might seem just as visionary to say that one loves the invisible by not loving anything visible. It is a divine contention submitted against human romanticism with respect to loving God, for it is visionary, even if it is not hypocritical, thus to wish to love the invisible. The matter is quite simple. Man must begin by loving the unseen, God, for thereby he will himself learn what it means to love; but the fact that he really loves the unseen will be recognized precisely by the fact that he loves the brother he sees; the more he loves the unseen, the more he will love the men he sees. Not conversely, that the more he rejects those he sees, the more he loves the unseen. If that were true then God would be transformed into an unreal something, a figment of the imagination. Therefore only a hypocrite and a deceiver would hit upon such ideas for the sake of finding an excuse; or one who misrepresents God by making it seem as if God were jealous for Himself and for being loved, instead of the blessed God being merciful, and, as it were, constantly subordinating Himself by saying: "If you will Jove me, then love the men you see; what you do to them you do to me."

God is too exalted to be able simply to accept a man's love, to say nothing of His being able to find pleasure in those things in which a visionary delights. If someone says about a gift through which he would be able to help his parents, that it is "Corban," that is, that it is already dedicated to God, this is not well-pleasing to God. If you wish to show that it is dedicated to God, then give it in the name of God. If you wish to show that your life is dedicated to the service of God, then let it serve men, but always in the name of God. God is not a party to existence in such a way

that He demands His share for Himself. He demands everything, but when you bring it you learn to know at once, if I may speak thus, by the endorsement on it, where it will be further negotiated; for God demands nothing for Himself, although He demands everything from you. So the apostle's words, if rightly understood, lead directly to the subject of the discourse.

When it is a duty to love the men one sees, then must one primarily renounce all imaginative and overstrained ideas of a dream-world, where the object of love would he to seek and to find; that is, one must become sober, gain reality and truth by finding and remaining in the world of reality, as the sole appointed task.

The most dangerous of all evasions as regards loving, is to wish to love only the invisible, or that one has not seen. This evasion is so high-flying that it soars completely above reality; it is so intoxicating that it easily tempts and easily imagines itself to be the all-supreme and most perfect kind of love. Certainly it seldom occurs to a man shamelessly to speak derogatorily about loving; on the contrary, that deception is more general by which men defraud themselves of really beginning to love, just because they talk too enthusiastically about loving and of love. The reason for this has a far deeper ground than we might suppose; otherwise the confusion could not have established itself as firmly as it has, the confusion that arises from calling that a misfortune which is a fault: the fact of their not finding any object of love whereby they still further hindered themselves from finding it; for as soon as they realized that it was their own fault, then they found it. The general conception of love is that it is the opened eye of admiration which is looking for superiority and perfections. That is why one complains that one looks in vain. We shall not attempt to decide how far the individual is right or not; whether or not that lovable superiority and perfection which he seeks, are to be found; whether he has not confused his

search by his fastidiousness. No, we shall not dispute in this way. We shall not dispute within the limits of this conception of love, for this whole conception is an error, since love is rather the closed eye of forbearance and mildness, which does not see the deficiencies and the imperfections.

But it is very essential that we emphasize the difference between these two conceptions, for there is a world of difference, a revolutionary difference between them. It is only the latter conception that is true, the first is an error. And it is well known that an error never halts of itself, it only leads farther and farther astray, so it becomes increasingly difficult to find the way back to truth. The way of error is easy to find, but to find the way back is so difficult — as we are told in the legend about that mountain of Venus, which must lie somewhere on earth, that no one who found his way to it could ever find his way back. So if a man with the wrong idea of what love is, goes out into the world, then he seeks, and seeks, as he believes, to find the object of love, but, as he thinks, in vain. However, he does not change his conception of what it is; on the contrary, enriched by his manifold knowledge of the fastidious, he seeks ever more fastidiously, but, as he believes, in vain. It never occurs to him that the mistake might lie in himself or in his wrong conception of what love is. On the contrary, the more refined he becomes in his fastidiousness, the more exalted opinion he entertains of himself and of the perfection of his conception of love — the more clearly he sees how imperfect men are, and this can be discovered only through the assistance of his own perfection! Nevertheless, he is absolutely certain that this is not his fault, that he does not act from any evil or hateful motive — he who is seeking only love.

For far be it from him to renounce love, he who so vividly realizes how his conception of it becomes ever more enthusiastic — what indeed could ever become more enthusiastic than an error! And he has not checked the error, exactly the reverse; by its aid he has made himself giddy — in loving

the invisible, an apparition one does not see. Or does not all this come to one and the same thing: seeing an apparition — and: not seeing? For if you take away the apparition you see nothing, the man himself admits that; but the man forgets that if you take away the seeing, then you still see an apparition. But, as was said, he will not give up love or talk humbly about it; he will talk enthusiastically about it and preserve it — the love of the unseen. Distressing error! We say about worldly honor and power, about wealth and happiness, that it is as a vapor, and this is indeed true. But that the strongest power in man, a power which according to his own definition is simply nothing less, since it is life and strength, that this should become as vapor, and that the man intoxicated by these vapors, proudly believes that he has apprehended the highest — that man has indeed seized upon clouds and fancies, which always soar high above reality: lo, that is terrible! Ordinarily one devoutly warns against wasting the gifts of God; but which of God's gifts is comparable to the love which he implanted in the human heart? Alas, and then to see it wasted in this way! For the clever man believes — foolishly, that one wastes his love in loving the imperfect, the weak men. I should suppose that this would be to apply his love, to make use of it. But to be able to find no object for love, to waste it in a vain search, to squander it in empty space by loving the unseen: that is truly wasting it.

Therefore be sober, come to your senses; understand that the fault lies in your conception of love, that this ought to constitute a claim, a most glorious one, since the whole of existence would not be able to pay it, any more than you can prove your right to collect this claim. At the very moment in which you changed your conception of love, that it is the exact opposite of a claim, that it is an outstanding indebtedness to which God binds you; that very moment you have found reality. And just this is your duty, thus with closed eyes (for in love you close your eyes to weakness and

frailty and imperfection) to find reality, instead of with open eyes (aye, open and staring like a sleepwalker's) to overlook reality. For duty this constitutes the first condition, so that in loving at all you may come to love the men you see. The condition is to find a foothold of reality. Error always vacillates, that is why it sometimes looks so easy and so spiritual, because it is so airy. Truth takes firm and therefore sometimes difficult steps. It stands upon solid ground, and therefore sometimes looks so simple. There is also a significant change: instead of having a claim to recover to get a duty to fulfil; instead of having a world to traverse to take, as it were, a world upon one's shoulders; instead of ardently wishing to seek the pleasant fruit of admiration to have to bear patiently with want. Ah, what a change! And yet it is through this change that love comes into being, the love which can perfect the duty: in loving, to love the men we see.

When it is a duty in loving to love the men we see, then it is important that in loving the individual, actual man, we do not slip in an imagined conception of how we believe or might wish that this man should be. He who allows himself to do this does not love the man he sees, but again something unseen, his own idea, or something like it.

There is in loving a manner of conduct which contains a considerable alloy of doubt and fastidiousness. It is one thing to reject and reject, and never find an object worthy of love; it is another thing in loving what one calls the object of his love, truly and sincerely to perfect this duty in loving what he sees. It is in truth a worthy wish, a truly worthy wish, that the one we love should possess the lovable perfections; we wish it not merely for our own sake, but also for his. Above all, it is worthwhile to wish and to pray that the one we love might always act and be such as we are able to approve of and agree with. But, for God's sake, let us not forget that it is not to our credit if he is so, even less to our credit to demand it of him — should any question of our merit arise, which is, however, improper and

unseemly talk in relation to love, which should simply be to love equally faithfully and tenderly.

But there is a fastidiousness which always, as it were, works against love, and wishes to prevent it from loving what it sees, when the fastidiousness with a wavering and yet in a certain sense critical glance, effaces the actual form of love or offends against it, and cunningly demands to see something else. There are men about whom one may say that they have not yet taken form, that their reality has not consolidated itself, because inwardly they cannot make up their minds as to what they are and what they wish to be. But by the way in which one sees, one can also make another man's form vacillating and unreal, because the love, which should love the man it sees, cannot really decide, but sometimes would do away with one fault in its object; sometimes would demand a perfection in it, which would be, if I may say so, as if a bargain was not quite completed. Yet the one who by loving in this way is inclined to be fastidious, does not love the man he sees, and really makes his love objectionable, as hard for the beloved.

Your beloved, your friend, is also in the more general sense a man, and he exists as such for the rest of us; but for you he should essentially exist as the beloved, if you will to perfect your duty in loving the man you see. If there is duplicity in your relationship, so that he partly exists for you in a general sense as an individual man, partly in a particular sense as the beloved, then you do not love the man you see. It is rather as if you had in that sense two ears, so that you do not as ordinarily hear the same thing with both ears, but you hear one thing with one ear, and another thing with the other ear. You hear with one ear what he says, and whether it is wise and correct and shrewd and spiritual and so on; alas, and with the other ear you hear that it is the voice of the beloved. You scrutinize him probingly with one eye, searchingly, critically, alas, and only with the other eye do you see

that he is the beloved. Oh, but thus to divide, that is not to love the man one sees. Is it not as if there were constantly a third party present, even when the two are alone, a third party who tests and rejects, a third party who disturbs the inwardness, a third party who may sometimes make the concerned disgusted with himself and his love, because it is so critical; a third party who would alarm the beloved if he knew that this third party was present! What, too, does it mean, that this third party is present? It signifies that if... this or that is not in accordance with your wish, then you might not love; hence the third party signifies divorce, separation; so consequently the thought of separation is present — confidentially, alas, as when in paganism the destructive being is insanely included in the unity of the godhead. Does the presence of the third party not signify that the love-relationship is yet in a certain sense no relationship, in that you stand above the relationship and test the beloved? Do you not consider that in such a case something else is tested, whether you really have love, or rather that there is something else decided, that you do not really love? For life certainly has tests enough, and these tests should precisely find the lovers, find friend and friend, united in order to endure the test. But if the test is to enter into the relationship, then a treachery has been committed.

Truly this mysterious reserve is the most dangerous kind of faithlessness; such a man does not break his vow, but he makes it constantly indecisive whether he is bound by his vow. Is it not faithlessness when your friend clasps your hand, and there is in this handclasp something vague, as if it were doubtful to him who pressed your hand how closely at that moment he corresponded to your idea of him, so that you would reciprocate in the same way? Is the relationship to be such that it must every moment begin from the beginning to come into the relationship; is this to love the man you see, every moment to test him, as if it were the first time you saw him? It is abhorrent to see the fastidiousness which rejects all food, but it is also

abhorrent to see the one who, to be sure, eats the food which is politely offered him, and yet in a certain sense does not eat, but constantly, as if he were already satiated, only tastes of the food or takes pains to taste a tidbit, while he is satiated by plainer food.

No, if a man wishes to fulfil his duty in loving to love the men he sees, then he must not only find those he loves among actual men, but he must eradicate all doubt and fastidiousness in loving them, so that in earnestness and truth he loves them as they are; he must in earnestness and truth apprehend the task: to find the given or the chosen object lovable. We do not mean by this to recommend a childish infatuation with the accidental circumstances of the beloved, even less a fond indulgence in the wrong place; far from it, the earnestness lies in the fact that the relationship itself must with a united effort fight against the imperfect, overcome the defects, remove the differences. This is earnestness; fastidiousness makes the relationship itself ambiguous. His weakness or his fault does not make the one a stranger to the other, but the union regards the weaker as the stranger, which it is equally important to both to overcome and to remove. It is not you who because of the weakness of the beloved must, as it were, withdraw from him, or make your relationship less close; on the contrary, the two must hold themselves more closely and inwardly together in order to remove the weakness. As soon as the relationship is ambiguous, so that you do not love the man you see, then it is as if you demanded something else in order to be able to love; since on the contrary, the fault or the weakness makes the relationship more inward, not as if the fault should be retained, but just in order to overcome it, so you love the man you see. You see the fault, but the fact that the relationship becomes more inward, shows precisely that you love the man in whom you still see the fault or the weakness or the imperfection.

As there are hypocritical tears, hypocritical sighing and complaining about the world, so too is there hypocritical sorrow over the weaknesses and imperfections of the beloved. It is so easy and so complacent to wish the beloved to have all possible perfections,, and then, if some are lacking, it is again so easy and so complacent to sigh and sorrow and become self-important over one's own presumably pure and profound distress. It is perhaps, on the whole, a more general form of sensualism selfishly to wish to show off the beloved or the friend, and to wish to despair over each insignificant fault. But would that be loving the men we see? Oh, no, the men we see, and hence ourselves when others see us, are not so perfect; and yet it is so often the case that a man develops in himself this delicate frailty which is only calculated to love the complete conception of the perfect. And although we are all of us so imperfect, one rarely sees the strong, sound, efficient love which is calculated to love those imperfect ones, that is, the men we see.

When in loving it is a duty to love the men we see, then is there no limit to the love; if the duty is fulfilled, the love must be limitless, that is, unchanged, however its object changes.

Let us consider what we were reminded of in the introduction to this meditation; the relation between Christ and Peter — wonder if Peter, especially in his relation to Christ, was like an epitome of all perfections. And, on the other side, Christ certainly knew his faults! Let us speak in human fashion about this relation. God knows how many generally insignificant trifles are yet scrupulously gathered up and carefully concealed, which either at once, or, what is even more distressing, after a long lapse of time, give us occasion to accuse the one the other of selfishness, faithlessness or treachery. God knows how very infrequently the accuser makes even a slight effort to put himself in the place of the accused, so that the judgment, the strict, the merciless judgment, might not

be an overhasty one, but judicious, but at least insofar thoughtful, that it knows with certainty about that which it judges. God knows how often one sees this sorry sight, how passion immediately equips even the perhaps ordinarily restricted man, if he is presumably the injured party, with a shrewdness which is astonishing; and on the other hand, how it strikes even the perhaps ordinarily intelligent man with stupidity with respect to every appeasing, extenuating, exonerating interpretation of the injury, because it pleases the offended passion to be shrewdly blind: but this we shall all agree upon, that if in a relation between two friends there had happened what happened to Christ with Peter, then there would truly be a sufficient reason for breaking — with such a traitor. If your life had been brought into the utmost danger, and you had a friend who of his own accord had sworn a solemn oath of loyalty, moreover, of being willing to lay down his life for you; if then when the danger came, he did not even remain away (that would almost have been more forgivable), no, he came, he was present, but he did not move a hand; he stood and looked on quietly, or, no, he did not stand quietly, his only thought was to save himself and on any condition; he did not even take to flight (that would almost have been more forgivable), no, he remained standing as a spectator, which he asserted that he was — by denying you: what then? We shall not even let the apodosis follow; let us only present the relationship very vividly and speak in quite human fashion about it. Hence, you stood accused by your enemies, condemned by your enemies. It was literally true that you stood everywhere surrounded by enemies. The powerful, who might perhaps have been able to understand you, had hardened themselves against you, they hated you. Therefore, you now stood accused and condemned — while a blinded, raging mob hurled insults against you; maddened, even rejoiced at the thought that your blood would be upon them and upon their children. And this pleased the rulers who ordinarily despised the mob so deeply; it pleased them because it

satisfied their hatred, so that it was animal ferocity and the lowest paltriness which had found its victim and its prey in you. You had reconciled yourself to your fate; you understood that there was not a single word to say, since the insult only sought occasion, so that the magnanimous word about your innocence would only give insult a new occasion, as if it were defiance; so the clearest proof of your righteousness would embitter the mob and make the insults even more violent; so that an expression of pain would give a new occasion for insults, as if it had expressed cowardice. Thus you stood, an outcast from human society, and yet not an outcast; you stood surrounded by men enough, but none of them saw in you a man, even if in another sense they saw in you a man, for they would not have treated a wild beast so inhumanly. Oh, horror, more terrible than if you had fallen among wild beasts; for I wonder if even the nightly howling of the most bloodthirsty beasts of prey is as horrible as the inhumanity of a raging mob. I wonder if in a herd of wild animals one beast can so excite another to a greater ferocity than that which is simply natural, as in an innocent crowd one man can excite another to more than animal bloodthirstiness and cruelty. I wonder if the baleful or burning eye of the most bloodthirsty beast has such an evil burning as this which inflames the eye of the individual when, excited and exciting, he joins with the wild, raging mob! So you stood accused, condemned, insulted; vainly you looked about to discover a figure which still resembled a man, to say nothing of a friendly face on which your eye could rest — then you saw him, your friend, but he denied you, and the insult which had before sounded raucous enough was now like an echo multiplied a hundredfold! If this had happened to you, would you not truly have considered yourself magnanimous if, instead of considering revenge, you had turned your eyes away from him and said to yourself: “I do not care to look at this traitor”!

How differently Christ acted! He did not turn His eyes away from Peter, as if He were unconscious that Peter existed; He did not say, “I will not look at this traitor”; He did not leave him to shift for himself. No, He “looked upon him”; He reminded him at once with a glance; had it been possible He certainly would not have refused to speak to him. And how did Christ look at Peter? Was it an indignant glance? Was it like a glance of dismissal? Oh, no, it was as when a mother sees her child in danger through his own carelessness, and then, if she is not able to reach the child, she overtakes it with her reproachful yet also saving glance. But was Peter in danger? Ah, who cannot see this: for how terrible for a man to have denied his friend! But an injured friend cannot see in the passion of anger that the one who denied him is in danger. But He who is called the Saviour of the world. He could see clearly where the danger was, that it was Peter who was in danger, Peter, who should and must be saved! The Saviour of the world was not mistaken. He did not see His cause lost if Peter did not hasten to help Him, but He saw Peter lost if He did not hasten to save him. I wonder if there lives or ever has lived a man who cannot understand this which is so clear and so obvious; and yet Christ is the only one who saw this at the critical moment, when He Himself was the accused, the condemned, the mocked, the spit-upon, the denied.

A man is seldom tried in a crisis which involves life and death, and hence he seldom gets occasion to test the devotion of friendship to its extreme limit. But merely in some more important moment to find timidity and shrewdness where you were prepared because of your friendship to look for courage and resolution; to find duplicity, fickleness and evasion instead of candor, decision and refuge; to find only frivolity instead of sober-minded reflection: alas, how difficult then in the haste of the moment and the heat of passion, to be immediately able to understand on which side the danger lies, which one of the friends is in the greater danger, you or he

who thus leaves you in the lurch; how difficult then to love the man you see — when you see him so changed!

Nowadays we are accustomed to praise Christ's attitude towards Peter; let us guard against this commendation becoming a delusion, a figment of the imagination, because we are not able or willing to exert our thought, to imagine ourselves contemporary with the event, so that while we praise Christ on the one hand, on the other hand, insofar as we are contemporaneous with a similar event, we act and speak quite differently. We have no report handed down concerning the contemporary interpretation of Christ's attitude towards Peter, but if you meet them, those contemporaries, then ask them, and you will learn that on this occasion, just as on the occasion of almost everything which Christ did, people said: "The fool! Even granting that his case was desperately lost, yet not to have power to muster all his strength for the last time in a single glance which would crush this traitor! What craven, unmanly weakness! Is that acting like a man!" Thus was He judged, and the insult found a new expression. Or it would be said by the powerful ruler who intended to review the circumstances: "Well, why did he seek his company with publicans and sinners, his followers among the poorest class of people? He should have associated himself with us, the leaders of the synagogue, but as it is, he gets what he deserves. This shows how far one can rely on that kind of people. Well, as he has always abandoned himself to that class, he keeps it up to the last. He does not even become infuriated by their shabby faithlessness."

Perhaps the more clever among them, wishing to seem magnanimous, would explain: "The fact that the high priests have allowed him to be taken, the fact that he, fanatic though he was, now sees that everything is lost, may have weakened his reason and broken his courage, so that he has become depressed in a cowardly, spiritless stupor. Perhaps this explains his forgiving such betrayal, for of course no real man would behave in this

way!” Alas, it is only too true: no man does behave in this way. That is just why Christ’s life furnishes the only instance where a teacher, just at the moment His case is lost along with His life, and everything is most terribly forfeited through the apostasy of His disciple, by His glance at that very instant wins His most zealous adherent in this disciple, and thus His cause to a great extent, although the latter fact is hidden from everyone.

Christ’s love for Peter was, therefore, boundless; in loving Peter He perfected the task of loving the man one sees. He did not say: ‘Peter must first be changed and become another man before I can love him.” No, exactly the converse. He said: “Peter is Peter, and I love him. My love, if it amounts to anything, will precisely help him to become another man.” Hence He did not break off His friendship, in order perhaps to resume it again when Peter had become another man. No, He maintained His friendship unchanged, and through that was helpful to Peter in becoming another man. Do you believe that without this loyal friendship of Christ Peter would have been rewon? But it is so easy to be a friend when this does not entail anything more than asking some definite favor from the friend, and, if the friend does not comply with this request, then allowing the friendship to lapse, until it is perhaps renewed when he complies with the request. Is this the relation of friendship? Who should be more ready to help an erring one than the one who calls himself his friend, even if the fault was committed against the friend! But the friend avoids him and says (and it is as if some third party were speaking): “When he changes and becomes another man, then he may perhaps again be my friend.” And it is not far from being the case that we men regard such conduct as magnanimous. But truly, it is far from being true that a man can say about such a friend, that in loving he loves the man he sees.

Christ’s love was boundless, as it must be if this is to be perfected: in loving to love the man one sees. This is very easy to perceive. However

much and however a man is changed, he is not yet so changed that he becomes invisible. If this — the impossible — is not the case, then we see him, and our duty is to love the man we see. Generally we are inclined to believe that when a man has essentially changed for the worse, he is then so changed that one is excused from loving him. What a confusion of language: to be excused — from loving, as if it were a compulsory matter, a burden one wished to cast off! But Christianity asks: “Can you because of this change no longer see him?” To this the answer must be: “Certainly I can see him. I see exactly that he is no longer worthy of love.” But if you see that, then you do not really see him (which in another sense you cannot deny doing), you see only the unworthiness, the imperfection, and thereby you admit that when you loved him, in another sense you did not love him, but you loved only his superiority and his perfections. From the Christian standpoint, on the contrary, loving consists exactly in loving the man one sees. The emphasis lies not on loving the perfections one sees in a man, but the emphasis is placed on the man one sees, whether one now sees in this man perfections or imperfections, moreover, no matter how sadly this man has changed, since he still has not ceased to be the same man. He who loves the perfections he sees in a man, does not see the man, and therefore he ceases to love when the perfections cease, when a change enters, which change, even if distressing, still does not indicate that the man has ceased to exist. Alas, but even the wisest and most intelligent purely human interpretations of love are still somewhat highfalutin, somewhat hazy; Christian love, on the other hand, descended from heaven to earth. Its direction is consequently opposite. Christian love will not soar to heaven, for it comes from heaven and with heaven; it descends and thereby it succeeds in loving the same man in all the changes, because it sees the same man in all the changes. The merely human love is constantly prepared, as it were, to flee away after, or to flee away with the perfections of the beloved.

We say about a seducer that he steals a maiden's heart; but we must say about all merely human love, even when it is most beautiful, that there is a little thievishness in it, that it still steals the perfections of the beloved, while the Christian love grants the beloved all his imperfections and weaknesses, and in all his changes abides with him, loving the man it sees.

If this were not so, then Christ would never have come in love; for where would He have found the perfect! Wonderful! What it would really do would be to prevent Christ from finding the perfect; for was He not Himself exactly the perfect, which is recognized by His boundless love for the men He saw? What a wonderful crossing of concepts! We speak constantly with regard to love, about the perfect and the complete; Christianity also speaks constantly in relation to love about the perfect and the complete: ah, but we men speak about finding the perfect in order to love him; Christianity speaks about being the perfect which inimitably loves the man it sees. We men wish to look up in order to see the object of perfection (the tendency is still constantly towards the invisible), but in Christ perfection looked down to earth and loved the man it saw. And from Christianity we should learn, for it is still so in a far more general sense than is realized, that no one ascends to heaven except One who first descended from heaven: however enthusiastic the speech sounds about soaring to heaven, it is a delusion, unless you first, as Christianity says, descend from heaven. But from the Christian point of view to descend from heaven means to love infinitely the man you see, just as you see him. If you will, therefore, become perfect in love, then strive to perfect this duty, in loving to love the man you see; to love him just as you see him, with all his imperfections and weaknesses; to love him as you see him when he has completely changed, when he no longer loves you, but perhaps indifferently turns away to love another; to love him as you see him when he betrays and denies you.

V. OUR DUTY TO REMAIN IN THE DEBT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER

OWE NO MAN anything but to love one another. — Romans 13 18

MEN HAVE TRIED in various ways to depict and describe how love is felt by the one who has it, his condition in love, or what it means to love. Love has been called a feeling, a mood, a life, a passion; yet since these are very general definitions, an effort has been made to describe love more precisely. Someone has called it a want, but it is worth noticing that the lover constantly wants what he already possesses; it has been called a longing, but, it is well to note, a constant longing for something the lover already has — for otherwise the love described is an unhappy one.

That simple wise man of old said that "love is the son of wealth and poverty." Who in truth could be poorer than the one who has never loved! But, on the other hand, does even the poorest, who bending over gleans up the crumbs and is humbly grateful for a penny, really have any idea how small a trifle may have infinite value for the lover; how small the trifle may be which the lover (in his poverty) gathers up with infinite care and cautiously hides — like the most precious treasure! I wonder if even the poorest is able to see that which may be so little that only the sharp glance of passion (love in its poverty!) sees and tremendously magnifies! But the smaller the object which poverty gathers up, when it is grateful beyond all measure for it, as if the object were extraordinarily great, the greater it proves the poverty to be. Not even all the assurances about the greatest poverty prove this so conclusively; as if the poor man to whom you gave less than a shilling were to thank you for it as passionately as if you had given him wealth and superfluity; as passionately as if he were now rich.

Alas, for it is only too certain that the poor man remained essentially as poor as before, so it was only his — crazed idea that he had now become rich. So poor is the poverty of love!

A noble man has said about love: “It takes everything and it gives everything.” Who indeed received more than the one who received a man’s love? And who gave more than he who gave a man his love? But, on the other hand, can even envy, when it enviously strips a man of his actual or supposed greatness, thus penetrate to the inmost undergarment! Oh, envy is still so stupid; it does not even suspect where the enclosure might be, or that this enclosure exists, where the really rich man has his true treasure hidden. It does not even suspect that there is a burglar-proof receptacle against thieves (hence, also against envy), just as there is treasure which thieves (hence, also envy) are not able to steal. But love can press forward into the inmost enclosure and strip a man so that he has nothing left, owns nothing, so that he must himself admit that he has nothing, simply nothing, owns nothing. Wonderful! Envy takes, as it thinks, everything, and, when it has thus taken, the man says, “I have really lost nothing.” But love can take everything, so that the man himself says, “I own nothing at all.”

However, love is perhaps most correctly described as an infinite debt: so that when love seizes upon a man he feels that he is infinitely in debt. Generally we say about the one who is loved, that through being loved he becomes a debtor. Thus we say that children are in love indebted to their parents, because these have loved them first, so that the children’s love is only a partial payment on the debt, or a repayment. And this of course is true. But still such a statement reminds one too much of an actual business relation: where an indebtedness has been incurred and must be paid off in installments. It is love which has been shown us, and it must be repaid with love. We are not now speaking of the fact that the receiving one runs into debt. No, he who loves is in debt; when he feels himself gripped by love, he

feels this as being in an infinite debt. Wonderful! To give a man his love is, as was said, the highest thing one man can give another — and yet, just when he gives his love and just through giving it, he becomes infinitely indebted. Therefore can one say: this is love's characteristic, that the lover by giving, infinitely, comes — into infinite debt. But this is the relation of the infinite, and love is infinite. By giving away money one does not really run into debt; on the contrary, the receiver is in debt. On the contrary, when the lover gives what is infinitely the highest gift one man can give another, his love, then he places himself in an infinite debt. What a beautiful, what a sacred diffidence does not love bring with it; it not only dares not persuade itself to regard its own act as something meritorious, but it is ashamed even to regard its own act as a part payment on the debt; its own gift becomes consciously like an infinite debt which it is impossible to repay, since in giving, it is constantly running into debt.

Thus one might describe love. Yet Christianity never lingers on the condition or on the description of it; it always hastens to the task, or hastens to set the task. This is precisely expressed in the Gospel passage we read: "Owe no man anything except to love one another" which words we shall use as the basis for this meditation:

OUR DUTY TO REMAIN IN THE DEBT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER.

To remain in debt! But should that be difficult? Nothing is easier than running into debt! And, on the other hand, could remaining in debt be a task? We usually think otherwise, that our problem is the one of getting out of debt: the indebtedness may be anything, there are money debts, debts of honor, promissory notes, in short, anything whatever, the problem ordinarily always being how to get out of debt, the sooner the better. But here the task would be, and hence the honor, to remain in debt! And if this is the task,

then it must be an action, perhaps an extensive, a difficult action. But to stay in debt is still precisely the expression for not undertaking the least thing; it is the expression for inactivity, indifference, sluggishness. And this same phrase, as used here, will be the expression for that which is precisely the opposite of indifference, the expression for infinite love.

Lo, all this, all these strange difficulties, which, as it were, heap themselves up against this strange saying, indicate that the matter may have a peculiar connection, so that a certain reorganization of mind and thought is needed in order merely to realize what the discourse is really about.

Let us begin with a little thought-experiment. If the lover, humanly speaking, had done something for the beloved so extraordinary, so exalted, so self-sacrificing, that men might say, "This is the greatest thing one man can do for another": then this would be beautiful and good. But suppose he were to add: "See, now I have paid my debt!" Would this not be ungracious, cold, and, strictly speaking, if I may venture, an indecency which ought never to be heard, and which never is heard in the good society of true love! If, on the other hand, the lover had done this high-minded and self-sacrificing thing, and now were to add: "I still have one prayer — oh, let me remain in your debt": would this not be graciously said! Or if the lover by means of every sacrifice indulges the wishes of the beloved, and now says, "It is a joy to me to pay off by this means a fragment of the indebtedness — in which, however, I still wish to continue": would this not be graciously said! Or if he simply kept silent about its involving sacrifice, merely to avoid the confusion it might produce, in that this sacrifice might for a moment seem like a partial payment on the debt: would this not be a gracious thought! If this is true, has it not really indicated that any business relation is inconceivable, is most abominable to love? Reckoning can only find a place where there is a finite relation, because the relation of finite to finite permits calculation. But love cannot calculate. If its left hand never

gets to know what its right hand does, then it is impossible to cast up the accounts, and equally so when the debt is infinite. To reckon with infinite greatness is impossible, for reckoning is exactly to make finite. The lover consequently wishes for his own sake to remain in debt; he does not wish exemption from any sacrifice, far from It. Willing, indescribably willing, as the prompting of love is, he will do everything, and fear only one thing, that he might thus do everything so that he would get out of debt. Rightly understood, this is fear; the wish is to remain in debt, but it is also a duty, a task. If the love in us is not so perfect that we truly wish this, then duty will help us to remain in debt.

When it is a duty to remain in the debt of love to each other, then must there he eternal vigilance, early and late, so that love never comes to dwell upon itself, or to compare itself with the love in other men, or to compare itself with its own deeds which it has performed.

In the world we often hear enthusiastic and exciting speeches about love and faith and hope, and about the heart's goodness, in short, about all spiritual categories, speeches which describe and fascinate through their use of the most burning expressions, the most glowing colors. And yet such a discourse is really only a painted wall; it is to a closer and more serious inspection a deception, since it must either flatter the listener or make fun of him. Sometimes we hear a Christian discourse whose whole secret, like the narration and instruction noted, consists of this deceitful enthusiasm. If, for example, such a speech is heard, and a man now quite simply and honestly (for honesty precisely consists in wishing to act in accordance with what is said, in wishing to shape one's life accordingly) asks, "What shall I do, how shall I get love thus to inflame me?" then the speaker might answer literally, "That is a strange question; he who has love and faith and hope and goodness of heart, has these in the manner described, but he who does not have them cannot be helped by talking about them." Strange! One would,

nevertheless, suppose that it would be of special importance to talk to those who are not this way — in order that they might become so. But here lies just the deception in the delusion: to speak as if one would guide men, and then to be obliged to confess that one can only speak about those who need no guidance, because those whom the speech addresses are already so perfect. But who is it then to whom one speaks, who will be benefited by this speech, which at most has some individual about whom it speaks — if it is otherwise true that such an individual exists?

But could such poetic nonsense also be Christianity? If so, it is a mistake on the part of primitive Christianity, that in the sermon about righteousness and purity, it constantly refers to publicans and sinners, who certainly are not righteous! Then should not Christianity, instead of speaking sarcastically about the righteous, who need no conversion, more correctly have embellished the speech into a eulogy upon — the righteous! But if this is done, then not only does Christianity have no one to speak to, but neither does it have anyone to speak about, that is, Christianity is silenced. No, Christianity has least of all announced itself as a eulogy, and it has never concerned itself with describing or dwelling upon the fact of how a man is now; it has never made distinctions between men so it might only speak about those who are now so fortunate as to be lovable. Christianity begins at once with what every man must become. Therefore Christianity calls itself a guide, and rightly so; for no one will ask Christ, who is the Way, or the Scriptures, which are the guidance, in vain about what he ought to do: the questioner will get to know immediately — if he himself wills to know.

This in order to prevent misunderstanding. Anyone who does not wish to understand the discourse about what one must do in relation to love, in that there is truly much, or rather everything, to do both in acquiring and preserving it: he has placed himself outside of Christianity, he is a pagan who admires the lucky, hence the accidental, but just because of this he

gropes in darkness — does it really become lighter, however many will-o'-the-wisps play around him?

Hence, there is something to do, and which must be done, in order to continue in the debt of love to each other. When a fisherman has caught a fish and wishes to keep it alive, what must he do? He must at once place it in water, otherwise it weakens and dies after a longer or shorter time. And why must he put it in water? Because water is the natural element of fish, and everything which is to be kept alive must be kept in its own element But the natural element of love is infinity, inexhaustible, immeasurable. If, therefore, you wish to preserve your love, then you must take care that by the aid of infinite indebtedness, ensnared by liberty and life, it constantly remains in its element, otherwise it sickens and dies — not after a longer or shorter time, for it dies at once, which is exactly the sign of its perfection, that it can only live in infinity.

That love's natural element is infinity, inexhaustible, immeasurable, certainly no one will deny, and it is indeed easy to see. Assume, we can only' assume it, that a serving-man or a man whose labor and trouble you can pay for, does exactly the same work for you as do your friends, so that there is consequently not the slightest discoverable difference between the result of their work and that of the servant: and yet, yet there is an infinite difference, an immeasurable difference. There is, namely, always in the one case something extra, which, strangely enough, is worth infinitely more than that to which it is added as an extra. This is exactly the concept, "immeasurable"! In everything which the friend does for you, in the least trifle as in the greatest sacrifice, he is constantly giving his love with it, and thereby the smallest service,' which in connection with your servant you would hardly consider worth reckoning, becomes immeasurable.

Or imagine that a man conceived the idea of wishing to see whether he, without loving the other man yet because he wished to do it (hence, for the

sake of the experiment — not because it was his duty), could not be, as we say, equally indefatigable in sacrifices, in services, in expressions of devotion as the one who really loved the same man: you readily see that he does not approach this; there is, on the contrary, an incommensurable difference between the two. He who actually loves always has a head start, and an infinite head start; for by the time the other has unearthed, computed and discovered a new expression of devotion, the friend has already carried it out, because the friend does not need to calculate, and hence wastes no time in doing so.

But the fact of being and continuing in an infinite indebtedness, is exactly an expression for the infinity of love, so that by remaining in debt, love remains in its element. It is here a reciprocal relation, but infinite from both sides. In the one case it is the beloved who in each one of the lover's affectionate expressions of love grasps the incommensurability of the love; in the other case it is the lover who feels the incommensurability, because he knows the debt to be infinite: it is one and the same thing which is infinitely great and infinitely small. The object of love confesses in love that the lover in the smallest things does infinitely more than all others through all the greatest sacrifices; and the lover confesses that even with all possible sacrifices he does infinitely less than he feels the debt to be. What a wonderful *like for like* in this infinity! Oh, the scholars are proud of their calculation of the infinite, but here is the philosopher's stone: the least expression of love is infinitely greater than all sacrifices, and all sacrifices are infinitely less than the least expression of love in reducing the debt!

But what, then, can take love out of its element? As soon as love becomes self-centered, it is out of its natural element. What does it mean to be self-centered? It means to become itself the object. But an object is always a dangerous matter if one wishes to move forward; an object is like a finitely fixed point, a boundary and a hindrance, a dangerous matter for

the infinite. Infinitely it cannot be that love itself becomes the object, nor is there danger therein. For infinitely to be itself its own object is to remain in the infinite, and insofar only to exist or to continue to exist, since love is a reduplication in itself, as different as the particularity of the natural life is from the spiritual reduplication. Hence, when love becomes self-centered, it must be in its own individual expression that it becomes itself the object, or that another distinct love becomes the object, the love in the one man, and the love in the other man. When the object is thus finite, love becomes self-centered; for infinitely to become self-centered is exactly to be in movement. But when love is finitely self-centered, everything is lost. Imagine an arrow that flies, as we say, with the speed of an arrow; imagine that for a moment it gets the idea of halting its flight, perhaps in order to see how far it has come or how high it has soared above the earth, or how its speed compared with that of another arrow, which also flew with the speed of an arrow: at that very moment, it falls to the ground.

So too with love when it becomes finitely self-centered, or becomes itself the object, which more exactly defined, is comparison. Love cannot infinitely compare itself with itself, for infinitely it so resembles itself that this would be merely saying that it is itself. There is in the infinite comparison no third party, that is a reduplication, hence there is no comparison. The third party belongs to all comparison, together with likeness and unlikeness. If there is no dwelling on itself, there is no comparison; if there is no comparison, there is no dwelling on itself.

But what then can the third party of the comparison be? The love in the individual man can compare itself with the love in others. Then he discovers, or thinks that he discovers, that his love is greater than that in the others, or that in certain others it is greater, but in others less. Perhaps at first he believed that the comparison was but a fleeting side-glance in passing, something which required neither time nor effort. Alas! the side-

glance of comparison discovers only too easily a whole world of relationships and calculations. This causes a stoppage; at that very moment he is prepared to get out of debt, or is perhaps already out of debt — that is, out of love. Or the third party of the comparison may be those hitherto unaccomplished works of love. At the very moment when reckoning and weighing he is prepared to get out of debt, or perhaps with great self-satisfaction, he sees himself already more than out of debt — he is more than out of love.

In the comparison everything is lost, love is made finite, the debt is to be paid — quite like every other debt; in contradistinction to the debt of honor which is peculiar in that it must be paid at once, the sooner the better, the debt of love is peculiar in being infinite. What does comparison always lose? It loses the moment, the moment which should be filled with an expression of the life of love. But to lose the moment is to become immediate. A moment lost, then is the chain of eternity broken; a moment lost, then is the continuity of eternity disturbed; a moment lost, then is the eternal lost; but to lose the eternal is precisely to become immediate. A moment wasted on comparison, then is everything forfeited. The moment of comparison is, namely, a selfish moment, a moment which wishes to be for itself; just this is the breach, the fall — as the fall of the arrow is due to dwelling on itself.

In comparison, everything is lost, love made finite, the debt to pay position of no consequence, even if it were the highest; love thinks to participate comparatively in proportion to the love of others or in proportion to its own special impulses. Let us understand each other.

If it were really true, we may for a moment assume this, that it were considered unbecoming and unseemly for the kings son to associate with common men — if he nevertheless did this, and now in his own defense said, “I am by no means surrendering my dignity, I shall certainly know

how to assert myself as the first among all these men": I wonder if the subtle courtier would not say: "Your Highness, you do not understand; the unseemliness lies in the fact of your associating with such men. Your Highness will himself realize that it would sound like mockery for it to be said about you, the Prince, that you are the highest among those common men. In that comparison there is nothing for you to gain, practically nothing, by being first among them; for the relation itself, the possibility of comparison is a faux pas, and to remain outside of the possibility of comparison is the only thing worthy of the royal dignity." Still this is nothing but a jest. But when that which is and ought to be infinite seeks the evil companionship of intercourse and comparison with the finite, then this is unseemly, undignified; then is the debasement deserved, even if within the comparison one thinks to be the first. For even if it looked and were true, comparatively to love better than all other men, is not to love. To love is to remain in infinite indebtedness, the infinity of the debt is the bond of perfection.

Let me elucidate this by speaking about another infinite relationship. Imagine an enthusiast who enthusiastically desires only one thing, and who will enthusiastically sacrifice everything for that one good. Imagine that it now happens (that which does not happen accidentally, but which will absolutely happen as long as the world is the world) that to the degree he labors more and more disinterestedly, more and more sacrificingly, more and more strenuously, to that same degree the world works more and more against him; imagine him to have reached the point — where if for a single moment he makes a mistake and compares his effort with the reward which the world gives; or makes a mistake and compares his effort with his hitherto unrealized ambition; or makes a mistake and compares his lot with that of those distinguished ones who do not seem to be fired by enthusiasm: alas! then is he lost. Now the Tempter enters and says to him: "Halt your

striving, lessen your exertions, have a good time, enjoy life in comfort and accept the flattering condition which is offered you of being known as one of the greatest enthusiasts" — for the Tempter does not speak ill of enthusiasm, he is too clever for that; nor does he fool men so easily into dropping the matter. However, if the enthusiast will not yield to the Tempter, he renews his efforts. Then again the Tempter comes to him and says: "Halt your labors, lessen your exertions, have a good time, enjoy life in comfort by accepting the most unconditionally flattering terms that can certainly ever be offered you, the being recognized as the world's greatest enthusiast, a recognition which will make your life easier and secure for you, the enthusiast, the admiration of the world, whereas you are now only making your life strenuous and arousing the opposition of the world." Alas, to be comparatively enthusiastic is not to be enthusiastic at all.

Woe to the man who has corrupted his soul by the defilement of comparison, for he cannot understand his neighbor except as tremendous pride and vanity. For the enthusiast says to the Tempter: "Be off, and take your comparisons with you." And this is exactly the right procedure. Therefore we urge upon an enthusiast: "Shut your eyes, close your ears, stick to the demand of the infinite; then no comparison will slink in to assassinate your enthusiasm, and to tempt you to become the greatest enthusiast — comparatively! In the sight of the infinite demand your greatest efforts are but a childish performance, and this fact should prevent your becoming self-important, since you will just begin to understand how infinitely much more is required of you."

We warn the one on a ship which is sailing ahead before the wind, not to look at the waves lest he should become giddy; in the same way the comparison between the finite and the infinite makes a man giddy. Guard yourself, therefore, against the comparison which the world wishes to force upon you; for the world understands no more about enthusiasm than a

capitalist does about love, and you will always find that dullness and stupidity are first of all intent on making comparisons, and in catching everything in the muddy “actuality” of comparison. Therefore do not look about you, “salute no man on the way,” listen to no cry or shout which wishes to dupe you out of your enthusiasm and trick it into spending its strength laboring in the treadmill of comparison. Let it not disturb you if the world calls your enthusiasm madness, calls it selfishness — in eternity everyone will be forced to understand what enthusiasm and love are. Do not accept the terms offered you: the admiration of the whole world in exchange for half the labor. Continue in the debt of the infinite, happy in its terms: the opposition of the whole world because you will not bargain. Do not listen, for then it is already too late — to disbelieve it. On the other hand, do not listen to what is lyingly said about enthusiasm, lest you be injured in another way, by believing it, as if every man who wills it is not equally near to the infinite, and hence equally near to becoming enthusiastic. For what is enthusiasm? Is it not merely being willing to do and suffer everything? Is it not also wishing always to remain in the debt of the infinite? For every time the arrow will speed forth, the bowstring must be tensed, but for every time the enthusiasm renews or in the renewal maintains its impetus, the infinitude of the debt must be kept in mind.

So too with love. If you wish to preserve love, then you must preserve it in the infinite debt. Guard yourself, therefore, against comparisons! One who watches over the most precious treasure in the world does not need to exercise so much caution to prevent anyone from learning to know about it; for you must also be on guard so that you yourself do not learn to know something about love through comparisons. Guard against comparison! Comparison affords the most fatal connection into which love can enter. Comparison is the most dangerous acquaintance love can establish. Comparison is the worst of all seducers. And no seducer is so swiftly at

hand, and no seducer is so everywhere present as is the comparison as soon as your side-glance beckons — however, let no one seduced say in his own defense, “The comparison seduced me,” for he was the one who discovered the comparison. We all know how timidly, how ineffectively, and with how much difficulty a man walks when he knows he is walking on smooth ice; but we know, too, that if because of darkness or for some other reason he does not know that he is walking on it, then he steps forth quite firmly and confidently. Be on guard therefore against the comparison! Comparison is the adventitious sucker on the root which takes the strength from the tree: as if cursed the tree becomes a withered shadow, but the adventitious sucker flourishes in its unwholesome growth. Comparison may be likened to your neighbor’s marshy ground; even if your house is not built on it, all the surrounding ground also sinks. Comparison is like the hidden worm of secret consumption which does not die, at least not until it has taken the life of love. Comparison is a loathsome skin-eruption which strikes inward and consumes the marrow. Be vigilant, therefore, in your love against the comparison.

But if the comparison is the only thing which could get love out of debt, or which is ready to get it out of debt, and the comparison is avoided, then the love remains, sound and vital — in the infinite debt. Remaining in debt is an infinitely artful and yet infinitely satisfying expression for the infinitude of love. When one says about a force of nature, for instance, that it is blowing a gale, or that it bursts forth with an infinite power and force, there is always the possibility that it may cease or become exhausted. But that which infinitely in itself has also an infinite debt behind it, is a second time made infinite; it has in itself the vigilance which always takes care that it does not cease — the debt is the second time the accelerating force.

When it is a duty to remain in the indebtedness of love to one another, then the remaining in debt is not merely an enthusiastic expression, not a

mere concept of love, but it is action; then the love remains, by the aid of duty, Christian love in action, in the haste of action, and just thereby in the infinite debt.

To love is to assume an infinite debt. The wish to remain in debt might seem to be only an interpretation of a concept of love, a last and most extreme expression which is incident to it — like the garlands at a festival. For even the most precious goblet filled with the choicest wine still lacks something: that the goblet be garlanded! And even the most lovable soul in the form of the most lovely woman — still lacks something: the bridal garland which perfects her! So it must also be said, when one talks merely humanly about love: this wish to remain in debt is the highest festal expression, it is the garland at the festival, something which in a certain sense makes no difference (for one certainly does not drink the enwreathed goblet, nor do the garlands become a part of the bride), and just for that reason it is the expression of the beautiful enthusiasm. Only in the human sense is a beautiful enthusiasm the highest.

But Christianity does not speak enthusiastically about love; it says it is a duty to remain in the debt of love, and it says this not as a giddy thought now for the last time and as the result of intoxication — for the wish to continue in debt would be an exaggerated expression, and yet it might possibly seem to become more exaggerated through being regarded as a duty. Even the exaggeration has, against its will, an appearance of paying off on the debt, but if it is a duty to remain in debt, then the impossibility soars even higher. It might seem like a case of intoxication, where a sudden moment of sobriety means an increase of intoxication; for enthusiasm becomes even more enthusiastic when it is expressed quietly and coolly; the marvellous becomes even more marvellous when it is described quite simply, as an ordinary event. But Christianity does not speak in this way. It speaks about remaining in debt in quite the same fervent way that a noble

human love speaks about it, but it says it quite differently. Christianity simply makes no fuss over it; it is not, like the purely human interpretation of love, overwhelmed by the sight; no, it speaks equally as earnestly about it as about that which seems to a merely human enthusiasm entirely unlike it. It says it is a duty, and thereby it takes away from love everything inflaming, everything immediate, everything giddy.

Christianity says it is a duty to remain in debt, and means thereby that it involves action, not a mere expression about love, not a reflective interpretation of love. In the Christian sense no human being has ever accomplished the highest in love; and even if it were possible, this impossibility, there would at that very moment, from the Christian standpoint, be a new task. But if there is immediately a new task, then it is impossible to have time to know whether one has achieved the highest or not; for at the moment when one would get to know it, he is engaged in accomplishing the new task, and hence is prevented from knowing anything about the preceding moment, for which he has no time; he is occupied with the haste of action, whereas even in the moment of the greatest enthusiasm there is a certain lingering.

Christianity understands what action means, and how incessantly action is able to occupy love. The merely human interpretation of love admires love, and that is why it so easily comes to a standstill, a moment where there is nothing to do, an idle moment, that is the moment of enthusiasm. Love is to the merely human understanding as the extraordinarily gifted child is to the simple parents: the child finishes his task so quickly that the parents are at a loss to know what they can find to keep him busy. Love is to the merely human understanding of the conception, like the fiery snorting steed which quickly rides the horseman tired, instead of the horseman being able, if necessary, to ride his steed tired. And Christianity can do this. Its purpose is not to work love tired, far from it; but Christianity knows, by

virtue of its eternal nature and by the earnestness of eternity, that it can master love, and therefore it speaks so simply, so earnestly, about the matter — just as the skilled horseman who knows that he can manage his horse, is not surprised at its mettle, for he says it ought to be mettlesome; and he does not destroy its spirit, but by training it he improves the horse. So Christianity knows how to constrain love, and to teach it that at every moment there is a task; it knows how to bear with love so that love may humbly learn that wishing to remain in debt is not a mere form of words, not merely enthusiasm, but that it is earnestness and truth.

The danger would be, as certainly happened, that love would come to dwell comparatively upon itself. This must be prevented, but when it is prevented by the aid of duty, something else also happens — love comes into a relation with the Christian concept, or in the Christian sense with the God-idea. This debt-relation is carried over into the relation between man and God. It is God who, so to speak, kindly takes charge of the demand of love; by loving a man the lover comes into an infinite debt — but also a debt to God as guardian of the beloved. Now comparison becomes impossible, and now love has found its master.

There is no more talk about festal moods and showy achievements; love will no longer, if I may speak thus, play on the childish stage of men, which leaves it doubtful whether it is jest or earnest. While love in all its own expressions turns outward toward men, where it has its object and its tasks, it still knows that this is not the place where it shall be judged, but that in its innermost being, where love lays hold on God, there is the judgment. It is as when a child is out among strangers, it behaves as it has been taught. But whether strangers think well of the child or not, whether it occurs to the child that it behaves better than the other children or not: the seriously trained child never loses sight of the fact that the decision will be made at home, where the parents do the judging. And yet the training is not planned

for fitting the child to remain at home with its parents; on the contrary, it is planned to fit the child to go out into the world. So too with love when it is understood in the Christian way. It is, so to speak, God who trains the love in a man; but God does not do this just for His own pleasure, just to delight Himself with the sight. On the contrary. He does it in order then to send love out into the world, perpetually busy with its task. Nevertheless, the earnestly trained, the Christian love never for a moment forgets where it shall be judged; at evening, or morning, or whenever it may be, in short every time it temporarily leaves all its tasks in order to come home, it is catechized — in order to be immediately sent out again. For even with the greatest enthusiasm love may still tarry a little before it goes out again, but with God there is no tarrying.

Thus understood, earnestness and truth consist in remaining in the debt of love to each other. Even the most sincerely intended and, humanly speaking, the noblest enthusiasm, even the most fervent and disinterested enthusiasm, is still not earnestness, even though it accomplishes astonishing things, and even if it also wishes to remain in debt. The deficiency in even the noblest human enthusiasm is that it, as merely human, in the final analysis is not itself powerful, because it has no higher power over it. Only the God-relationship is earnest; the earnestness consists in forcing the task to its highest achievement because there is One who compels by the power of the eternal; the earnestness consists in the enthusiasm having power over itself and compulsion in itself. The individual is bound by his debt of love to other men; but it is neither the individual himself nor the other men who shall judge his love. If this is true, then must the individual remain in the infinite indebtedness. God has the infinite conception of truth and of the infallibility of love. God is love, hence the individual must remain in debt — as God judges him, or as he abides in God, for only in the infinitude of debt can God abide in him.

He is in debt, and he also recognizes that it is his duty to remain in debt, his duty to admit this, which from the Christian standpoint is not the admission of a fanatic, but of a humble, loving soul. The humility consists in making the confession; the loving, as it were, consists in being infinitely willing to make it because it belongs to love, because there is the meaning and coherence of eternal happiness in this confession, the Christian meaning consists in simply not ceasing to do this, because it is his duty.

"Therefore owe no man anything except to love one another"; no, "pay everyone everything which you owe them; tribute to whom tribute is due; duty to whom duty, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." In this way owe no man anything, not what you have borrowed from him, not what you have promised him, not what he might rightly demand of you in repayment. If possible, owe no man anything, no favors, no service, no sympathy in joy or sorrow, no forbearance of judgment, no assistance in life, no advice in danger, no sacrifice, not even the hardest — no, in all these, owe no man anything; but still remain in debt, which with all this you have by no means desired, and which before God you have by no means been able to pay, the debt of loving one another!

Oh, do this! And then only one thing more: "Remember in time that if you do this, or if you try to comply with this, then will things go ill, for you in the world." This is especially important to keep in mind with a particular reference to the conclusion of this discourse, and with a general reference to the conclusion of this little book, so that the discourse may not fascinate you with untruth. Therefore the world will simply find the conclusion entirely wrong, which fact again has significance in proving that the conclusion is — right.

We read and sometimes hear with sadness a Christian discourse which really leaves out the final danger. What is said about faith and love and humility is entirely right and wholly Christian; but nevertheless such a

discourse may mislead a youth, instead of guiding him, because it neglects to tell him what happens to the Christian in the world. The discourse demands that a man shall work self-sacrificingly to develop his Christian nature — but then, yes then, there is no more said, or the supremely serious, more definite categories are suppressed, while such assertions are made that the good has its reward, that the good is loved both by God and man. If this Christian nature is rightly recommended as the highest, then the youth must surely believe that if he accomplishes the required task, or at least works honestly to accomplish it, then things will go well for him in the world. Oh, but this silence about the final difficulty (that, humanly speaking, it will go badly with him in the world, and so much more so as he develops his Christian character) Is a deception, which may either lead the youth to self-despair (as if the fault lay squarely in himself, because he was not a true Christian) or to his despondently giving up his struggle, as if something quite unusual had happened to him, while nevertheless he had only experienced the ordinary consequence which the apostle John refers to when he says: “Marvel not at this.” Consequently, the speaker has deceived the youth by keeping silent about the true sequence of events, as if, from the Christian standpoint, there were a conflict only in one place, instead of the true Christian struggle always being a twofold danger because there is a conflict in two places: first, in the inner man, where he must fight with himself, and then, when he has made progress in this conflict, outside of himself, where he must fight with the world. Alas, perhaps such a speaker is afraid to recommend the Christian and the good in this certainly strange but veracious way, by saying that it has no reward in the world, and that, moreover, the world always works against it. Perhaps it may seem to the speaker like smiting himself on his own — eloquent lips, if, after having recommended the good in the most laudatory and particularly fortunately chosen turns and expressions, and after having almost brought the listener

to go out even this very day and act in accordance with his teaching, it may perhaps seem to him like smiting himself upon the lips, moreover, it would really be a sin, considering the impression produced by his inspired eloquence, if among his recommendations he should now interject this statement: that the good is rewarded with hate, contempt, and persecution. For, if this is true, would it not be more natural to warn against the good? To put it even more exactly, one does just this by recommending it in this way. The speaker is certainly in a difficult position. Well-intentioned perhaps, he really wishes to attract men: so he omits the final difficulty, the one which makes the recommendation so difficult — and then the discourse flows on, elevating and tear-compelling in its polished delivery. Ah, but this, as everyone knows, is deception. If, on the contrary, the speaker makes use of — the difficult recommendation, then he "frightens his audience away," perhaps the speech almost frightens himself. He, who is so highly popular, honoured and appreciated, certainly proves that the good Christian has his reward in the world. He has, namely, his reward, even if eternity believes ten times over that he has lost it. It cannot be denied that he has a reward, but a somewhat worldly one, and it is not the compensation which Christianity at the time had promised its adherents, and by which it had directly recommended itself.

We should truly hate to make a youth conceited, and early teach him to form the habit of judging the world; God forbid that any word of ours should be able to contribute to the development of such unsoundness in a man. We believe in making his inner life so strenuous that from the very beginning he learns to think otherwise; for it is certainly a perverted hatred of the world which, possibly without even having once considered the tremendous responsibility involved, wishes to be persecuted. But, on the other hand, we should truly hate to deceive a youth by keeping silent about the difficulty and keeping silent at the very moment when we are trying to

recommend the Christian way of life, for then and just then is the time to speak. Confidently and fearlessly we dare to recommend the Christian way of life, and to add that its reward, to put it mildly, will be the ingratitude of the world. We regard it as our duty to say this in time, so that we may not sometimes recommend Christianity by omitting any of its essential difficulties, and at other times, perhaps because of some particular text, find some ground of comfort for it in the life attempted. No, just at the time when the Christian way is being most strongly recommended, the difficulty must be simultaneously emphasized. It is unchristian sophistry if anyone reasons in this way: "Let us use every means to win men to the Christian way of life, and then when sometime adversities come upon them, then we shall have the remedy, then will be the time to speak about it." But this is the deception: that it might be possible for a Christian to escape these adversities, just as some people are fortunate in not being tried by poverty or sickness. That is, it places the opposition of the world in an accidental relation to the Christian way, not in an essential relation: opposition may perhaps come, but then again it may not. However, such a consideration is absolutely unchristian. If a pagan may rightly deem himself fortunate at his death because he was through with life and past all adversities, well, that is possible; but a Christian ought to be a little doubtful in this joy at the moment of death — for from the Christian standpoint, the opposition of the world has an essential relation to Christian inwardness. Besides, in the very moment of choosing Christianity, one should have an impression of its difficulties, so that he may know what it is he is choosing. Nothing should be promised the youth except what Christianity can hold to, but Christianity cannot hold to anything other than what it has promised from the beginning: the world's ingratitude, opposition, insults, and always increasingly so, the more earnestly Christian one becomes. This is the final difficulty in the

Christian way of life, and least of all must there be silence about it when one is recommending Christianity.

No, if there is to be silence regarding the final difficulty, then there is really nothing to be said about the Christian way of life. If the world is not as Christianity originally assumed it to be, then is Christianity essentially abolished. That which Christianity calls self-denial simply and essentially implies a double danger, otherwise the self-denial is not Christian self-denial. Therefore, if anyone can show that the world or Christendom have now become essentially good, as if they were the eternal, then I can also show that the Christian self-denial is made impossible and Christianity abolished, just as it will be abolished in eternity, where it will cease to be a striving.

A merely human self-denial thinks as follows: give up your selfish wishes, desires and plans — then you will be honoured and respected and loved as just and wise. It is easy to see that this sort of self-denial does not lay hold of God or the God-relationship, but remains on the worldly plane of a relationship between men. The Christian self-denial thinks: give up your selfish wishes and desires, give up your selfish plans and purposes in order to work for the good in true disinterestedness — and then prepare to find yourself, just on that account, hated, scorned and mocked, and even executed as a criminal; or rather, do not prepare to find yourself in this situation, for that may become necessary, but choose it of your own free will. For Christian self-denial knows beforehand that these things will happen, and chooses them freely. Christianity has the eternal understanding of what it costs to give up its own selfish purposes; therefore it does not let the Christian go for half-price. One can readily see that the Christian self-denial lays hold on God, and in God has its only stronghold. But only thus is Christian self-denial to be relied upon — in the double danger. The other danger, or the danger in another place, is precisely the guarantee that the

self-denial has the right God-relationship, that it is purely a God-relationship. And if there were no other double danger except that of wishing thus to be relied upon, the world regards as stupidity or folly that which it is very far from honoring and admiring. The world understands self-denial only as shrewdness, and therefore honors only the self-denial which shrewdly remains within the compass of the worldly. Therefore the worldly always sees to it that there shall be an adequate number of the counterfeit notes of the false self-denial in circulation; alas! and sometimes the crossing of the ratios and thoughts becomes so complicated that it needs an expert eye immediately to detect the counterfeit notes. For one can also take God along secularly into worldliness, and hence get a self-denial which bears the God-mark and yet is a forgery. Secularly it may sometimes look as if it is called to deny itself for the sake of God, yet not in that reliable confidence in God of the double danger, but in such a way that worldliness understands that man and honors him accordingly. Yet it is easy to recognize the forgery, for as soon as the double mark is lacking, then the self-denial is not the Christian self-denial.

It is human self-denial when a child denies himself while the arms of the parents encouragingly and promptly open to it. It is human self-denial if a man denies himself, and the world now opens its arms to him. But it is Christian self-denial if a man denies himself, and then, just because the world for that reason closes its arms to him, repulsed by the world he now must seek confidence in God. The twofold danger lies in the fact that he met opposition just where he had expected to find help, and consequently he must turn twice, instead of, as in human self-denial turning but once. No self-denial, therefore, which is encouraged by the world, is Christian self-denial. This was the meaning of the early Church Fathers when they said that all the virtues of the heathen were shining vices. It is merely human self-denial: without fear for one’s self or for the consequences, to rush into

danger — into a danger where honor awaits the victor, where the admiration of the environment, of the spectators, allures the one who only dares. It is easy to see that this self-denial does not lay hold on God, but is delayed by human relativities. Christian self-denial rushes into danger without fear of the consequences to itself, into a danger which the environment cannot understand will bring any honor to the victor, because the environment is itself blinded, entangled and guilty. Consequently, it is not only perilous to rush into the danger, but there is here a double danger because the contempt of the spectators awaits the hero, whether he wins or loses.

In the one instance the idea of danger is conceded; the environment is agreed that there is danger, danger in venturing, and hence honor to gain by victory, since the conception of the danger has made his contemporaries ready to applaud the one who dares. In the second case the hero must himself discover the danger and strive to get the right to call it danger, which his contemporaries are not willing to do, who, although they admit that it is possible to lose one's life in this danger, yet deny that it is really danger, since from their point of view it is ridiculous, and hence it is doubly ridiculous to lose one's life for the sake of something ridiculous. Thus Christianity discovered a danger which is called everlasting perdition. The world found this danger ridiculous. Let us now imagine a Christian witness. For the sake of this doctrine he rushes into a struggle with the powerful who hold his life in their hands, and who must look upon him as an agitator — a fact which will cost him his life. At the same time his contemporaries, with whom he has no immediate quarrel, but who are spectators, find it ridiculous that anyone should risk death for such foolishness. Here is life to lose and truly no honor or admiration to gain! Still, thus to be forsaken, only thus to be forsaken, is Christian self-denial. If now

the world, or Christendom, had been essentially good, then this self-denial would have been impossible; for under such conditions the world, as

essentially good, would honor and praise the one who denied himself and who always had the true conception of where the danger was and what it truly was.

Therefore we wish to end this discourse like all our discourses which, according to the ability vouchsafed us, recommend the godly life, with this little ingratiating word of exhortation: watch yourself at the beginning of your task — lest you find that you are not truly in earnest in truly wishing to deny yourself. Our understanding of what Christianity is, is too serious to wish to entice anyone; we would almost rather warn against it. He who in truth will appropriate the Christian teaching, he will yet come to experience inward terrors quite different from the bit of terror dramatically set forth in a discourse; he must make an outward resolution quite different from one he could make by the aid of the painted falsity of a bit of eloquence. We leave it to anyone to decide whether this, our earnest understanding of what Christianity means, could seem cold, cheerless and lacking in enthusiasm.

So far as one might speak of his own personal relation to the world, since this would be a different matter, it would be one's duty to speak as mildly, as apologetically as possible, and even if one does speak, it is his duty to remain in the debt of love. But when we speak instructively we dare not keep silent, a fact that is little calculated to win favor for the discourse in the longing understanding of an enthusiastic youth. Nor dare we recommend, smilingly to wish to elevate himself above the world's opposition and folly; if this could be done as it is done in heathendom, it can only be done in heathendom, because the heathen does not have the true Christian's earnest, eternally concerned conception of the truth: yet to the truth it is by no means ridiculous that others do not have it. From the Christian point of view the world's essential foolishness is not at all ridiculous, however ridiculous it is; for when there is an eternal happiness

to win or lose, then it is neither a jest if I win it, nor laughable if someone loses it.

On the other hand, it would be an absurdity we should guard against, to speak complacently about the Christian truth. If a man were handing another man a terribly sharp, polished two-edged tool, would he hand it to him with the manner, bearing and gestures with which he would hand him a bouquet of flowers? Would not this be a crazy thing to do? How does one do it? If he is certain of the dangerous nature of the tool, while he may recommend it unhesitatingly, he also adds a word of caution. And so with the Christian truth. If necessary we should not hesitate, conscious of the greatest responsibility, in our Christian preaching, precisely in our Christian preaching, to preach against Christianity. For we know perfectly well in these times how anything unpleasant stings, so that the preacher by foolish and flattering sermons has tricked Christianity into becoming an illusion and us men into imagining that as such we are Christians. Still, if a man had thought that he was holding a flower in his hand, a flower which he half foolishly, half thoughtlessly has enjoyed looking at, and then someone, with truth, remember, cried to him, "You fool, do you not see that you are holding a terribly sharp, polished, two-edged tool!" — would he not for a moment be horrified? But, but — did the one who truthfully said that, deceive him or the truth? If someone were to call that man's attention to the fact that the flower he held in his hand was no common, ordinary flower, but a very rare one, this would again be to confirm him more strongly in his misunderstanding. No, Christianity is not from the human point of view the extremely rare blossom, nor is it the rarest of all — so the sermon becomes pagan and worldly within the limitations of the merely human understanding. Divinely understood, Christianity is the highest good, and therefore also, humanly understood, a tremendously dangerous good, because when only humanly understood, it is so far from being the rare

flower that it is offense and foolishness, now as once in the beginning, and as long as the world stands.

Wherever the Christian religion is, there is the possibility of offense, but offense is the supreme danger. Everyone who has in truth appropriated the Christian teaching, or something of it, has been obliged thus to pass by the possibility of offense so that he has seen it, and with it before his eyes — has chosen the Christian way. If Christianity is to be discussed, the discourse must constantly hold the possibility of offense open, but hence it can never bring itself to recommend Christianity immediately, so the difference between the speakers would merely be that one used a stronger, a second a weaker, a third the strongest possible expression of praise. Christianity can only be recommended if at every point the possibility of the danger is constantly made manifest: that to the merely human understanding the Christian way is foolishness and offense. But by making this clear and explicit, the warning is given. So earnest is Christianity. Whatever stands in need of men's applause immediately tries to curry favor with them; but Christianity is so certain of itself, and recognizes with such earnestness and severity that it is men who need it, that just for that reason it does not recommend itself directly, but first startles them — just as Christ early commended Himself to His disciples by predicting to them that they would be hated for His sake; that the one who smote them would think that he was doing God service.

When Christianity came into the world it was not necessary for it to call attention to the fact (although it did so) that it would be a source of offense, for the world which was offended, discovered this soon enough. But now, now since the world has become Christian, now must Christianity first of all look out for offense. If it is therefore true that so many "Christians" in these times are disappointed in Christianity, how does this happen except because the possibility of offense escapes them, this frightfulness, please notice!

What wonder, then, that Christianity and its eternal happiness and its duties are no longer able to satisfy the "Christians" — they cannot even be offended by them!

When Christianity came into the world it was not necessary even for it to call attention to the fact that it was contrary to human reason (although it did so), for the world discovered this readily enough. But now, now, since Christianity has lived through hundreds of years in the complex intercourse with the human reason; now, since a fallen Christianity, like those fallen angels who married earthly women — has entered into a marriage with the human reason; now, since Christianity and reason have become on "*du*" terms: now Christianity must ever be on the watch for offense. If Christianity (alas! this sounds like the fairy story about the palace under enchantment for a hundred years) is to be preached out of the enchantment and the deformed metamorphosis of delusion, then must first the possibility of offense again be revived as the basis of preaching. Only the possibility of offense (the antidote against the sleeping potion of apologetics) is able to wake the slumberer, able to overcome the enchantment, so that Christianity may again be itself.

If then the Holy Scriptures say, "Woe to the one by whom the offense cometh," then we can confidently say, "Woe to the one who first hit upon the idea of preaching Christianity without the possibility of offense." Woe to the one who in ingratiating, amorous, attractive, convincing words foisted off something unworthy of men as Christianity! Woe to the one who would make a miracle comprehensible, or at least suggest that there were clear probabilities of soon being able to do so! Woe to the one who betrayed and broke the secret of faith, corrupted it into a popular wisdom by taking the possibility of offense away! Woe to the one who would lay hold on the secret of the atonement without perceiving the possibility of offense, and again, woe to him because he thought thereby to make God and Christianity

into an esthetic coterie! Woe to all those faithless stewards who sat down and falsified their records, and thereby gained friends for Christianity and themselves by writing off the possibility of offense in Christianity, and imputed to it a hundred kinds of foolishness! Oh, what a sorry waste of ability and shrewdness! Oh, what an appalling waste of time spent on the tremendous task of defending Christianity! Truly, when Christianity again arises in its power through the possibility of offense, then will this horror again scare men up: then will Christianity need no defense.

And, on the other hand, the more scholarly, the more excellent the defense is, the more is Christianity corrupted, done away with, shrunken like a half-man. For the defense wishes out of the goodness of its heart, to take the possibility of offense away. But Christianity will not be defended; rather it is men who should look to it to learn whether they are able to defend themselves and defend for themselves that which they choose, when Christianity sometime terribly offers them the choice, and terribly forces them to choose: either to be offended or to accept Christianity. Therefore, take away from Christianity the possibility of offense, or else take away from the forgiveness of sins the anxious debate of conscience (to which still, according to Luther's excellent explanation, this whole matter must be referred), and then lock the churches, the sooner the better, or make them into recreation centers which stand open all day.

But while the whole world has been made Christian through the taking away the possibility of offense: the strange circumstance constantly manifests itself: that the world is offended at the real Christian. Here the offense enters, if the possibility of offense is still inseparable from the Christian belief. Only the confusion becomes worse than ever; for if once the world was offended at Christianity — there was meaning in that; but now the world has the illusion that it is Christian, that it has appropriated Christianity, without paying any attention to the possibility of offense —

and so it is offended at the real Christian. Truly, escape from such a delusion is difficult. Woe to the swift pens and busy tongues, woe to all the busyness which because it neither knows the one nor the other, therefore finds it so infinitely easy to reconcile both the one and the other!

The Christian world is always offended by the true Christian. Only now the passion of offense is not ordinarily so strong that it wishes to eradicate him; no, it will only continue to mock and insult him. This is easy to explain. At the time when the world was itself conscious of not being Christian, then there was something to fight about, then it was a fight to the death. But now, when the world is proudly and calmly certain that it is Christian, the true Christian insistence is merely something to laugh at. The confusion is even more distressing than in the first period of Christianity. That was distressing, but there was meaning in it, since the world was fighting to the death against Christianity. But the world's present lofty calmness in its consciousness of being Christian, its cheap bit of mockery, if one wishes to call it that — of the real Christian: this almost borders on madness. For never in its first period was Christianity thus made the object of ridicule.

If then in this Christian world a man's only desire is to fight to perfect his duty in remaining in the debt of love to everyone: then he will be swept out into the last difficulty, and will have the opposition of the world to fight against. Alas, the world seldom or never thinks of God; that is the reason why it completely misunderstands every life whose most essential and steadfast thought is precisely the thought of God, the thought about where, divinely understood, the danger is, and what is required of a man! Therefore the Christian world is apt to say about the true Christian in this respect: "See how he gives himself up; even there where he is manifestly the injured party, it is almost as if he were the one who begs for forgiveness." The world will in him — Christianly (for the world is indeed Christian) feel the

lack of the requisite — Christian hard-heartedness, which busies itself with asserting its right to assert itself, to repay evil with evil, or at least busies itself with the proud consciousness of doing good.

The world simply does not notice that such a man has a totally different standard for his life, and that this explains the whole procedure quite simply, while, explained according to the world's standard, it becomes quite meaningless. But since the world does not realize and does not wish to realize that this standard, the God-relationship, exists, hence it cannot explain such a man's conduct as anything except a peculiarity — for the fact that it is Christian conduct naturally cannot occur to the world, which as Christian certainly best knows what Christianity is. It is odd for a man not to be self-seeking; it is odd that he does not quarrel; it is odd and foolish in him to forgive his enemy, and to be almost afraid that he does not do enough for his enemy; it is odd that he always sticks at the wrong place, never where it appears to his advantage to be courageous, high-minded and disinterested: this is odd, far-fetched and stupid, in short, rather laughable, since one just by virtue of being in the world, is certain, as a Christian, to possess the true and eternal happiness both here and hereafter.

The world has no conception, except at most a very remote conception of a great solemn festival, that the God-relationship exists, to say nothing of its daily determining a man's life — therefore it can judge in no other way. The invisible law determining such a man's life, its suffering and its happiness, simply does not exist for the world: ergo its most lenient explanation of such a life is that it is an oddity, just as we call it madness if a man is incessantly looking about for a bird which none of the rest of us can see; or if a man dances — to music which no other man except himself, even by straining his ears, can possibly hear; or if a man in walking turns aside from his path because of some — invisible barrier. And this, too, is madness. For a bird which is really present, cannot be invisibly present, any more than

actual music can be inaudible, or an obstruction on one's path which makes it necessary to go out of the way, can be invisible. But God can only be invisibly and inaudibly present, so the fact that the world does not see Him still does not prove very much.

Let me illustrate this relationship by means of a simple metaphor which I have frequently used, even though for a different purpose, because it is so fertile, so suggestive, so significant. If a strictly disciplined child is in the company of rude or less well-trained children, and it will not share with them in their rude behavior, which to them does not seem in general to be rudeness: the naughty children do not know any way of explaining his behavior except to say that the child must be odd or foolish. They do not realize that his behavior may be explained in another way, in that, wherever he is, the strictly trained child always has its parents' standard in mind to help it decide what it dares and what it dares not do. If the parents were visibly present, so that the rude children saw them, then they would be better able to understand the child, especially so, if it also seemed to resent having to obey the admonition of its parents; for that would show them that the child would be only too glad to act as the rude children did; and it would be easy enough to see what held the child back. But when the parents are not present, the rude children cannot understand the strictly trained child. They think as follows; either that child does not enjoy the things the rest of us do, which makes it stupid or odd; or it perhaps enjoys them well enough, but does not dare to — yet, why not? The parents are not present, so it really must be stupid and peculiar. One can, therefore, by no means call it mischievousness or badness in the less polite children that they judge the more strictly trained child in this way. Oh, no, perhaps in their way their intentions are good, they mean well by it. They do not understand the strictly trained child, they enjoy themselves as they are, and therefore they want him to play with them and be a real boy — like the others.

The application of this metaphor is easy to make. The world simply cannot get it into its head (and this is no accident) that a Christian should not have the same pleasures and passions as the world has. But if he does have them, then the world can still less get it into its head why he, from fear of an invisible Being, will foolishly, according to worldly ideas, restrain the innocent and permissible pleasures which it is even “a duty to enjoy”; why he will restrain the selfishness which the world not only calls innocent but praiseworthy; why he will restrain the resentment which the world not only regards as natural but as a sign of his manliness and honor; why he will make himself doubly unhappy, first by failing to satisfy his desires, and next by being ridiculed by the world as a reward of his self-denial.

One easily sees that self-denial is here rightly marked; it has the double sign. Just because this is so, because quite rightly the one who earnestly seeks to obey will fall into double danger: that is why we say that it is the duty of Christians to remain in the debt of love to each other.

VOLUME TWO

I. LOVE EDIFIETH

BUT LOVE EDIFIETH. — I Corinthians 8:1

ALL HUMAN SPEECH, even the divine speech of the Holy Scriptures about spiritual matters, is essentially metaphorical. And this is quite proper as regards existence in general, since, although from the moment of his birth man is spirit, he does not become conscious of himself as spirit until later, and so sensuo-psychically he has already lived through a certain period of his life before the spiritual awakening. But this first period will not then be discarded when the soul awakens, just as little as the soul's awakening will proclaim itself in a sensuous or sensuo-psychical manner as against the sensuous and sensuo-psychical. That first period is simply taken over by the spirit, and thus employed, thus made the foundation, it becomes the metaphorical. The spiritual man and the sensuo-psychical man therefore in a certain sense say the same thing. Yet there is an infinite difference, since the latter does not suspect the secret of the figurative expression, although he nevertheless uses the same word, but not figuratively. There is a world of difference between the two; the one has made the transition, or has allowed himself to be carried over to that side, while the second remains on this side; yet there is a bond between them because they both use the same expression. The one in whom the soul has awakened, has not, therefore, abandoned the visible world; he is always, although conscious of being spirit, in the visible world, and even sensuously visible: so he also continues to use the same language except that it has become metaphorical. But the metaphorical expression is not a brand-new word; on the contrary, it is an ordinary word. As the spirit is invisible, so too is its language secret, and the secret lies precisely in the fact that it uses the same word as the child

and the common man, but it uses it figuratively, whereby the spirit denies that it is the sensuous or the sensuo-psychical, but does not deny it in a sensuous or sensuo-psychical manner. The difference is by no means a conspicuous difference. We rightly regard it, therefore, as a sign of false spirituality to make a parade of the conspicuous distinction — which is the sign of the purely sensuous, whereas the essence of the spirit is the quiet, whispering secrecy of the metaphorical — to the one who has ears to hear with.

One of the figurative expressions which the Holy Scripture frequently makes use of, or one of the words which the Holy Scripture most frequently uses figuratively, is: to build, to edify. And it is really — yes, it is very edifying to see how the Holy Scripture does not tire of this word, how it does not spiritually desire changes and new turns of expression, but that, on the contrary, how that which is the true essence of the spirit refashions the thought in the same word! And it is — yes, it is very edifying to see how the Scripture by the use of this simple word is able to indicate the highest and that in the most inward manner; it is like that miracle of feeding the multitude with a limited supply, which nevertheless through the blessing became so richly abundant that there was left a superfluity! And it is — aye, it is edifying, if someone succeeds, instead of busying himself in making new discoveries which will busily supplant the old, in being humbly satisfied with the Scriptural words, in thankfully and inwardly appropriating to himself the traditions of the early Fathers, in establishing a new acquaintance — with the old acquaintances. As children we have all frequently played “Stranger”: truly, this is exactly earnestness, spiritually understood, to be able to continue this edifying jest in earnest, to play “Stranger” with old acquaintances.

To edify is a figurative expression; however, we shall now, with that secrecy of the spirit in mind, see what this word signifies in ordinary use.

To edify is formed from the verb “to build” [*at bygge*] and the adverb “up” [*op*] on which latter the emphasis must consequently be placed. Everyone who upbuilds builds, but not everyone who builds up. For instance, if a man builds a wing to his house we do not say that he builds up a wing, but that he builds an addition. This “up” seems consequently to indicate direction in height, direction upward. Yet this does not quite express it. Thus if a man carries a building which is sixty feet high twenty feet higher, we do not say that he builds up his house twenty feet higher; we say that he builds an addition. Now we begin to see the application of the word, for it seems that it does not depend on the height. On the contrary, if a man built a house, even if it was only a little, low house, but he built it from scratch, then we say he built [up] a house. To build [up] is consequently to build something from scratch. This “up” indicates a certain direction as height; but only when height is also depth reversed do we say “build up. So that if a man builds up in height and from scratch, but the depth below ground does not quite correspond to the height, then we certainly say that he builds up, or simply that he builds, although by “simply building” we understand something different. Thus the emphasis is in relation to the fact of building, in building from scratch. We do not call building in the ground building up, we do not speak of building a well. But if we speak about building up, then no matter how high or how low the building is, it must he from scratch. We may therefore say that a man began to build a house, but he did not finish. On the contrary, we can never say that a man, however much he may have added to the height of the building, if it was not built from scratch, built it.

How strange! This “up” in the word “upbuilding” means height, but height as contrary to depth; for to build up is to start from the beginning. Therefore the Scriptures say of the man of little understanding, that he “built without a foundation”; but of the man who hears the word in true edification, or, as the Scriptures have it, the one who hears the word and

acts accordingly, that he is like a man who built his house and “digged deep.” When, therefore, the waters came and the winds blew and beat upon this dependably built house, then we all rejoiced at the edifying sight that the storms could not shake it. Alas, for, as was said with reference to building up, it particularly depends on building on a foundation.

It is commendable that a man, before he starts to build, should reflect on “how high he will be able to build his tower,” but if he decides to build, then let him take care to dig deep; for even if the tower, if that were possible, reached to the clouds, if it were without a foundation it was not really built. To build absolutely without a foundation is impossible, it is building in the air. Therefore we are grammatically correct when we talk about building air castles; we do not say “building up air castles,” which would be a careless and absurd use of language. For even in expressing the insignificant, there must be harmony between the individual words, such as is not present between “in the air,” and “to build up,” since the first takes the foundation away, and the latter dispenses with “foundation”; the combination then would be a false overstatement.

This explains the expression “to build up” in simple unfigurative language. Let us now consider it as a figurative expression, and pass over to the subject of this reflection:

LOVE EDIFIETH.

But is that word “edifying,” when spiritually understood, such a characteristic adjective for love, that it exclusively belongs to it? It is always quite possible, as regards an adjective, that there are many objects which equally, or even if in varying degrees, still have a claim to this same adjective. If this were the case with “edifying,” it would be particularly wrong to emphasize its use, as this reflection does, in its relation to love; it would be an attempt of misunderstanding to impute to love a presumption, as if it wished exclusively to usurp to its own use that which it shared with

others — and which love is precisely willing to share with others, since "it never seeks its own." Nevertheless, it is truly so that "edifying" is exclusively characteristic of love; but, on the other hand, this quality of edifying has also the characteristic, that it is able to sacrifice itself in everything, be present in everything — exactly like love. Thus one sees that love in this, its own characteristic quality, does not isolate itself, or boast of independence and caution in comparison with others, but absolutely surrenders itself; its characteristic is exactly that it has the exclusive quality of absolutely sacrificing itself. There is nothing, simply nothing, which cannot be said or done so that it becomes edifying; but whatever it is, if it is edifying, then is love present. Therefore we hear the admonition just at the point where a man himself admits the difficulty of formulating definite rules, "Do everything for edification." It might equally well say, "Do everything in love," and have expressed exactly the same meaning. One man may do exactly the opposite of what another man does, but if they each do the opposite — in love, the opposite is edifying. There is no word in the language which is edifying in itself, and there is no word in the language which cannot be spoken edifyingly and become edifying when love is present. It is therefore, then, very far (alas, it is simply an unkind and divisive error) from being the case that edifying is a privilege of the individually gifted, like art and poetry and beauty and other such things; on the contrary, every man by his life and his behavior, by the conduct of his daily life, by his association with his equals, by his words and utterances, ought to and might be equally edifying, and would be so, if he really had love.

We ourselves are also aware of this, for we use the word "edifying" with the widest possible latitude; but what we do not ourselves perhaps realize is that we nevertheless only use it in connection with the idea of love. Still this constitutes the right usage: to be meticulous not to use this word except in

connection with love, and within this limitation to make its range illimitable; then everything can be edifying in the same sense that love can be present everywhere.

Thus when we see a single man with praiseworthy frugality carefully making a little suffice, then we honor and commend him; we rejoice; it confirms our sense of the good. But we do not really call it an edifying sight. On the contrary, when we see how a mother, who has many to care for, by frugality and wise economy affectionately knows how to bless the little so that there is enough for all: then we say it is an edifying sight. The edification lies in the fact that at the same time that we see the frugality and economy which we honor, we also see the mother’s loving care. On the contrary, we say that it is but little edifying, that it is a distressing sight, to see one who in a way starves in the midst of plenty, and who yet has nothing at all left for others. We say it is a shocking thing to see, we are disgusted with his luxury, we tremble at the idea of the horrible revenge of self-indulgence — the starving in the midst of plenty; but the fact that we look in vain for the least expression of love, confirms our belief that it is little edifying.

When we see a large family crowded into a small apartment, and we nevertheless see it living in a comfortable, friendly — roomy apartment, then we say that it is an edifying sight, because we see the love which must be in the individuals and in each one of them, since one unfriendly one would be enough to make the whole place seem crowded; we say it because we see that there is always house-room where there is heart-room. And, on the other hand, it is very little edifying to find an uneasy spirit dwelling in a palace, unable to find rest in a single one of the many rooms, and yet not able to spare or dispense with the smallest closet.

Moreover, what is there which may not be thus edifying! We do not think of the sight of a man asleep as edifying. And yet, if you see a child sleeping

on its mother's breast — and you see the mother-love, see that she seems to have waited for and now is using the moment while the child is sleeping, truly to rejoice over it, because she hardly dares let the child see how unspeakably she loves it: then this becomes an edifying sight. If the mother's love is not in evidence, if you look in vain in her face and expression to discover the least expression of the joy of mother-love or solicitude for the child; if you see only stolid indifference, as if she would be glad to be rid of the child: then the sight is not edifying. To see the child sleeping by itself is a friendly, a pleasant, a gratifying sight, but it is not edifying. If you wish to call everything edifying, then it is because you see love present everywhere; it is because you see the love of God hovering over the child. — To see a great artist perfecting his work is a glorious, an elevating experience, but it is not edifying. Suppose this masterpiece was marvellous — if now the artist, out of his love for a man, smashed it to pieces: then the sight would be edifying.

Wherever the edifying is, there is love; and everywhere love is, there is the edifying. Therefore Paul says that a man without love, though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels, is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. What, too, can be less edifying than a tinkling cymbal? The worldly, however glorious and however vociferous it is, is nevertheless without love, and therefore it is not edifying; the most insignificant word, the slightest act with love or in love, is edifying. Therefore knowledge puffeth up. And yet knowledge and the communication of knowledge may also be edifying; but if it is, it is because there is love. To commend one's self seems little edifying, and yet even this too may be edifying. Does not Paul sometimes do it? But he does it in love, and, as he himself says, "for edification." It would therefore be the emptiest of all speeches to talk about what can be edifying, since everything can be so; it would be the emptiest of all, just as it is the most distressing accusation which can be brought

against the world, that one sees and hears so little that is edifying. Whether it is rare to see wealth is neither here nor there; we should rather see a general well-being. If it is rare to see a masterpiece, oh, well, in a certain sense that makes no difference, and, as far as that goes, men for the most part care little about it. It is otherwise with edifying. At any given moment there are countless numbers of men living; it is possible that everything which any man says, everything which any man undertakes, may be edifying: alas, and yet it is so rare to see or hear anything edifying!

Love edifies. Let us now consider that which we developed in the introduction to this discourse, whereby we at once assured ourselves against the danger of the discourse falling into error through choosing an insuperable task, since everything can be edifying. To edify is to build on some foundation. In the simple story about a house, a building, everyone knows what is understood by the ground and the foundation. But what is, spiritually understood, the ground and the foundation of the spiritual life which shall support the building? It is simply love; love is the origin of everything, and, spiritually understood, love is the deepest foundation of the spiritual life. Spiritually understood, the foundation is laid in every man in whom there is love. And the building which, spiritually understood, will be erected is again love; and it is love who does the building. Love edifies, and this means that love builds it up. In this way the task is limited; the discourse does not spread out on the individual and the manifold; it does not in confusion begin on something which it must quite arbitrarily break off somewhere in order to finish; no, it centers itself and its attention on the essential, on one and the same thing in all the manifold. The talk is first and last about love, just because the fact of edifying is love’s most characteristic purpose. Love is the foundation, love is the building, love edifies. The act of edifying is the building up of love, and it is love which edifies. It is true we sometimes speak in a general sense about edifying; we use the word in

contrast to the corruption which would only tear down, or in contrast to the confusion which can merely tear down and divide; about the fact that it is the clever man who edifies, the one who knows how to direct and lead, the one who knows so well how to instruct in his line, the one who is master of his art Every such person builds up in contrast to tearing down. But all of this building up of knowledge, of insight, of ingenuity, of righteousness and so on, is still, insofar as it does not build up love, not edification in the deepest sense. For, spiritually, love is the foundation, and to edify is to build on this foundation.

Consequently when the speech is about the work of love in edifying, this must then either indicate that the lover implants love in another man's heart; or it must indicate that the lover presupposes that love already exists in the other man's heart, and just through this presupposition, he builds up the love in him — radically, insofar as he affectionately presupposes love at bottom. One or the other of these conditions is necessary for edifying. But I wonder if one man can implant love in another man's heart? No, this is a superhuman relation, an unthinkable relation between man and man; in this sense human love cannot edify. It is God, the Creator, who must implant love in every man. He who is Himself love. It is therefore unkind and by no means edifying, for someone presumptuously to imagine himself as wishing and being able to create love in the other man; all busy and self-important zeal in this respect neither builds up love, nor is itself edifying. The first relationship would be unthinkable for edifying; hence, we must consider the second relationship — between man and God. Thus we have gained the explanation of what it means, that love edifies, on which explanation we shall now reflect: the lover presupposes that there is love in the other man's heart, and just through this presupposition he builds up the love in him — on that foundation, insofar as he affectionately presupposes that it exists at bottom.

The speech can then not be about what the lover, who wishes to edify, will now do to transform the other man, or to force the love forth in him, but it is about how the lover edifyingly constrains himself. Certainly this is already edifying, to see how the lover edifies by constraining himself! Only the non-lover imagines that he is able to edify by constraining the other; the lover constantly presupposes that love is present, and just by this he is edifying. A builder thinks little about the stone and gravel he will use in building; a teacher presupposes that the pupil is ignorant; a disciplinarian presupposes that the other man is perverted: but the lover who edifies has but one course — to presuppose love; what further he constantly has to do is only constantly to constrain himself to presuppose love. Thus he lures the good forth, he encourages love, he edifies. For love can be and will only be treated in one way, by being loved forth; to love it forth is to edify. But to love it forth consists exactly in presupposing that it is basically present. Men can therefore be tempted to become master-builders, to become teachers, to become disciplinarians, because those things seem to imply having control over others; but to edify, as love does, cannot tempt one, for that means exactly to be the servant; therefore only love has the desire to edify because it is willing to serve. — The master-builder can point to his work and say, "That is my work"; the teacher can point to his pupil; but the love which edifies has nothing to point at, for its work consists only in presupposing it.

Again, this is very edifying to consider. Suppose the lover succeeded in building up love in another man; when the building stands there, the lover stands aside by himself, abashed he says, "I have always presupposed this." Alas, the lover has no merit at all. The building up of love is not like a monument to the master-builder's art, or, like the pupil who is a reminder of the teacher's instruction; the lover has done nothing, he has only presupposed that there was love at bottom. The lover works so quietly and

so soberly, and yet the forces of eternity are in motion. Love humbly makes itself inconspicuous just when it is working hardest; aye, its labor is as if it did nothing at all. Alas, to busyness and worldliness this is the greatest folly conceivable, the idea that, in a way, doing nothing at all should be the hardest work. And yet it is true. For it is more difficult to rule one's own spirit than to take a city, and more difficult to edify as love edifies, than to carry out the most marvellous undertaking. If it is difficult for one to rule one's own spirit, then how difficult to annihilate one's self completely in one's relation to another man, and still do everything and suffer everything! If it would ordinarily be difficult to begin without the presupposition, truly the most difficult of all is to begin to edify with the presupposition that love is present, and to end with the same presupposition, so that one's entire labor is discounted in advance, since the presupposition from first to last involves self-denial, or that the master-builder be hidden and as nothing. The only thing with which we are able to compare this edification of love is the secret working of nature. Man sleeps, but the forces of nature rest not either night or day: no one considers how they go on — while all take delight in the beauty of the fields and the fruit of the pastures. So is love manifest in the same way; it presupposes that love is present like the germ in the corn, and if it succeeds in bringing that to growth, then has the love concealed itself, as if it were hidden, whereas it was working early and late. Nevertheless, this is the edifying wonder in nature: you see all this glory and then it impresses you edifyingly if you happen to consider how strange it was that you did not see at all the one who produced it. If you could see God with the sensual eye, if He, if I dare say this, stood by your side and said: "I produced all this!" then would the edification have disappeared.

Love edifies by presupposing that love is present. Thus one lover edifies the other, and here it is easy enough to presuppose it, since love is generally known to be present. Alas, but love is never perfectly present in any man,

insofar as it is possible for him to do something else than presuppose it; possible to discover one or another fault or frailty in it. And then when he has unkindly discovered this, he wishes perhaps, as they say, to take it away, to take the mote away in order really to build love up. But love edifies. The one who loves much, to him is much forgiven; but the more perfect the lover presupposes the love to be, the more perfect a love he loves forth. In no worldly relations is there found any relation where there is thus *like for like*, where that which results corresponds so exactly to what was presupposed. Let no one raise an objection, let no one appeal to experience, for this would be unkindly arbitrarily to fix a day when it must appear how it turned out. Love itself does not understand such things, it is eternally certain about the fulfillment of the presupposition; if this is not true, then the love is already at the point of exhaustion.

Love edifies by presupposing that love is fundamentally present, therefore love also edifies there where, humanly speaking, love seems to be lacking, and where, humanly understood, it seems first and foremost necessary to tear down, not indeed for the sake of pleasure but for the sake of salvation. Tearing down is the opposite of building up. This contrast never shows more clearly than when the discourse is about the fact that love edifies; for in whatever other connection there may be talk about edifying, it still has a resemblance to tearing down, that is, doing something through another. But when the lover edifies, then it is exactly the opposite of tearing down, because the lover does something through himself: he presupposes that love is present in the other man — which is certainly exactly the opposite of doing something through the other man. Tearing down satisfies only too readily the sensual man; edifying in the sense that one does something through the other man, can also satisfy the sensual man; but to edify by overcoming oneself satisfies only love. And yet this is absolutely the only way to edify. But in the well-meant zeal for tearing down and

building up, one forgets that in the last analysis no man is able to plant the ground of love in another man.

Just here it appears how difficult the art of building is, as practiced by love, and as it is described in that celebrated passage by the apostle Paul; for what he says about love is just a closer definition of how love manages to edify. “Love is long-suffering”, and thereby it edifies; for long-suffering is just continuing to presuppose that there is love at bottom. He who judges, even if this came about slowly, that the other man is wanting in love, takes away the foundation — he cannot edify. But love edifies through long-suffering. Therefore it harbors neither envy nor spite, for envy and spite negate the love in the other man, and consume, if that were possible, the foundation of love. The love which edifies endures the other man’s misunderstanding, his ingratitude, his anger — that is certainly enough to bear; how then should love also be able to bear envy and spite! That is the way things are divided in this world: he who bears envy and malice does not bear the other man’s burdens, but the lover who loves does not bear malice and envy, he bears the burdens. Each one bears his own burden, the envious and the lover, both in a certain sense are martyrs, for as a devout man has said: the envious man is also a martyr — but the devil’s.

“Love seeketh not its own” therefore it edifies. For he who seeks his own must push the other aside; he must tear down in order to get a place for his own house which he wishes to build. But love presupposes that love is basically present, therefore it edifies. “It rejoiceth not in iniquity”; but he who wishes to tear down, or at least wishes to seem important by pretending that it is necessary to tear down, he may be said to rejoice in iniquity — otherwise there would be nothing to tear down. Love, on the contrary, rejoices in presupposing that love is fundamentally present, therefore it edifies. “Love heareth all things”; for what does it mean to bear all things? In the final analysis it means being able to find love in everything, as it is

fundamentally presupposed. When we say of a man who has a very strong constitution, that as regards food and drink he can stand anything, we mean by that, that his system is healthy enough to get nourishment from even unhealthful food (just as the sick may be injured by even healthful food); we mean that his system derives nourishment even from that which would seem least nourishing. In this way love bears all things, always presupposing that it is fundamentally present — and thereby it edifies.

“Love believeth all things”; for to believe all things is exactly, although it does not seem so, although it seems just the opposite, to presuppose that love is fundamentally present, even in the misguided, even in the perverted, even in the most malicious. Mistrust precisely takes the foundation away by presupposing that love is not present; therefore mistrust cannot edify.

“Love hopeth all things”; but to hope all things is truly, although it does not seem so, and even seems to be the opposite, to presuppose that love is, nevertheless, fundamentally present, and that it will manifest Itself in the erring, in the misguided, even in the lost. Was not the father of the prodigal son perhaps the only one who did not know that he had a prodigal son, for the father’s love hoped all things? The brother knew at once that he was hopelessly lost. But love edifies; and the father regained the prodigal son just because he who hoped for everything, presupposed that love was fundamentally present in his son. On the father’s side, in spite of the son’s dissipation, there was no rupture (and a rupture is exactly the opposite of edifying), he hoped all things; therefore by his fatherly forgiveness he edified in truth, because the son vividly felt that his father’s love had borne with him, so that there had been no breach.

“Love endureth all things”; for to endure all things is exactly to presuppose that love IS fundamentally present. When we say that a mother endures all her child’s naughtiness, do we mean thereby that as woman she patiently suffers evil? No, we mean something else; we mean that as mother

she always continues to remember that it is a child, and consequently to presuppose that the child still really loves her, and that this will soon be evident. Ordinarily we talk about how patience endures all things, not about how love does. For patience endures all things and is silent; and if the mother thus endured the child's naughtiness, then we should really mean by that that the mother and the child were estranged from each other. On the other hand, love endureth all things, patiently silent — but presupposes in all stillness that love is still present in the other man.

Thus love edifies. "It is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked": it is not puffed up at the thought that it might create love in the other man; it is not provoked and precipitate, impatiently, almost hopelessly concerned with what it must first tear down in order to build up again; no, it always presupposes that love is fundamentally present. Therefore it is unconditionally the most edifying sight to see love edifying, a sight by which even the angels are edified. And therefore that is unconditionally the most edifying talk, if a man really succeeds in telling how love edifies. There is many a friendly, many a salutary, many an enchanting, many an impressive, many an elevating, many a captivating, many a persuasive sight, and so on; but there is but one edifying sight, that of seeing love edifying. Whatever you may have seen of horror or abominations in the world, which you could wish to forget, because they tend to break down your courage and your confidence, to make life distasteful to you, and the idea of living abhorrent: consider only how love edifies, and you are edified in living! There are very many different things to speak about, but there is only one which is edifying: how love edifies. Therefore, whatever may befall you, so embittering that you might almost wish that you had never been born, and wish that you were dead, the sooner the better: only consider how love edifies, and you are again edified in speaking. There is but one edifying sight and one edifying subject: yet

everything can be said and done edifyingly, for everywhere where there is edifying there is love, and wherever there is love, there is edifying, and as soon as love is present, it edifies.

Love edifies by presupposing that love is present. Have you not experienced this, my hearer? If any man has ever spoken in this way to you or acted in this way toward you, so that you really felt edified by him, then it was because you were vividly conscious of his presupposition that there was love in you. Or what kind of a man do you think the other man ought to be who might truly edify you? Is it not true that you would wish him to have insight and knowledge and ability and experience? But still you would not believe that it decisively depended on these; on the contrary, it would depend on his being a reliable, kindly man, that is, a truly loving man. Hence you believe that to be able to edify decisively and essentially depends on being loving, or in having love to such a degree that one can depend upon it.

But what, then, is love? Love is presupposing love; to have love is to presuppose love in others; to be loving is to presuppose that others are loving. Let us understand each other. The characteristics a man may have may either be characteristics he has for himself, even if he makes use of them for others; or attributes for others. Wisdom is one quality inherent in himself; power and talent and knowledge and so on may also be attributes peculiar to himself. To be wise is not to say, not to assume, that others are wise; on the contrary, it may very certainly be true, if the truly wise man assumes that all men are far from wise. Moreover, because "wise" is an exclusively personal attribute, there is nothing in the thought to prevent one from assuming that there might live, or has lived, a wise man who dared say that he assumed that all other men were unwise. In the thought (of being wise — and assuming that all others are unwise), there is no contradiction. In the realities of life, such an expression would be arrogant, but merely in

the thought as such, there is no contradiction. On the other hand, if one were to believe that he himself was loving, but also that all other men were not loving, then we should have to say: "No, stop; there is a contradiction here in the thought itself; for to be loving is just to assume, to presuppose, that other men are loving." Love is not an exclusively personal attribute, but an attribute by virtue of which or in which you exist for others. In ordinary conversation we of course say, when we sum up a man's qualities, that he is wise, understanding, loving — and we do not notice what a difference there is between the last attribute and the first. His wisdom, his experience, his understanding are his own, even if others benefit by them; but if he is truly loving, then he does not have love in the same sense as he has wisdom, but it is exactly his love which presupposes that the rest of us have love. You praise him as the lover; you believe love is an attribute he has, as it really is; you feel edified by him just because he is loving, but you do not notice that this is because his love indicates that he presupposes love in you, and that just for this reason you are edified, just for this reason the love in yourself is built up. If it were actually true that a man could be loving without this indicating a presupposed love in others, then you would not in the deepest sense feel yourself edified; however certain it was that he was loving, you would not in the deepest sense feel yourself edified, any more than you would in the deepest sense be edified, no matter how certain it was that he was wise, understanding, learned and experienced. If it were possible that he might in truth be loving without this signifying that it presupposed love in others, then you could not fully rely upon him, for the test of reliability in the lover is exactly that, even when you are distrustful of yourself, of your own love, he is loving enough to presuppose, or rather he is the lover who presupposes it. — But you demanded that a man in order truly to be able to edify should be truly loving. And to be loving has shown itself as

signifying: presupposing love in others. So you say absolutely the same thing that has been developed in the discourse.

So the reflection returns to its beginning. To edify is to presuppose love; to be loving is to presuppose love; only love edifies. For to edify is to build up something on a foundation, but spiritually love is the foundation of everything. No man can lay the foundation of love in another man’s heart; nevertheless, love is the foundation, and one can only build on that foundation; hence one can only edify by presupposing love. Take love away, then there is nothing which edifies, and no one who is edified.

II. LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS — AND YET IS NEVER DECEIVED

LOVE BELIEVETH ALL things. — I Corinthians 13:7

"NOW Abideth Faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love," which is therefore the foundation of everything, is before everything, and abides when all else is done away with. Love is consequently the "greatest" of "these"; and what is there more perfect to compare love with than faith and hope! But he who is greatest from the standpoint of perfection must also, if I may venture to say so, take upon himself the duty of bringing himself into subjection, and become even more perfect. In a worldly sense a man may sometimes be the most distinguished without being the most perfect, and this exactly constitutes the worldly imperfection. It is true that the greatest man may be able to do what the lesser man can do; and this holds true about love, that it can take upon itself the tasks of faith and hope, and do them even more perfectly.

We shall now consider this thought as we reflect on the theme:

LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS — AND YET IS NEVER DECEIVED.

We shall first consider what it means when we say that love believes all things, and next, how the one who loves, simply by believing all things, can be assured against every deception. For truly, not everyone who believes everything is therefore a lover, and not everyone who believes everything is thereby assured against every deception — not even faith, if it will believe everything. And even if it might seem that the fact of being assured against every deception is a good for love, an advantage it has, then this meditation

would not really be suitable as a subject for consideration in an essay about the works of love: since it is not that. The fact of being assured against every deception is a work, a task, entirely synonymous with that of believing all things so that one can just as unconditionally say that love believeth all things, as it can say that it is never deceived, since they are one and the same thing t is not as if the action were one thing, and the prudence which guards against a man being deceived were another. It is not from the standpoint of earthly wisdom that love is never deceived; for to love so that one is never deceived is, according to what earthly wisdom says and thinks, the most stupid and foolish thing one can do; moreover, it is an offense to prudence therefore it may readily be recognized as belonging essentially to Christianity.

Love believeth all things. Thoughtlessness, inexperience, credulity believe everything that is said; vanity, conceit, self-satisfaction believe all the flattering things that are said; envy, spite, depravity believe all the evil things that are said; mistrust believes nothing at all; experience will teach that not to believe everything one hears is the wisest course; but love believes everything.

Consequently mistrust believes nothing at all; it is the exact opposite of love. Generally speaking, men do not, I suppose, think very highly of mistrust, but still it by no means follows that they have absolutely and unanimously decided to renounce all mistrust unconditionally, or that they have absolutely and unanimously decided to recommend the love which believes everything, unconditionally. Perhaps, strange to say, men prefer to make a compromise, hence a dissident compromise between the mistrust which — a little loving, still believes something, and the love which — a little mistrustful, still has a suspicion or two. Moreover, if someone wished to describe the shrewd secret of mistrust, to array it in the supernatural greatness of shrewdness, of cunning, in the dazzling appearance of sagacity,

then it might well tempt many. There might be someone who would cleverly give us to understand that that was just what he had discovered — proud of his discovery. And in contrast to this, as so often happens to the good, the love, which believes all things, would appear to a great disadvantage, so that many would not even dare to confess that they could wish to be so simple-minded.

What really is the shrewd secret of mistrust? It consists in an abuse of knowledge, an abuse which without further ceremony, in a single breath wishes to attach itself ergo to what as knowledge is absolutely true, and only becomes something else when it is preposterously believed by virtue of this knowledge, something which is just as impossible as it is preposterous, for one does not become a believer by virtue of knowledge. That which mistrust says or talks about is really only knowledge; the secret and the falsity lie in the fact that, without further ceremony, it transposes this knowledge into faith, pretending it to be nothing, pretending that it was something that need not even be noticed, "since everyone who has this knowledge must necessarily decide in the same way"; as if, consequently, it were eternally certain and absolutely decided that if a man has knowledge, then it is also known what conclusion he will reach. The deception lies in the fact that mistrust, by virtue of the disbelief inherent in it, infers, assumes, believes what it does infer, assume and believe, from its knowledge (for the appearance and fallacy is that knowledge causes the mistrust), whereas from the same knowledge, by virtue of belief, a man can infer, assume and believe exactly the opposite. Mistrust says: "Deception stretches unconditionally as far as truth, duplicity unconditionally as far as honesty; there is no absolute criterion of truth or of honesty or of sincerity. So, too, in relation to love; hypocrisy and craftiness and cunning and seduction deceptively extend absolutely as far as love extends; they are able to resemble true love so deceptively that there is no absolute criterion,

because with every expression of the truth or with every expression of true love there exists the possibility of a delusion which exactly corresponds to this." And so it is and ever shall be. Just because existence will test "you," test "your" love or whether you have love, just for that reason it places truth and deception before you in the balance of possibilities opposed to each other, by the aid of reason, so that now when "you" judge, that is, when in judging you choose, it becomes manifest what you yourself are. Alas, many believe that the judgment is something that takes place the other side of the grave, and this is also true; but one forgets that the judgment lies much closer, that it is going on every moment, because existence is judging you in every moment you live, since to live is to judge one's self, to reveal one's self. Just for this reason existence must be so arranged that you may not by the aid of an authenticity of knowledge, evade revealing yourself in your judging or in how you judge. When then deception and truth are placed in the balance of possibilities opposed to each other, then it is decided whether you are suspicious or loving. For perhaps someone says, "Even that which seems to be the purest of feelings might still be a deception" — oh, well, that is possible and will always be possible: "Ergo I choose mistrust, or to believe nothing," that is, he reveals his mistrust.

Let us reverse the conclusion we drew about "truth and falsehood unconditionally stretching equally far; consequently it may be possible that what even appears to be the basest conduct might be pure love." Oh, well, that is possible, and it will be possible: ergo the lover chooses to believe everything, that is, he manifests his love. A man whose thinking is confused certainly thinks that existence is a fairly muddy element: oh, not even the sea is so transparent! If someone, therefore, can prove that one ought to believe nothing at all because of the possibility of deception, then I can prove that one ought to believe everything — because of the possibility of deception. If anyone thinks that one ought not to believe even the best of

men because of the possibility that he might prove a deceiver, then this is also true of the converse, that you can expect good in even the worst of men, for it would be possible that his baseness was only an appearance of evil.

Love is the exact opposite of mistrust and yet it is based on the same knowledge; as far as knowledge goes, we may say that they are indistinguishable from one another (in the infinite sense knowledge is objective); only in the conclusion and in the decision, in the faith (which believes everything, and believes nothing) are they exactly opposed to each other. When love, for instance, believes everything, it is by no means in the same sense as thoughtlessness, inexperience and credulity believe everything, which believe everything through ignorance and naivete. No, love is just as well aware as anyone of everything which mistrust knows, yet without being mistrustful; aware of what experience knows, but also aware that what we call experience is really that mixture of mistrust and love.

"How much secrecy may not dwell in a man, or how much can still not be hidden! How ingenious is not that hidden inwardness in concealing itself, and in deceiving or avoiding others; that inwardness which preferably wished that one should not even suspect its existence, shame-facedly fearing to be seen, and fearing like death to be completely manifest! Is it not true that one man never completely understands another? But if he does not completely understand him, then it is always possible that the most uncertain might still have a quite different explanation, and, as it is well to note, if this is true, such an assumption might very well explain a great many cases, and thereby confirm its own truth, and yet later appear to be untrue as soon as something happens it cannot explain. And it would be possible that this case or this little further definition might even come at the last moment.

"It is because of this that all calm and intellectually dispassionate observers, who prefer to understand the inner man by a searching and illuminating study, that just these are so infinitely cautious in their judgment, or would rather abandon it altogether, because enriched by their observations they have developed an understanding of that mysterious world of the hidden things of the spirit, and because as observers they have learned to rule over their own passions. Only superficial, hasty, passionate men who have not learned to know themselves, and naturally for that reason do not know others, are given to such offhand judgments. The well-informed, the intelligent, never do this. A young, inexperienced man, who perhaps has never been on a horse before, casually springs up on the first one offered; but the very strong and experienced rider — notice how carefully he scrutinizes a strange horse before he will mount it, how doubtfully and cautiously he goes about it, how he scarcely ventures to mount it until he has let it run on a line in order to learn its disposition. And then, on the other hand, he continues to test it, long, long after the inexperienced rider has given up. For the inexperienced rider, who knows nothing about horses, believes that 'one horse is just like all the others — ergo I know them all.' Only an experienced rider thoroughly understands how great a difference there is, how one may be mistaken about a horse in very different and contradictory ways, and how unreliable every criterion is because each horse has its own peculiarities. And, now, the differences between man and man! How infinite! If this were not true, then would mankind be debased; for man's superiority over the brutes is not only the one which is most often mentioned, the universally human, but also that which one most often forgets, that every individual within the species has essential diversities and characteristics. And this superiority is really the proper human superiority; the first superiority is the racial superiority over the animal species. Moreover, if it were not a fact that one man, honest,

sincere, respectable and God-fearing, can under the same circumstances do exactly the opposite of what another man does, who is also honest, sincere, respectable and God-fearing: then the God-relationship would not essentially exist, not in its most profound significance. If one man were able with absolute truth to judge every man according to a common pattern, then would the God-relationship be essentially abolished; then would everything face outward, heathenishly finding its complete expression in the state and community life; then living would become far too easy, but also very empty; then would neither personal exertion nor deepening of the self be possible or necessary, which, in the most difficult collision of the infinite misunderstanding, is exactly that which develops the God-relationship in a man."

Can you tell me who has said this? No, that is impossible; it is entirely uncertain; the most suspicious and the most kindly man could, as far as knowledge is concerned, equally well have said it. No man has said it; it is superhumanly uttered; it is a sound which first becomes articulate through the inspiration of diversified personalities, who pronounce it by adding voice to it. It is knowledge, and knowledge as such is impersonal, and must be communicated impersonally. Knowledge posits everything in possibility, and is to that extent outside the reality of existence in the possibility. The individual first begins his life with ergo, with faith. But most people simply do not notice that, in one way or another, every moment they live they live by virtue of an ergo, of a faith — so heedless are their lives. There is no decision in knowledge; decision, the determination of the personality, and determination are first in ergo, in faith.

Knowledge is the infinite art of ambiguity, or the infinite ambiguity; at its highest it consists in bringing opposing possibilities into equilibrium. To be able to do this is to have knowledge, and only the one who knows how to describe the balancing of these opposing possibilities, only he

communicates knowledge. To expect to impart a decision by means of knowledge or knowledge by means of a decision is preposterous, as it has certainly become in these times — aye, preposterous it is and remains, but in these times it has become the truly profound, the true profundity of profound thought. Knowledge is not suspicion, for knowledge is infinitely objective; it is the infinite indifference in equilibrium. Nor is knowledge love, for knowledge is infinitely objective, it is the infinite indifference in equilibrium. Nor is knowledge defilement, since it is the infinite indifference. The suspicious man and the lover have knowledge in common, and the suspicious man does not become suspicious because of his knowledge, nor does the lover become the lover through that knowledge. But when a man's knowledge has balanced the opposing possibilities, and he is about to or wishes to pronounce a judgment, then it appears in what he then thinks next, who he is, whether he is suspicious or loving. Only extremely confused and ordinary men believe that they are able to judge another man by virtue of knowledge. From this it is evident that they do not even know what knowledge is; that they have never taken the time and pains to develop the infinite, objective sense for possibilities; or by means of the art of infinite ambiguity to understand the possibilities and bring them into equilibrium; or to understand them clearly. In a kind of nebulous condition, they have a stolid or a passionate preference for a certain kind of possibility; they judge that a little of it is enough, and they call that judging by virtue of knowledge; and they think, self-satisfied in thus — believing — by virtue of knowledge (a sheer contradiction), that they are assured against mistakes — which would be restricted faith (a new contradiction).

It is quite common to hear men express a great fear of making a mistake in judging. When you listen more closely to what is said, then, alas, there is so often a distressing misunderstanding in this — serious fear. Behold that noble, simple, wise man of old; he became what he was — moreover it was

not something great — he did not become a great capitalist, nor an ambitious statesman in this best of all possible worlds. Impoverished, laughed at, ridiculed, accused, condemned, he remained the noble, simple, wise man, still so rarely seen; almost the only one who really made a distinction between what he understood and what he did not understand; and he remained so, because he "feared most of all to be in error."

I wonder if this elevation of thought, this sublime equipoise, is what men are really thinking about when they are afraid of making a mistake in judging. Possibly. But then it would also be possible that the fear is sometimes somewhat one-sided. All men have a natural fear of making a mistake — through believing too well of a man. The mistake, on the other hand, of believing too badly of another man, is perhaps less feared, at least not in comparison with the first. But then if we did not fear most of all being in error, then we are, on the contrary, in error through our one-sided fear of a certain kind of error. It mortifies our vanity and our pride to have thought too well of a swindler, to have been foolish enough to believe him — for it is a contest between brain and brain. One is vexed at oneself, or one finds that it is (yes, we speak in this way, and it does not help much, or rather it is a deception, to use more ceremonious and unusual expressions in an edifying discourse) "so stupid" to have been a fool. But ought it not to seem equally stupid to us, to say the least, to have believed evil, or suspiciously to have believed nothing, where there was good! I wonder if sometime in eternity it will not prove to have been more — than "stupid"; for let us use the word that is constantly used in the world; it does just as well applied to the eternal! But here in the world it is not "stupid" to believe evil of a good man; it is a superciliousness by which one adroitly gets rid of the good; but it is "stupid" to think well of an evil man, that is why one protects himself — since one fears so much being in error. The lover, on the other hand, truly fears being in error, therefore he believes everything.

The world tempts in many ways, among others also by making it appear that it would be so restricting, so foolish: lovingly to believe everything. But this is a misunderstanding. One draws a line through "lovingly" (alas, instead of underscoring it!), and so lays the emphasis on "foolish: to believe everything"; instead, the entire emphasis lies on the fact that it is "love" which believes everything. Truly it is not knowledge that defiles a man, far from it; knowledge is like sheer transparency, precisely then the most perfect and clearest; just as the most perfect water is tasteless. The servant of justice is not defiled because he has better information than the criminal about all intrigues. No, knowledge does not defile a man; it is suspicion which defiles a man's knowledge, just as love purifies it.

In relation to the fact of judging another man, knowledge leads at most to the balancing of opposing possibilities — on that fact the difference becomes apparent by what is now decided. For the Scriptures warn against judging, and they add "that you be not judged"; so that it looks as if one might sometimes judge without being judged in turn. But this is not the case. At the very moment you judge another man, or condemn another man, you judge yourself; for the act of judging another man is, in the last analysis, merely to judge yourself, or to reveal what you are. You perhaps do not notice it, it escapes your attention, how earnest existence is, how by showing you all these many men, it, as it were, gives you occasion to judge, so that you even deem yourself lucky that you are among those — undeservedly happily favored who are nothing, and therefore in all heedlessness have the comfortable task of judging others: and then it is existence who is courteous or strict enough not to regard you as nothing; then it is existence which judges you. How eager a man is to judge — if he knew what it means to judge: how hesitant he would be! How easily he seizes upon the least crumb in order to get the opportunity to judge — it is an opportunity to ensnare himself! Through knowledge you merely arrive at

equilibrium, just when the art is perfectly practiced; but the conclusion returns in the person of the judge, and makes it manifest — that he is the lover, for he decides: ergo I believe everything.

Suspicion, on the other hand, has (naturally not through its knowledge which is infinitely indifferent, but through itself, through its disbelief) a preference for evil. The fact of believing nothing at all is exactly the boundary which begins by believing evil. The good is of course the object of faith, and therefore the one who believes nothing at all started by believing evil. The fact of believing nothing at all is the beginning of being evil, for it shows that one has nothing good in one's self, since faith is precisely the good in a man, which does not come with much knowledge, nor need he lack it because his knowledge is insignificant. Suspicion cannot hold knowledge in equilibrium; it defiles its knowledge, and therefore is nearer to envy, spite, corruption, which believe everything evil.

But now what about the one who was so zealous to judge, to pour out his indignation, his powerful or impotent indignation upon another, yet without really knowing whereof he judged? What if in eternity he discovers and is forced to confess that the one he judged was not only innocent, but that he was the noblest, the most disinterested and the most high-minded of men! Someone has said that sometime in eternity (assuming that we are not ourselves excluded) we shall note with wonder one or another missing whom we had so definitely expected to find there. But I wonder if we shall not also see with wonder one or another there whom we would have excluded without ceremony, and see that he was far better than one's self, not as if he had later become so, but just in connection with the very thing which determined the one judging to exclude him. Nevertheless, the lover believes all things. With the blessed joy of wonder he will sometime see that he was right; and if he made a mistake in believing the good — the fact

of believing the good is in itself a blessing. Charitably to believe the good is certainly not a mistake, but one makes a mistake by not doing so.

The fact of suspiciously believing nothing at all (which is quite a different thing from knowledge about the equilibrium of opposing possibilities) and the fact of lovingly believing everything, is thus not an understanding, or the inference of an understanding, but a choice which must be made just when knowledge has balanced the opposing possibilities; and in this choice, which certainly takes the form of a judgment upon others, the one who judges is revealed. The fact that thoughtlessness, inexperience, simplicity, believe everything, is an understanding, a foolish understanding; the fact of lovingly believing everything is a choice by virtue of love. Instead of doing as suspicion does, which uses its shrewdness to secure itself by believing nothing, love uses its acuteness to discover the same thing, that deception and truth unconditionally stretch equally far, and it then decides by virtue of the faith it has in itself: ergo I believe everything.

Love believes everything — and is never deceived. Wonderful! To believe nothing at all for fear of being deceived seems reasonable; for how could anyone deceive someone who believes nothing! But to believe everything, and in that way throw himself away, a prey to all deception and to all deceivers, and nevertheless just by so doing assure himself everlastingly against every deception: that is strange. And yet I wonder if the one, even if he is not deceived by others, is still not deceived, most terribly deceived, certainly by himself, through believing nothing at all; defrauded of the highest, of the resignation, of the blessedness of love! No, there is but one way to assure one’s self against ever being deceived, that is charitably to believe everything.

Let us speak about it in this way: Can a man deceive God? No, in his relation to God a man can only deceive himself; for the God-relationship is

the supreme good, so that whoever defrauds God defrauds himself most terribly. Or, for purposes of comparison, let us consider the relation between man and man. Can a child deceive its parents? No, the child deceives itself; it is merely an appearance (hence, an illusion), a short-sighted deception, that makes it hook to the child, and to anyone who has no more understanding than the child, as if it were the child who deceived its parents, while, alas! the poor child really deceives itself. One may reasonably assume that as far as the child is concerned, the parents are superior to it in wisdom and insight, and therefore are superior in their true love for the child, who only foolishly understands loving himself, so that to deceive the parents would be the greatest misfortune which could befall the child, the greatest misfortune, if it were not his own fault. But then it is — truly — not the parents who are deceived; on the contrary, it is the child, and it only looks (an illusion) as if the child deceived its parents; in a childish and foolish sense it is true that the child deceived its parents, but consequently it is not true, since it is true only in a "childish and foolish sense." On the other hand, would it not be a pitiful and disgusting sight to see a father or mother who, in relation to the child, did not have the true earnest, concerned idea of their own superiority, based on the eternal responsibility of being truly desirous of the child's best interest? Would it not be pitiful and disgusting to see a father or mother, who might therefore degrade themselves by indecent quarrels with the child, become irritated and indignant on their own account, because they childishly had the foolish idea that it was the child who deceived them? Such a relationship between parents and a child is indeed indecent, moreover, almost crazy, as if to slap the child were to indicate being slapped by the child, and thus, by setting aside all dignity, superiority and legitimate authority, were to prove merely that the father or the mother was physically stronger.

Consequently the true superiority can never be deceived if it remains true to itself. But true love, in comparison with everything which is not love, hence compared with every illusion, is unconditionally superior: as a result it can never be deceived if, through believing all things, it remains true itself, or continues to be true love.

This is certainly very easy to understand; the difficulty must therefore lie elsewhere, in that there must be a lower range of ideas which does not even suspect what true love is, what love is in itself, and what this blessedness is in itself. The trouble is that there is a great multitude of illusions which tend to hold a man down in the lower range of ideas where the deception and the fact of being deceived signify exactly the opposite of what they signify in the infinite conception of love. This conception signifies that the only possibility of deception lies in refraining from loving, in submitting to giving up love itself and thereby losing its blessedness. For in the infinite sense the only deception possible is self-deception; infinitely speaking, one need not fear him who merely kills the body; to be killed is, from the infinite standpoint, not a danger, nor is the kind of deception the world talks about, any danger. And again this is not difficult to understand. The difficulty consists in carrying the task to completion, in acquiring the true conception of love, or, more correctly, in becoming the true lover; for just through believing all things, he guards against illusion, and fights to preserve himself in the true love. But the illusion will constantly obtrude itself, about like that illusion which believes that the sun moves around the earth, although we know that it is the earth that moves.

There is a lower conception of love, hence a lower love, which has no conception about love itself. This conception regards loving as a claim (the requital of love is what is demanded), and the fact of being loved (the requital) as an earthly good, as temporal — alas! and yet as the highest happiness. Moreover, if it is true, the deception may certainly play the

master, just as in the capitalistic world. One pays out his money to buy one or another convenience; if one has paid his money but has not received the convenience, then one is defrauded. A man makes love a transaction; he sacrifices his love in bartering, but if he does not get requited love in exchange, then he feels defrauded. The deception may also consist in the deceiver's having gained the love of the deceived in such a way that perhaps the one deceived could not keep from loving him, because he loved in such a way — that he could only love one single man, and this man was the deceiver. It is not the intention of this reflection to deny that the lover was deceived, nor that the deceiver was, yes, that he was a wretched deceiver; but it does deny that this lover was the true lover. For the one who is — loving, in such an extraordinary way that he can love but one single man, he is not the true lover, but he is in love with love, and he who is in love with love is a self-lover, as was earlier demonstrated. But that one may deceive a self-lover, the discourse has never wished to deny.

There is here as everywhere, something very profound in existence. We sometimes hear the most vociferous complaints about being deceived in love. The accuser wishes to prove exactly what a rare lover he himself is, and in turn how unusually paltry the deceiver is, and he proves this by protesting that he can and could love only one man. He does not notice that the more violent this complaint becomes, the more it becomes a self-accusation, which indicates that he himself has been and is a self-lover, of whom it is certainly true that he can love but one (for the true lover loves everyone, and that without demanding requital), and therefore he might really be deceived, which the true lover cannot be. That is to say: everyone who essentially and decisively admits that he has been thus deceived in love, so that he has lost the best, to say nothing of everything, he thereby denounces himself as a self-lover; for the best is love in itself, and one can always retain that if one wills to be the true lover. Everyone, therefore, who

only wills to have the lower, the illusory idea of what love is, he certainly takes pains not to be deceived; he learns from the capitalists or from those who carry on trade, what precautions they use against swindlers. Alas! and in spite of all these precautions, moreover even if he succeeds by means of these precautions in insuring himself against every deception: he and all like-minded are still essentially deceived through leading their lives in that world of illusion, in that world where all are essentially victims, whether the one now groans about the other's having deceived him, or the other brags of not having been deceived. The difference between them is no greater than it would be in an insane asylum if one of the patients were to imagine himself something through not being insane in the same way as another, while all of them were essentially insane.

The lower conception and illusion of love to which men resort in this interest and service, is temptation; the difficulty consists precisely in acting to defend one's self against it; for it is easy enough in a quiet moment to perceive that the true lover who believes everything, cannot be deceived. "But still it is so stupid to be deceived." If you yourself were the true lover, who believes everything, then you would indeed see that it is an impossibility, would see that you were not deceived. But is there anything stupid in knowing within yourself that you are not deceived? No. "But it is, nevertheless, so stupid that it should seem so to others," See, here is the deception. To know in yourself and in truth that you are not deceived, and still find it stupid that you should seem to be deceived. What do you call that? We call it vanity, or, what here amounts to the same thing, we call it; not being absolutely the true lover. Alas, and if vanity could get power over the true lover, then he would certainly be deceived, for it drags him out of love down into the low, the world of pettiness and wrangling, where one fools and is fooled, vain of being able to dupe others, stupid in being duped, and therefore vain of being able to avoid it.

When we see the true lover deceived by the cunning, the artful and the hypocrite, we are revolted, and yet why? Sometimes because we do not see punishment and retribution follow in the external world; hence because we ask to see the meaning of the imperfection and the externality presented as a satisfying drama where there is external retribution; then again because we sink down to the lower level of ideas; again because we sluggishly and thoughtlessly forget that the true lover cannot be deceived. We have a right to cry woe to the one who leads a blind man astray; here it is quite proper to demand external punishment, for one can deceive a blind man; the fact of being blind does not assure against every deception. But the true lover who believes everything cannot be deceived. In a certain sense the lover knows very well if someone deceives him, but by not wishing to believe it, or by believing everything, he preserves himself in love, and thus is not deceived — consequently, here, too, one has an illustration of how foolish it is, how injudicious the business, which thinks that knowing is higher than believing; for that which precisely assures the lover, who in a certain sense knows that he has been deceived, is to believe everything.

One cannot deceive the true lover who believes everything, for to deceive him is to deceive one’s self. What really does constitute the highest good and the greatest happiness? In truth it is certainly loving; next to this is being truly loved. But then it is impossible to deceive the lover, who just by believing everything abides in love. If it were possible to defraud anyone of money in this way, so that the so-called victim retained his money: then would he have been defrauded? But that is exactly the case here. The deceiver becomes contemptible through his attempt, and the lover preserves himself in his love, abides in love and hence is in possession of the highest good and the greatest happiness; consequently, he certainly is not deceived! The deceiver, on the contrary, deceives himself. He does not love, and thereby he has already defrauded himself of the supreme good and the

greatest happiness. Next to this comes the being loved by one who loves in truth — otherwise being loved might become a source of great unhappiness to one. Again it is this which the deceiver is about to swindle himself out of, insofar as he prevents himself from having the true benefit of this love, and insofar as he might succeed, if his deception were presumably discovered, in forfeiting the other man's love, in making the lover unhappy through truly having ceased to love — instead of through believing all things abiding in love, assured against all deception.

Let it sometime take place before our eyes, so that it can really become clear how pitiful the deceiver looks in comparison with the true lover — for there is much said about seducing and seducers, about deception and deceivers, but one rarely talks about or describes the true lover. Hence, I imagine a cunning man, an artful one, a hypocrite; I take pleasure in equipping him who is initiated into all the secrets of deception, with all seductive gifts. Now what will he do? He wishes to deceive the lover; he wishes (for he has that much sense in spite of his depravity, so that he perceives how great a good it is to be loved) by means of his cunning, to see himself beloved. But why all this fuss, this wholly superfluous expenditure of cunning and artfulness? It is the true lover he wishes to deceive, but the true lover loves everyone, so the deceiver can attain love in a far simpler way. Moreover, if we were speaking about earthly love (self-love) then there would at least be some meaning in the deception; for if the beloved can only love one single person, then, if it were possible, it would be suitable by means of the deceptive art of cunning and artifice, to become that one. But as regards the true lover, the deception is from its very inception exactly meaningless, the deceiver from the very beginning is shown in the most pitiful light. Now furthermore. The deceiver naturally succeeds in being loved, naturally — moreover, the deceiver thinks and must naturally think that this result is due to his cunning and artfulness and

skill; poor, deceived deceiver! He does not notice that he is dealing with the true lover, who loves him because the true lover loves everyone. In what an absurdity is not the wretched deceiver now involved! Not as if the deception had failed; no, that punishment is far too insignificant; no, the deception is successful, and the deceiver is proud of his deception! But wherein lies the deception, what kind of a deception is it he talks about? Naturally the deception must lie in the fact that although the lover loves him, in addition to enjoying this good of being loved, he coldly and proudly and mockingly also enjoys the self-satisfaction of not loving in return. It quite naturally escapes him (for how could a deceiver realize that true love exists!) that he was dealing with the true lover, who loves without asking for any requital, who justly estimates the love and its eternal happiness by not asking any requital. Consequently, by the use of cunning the deceiver has led the lover to love him — but that is what the lover is so infinitely willing to do. The deceiver has presumably fooled him by not loving in return — but the true lover regards asking for a requital as a pollution, a debasement of love, and considers that loving without the reward of requited love, is the highest happiness. Who then is the victim of deception? What is there to say about the deception? The deceiver talks at random and does not even understand what he is saying, like that man at whom we all laugh, that man who lay in the ditch and still believed he was riding. To deceive in this way, is it not as if one were to call it stealing to put money into a man's pocket! The true lover has become richer; for each more that he gives in loving, and for each new time that he gives his love, relinquishing all thought of requital, the richer he becomes. Or is the true lover deceived if it is not revealed what an unworthy object of love the deceiver is? The act of loving is the supreme good, but then only the love which asks requital, hence the false love, can be deceived through remaining ignorant of the fact that its object was unworthy.

Or is the true lover deceived if it becomes evident how unworthy an object of love the deceiver is and was? The fact of loving is the supreme good and the greatest happiness. You know that one who is in need of money, in order to get money approaches a man he had depended on, and who he believes has money: he is fooled then if the man is insolvent and has no money. But the one who wishes to give his money away, and does not in the most remote way wish or demand repayment, he is certainly not deceived — because the recipient has no money. But the cunning deceiver, who is prompted by the smoothest and most insinuating motives of cunning, does not notice how clumsily he behaves. He believes himself to be superior, he smiles in self-satisfaction (alas, as if you saw the self-satisfied smile of the insane, which is something both to laugh at and to weep over!); he does not suspect that the lover is infinitely superior. The deceiver is blinded, he does not even notice his terrible impotence: his deception is successful — and he confers a benefaction; his deception is successful — and he makes the true lover still richer; his deception is successful, he succeeds — and yet it is just himself who is deceived. Poor victim! Even this way to salvation is cut off from him, so that his deception fails! If an insane man wished to convince a rational man of the correctness of his insane thoughts, and to a certain degree succeeded, would this not be the most terrible of all, would it not be almost like the act of an unmerciful existence, for if he had failed, then the deranged man might resize from this that he was insane; but now it is hidden from him, and his madness is indeed incurable. So with the deceiver; but it is not an unmerciful but a just punishment upon him, that his deception succeeded — and just therein is his perdition.

What, then, in truth is the quarrel between the deceiver and the lover? The deceiver wishes to trick his love from the lover. This cannot be done; the true lover has, simply by not requiring the least requital, assumed an

impregnable position. To cheat him out of his love is no more possible than to cheat a man out of the money which he as donor stands ready to give and does give to one. The quarrel is therefore really about something else — whether it might be possible for the deceiver (something he by no means intends or considers) to become the occasion of the lover's fall, so that the lover fell away from love and sank down in the world of illusion, in a childish wrangling with the deceiver, because the lover gave up the love which loves without asking requital. However, the true lover guards against the possibility of this just by believing all things, hence by loving the deceiver. If the deceiver could understand this, he would lose his reason. An earthly lover (the self-lover) believes that he is deceived when the deceiver has fooled him into loving him, without the deceiver's loving in return — and the true lover believes that he himself is saved when by believing all things, he succeeds in loving the deceiver. The earthly lover regards it as a misfortune to continue to love the deceiver; the true lover regards it as a victory if he is successful in continuing to love the deceiver. Wonderful! The deceiver must become more and more conceited about his own wisdom because his deception succeeds so extraordinarily; at last it even ends by his regarding the lover as a poor, incompetent, stupid devil. And yet it is just by means of this very same fact that the true lover is everlastingly and infinitely assured against deception! Do you, my hearer, know any stronger expression for superiority than the fact that the superior one looks as if he were the weaker? For the stronger, who looks as if he were stronger, establishes a standard of superiority; but the one who, although superior, looks as if he were the weaker, negates the standard and the comparison, that is, he is infinitely superior. Have you never in life seen this relation of infinite superiority, which certainly is not plainly seen, for the infinite is never seen directly? Take it in the matter of the infinite superiority of another, and you will see that he looks like a plain, ordinary man; only a

man who thinks that he has more sense than others, but is not quite certain about it, or is weak and foolish enough to boast of a comparative relation of superiority, strives to give an appearance of superiority of understanding.

So, too, with the lover who believes everything. This credulity can so easily be confused with incapacity, and yet there is the profundity of wisdom in this simplicity. It can so easily be confused with weakness, and yet the strength of eternity is in this impotence. The lover can so easily look like a poor, friendless man whom anyone can deceive, and yet he is the only one who is eternally and infinitely assured against deception. But we simply do not see it; humanly speaking the confusion lies near enough, especially in these clever times which have become too clever to believe in wisdom. The confusion lies near enough. For the lover who believes everything is not immediately manifest; he is like those plants whose propagation is in secret: he breathes in God, he draws the nourishment for his love from God, he is strengthened through God. That humanly speaking he is deceived, he sees in a certain sense himself; but he knows that deception and truth stretch equally far, and for that reason it might still be possible that the deceiver was not a deceiver, and therefore he believes everything. For this end the lover has courage, courage to believe everything (in truth the highest courage!); courage to endure the world's contempt and insults (truly the greatest victory, greater than anything which is gained in the world, for it overcomes the world!); courage to endure the world's finding it so indescribably foolish, while it still excellently understands that from which he draws his conclusion, but not his conclusion, any more than a suspicious world can understand the everlasting happiness which the true lover has in himself.

Still, suppose that sometime in eternity it appeared that the lover really had been deceived! How — if it actually is necessary to repeat it once more? When loving is the highest good and the greatest happiness; when

the lover just by believing everything, abides in the happiness of love: how then could he, in time or eternity, be deceived! No, no, there is in time and eternity only one deception possible with respect to true love, the self-deception, or the renouncing of love. The true lover therefore will not even understand the objection. Alas, but the rest of us unfortunately understand it only too easily; for the lower range of ideas and the covenant of worldly passions with illusions are so difficult to free one's self from. At the very moment when one has best understood the truth, the old ideas suddenly come upon one again. The infinite, the eternal, consequently the true, are so alien to the natural man that it is with him as it is with a dog, which can indeed learn to walk upright for a moment, but still is constantly wanting to walk on all fours. One can almost force a man's thought to have to admit that since deception unconditionally stretches equally as far as truth, one man cannot really judge the other, but the judge reveals only himself — about as when someone with all his might strikes down on a dynamometer, and does not know that it is a dynamometer, hence he believes that he really is striking something, while it is really only his strength which is being tested. And when one has understood this in this way, then one may still seek one more evasion; one can lay hold on eternity in a curious way, counting on eternity to reveal whether he really was a deceiver. But what does this prove? It proves that one is not the true lover who has the eternal happiness of love in himself, or who has the true conception of earnestness about eternity. If a man yields to this impulse, it immediately drags him down to its low level of pettiness, where the last and the highest aim is not the happiness of love itself, but the wrangling of sophistry, — But the true lover believes everything — and yet is never deceived.

III. LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS — AND YET IS NEVER PUT TO SHAME

LOVE HOPETH ALL things. — I Corinthians 13.7

BY THE USE OF MANY parables and the employment of many figures of speech, the Holy Scriptures seek in various ways to add dignity and solemnity to our earthly existence; to secure air and vision through laying hold on the eternal. And this is in truth needed. For when the worldliness of the God-forsaken earthly life immures itself in proud self-satisfaction, this enclosed air generates a poison in itself. And when time apparently creeps on so slowly in our temporal existence, and yet with such a subtle haste that we are never consciously aware of its passing; or when the moment sticks fast and remains stationary; when everything, everything conspires to turn our thoughts and our energies into the service of the moment; then is the vision lost, and this isolated, God-forsaken moment of the temporal existence, be it longer or shorter, signifies a falling away from the eternal. This is why the need has so frequently been felt at various times for a refreshing, inspiring breeze, a mighty gust of wind, which would purify the air and drive out the poisonous vapors; a need for the saving impulse of great events, which save by stirring up the stagnation; a need for a great revivifying vision of expectation — so that mankind may not be stifled in worldliness or perish in that suffocating moment!

However, Christianity knows only one way and one way out, while none the less it always does know one way and one way out. By the aid of the eternal Christianity is able at every moment to secure air and vision. When the pressure of business increases, just because the moment is extended, when it rushes impetuously about in the moment which, eternally

understood, makes no progress; when the industrious sow and reap and sow again and reap again (for industry harvests many times); when the industrious fill, their barns full of what they harvested and rest on their merits — whereas, alas! the man who in truth wished the good, during that same time does not see the least reward of his labor, and becomes a joke as one who does not know how to sow, as one whose labor is in vain and who only beats the air: then Christianity furnishes the vision by means of its parable about this earthly life being the time of sowing, eternity the time of harvest. When the moment, just because it is standing still, is like a whirlpool (for a whirlpool does not move forward); when there is striving, winning and losing and winning again, now at one point, now at another — but the one who wishes the good in truth, is the only one who alone is losing, and losing everything as it seems: then Christianity affords a vision by means of the parable about this earthly life being the time of tribulation, of striving, eternity the time of victory. When the moment is halted in the miserable intricacies of pettiness, which sneeringly parodies the most sacred things, the good, the true, in a wretched belittlement, sneeringly plays the game of distributing honor and shame; when everything is made more vainglorious by being dragged down into this seething wretched commotion: then Christianity affords air and vision, secures for life dignity and solemnity by the aid of the parable showing that scene in eternity where it will be eternally decided who has won the garland of honor, and who was put to shame.

What a solemnly earnest festival! Truly, what are honor and shame if the surroundings are not such as give the honor or the shame their infinite significance! Even if a man deservedly won honor here in the world, what solemnity does the world have to give it significance? Suppose a pupil is deservedly rebuked or deservedly honoured: if the solemn ceremony were to take place on the stairway; if the teacher who awards the honor and the

demerits were a wretched fellow; if none, or as good as none, of those dignitaries were invited whose presence would be an honor to the occasion, but only an even greater number of ordinary men whose reputation was, to say the least, ambiguous: what then are honor and shame? But eternity! Do you know any banquet hall whose arches are as lofty as those of eternity? Do you know any place, even any cathedral, where there is this sacred stillness, like that of eternity? Do you know any group, even the most select circle of venerable men, which is so certain that no one is present against whom honor might have the least, the very least, objection, so certain that no one is present except those whom honor honors, as eternity is? Do you know any festal hall, even if its walls are of mirrors, which so infinitely and solely reflects the demands of honor; so infinitely refuses even the least, the most inconspicuous crevice for dishonor to conceal itself in, as eternity? — If you should there be put to shame!

By the help of the eternal Christianity affords a vision for every moment, as touching honor and shame, if you will assist by hoping. Christianity does not bear you up to some loftier place from which you can look out over a somewhat wider range: that is still only an earthly hope and a worldly vision. No, Christianity's hope is eternity; and therefore there are lights and shadows, beauty and truth, and above all the transparency of distance in its plan of existence. Christianity's hope is eternity; and Christ is the Way; His abasement is the Way, but also when He ascends into heaven He would also be the Way.

But love which is greater than faith and hope, assumes also the work of hope, or assumes hope, the hoping for others, as a task. It is even edified and nourished by this hope of eternity, and then again it acts affectionately toward others in this hope, which we shall now consider:

LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS — AND YET IS NEVER PUT TO SHAME.

For truly not everyone who hopes all things is therefore the lover; nor is everyone who hopes all things thereby assured against ever being put to shame; but affectionately to hope for all things is the opposite of despairingly hoping nothing at all, either for one's self or for others.

To hope all things or what amounts to the same thing, always to hope. It certainly seems at first glance as if hoping all things were something which might be done once for all, since "all things" gathers all the many into one, and insofar into what one might call an eternal moment, as if hope were at rest, in tranquility. However, this is not so. For hoping means the synthesis of the eternal and the temporal; the consequence is that the expression for the task of hope in the form of eternity is to hope all things: for the task of hope in the form of the temporal existence always to hope. One expression is no truer than the other; on the contrary, each of the expressions becomes untrue if it is set in opposition to the other, instead of being united in expressing the same thing: at every moment always to hope all things.

Hoping lays hold upon the future, on the possibility, which again, as distinguished from reality, is always a duality — the possibility of progress or retrogression, of building up or tearing down, of good or of evil. The eternal but when the eternal touches on the temporal, or is in the temporal, they do not meet each other in the "present," for then the present would itself be the eternal. The present, the moment, is so swiftly past that it does not really exist except as a dividing line, and it is consequently past while the past is what had been the present. Hence when the eternal is in the temporal, then it is in the future (for the present cannot lay hold on it, and the past is past) or in the possibility. The past is the actual, the future the possible; the eternal is everlastingly the eternal; in time the eternal is the possible, the future. We therefore call the day tomorrow the future, but we also call the eternal life the future. The possible, as such, is always a duality, and the eternal is equally proportional in the possibility to its duality. On the

other hand, if a man who is concerned with the possible, lays hold equally on the duality of the possible, then we say: he is expectant. Expecting contains in itself the same duality as does the possible, and to expect is to relate oneself to the possible clearly and only as such. On that the relationship divides, inasmuch as the expectant man makes a choice. To lay hold expectantly on the possibility of the good is to hope, which just for this reason cannot be any temporal expectation, but is an eternal hope. To lay hold expectantly on the possibility of evil is to fear. But the one who hopes as well as the one who fears is expectant. Yet as soon as the choice is made, the possible is changed, for the possibility of the good is the eternal. It is only in the moment of contact that the doubleness of the possible is equal. By the decision to choose hope one decides, therefore, infinitely more than it seems, for it is an eternal decision. Only in the mere possibility, hence for the merely or indifferently expectant, are the possibilities of good and of evil equal; in the making of a distinction (and choice is the making of a distinction) is the possibility of the good more than possibility, for it is the eternal. Hence it happens that he who hopes can never be deceived; for to hope is to expect the possibility of the good, but the possibility of good is the eternal.

So we must define more exactly what it means to hope; in ordinary speech we often call that hope which is by no means hope, but is a wish, a longing, a yearning expectation, now for one thing, now another, in short, it is the laying hold by the expectant on the infinitude of possibilities. Thus understood (when hope really merely indicates expectation) the youth and the child find it easy enough to hope, because the youth and the child are themselves still a possibility. And, on the other hand, it is again quite proper, when one sees how with the years the possible, or the sense for the possible, and the hope very frequently diminish in men. This may explain why experienced people speak in such a disparaging way about hope, as if it

belonged only to youth (as the hope of the youth and of the child certainly do), as if hoping, like dancing, were something youthful, something which older people neither enjoyed nor had the facility for. Oh, well, it is easy to hope and also to do by the aid of the eternal, that is, by the aid of the possibility of good. And even if the eternal is far from being youthfulness, it still has far more in common with youthfulness than with the sullenness which is frequently honoured by the name of earnestness; than with the slowing down of the years which under fairly fortunate conditions are as such fairly satisfied and calm, but after all have nothing to hope for, and which under unfortunate conditions are more disposed to grumble peevishly than to hope. In youth a man has expectation and possibility enough; it develops of itself in the young, like the precious myrrh which drips from the trees in Arabia. But then when a man has become older, then his life becomes more often than not an indolent repetition and paraphrase of the same thing. No possibility frightens it awake, no possibility animates it rejuvenatingly; hope becomes something which is neither here nor there, and possibility something as rare as greens in winter.

One gets along without the eternal by the aid of habit, shrewdness, imitation, experience, custom and use. And truly, take all this, bring it together prepared by the smoldering or merely earthly-blazing fire of passion, and you will see you can get all kinds of things out of it, a variously prepared tough slime, which one calls judicious living. But no one ever gets any possibility from it, the possibility, that wonderful possibility, which is so infinitely fine (not the most delicate spring shoot is so delicate!), so infinitely fragile (not the finest of woven linen is so fragile!), and yet precisely brought about, created, by the help of the eternal, and so stronger than everything, if it is the possibility of the good.

One thinks to speak empirically by dividing a man’s life into certain periods and years, and then calling the first period that of hope or of

possibility. What nonsense! In that way one absolutely leaves out the eternal in speaking about hope, and yet one talks about hope. But how is that possible, since hope lays hold on the possibility of the good, and thereby on the eternal! On the other hand, how is it possible to speak about hope in such a way that one must assume that it belongs exclusively to a certain age? The eternal certainly extends over the whole life, so there is and consequently must be hope until the last, so there is consequently no exclusive age which is hope's, but the whole of one's life must be the time of hope! One also thinks to speak empirically about hope — by discarding the eternal. As in the theater by shortening the time and by condensing the incidents one gets to see the events of many years in the course of a few hours: so one wishes theatrically to arrange matters in the temporal existence. One rejects God's plan of existence: the temporal existence is safe and sound development, the complication — the dissolution of eternity. One arranges everything within the temporal existence, expends a score of years on the development, then ten years on the complications of existence; then some year one draws the knot too tight, and then dissolution follows. Undeniably, death is also a dissolution, and then it is past; one is buried — yet not before the dissolution of corruption has set in. But truly everyone who does not wish to understand that one's whole life must be a time of hope, he is in despair, regardless of, completely regardless of whether he knows it or not; whether he deems himself lucky in his supposed well-being, or he spends a toilsome life in boredom and trouble. Everyone who dismisses the possibility of his existence being forfeited the next moment — if he does not dismiss this possibility because he hopes for the possibility of the good, hence everyone who lives without possibility, he is in despair; he breaks with the eternal, he arbitrarily ends the possibility, he makes an end, where there is no end, without the assent of eternity; instead of being like the one who writes according to another's dictation, who constantly has

the pen ready for the next word, so that he does not presume irrelevantly to place a period before the meaning is complete, or rebelliously to throw the pen aside.

If someone wishes to help a child with a very hard task, what does he do? Certainly he does not set the whole task all at once before the child, so that the child becomes discouraged and gives up all hope of accomplishing it. He assigns a small portion at a time, but always enough so the child does not stop as if it were finished, and yet not so much that the child cannot manage it. This is the gentle deception of education; it really holds something back. If the child is deceived, does it happen because the teacher is a man who cannot answer for the next step? But now eternity; that is still the greatest task that is set for a man, and, on the other hand, it can still vouch for what comes next; and the child of the temporal existence (the man) still acts like a little child regarding the infinite task! If eternity were sometime and in its own language to set man the task without regard for his apprehension and his limited ability: the man would be in despair. But then it is truly wonderful that this, the greatest power, eternity, can make itself so small, that it is so divisible, that that which is everlastingly one, by putting on the form of the future, of the possible, by the help of hope, educates the child of the temporal existence (the man), teaches him to hope (for hoping is itself an education, is the laying hold on the eternal), if he does not then voluntarily austerely choose to be dispirited through fear, or if he does not impudently choose to despair, that is, to evade the education of the possibility. Rightly understood, the eternal assigns only a little portion at a time in the possibility. Eternity is through the possible always near enough at hand, and yet far enough away to keep a man moving forward, progressing, toward the eternal. Thus eternity draws and lures man by the possibility from the cradle to the grave, if he will but choose to hope. For the possibility is, as was said, twofold, and just because of this it is the true

education. The possibility is equally as severe, or can be equally as severe, as it can be gentle. Hope does not lie as a matter of course in the possibility, for fear may also lie in it. But the one who chooses hope, him the possibility, by the aid of hope, teaches to hope. Still the possibility of fear, the severity, remains, secretly present as a possibility, if it should be needed for the sake of the education, for the purpose of arousing; but it remains hidden, while the eternal allures by the aid of hope. For the alluring always consists in being equally as near as far away, whereby the hopeful one is always kept hoping, hoping everything, preserved in hope for the eternal, which in the temporal existence is the possible.

So it is with hoping all things. But lovingly to hope everything indicates the relation of the lover to other men, so that in his relation to them, in hoping for them, he always keeps the door of possibility open with infinite preference for the possibility of the good. Hence, he lovingly hopes that at every moment there is the possibility, the possibility of the good for the other man; this, the possibility of the good, indicates the increasingly glorious progress in the good from perfection unto perfection, or the rising again after the fall, or salvation from perdition, and so on.

That the lover is right, that at every moment the possibility exists, is easily perceived. Alas, but perhaps many would far more easily understand it, were we to allow despair to say the same thing — for in a certain sense despair does say the same thing. The despairing one knows, too, what lies in the possibility, and yet he gives up the possibility (for renouncing the possibility is just what despair means), or, even more correctly, he ventures impudently to assume the impossibility of the good. Again it appears here that the possibility of the good is more than possibility; for when one ventures to assume the impossibility of the good, then all possibility has ceased for him. The apprehensive one does not assume the impossibility of

the good; he fears the possibility of evil, but he does not infer he does not venture to assume the impossibility of the good.

"It is possible," says despair, "it is possible that even the most honest enthusiast might sometime become weary, renounce his striving, and sink down in the service of wretchedness. It is possible that even the most fervent believer might sometime let go of faith and choose disbelief. It is possible that even the most ardent love might become chilled, become cold. It is possible that even the most upright man might still go astray and be lost. It is possible that even one's best friend might be changed into an enemy, even the most loyal wife be changed to a wanton: all this is possible, therefore despair, relinquish hope, above all, do not hope in any man or for any man!"

Yes, all these things are certainly possible, but then, too, the converse is also possible. "Therefore never unlovingly give up any man or your hope for him, for it might be possible that even the most prodigal son might still be saved; that the most bitter enemy, alas, he who was your friend, it is possible that he might again become your friend; it is possible that he who sank lowest, just because he had stood so high, it is still possible that he might again be lifted up; it is still possible that the love which grew cold, might again be fanned into flame: therefore never give up any man, not even at the last moment; do not despair, rather hope all things!"

Hence, "it is possible," insofar as the despairing and the lover agree on the same thing; but then they are eternally separated, for despair hopes nothing at all for others, love hopes everything. Despair loses courage, and now sometimes makes use of the possibility as a delightful means of stimulation, if one can sometimes be amused by the unstable, vainglorious, weird blazing of the possibility. It is noticeable enough, and it shows how deeply hope is entrenched in mankind, that one finds among men who were chilled in despair, a dominant inclination to toy and trifle with the

possibility, a sensuous misuse of the imagination. Coldly and defiantly the despairing man will not hope for the other man, even less work for the possibility of the good in him; but the despairing one delights in letting the other man's fate play the buffoon in the possibility; indifferent to hope or fear, he delights to play with the other man's fate, to consider now one, now another possibility, to seesaw in the air, while he himself proudly and unkindly despises it all.

Still, by what right do we call a man despairing who gives up another man? It is one thing to despair yourself; it is something else to despair about another man. Oh, well, but if that is still true which the lover understands, and if it is true that one, if one is the lover, understands what the lover understands, that at every moment there is the possibility of the good for the other man: then the giving up of another man as hopelessly lost, as if there were no hope for him, is a proof that one is not one's self the lover; and hence the one who gives up the possibility is the despairing man. No one can hope unless he also is loving; he cannot hope for himself without also being loving, for the good qualities hang infinitely together; but if he is loving, he also has hope for others. And to the same degree as he hopes for himself, absolutely to the same degree he hopes for others; and to the same degree as he hopes for himself, absolutely to that same degree he is the lover. And to the same degree as he hopes for others, absolutely to that same degree, he hopes for himself; for this is the infinitely precise, eternal *like for like*, which is in everything eternal.

Oh, everywhere where love is, there is something so infinitely profound! The true lover says: "Hope everything, give up no man, for to give him up is to give up your love for him — for if you do not give that up, then you have hope. But if you give up your love for him, then you cease to be the lover." But we generally talk in another way, in an imperious and unkind fashion of our relation to the love in us, as if one were himself the master

and autocrat of his love in the same way that a man is of his money. If someone says, “I have stopped loving that man,” then he thinks that it is “that man” who loses, the man who had been the object of his love. The speaker even believes that he controls his own love in the same way as when one who has assisted another man with money says, “I have stopped giving him this assistance,” so that the giver now keeps the money himself which the other had formerly received, the one who is now the loser. For when it is a matter of money, the giver is far from losing it through this change of policy with regard to giving. But it is not so with love; perhaps the one who had been the object of love loses, but the one who “has given up his love for this man,” he is the loser. Perhaps he does not notice it, perhaps he does not notice that his very words mock him when he says, “I have given up my love.” But if he has given up his love, then he has ceased to be loving. To be sure he adds “my love for this man,” but this does not help in the same way that it does about money, for it cannot be that way with love. The adjective “loving” does not apply to me when I have given up “this man,” although, alas! I may even have imagined that he was the one who lost.

And so, too, with regard to the fact of despairing of another man — that is one’s self to be in despair. Moreover, it loses little time, this reflection! One grows worse so easily and so readily by despairing over another man — and presumably being certain of one’s self, full of hope for one’s self; and the very men who self-complacent feel safest personally, are the quickest of all to despair over others. But however easy it is, it still cannot really be done — except in thoughtlessness, which certainly is the easiest for many men. No, here again is the eternal *like for like*, to despair over another man is to be one’s self in despair.

For the lover hopes all things. And that is true which the lover says, that, according to his understanding, even at the last moment there is the

possibility of the good, even for the most disheartened, hence, there is also hope. It is true, and it will be true for everyone in his relations to other men, if he will hold his imagination in check, undisturbed and unobscured by unkind passions, with the eternal view of the reflection of the eternal in the possibility. If therefore a man cannot understand what the lover understands, then it must be because he is not the lover; it must be because there is something which prevents him from keeping the possibility clear (for if the possibility is kept clear, everything is possible), while he lovingly chooses the possibility of the good, or hopes for the other man. It must be because there is something which oppresses a man and gives him a tendency to expect faintheartedness, destruction and perdition for the other man. This sense of oppressiveness is the worldliness and thus the earthly passions of the unloving mind. For worldliness is in itself heavy, hard, supine, slow, out of harmony, and cannot admit the possibility, least of all the possibility of good, either for its own sake or for the sake of another.

There is a shrewdness which, almost proud of this shrewdness, believes that it has a particularly profound knowledge of the shabby side of existence, the knowledge that everything ends in wretchedness: how could one with this viewpoint even at the last moment be able in love to hope for another man, who already early in the day begins to expect and to be prepared for his destruction! — There is wrath and indignation; even if one does not have murder on his conscience, he still hopelessly gives up the hated, hence he takes the possibility away from him; but is not this to slay him spiritually, spiritually to thrust him down into the abyss — insofar as that depends on wrath and indignation!

There is an evil eye. How could an evil eye be able lovingly to catch sight of the possibility of the good? There is envy. It is swift to give a man up, and yet it does not really so much give him up as it lets him go; not only that, it is early ready to help along his destruction. And when this has been

made certain, then envy hastens to its spiteful retreat and calls together its even more abominable kinsfolk, who are called spitefulness, so that they may rejoice together — to their own detriment.

There is a cowardly, timorous pettiness, which does not have the courage to hope anything for itself! How then could it hope the possibility of the good for others? For that it is too petty, and has too much kinship with envy! There is a worldly, vainglorious mind which would die of shame and disgrace if it should happen to make a mistake, to be made a fool of, to become a laughingstock (the most terrible of all horrors!) through having hoped for another man something which did not come to pass. So this vainglorious and worldly mind insures itself by hoping nothing, and it finds the idea of lovingly hoping all things so infinitely foolish and so infinitely laughable. But in that the vanity of the world is wrong, for what is foolish is never infinite; that would be exactly the consolation of one who while he lived must endure much of the world's foolishness, so that he might always be able to say: "It does not last forever, no, God be praised! it has an end." Nor is experience right in saying that the wisest thing is not to hope everything for another man — yet, of course, experience is right, otherwise it must learn and teach how foolish it is for a man to love others for the sake of his own advantage; and only insofar as a man does that is he unwise in hoping everything.

When then all this, this shrewdness, this wrath and indignation, this envy, this spitefulness, this cowardly, timorous pettiness, this worldly, vainglorious mind, when all this, or at least some of it, is in a man, and in the same degree as it is present in him: then there is no love, and in the same degree as all this is present in him, the love is correspondingly less. But if there is less of love in him, there is also less of the eternal; but if there is less of the eternal in him there is also less possibility, less sense of the possibility (for the possibility arises from the fact that the eternal

touches in time the eternal in man; if there is nothing eternal in this man, the contact with the eternal is in vain, and there is no possibility); but if there is less possibility there is also less hope, just because and as there is less love, which might lovingly hope the possibility of the good. The lover, on the other hand, hopes everything; no indolence of habit, no pettiness of understanding, no sophistry of prudence, no amount of experience, no slackness of the years, no bitterness of evil passions corrupt his hope for him or falsify the possibility. Every morning, aye, every moment, he renews his hope and recreates the possibility, while love abides and he in it.

Even if the lover is not able to do anything else for others, even if he is not able to bring any other gift: he still brings the best gift, he brings hope. There, where everything seems so hopeful and is so rich in expectation for the promising youth, there love still brings the best gift, hope; but also there where men already for a long time have believed they had held out to the uttermost, there too love hopes to the last, moreover to the "last day," for not until then is hope past. If you have ever seen a physician going about among the sick, then you have certainly noticed that the best gift he brings, better than all medicine, and better even than his care, is the hope he brings, when it is said, "The doctor hopes." Still a doctor has only to do with temporal conditions, therefore it must happen again and again that the moment comes when it would be false for him to deny that he had given up the sick, that the sickness was unto death. But the lover — what joy for the lover that he always dares to hope; what joy to him that eternity always vouches to him that there is always hope. For the lover, the true lover does not hope because eternity vouches to him for it, but he hopes because he is the lover and he thanks eternity that he dares hope. And so he always brings the best gift, better than congratulations on the greatest happiness, better than all human sympathy for the greatest unhappiness; for hope, the possibility of good, is the support of eternity. When all the calamities befell

the race, hope still remained behind. On that paganism and Christianity are agreed; the difference is, and it is an infinite one, that Christianity has an infinitely lower conception of all these calamities, and an infinitely more blessed conception of hope. But the hope which remained, remained only with the lover. If there were no love, then neither would there be hope; it would be like a letter which lies uncalled for. If there were no love, it would be with hope as with a letter whose contents would be so very welcome, but where there was no one to deliver the letter. Then love, although greater than hope, would assume it as its duty and its task, to bring hope.

However, is there not something dark, something obscure in all this reflection, so that one cannot' rightly decide what it is all about? For "Love hopeth all things" may indicate that the lover hopes everything for himself, and it may indicate that the lover lovingly has everything for others. But this is after all one and the same; and this obscurity is simply the clarity of the eternal, if one understands that it is absolutely one and the same. If it is love alone which hopes everything (and Paul does not say that hope hopes everything, but that love hopes everything, just because, as he says, love is greater than hope), then it follows as a matter of course (because it is love and because of what love is) that the lover hopes everything for others, since his love is the condition of his hope for himself. Only earthly understanding (and its clarity is not to be recommended), only earthly understanding, which understands neither love nor hope, believes that hoping for one's self and hoping for others are two entirely different things, as well as that love is a third thing in itself. Earthly understanding thinks that a man can just as well hope for himself without hoping for others; and that he does not need love in order to hope for himself, whereas he certainly needs love in order to hope for others, for the beloved; and why should one hope for any others than these? Earthly understanding does not notice that love is by no means a third thing in itself, but it is the middle term: without

love no hope for one's self, with love hope for all others; to the same degree as one has hope for one's self, to the same degree one hopes for others, for to that same degree one is loving.

Blessed be the lover, he hopes all things; even in the last moment he hopes the possibility of good for the most perverted. He learned it from eternity; but only because he was the lover could he learn from eternity, and only because he was the lover could he learn this from eternity. Woe to him who with respect to another man gave up hope and possibility, woe to him, for thereby he himself lost love!

Love hopes all things and — is never put to shame. We speak in relation to hope and expectation, about being put to shame; we believe that one is put to shame when his hope or expectation is not fulfilled. In what does the disgrace consist? Certainly it must lie in the fact that one's calculating cleverness has not reckoned correctly, that (to one's shame) it becomes apparent that one has irrationally miscalculated himself. But, good heavens! the disgrace would not be so dangerous; it is after all really so only in the eyes of the world, whose ideas of honor and shame one would still not take pride in appropriating for one's self. For that which the world most admires and alone honors, is shrewdness, or acting cleverly. But to act cleverly is certainly the most contemptible thing of all. If a man is clever, he is in a certain sense not responsible for that; that he develops his cleverness is nothing to be ashamed of; it is rather the more clever. And it is certain (something which particularly needs to be said in these clever times, where cleverness has really become that which must be overcome by the help of Christianity, as were once ferocity and savagery), if men do not learn to despise acting cleverly as profoundly as they despise stealing or bearing false witness: then one completely does away with the eternal, and along with it everything which is sacred and worthy of honor — for acting cleverly simply consists in employing one's whole life in bearing false

witness against the eternal, in stealing existence from God. Acting cleverly is, namely, incompleteness, whereby one undeniably gets farthest in the world, gains worldly goods and advantages, and the world’s honor, because the world and worldly advantages are, everlastingly understood, incompleteness. But neither eternity nor the Holy Scriptures have ever taught any man to strive to come far or farthest in the world; on the contrary they warn him not to come too far in the world, in order, if possible, to keep himself pure from the world’s pollution. Still, if this is the condition, then it does not seem to be something to recommend to anyone who aspires to getting farthest or far in the world.

If anything can be truly said about being put to shame as regards hope and expectation, the source of the disgrace must lie deeper, must lie in what one hopes, so that one is essentially put to shame equally whether one’s hope is fulfilled or not; the difference will only be that when the hope is not fulfilled, perhaps in one’s resentment and despair it then becomes evident how firmly one had adhered to that for which it was shameful for him to hope. If hope were fulfilled, this would not perhaps have become apparent, but the disgrace would essentially have been the same.

Still, if one hopes for something for which it is a disgrace to hope, regardless of whether the hope is fulfilled or not, one does not really hope. It is a misuse of the noble word “hope” to juxtapose it with anything like that; for the fact of hoping lays hold essentially and eternally on the good — so one can never be disgraced by hoping.

One may (in order for a moment to use the wrong word) be put to shame through hoping for one or another earthly advantage — if it does not materialize. But the disgrace does not really lie in the fact that it does not happen, that one’s hope was unfulfilled, the disgrace consists in its now becoming evident, through one’s being disappointed, how important such a worldly advantage would be to one. This is, therefore, not hoping, it is

wishing, desiring, expecting; and so one can be made to feel ashamed. — One can be put to shame through giving up hope for another man — if it now appears that he is, nevertheless, saved, or perhaps even that his destruction lay in our imagination. In this case one is really put to shame because it is a disgrace to one to give up another whatever the outcome is. — One can be put to shame through hoping evil for a man — if it appears that everything turns out for the good for him. The vindictive man says sometimes that he hopes to God that vengeance will overtake the one he hates. But truly this is not hoping, but hating; and it is shameless to call it hoping; blasphemous to wish to make God a partner in hating! The vindictive man is not put to shame because things do not turn out as he expected, but he is and would be put to shame regardless of what happens.

The lover, on the contrary, hopes everything, and is never put to shame. The Scriptures speak about a hope which will not be ashamed. Thereby one thinks immediately of the hope which concerns the one who hopes, his hope for the forgiveness of sins, and sometime of becoming eternally happy; his hope for a blessed reunion with those from whom death or life had separated him. And only in relation to this hope, which is hope, could there be any question of being put to shame; for truly it would not be a disgrace to one to have had this hope, but on the contrary, an honor, and hence it might seem that the shame would be in the nonfulfillment of the hope. So consistent is the Scripture usage, it does not call all kinds of expectation, the expectation of the manifold, hope; it knows only one hope, the hope, the possibility of the good and of this hope, the only one which might be put to shame, because the fact of having it, say the Scriptures, is an honor which shall not be put to shame.

Yet, if the lover's hope is for another man, might it not be possible that the lover would be put to shame — if his hope were not fulfilled? Is it not possible that a man might be eternally lost? But now if the lover had hoped

everything, had hoped the possibility of the good for this man, then would he be put to shame through having had this hope?

How! If the prodigal son had died in his sins, and had consequently been laid in his grave with shame — and the father who even in this last moment had hoped all things, stood near: did he stand there disgraced? I thought it was the son who was disgraced, the son who brought shame to the father — but then the father must have honor, for it is impossible to put to shame one who is shamed. Alas, this troubled father was least concerned about the honor; but truly he stood there in honor! If there were on that side of the grave no salvation for the prodigal son, if he were eternally lost — and the father who, as long as he lived, had persisted in hoping all things, even still at the hour of death had hoped all things: would he in eternity be put to shame? In eternity! No, eternity has the conception of eternity about honor and shame; eternity does not even understand, it separates from itself as the dishonoured, the clever who will only talk about how far now one's expectation had achieved fulfillment, but who do not consider at all what that expectation was. In eternity everyone will be forced to understand that it is not the outcome which conditions the honor or the shame, but the expectation itself. In eternity, therefore, it will precisely be the unloving one, who still perhaps was right in what he pettily, enviously, hatefully expected for another man, he will be put to shame although his expectation was fulfilled. But the honor belongs to the lover. And in eternity there will be no busy gossip heard about his having made a mistake — perhaps it would also be a mistake to become eternally happy; no, in eternity there is but one mistake: to be, together with his fulfilled, petty, envious, hateful expectations, excluded from eternal happiness! And in eternity no mockery will wound the lover because he was foolish enough to make himself a laughing-stock through hoping everything; for in eternity the cry of the mocker is not heard, even less than in the grave, because in eternity naught

is heard but the voices of the blessed! And in eternity no envy will touch the wreath of honor which the lover bears with honor; no, envy does not reach so far. However far it reaches, it does not reach from hell to Paradise!

IV. LOVE SEEKETH NOT ITS OWN

LOVE SEEKETH NOT its own. — I Corinthians 13:5

NO, LOVE DOES not seek its own; for seeking its own is precisely selfishness, egotism, self-seeking, or whatever names the uncharitable mind may use to describe it. And yet, is not God love? But He who created man in His image, so that he might resemble Him, might become perfect even as He is perfect, hence, might approach the perfection which is God Himself, might resemble the image which is the image of God: does He not seek His own? Yes, He seeks His own, which is love. He seeks it by giving everything, for God is good, and there is only One who is good, God who gives everything. Or was not Christ love? But He came into the world in order to become a pattern, in order to draw men unto Himself so that they might resemble Him, might in truth become His own: did He then not seek His own? Yes, He sought His own by sacrificing Himself for everyone, so that they might resemble Him in His very likeness, in sacrificial devotion. Still, in that sense the seeking His own is something quite different, and by no means what we think of when we speak about seeking one's own or about not seeking one's own. Love is precisely sacrifice; that it seeks love is again the supreme love. That is to say, it is so in the relation between God and man. For when a man seeks another man's love and seeks himself to be loved, then that is not sacrifice, for sacrifice would precisely consist in helping the other man to seek God. Only God is unreservedly able to seek love, and to be Himself the object of that love, yet without seeking His own. But no man is love. Therefore if a man seeks to become the object of another man's love, he is seeking his own deliberately and fraudulently; for the only true object of a man's love is "the love" which is God, which

therefore in a still more profound sense is not any object, since He Himself is the love.

So let us then, with the act of sacrificial devotion in our thoughts (and it is then really not an act, not doing this or that), speak about:

LOVE SEEKETH NOT ITS OWN.

Love seeketh not its own; for in love there is no mine and thine. But “mine” and “thine” are only a determination of the relationship of “own”; if, consequently, there is no “mine” and “thine,” then there is no “own”; but if there is no “own” at all, it is impossible to seek one’s own.

Justice is recognizable by the fact that it gives to everyone his own, just as in turn it demands its own; that is to say, justice goes to law about the “own,” weighs and divides; decides what each one has a right to call his own, judges and punishes, if anyone refuses to make the distinction between “mine” and “thine.” In this self-willed yet legally justified “mine,” the individual has the right to do what he will; and if he does not seek his own in some way other than as justice prescribes, then justice has nothing to reproach him about, and no right to reproach him for anything. So each one is entitled to his own. As soon as he is deprived of his own, or as soon as he deprives another of what belongs to him, then justice steps in, for its duty is to secure the common safety in which everyone is protected in his own rights.

But sometimes something happens, a revolution, a war, an earthquake, or some such terrible catastrophe, and everything is thrown into confusion. Justice tries in vain to secure everyone his own, to maintain the difference between “mine” and “thine”; it cannot do it; in the confusion it cannot hold the balance even, it throws the balance away: it despairs!

Terrible spectacle! And yet, does not love in a certain sense, although in the most blessed way, occasion the same confusion? But love, it too is an event, the greatest of all, the most joyful of all; love is a change, the most

remarkable of all, but the most desirable — we are not now speaking in a preferential sense about the fact that one who is affected by love is changed or becomes changed; love is a revolution, the most profound of all, but the most blessed! So then in love there is confusion; in this blessed confusion there is for the lovers no difference between “mine” and “thine.” Wonderful! There is a “you” and an “I,” and there is no “mine” and “thine”! For without “you” and “I” there is no love, and with “mine” and “thine” there is no love; but “mine” and “thine” (these pronouns of possession) come from “thou” and “I,” and hence it seems as if they must be wherever there is “thou” and “I.” This is also the case everywhere except in the love which is a fundamental revolution. The more profound the revolution is, the more completely the difference of “mine” and “thine” disappears, the more perfect is the love. Its perfection depends essentially upon its not appearing that concealed at bottom there has lain and lies a difference between “mine” and “thine”; hence it depends essentially upon the completeness of the revolution. The more profound the revolution is, the more justice trembles; the more profound the revolution is, the more perfect is the love.

Does the difference between “mine” and “thine” then absolutely cease in earthly love and friendship? There does take place in love and friendship an overturning of the selfishness which is moved by self-love and by this stubborn “mine” and “thine.” The one in love feels beside himself, outside of the ego, carried forward into that blessed confusion, so that for himself and the beloved, for him and the friend, there is no difference of “mine” and “thine”; “for,” says the lover, “everything which is mine is his... and what is his is... is mine!” How? Has then the difference between “mine” and “thine” ceased? When “mine” has become “thine,” and “thine” “mine,” then there is everywhere a “mine” and “thine,” only that the change which took place indicates and vouches for the fact that it is no longer the first, the immediate “mine” of self-love which stands stubbornly against the “thine.” With the

exchange the headstrong “mine” and “thine” has become the common “thine” and “mine.” There is, consequently, fellowship, perfect fellowship in “mine” and “thine.” When “mine” and “thine” exchanged become the “our” in which the determination love and friendship has its strength, they are at least strong in that. But “our” is for fellowship exactly what “mine” is for the individual, and the “our” is formed — not of the obstinate “mine” and “thine,” for there can be no union between these, but of the united, the interchanged “thine” and “mine.” Therefore we see that love and friendship as stick are only improved and augmented self-love; while undeniably earthly love is life’s most beautiful happiness, and friendship the greatest temporal good! In earthly love and friendship the revolution in self-love is by no means radically deep enough; therefore the obstinate difference between “mine” and “thine” of the primitive selfishness still slumbers within it as a possibility. It is therefore regarded as an entirely significant symbol of love that the lovers exchange rings with each other; truly it is also entirely significant, but a mediocre symbol of love — that they must exchange rings. And an exchange by no means ends the difference of “mine” and “thine,” for that for which I exchange mine becomes in turn mine. When friends blend their blood with each other, it is certainly a fundamental exchange, for when the blood is blended a confusion arises: is it my blood which courses through my veins? No, it is my friend’s; but then, too, it is also my blood which flows in my friend’s veins. That is to say, an “I” is no longer itself the first, but a “you,” yet conversely, the case is the same.

How then is the difference “mine” and “thine” completely removed? The difference of “mine” and “thine” is an antithetical relation, they exist only in and with each other; therefore take one difference completely away and the other also completely disappears. Let us first attempt in the difference “mine” and “thine,” to take the distinction “thine” completely away. What

do we then have? Then we have crimes and offenses against the law; for the thief, the robber, the swindler, the man of violence, in the distinction "mine" and "thine," recognizes nothing, he will not recognize "thine" at all. But just for that reason he also absolutely loses the distinction of the "mine." Even if he does not himself understand it, even if he hardens himself against understanding it, justice essentially understands that a criminal has really no sense of "mine"; as a criminal he is without this discriminating sense; and in another way: the richer the criminal becomes through the stolen "thine," the less "mine" he has. Now in the difference "mine" and "thine," take away the difference of the "mine" completely, what do we then have? Then we have the self-abnegating, the self-denying, the true love. But again if the category "thine" completely disappears, what is there then for reflection to understand, even if for a moment this seems a bewildering thought? The curse that rests on the criminal is that his "mine" disappears because he has abolished the "thine." The blessing that rests upon true love is that the qualification "thine" is dropped, so that everything becomes the true lover's; as Paul says: "All things are yours," and as the true lover in a certain divine sense says: "All things are mine." And yet, yet this happened only once in that he simply had no "mine"; hence, "All things are mine, I, who have no 'mine' at all." But that all things are his is a divine mystery; for, humanly speaking, the true lover is the sacrificing lover, the self-sacrificing, the absolutely self-denying lover; he is, humanly speaking, the one wronged, wronged most deeply of all, even if he is himself responsible because of his own perpetual sacrifice. He is thus quite exactly the opposite of the criminal who is the offending one.

An earthly lover is not exactly the opposite of the offender, however different he is from him; for an earthly lover still seeks in a certain, frequently unconscious sense his own, and thus he has a "mine." Only in the self-denying love does the category of "mine" completely disappear,

and the distinction of “mine” and “thine” become completely abolished. When, namely, I know nothing which is “mine,” when nothing at all is “mine,” then is everything “thine,” which it also is in a certain sense, and thus the sacrificing love thinks of it. Still, everything, unconditionally everything, cannot be “thine,” since “thine” is a contrast-relationship, and in “everything” there is no possibility of contrast. Then the miraculous takes place, which is the blessing of heaven upon the self-denying love, that in the mysterious sense of the eternal happiness, everything becomes His, His who had no “mine” at all; His who in self-denial made all “His” into “thine.” Since God is, in other words, everything, and just through having no “mine” at all, self-denying love gained God, and gained everything. For he who loses his soul shall gain it; but the discrimination “mine” and “thine,” or the “thine” and “mine” of love and of friendship is the preservation of the soul. Only spiritual love has the courage to be willing to have no “mine” at all, courage absolutely to end the difference “mine” and “thine,” therefore it gains God — through losing its soul. Here again is seen what the early Fathers understood, that the virtues of the pagans were glittering vices.

The true lover does not seek his own. He does not understand the strict demands of justice and of equity, not even of fairness, regarding the “own”; nor does he understand an exchange, as earthly love does, which also understands how to guard against being fooled (hence, understands how to guard its “own”); nor does he understand fellowship, as friendship does, which also understands how to see that like is given for like, so that the friendship may be preserved (hence, understands how to guard its own). No, the true lover understands only one thing: to be fooled, to be deceived, to give everything without receiving the least reward — that is what it means not to seek his own. Oh, the poor fool, how ridiculous he is — in the eyes of the world! The true lover is absolutely the injured one — for which in a

certain sense he was himself responsible because of his self-denial. Yet it was in this way that the overturning of the “mine” and “thine” reached its highest point, and thereby love also attained its highest happiness in itself. No ingratitude, no envy, no unappreciated sacrifice, no ridicule instead of thanks, nothing either present or future, can earlier or later make him understand that he has any “mine,” or make it evident that he nevertheless had forgotten the difference “mine” and “thine” for only a moment; for he has eternally forgotten this difference, and has eternally understood himself in sacrificial love, has understood himself in being sacrificed.

Love seeketh not its own. For the true lover does not love his own characteristics; on the contrary, he loves every man according to his own characteristics; but the phrase “his own characteristics” is exactly the expression for his “own”; hence the lover does not seek his own; just the opposite, he seeks the other’s “own.”

Let us for a moment look at nature. With what infinite love nature, or God in nature, embraces all the differences there are in life and existence. Recall sometime what you have so often delighted in observing, recall the beauty of your field! There is no, oh, no difference in the love — but in the flowers, what a difference! Even the least, most insignificant, unattractive, poor little flower, overlooked even in its most immediate environment, which you hardly discover unless you are looking particularly for it, it is as if it had also said to the creating love: “Let me be something in myself, something characteristic.” And then love had helped it to become its own individuality, but far more beautiful than anything the poor little flower had ever red to hope. What love! First, it makes no distinctions, none at all; next, which is like the first, it makes infinite differences itself in loving the difference. Wonderful love! For what is so difficult as in loving not to make any distinctions; and if one simply makes no distinction, what then is so difficult as to make distinctions! Imagine then that nature was as men are,

severe, domineering, cold, partial, petty, capricious — and imagine, aye, just imagine, what might then happen to the beauty of the fields!

So, too, with respect to the love between men, only the true love loves every man according to his own characteristics. The strict, the domineering man lacks flexibility, and he lacks adaptability in understanding others; he demands his "own" from everyone, wishes that everyone might be remodelled to resemble himself, might be pruned according to his knack for training men. Or he does what he regards as manifesting a rare degree of love; for once he makes a single exception, he tries, so he says, to understand a single man, that is, he considers, in a quite definite and particular — and arbitrary manner, something definite for this man, and now demands that this other man shall carry out this idea. Whether it is consistent with the other man's individuality or not, has nothing to do with the case, for it is what the domineering man has planned for him. If the strong, imperious man is not allowed to create, then he at least wishes to remodel, that is, he seeks his "own," so that everywhere he points he will be able to say: "See that, that is my own idea; I thought of that, that is the way I wanted it." Whether the arrogant and imperious man is referring to some big thing or a small one, whether he tyrannically rules over an empire, or is a domestic tyrant in an attic, makes no essential difference; his nature is the same: imperiously not to be able to forget himself, imperiously to wish to crush the other man's individuality, or make his life miserable for him. The nature is the same — the greatest tyrant who has ever lived, and who had a world to tyrannize over, finally became weary of it, and ended by torturing flies, but truly his nature remained the same!

And as the strict imperious arrogance only seeks its own, so, too, does petty-mindedness, the enviously-imperious, the cowardly-timorous pettiness. What is pettiness? Is pettiness a natural characteristic, that is, is any man originating from the hand of God, born petty? No! Pettiness is

creation's own wretched invention, when, neither truly proud nor truly humble (for humility before God is the true pride), it creates itself, and also distorts God, as if He too were petty, as if He could not bear individuality — He, who lovingly gives everything, and yet, yet, gives everything individuality. Pettiness must therefore not be confused with humble gifts or with what we narrow-mindedly enough call the insignificant. Imagine such an insignificant man — if he has the courage to be himself before God, then he has individuality; but truly such an insignificant man, yet what am I saying, no, such a noble man, is never petty-minded. One should guard against this mistake; and so one should not confuse a simple, noble simplicity, which does not understand much, with a narrow-minded stupidity which cowardly and stubbornly only wishes to understand its "own." The narrow-minded man never has had the courage for this divinely pleasing venture of humility and pride; being one's self before God — for the emphasis rests on "before God," since He is the origin and well-spring of all individuality.

He who dares to do this, has individuality; he has learned to know what God had already given him; and he believes in entirely the same sense in the individuality of every man. To have individuality is to believe in the individuality of everyone else; for the individuality is not "mine," it is the gift of God through which He permits me to be, and through which He permits everyone to be. This is just the unfathomable wealth of goodness in God's goodness that He, the Almighty, still gives in such a way that the receiver is given individuality; that He who creates from nothing yet creates individuality, so that the creature, as over against Him, the Creator, does not become nothing, although he is taken from nothing and is nothing, but becomes an individuality. Pettiness, on the contrary, which is an assumed nature, has no individuality, that is, it has not believed in its "own" individuality, therefore it cannot believe in that of anyone else.

Pettiness has dung firmly to a definitely fixed shape and form which it calls its own; it seeks only that, can love only that. If the petty-minded man can find this, then he loves it. So petty-mindedness sticks with petty-mindedness, they grow into each other, which spiritually understood is just as pernicious as an ingrowing nail. This petty union is regarded then as the highest type of love, as the true friendship, as the truly loyal, sincere unanimity. The petty-minded man does not wish to understand that the more he lays hold on this pettiness, the farther away he is from true love, the greater becomes the falsity of the petty-mindedness — and it is worse, moreover, if he takes advantage of God's name, and uses it to his own profit, presumably so that petty-mindedness will be the only object of God's love, the only one in which He has pleasure. This petty connection is then equally petty in both directions: equally petty in idolizing some particular man who is of its "own" kind, perhaps its inventor, or yet one who from the least trial up to the least pettiness proves to have absolutely the countenance, demeanour, voice, thought-processes, manner of speech and cordiality of pettiness; and equally petty in wishing to supplant everything else. Just because pettiness is an assumed nature, and hence untruth; just because it has never fundamentally and frankly laid hold on God, but has petty-mindedly bungled its own affairs and falsified God; just because of these it has a bad conscience.

To the one who has individuality no strange individuality is a refutation, it is rather a confirmation, or a further proof; for it cannot disturb him that it appears, as he believes, that everyone has individuality. But to pettiness every individuality is a refutation; that is why the petty-minded man feels a clammy, uncomfortable uneasiness on seeing a strange individuality, and nothing else is so important as to get rid of it. Petty-mindedness demands, as it were, of God that every such individuality be destroyed, so that it may appear that petty-mindedness is right, and that God is a jealous God —

petty-mindedly jealous. It may sometimes serve as an excuse that petty-mindedness really imagines that its wretched invention is true, consequently it is a proof of sincere friendship and true sympathy to wish to bungle everything and make everyone into a resemblance of itself. When this is so, petty-mindedness is generally free in the use of hearty words and assurances. But it really is, what is not usually mentioned, a self-defense, an instinct for self-preservation, which makes petty-mindedness eager to do away with everything except its own. One hears it in its asthmatic breathing, which gasps for air, how it will perish if it does not get rid of this discomfort, this apprehensiveness; one sees it in its glance, how uncertain of itself it is deep within itself, and therefore how craftily and also how rapaciously it lies in wait for its prey: so that it may prove that petty-mindedness is right and is the victor. As one who in peril of life permits everything because it is a matter of life and death, so does petty-mindedness act in the same way; it is only natural that all the means it uses to defend its life and to deprive the individuality of life, should naturally be extremely petty; for although it permits everything, you may be sure that the everything it permits is everything petty.

"But do not earthly love and friendship love the beloved or the friend for his personal characteristics?" Yes, that is true, and yet it is not always absolutely true; for earthly love and friendship have their limitations, they can surrender everything to the other's personality but not love and friendship itself to the other's personality. Suppose now that the other's personality demanded just this sacrifice! Suppose the lover saw, to his delight, that he was loved, but also saw that it would be very detrimental to the beloved's individuality, would mean his ruin, however much he desired it: aye, then the earthly love, as such, is not able to make this sacrifice. Or suppose that the beloved saw that such a relationship would be the ruin of

the lover, would completely upset his personality: aye, then earthly love, as such, has not the strength to make this sacrifice.

But the true love, the sacrificing love, which loves every man for his own characteristics, is willing to make every sacrifice: for it does not seek its own.

Love seeketh not its own; for it chooses rather to give so that the gift looks as if the gift were the recipient's own possession.

When in our civic relationships we speak about men's circumstances, we make a distinction between those who are their own masters and those who are dependent, and we wish for everyone that he might sometime be able to become his own, as we say. But in the world of the spirit, too, the being one's own is highest — and affectionately to help someone to become himself free, independent, his own, to help him to stand alone: that is the greatest benefit one man can confer upon another. What consequently is the greatest benefaction? It is in truth the one we have mentioned, that is, please notice, if the lover also knows how to make himself inconspicuous, so that the one he helped does not become dependent on him — through being indebted to him for the greatest of all benefits. That is to say, the test of the greatest benefit is simply: the manner in which the only true benefit is conferred. Essentially it can be conferred in but one way, even if in another sense, there are many ways; when the benefaction is not conferred in this way, it is very far from being a benefaction. So one cannot say directly what the greatest benefaction is, since the greatest benefaction, that of helping another man to be independent, cannot be done in a direct manner.

Let us try to understand this. When I say, "This man stands only through my help," and what I say is true: have I then done the highest possible for him? Let us see! What do I mean by that? I say, "He stands only and alone by my help" — but then he does not stand alone, then he has not become his own, then it is to my help that he owes all this — and he is conscious of

that fact. To help a man in this manner is really to deceive him. And yet this is the way in which the greatest benefactions in the world are, as often as not, conferred, that is, in a way in which they cannot be conferred; and yet it is the way which the world particularly appreciates — which is natural, for the true way of conferring a benefit makes itself invisible, hence is not seen, and thus, the world, as it were, exempts those concerned from all dependence. But the one who is aided in the wrong way, the meaningless way, he is inexhaustible in his praise and gratitude to me as his greatest benefactor (because he now stands alone by the aid of a dependent relation to me); he and his family and all his connections honor and praise me as his greatest benefactor, because I have affectionately made him dependent on me, or — yes, it is strange, he expresses his gratitude in an absolutely meaningless way, for instead of saying that I have made him dependent on me, he says that I have helped him to stand alone.

Hence the greatest benefit cannot be bestowed in such a way that the recipient comes to realize that he owes it to me; for if he learns to know that, then it simply is not the greatest of benefactions. If, on the other hand, someone says, “This man stands alone — through my assistance,” and what he says is true: aye, then he has done for this man the most that one man can do for another, he has made him free, independent, a self, an ego, and just through concealing his aid, has helped him to stand alone. Consequently, to stand alone — by another’s aid! You know there are many authors who use dashes on every occasion to conceal their lack of thought; and there are also others who use dashes with insight and propriety: but truly a dash is never used more significantly than in this little sentence — where it is used by one who, it is well to note, has perfected its use, if such a thing is possible; for in this little sentence the thought of the infinite is contained in the most ingenious manner, the greatest contrast is overcome. He stands alone — that is the most important thing; he stands alone — you see nothing more; you

do not see the assistance or support, no awkward bungler's hand holding him up, any more than it occurs to him that anyone has helped him; no, he stands alone — by another's help. But this other's help is hidden, concealed from him — from the one helped? No, from him, from the eyes of the independent man (for if he knows that he has been helped, then he is not in the most profound sense the independent one who helps and has helped himself), that other's help is hidden behind the dash.

There is a noble wisdom which yet in a good sense is also infinitely cunning and subtle. It is well known; were I to mention the strange word by which it is called, there would hardly be anyone in these times who was not acquainted with it — by name: still, perhaps there are not so many who would recognize it if one were to describe it without mentioning its name. It and its name are often blamed in the world; and yet even this is not so strange, for the world is a very confused thinker who because of mere thoughts has neither time nor patience to think one thought. That noble, simple, wise man of old, he was the master of this wisdom, and truly this noble man was still not just a bad or evil man; he was also, if I may express myself a little whimsically, he was, and that one cannot deny him, he was a kind of thinker, even if not as profound as modem thinkers in their modes of thought and expression, even if not so worthy of admiration as being able to explain — for he was never able to explain more than what he understood

This noble wag had profoundly understood that the most one man can do for another is to set him free, to help him to stand alone — and he had also understood himself in understanding that, that is, he had understood that if this is to be done, then the one who helps must be able to conceal himself, must magnanimously be willing to annihilate himself. He was, as he also called himself, in the spiritual sense a midwife, and he labored disinterestedly in this service, making every sacrifice — for this disinterestedness lay in the fact that it was concealed from the one helped,

both the how and the fact that he was helped; the disinterestedness lay in the fact that the world could not understand, and hence could not appreciate his disinterestedness, something it is never able to do, for it simply cannot understand why one does not wish to be considered interested; on the other hand, why an interested party even more interestedly might wish to be regarded as disinterested.

In this understanding about helping another man, the true lover and that noble wag are in agreement. The latter knows in himself, and it is true that he has done the other man the greatest service possible; he knows himself how he has worked for this, what time and industry and art it has cost him to inveigle the other man into an admission of the truth; how much misunderstanding he has had to endure from the one he helped by depriving him of his folly and cleverly leading him to the acquiring of the truth. For the art of divesting a man of his folly is a dangerous one to practice; that noble wise man himself says "that men became so angry with him that they were sometimes ready to bite him, every time he took away a stupid idea from them" — for they regarded as love that which confirmed them in their folly. What wonder then that they were angry at anyone who wished to take that, their choicest treasure, away from them! Thus he labored; and when the work was finished he said quite softly to himself: "Now this man stands alone." But thereby we come to the dash; and with the dash a smile comes upon the lips of this man, so noble and yet so mischievous, and he says, "Now this man stands alone — by my help"; he reserves for himself the secret of this inscrutable smile. Truly there is no trace of malice in this smile; he himself knows that what he has done is well-intentioned, that it is in truth a benefaction, and in truth the only way in which it could be done: but the smile, that is, however, the self-conscious smile of ingenuity.

It is otherwise with the lover. He too says: "Now this man stands alone." Then comes the dash. Oh, but this dash signifies for the lover something

other than a smile; for however noble and magnanimous and disinterested that wise rogue was, he still did not love the one he wished to help with a true sense of concern. While then by means of the cunning of the dash, that wag accomplishes this task with infinite ease, and this is precisely his art, that he was able to do everything for the other man, and still let it seem as if he had done nothing: so, too, for the lover, although in the thoughtful sense the dash is infinitely easy, in another sense (it is well to notice there is nothing to notice) it is like a labored breathing, almost like a deep sigh. For in this dash is concealed the sleepless anxiety, the toilsome night watches, the almost desperate exertion; in this dash is concealed a fear and trembling which, and for that reason more terribly, has never found expression. The lover has understood that in truth the greatest, the only benefit that one man can bestow upon another, is to help him to stand alone, to become himself, to be his own; but he has also understood the danger and suffering involved in the passionate labor, and above all, the terrible responsibility. Therefore in gratitude to God he says: “Now this man stands alone — by my help.” But there is no self-satisfaction in this last phrase; for the lover has understood that every man essentially stands alone — by the help of God, and that the lover’s self-annihilation is merely so that he may not hinder the other man’s God-relationship; so that all the lover’s help infinitely disappears in the God-relationship. He works without reward; for he makes himself into nothing, and just at the moment when some mention might be made of it, so that he could retain a proud self-consciousness as a reward of his labor, God steps in, and he is again annihilated, which nevertheless makes for his eternal happiness.

Suppose a courtier had it in his power to make himself important to someone to whom an audience with his majesty was of extreme importance. But now, if we can imagine such a situation, suppose the courtier, by putting himself to one side, were able to secure this audience at any time for the one

seeking it: I wonder, then, if the suppliant, in his joy at having received an audience, would entirely forget the poor courtier; the poor courtier, who had had it in his power, unkindly, sometimes to secure an audience with his majesty for the seeker, had had the power to put him under particular obligations, to make himself loved for his love; the poor courtier, who instead of doing this had lovingly chosen to set himself to one side, and just by so doing, to pave the way for the suppliant at any time to secure an audience with his majesty, to help the seeker to the independence which at any time is permitted access to his majesty!

This is the way with all the lover's work. Truly he does not seek his own, for he gives precisely in such a way that it looks as if the gift had been the recipient's possession. So far as the lover may, he seeks to help a man to become himself, to become his own. But in this way there is simply nothing changed in existence, except that the lover, the concealed benefactor, is thrust outside, since it is every man's destiny to be free, to be independent, to be himself. If the lover in this respect has been a fellow-laborer with God, everything has still become — like the fulfillment of the destiny. If it is noticed that the lover has helped, then the relationship becomes confused, or then the helper has not helped lovingly, the lover has not helped in the right way.

Wonderful memory, which the lover acquires as thanks for his labor! He can in a manner of speaking, pack his whole life into a dash. He can say: "I have labored in spite of everyone, early and late, but what have I accomplished — a dash! (If what he had accomplished could be directly seen, then he would have worked less lovingly.) I have suffered as severely as any man, inwardly as only love can suffer; but what have I gained — a dash! I have proclaimed the truth clearly and thoughtfully in spite of everyone; but who has appropriated it — a dash!" Had he, namely, not been the lover, then would he, certainly less thoughtfully, plainly have shouted

forth the truth, and then he would have had disciples at once, who would have appropriated the truth — and hailed him as master.

Is the lover's life then wasted, has he absolutely lived in vain, since there is nothing, nothing at all, which witnesses to his work and striving? Answer: is, then, not to seek his own, is that to waste his life? No, truly, this life is not wasted; the lover knows that in his blessed joy in himself and with God. His life is in a certain sense quite wasted on existence, on the existence of others; without wishing to waste any time or strength in asserting himself, in being something for himself, he is in his self-sacrifice willing to perish, that is, he is wholly transformed into being merely an active power in the hand of God. Therefore his work cannot be made visible. His work consists simply in helping another man or other men, to become their own, which in a certain sense they were before. But when one actually has by another's help become his own, then it is absolutely impossible to see that it is by another's help; for if I see the other's help, then I see, too, that the one helped did not become his own.

V. LOVE COVERETH A MULTITUDE OF SINS

THE TEMPORAL HAS three times, and therefore it never really absolutely exists, or absolutely in any one of them. The eternal is. A temporal object can have many different attributes, and in a certain sense can be said to have them all at one time, insofar as it is what it is in these definite attributes. But duplication in itself never has a temporal object; as the temporal disappears in time, so too it exists only in its attributes. On the contrary, when the eternal is present in a man, then this eternal so reduplicates itself in him, that every moment it is present in him, it is present in a twofold manner; in an outward direction, and in an inward direction back into itself, but in such a way that this is one and the same thing; for otherwise it is not duplication. The eternal is not merely in its own attributes, but is in itself in its attributes; it not only has attributes, but is in itself when it has attributes.

So now with love. What love does, that it is; what it is, that it does — and at one and the same time: at the very moment it goes out of itself (the direction outward) it is in itself (the direction inward); and at the very moment it is in itself, it thereby goes out of itself, so that this outgoing and this return, this return and this outgoing, are simultaneously one and the same.

When we say that "Love gives fearlessness," we mean by that, that the lover by his very nature makes others fearless; everywhere where love is present, it spreads fearlessness; one freely approaches the lover, for he drives out fear. Whereas the suspicious man frightens everyone away from him, whereas the cunning and the crafty spread fear and painful unrest about them, whereas the presence of the tyrant oppresses like the heavy pressure of sultry air: love gives fearlessness. But when we say that "love gives fearlessness," we also say at the same time, something else, that the

lover has fearlessness, just as it is said that love gives boldness on the day of judgment, that is, it makes the lover fearless in the judgment.

When we say, "Love saves from death," it is precisely a duplication of the thought: the lover saves another man from death, and he saves, either in absolutely the same or yet in another sense, himself from death; he does it at one and the same time, it is one and the same thing; he does not save the other at one moment and himself the next, but at the very moment that he saves the other, he saves himself from death. Only love never thinks about the latter, about saving himself, about himself acquiring fearlessness; the lover in his love thinks only about giving fearlessness and saving another from death. Yet the lover is not therefore forgotten. No, the one who lovingly forgets himself, forgets his own suffering to consider another's, forgets all his own wretchedness in order to think of another's misery, forgets what he himself loses in order lovingly to consider another's loss, forgets his own advantage in order lovingly to look at another's: truly such a one is not forgotten. There is One who considers him: God in heaven; or love considers him. God is love, and when a man from love forgets himself, how then could God forget him! No, while the lover forgets himself and thinks of the other man, God thinks of the lover. The self-lover is busy, he shrieks and shouts, and stands for his rights in order to make certain of not being forgotten — and yet he is forgotten; but the lover who forgets himself, he is remembered by love. There is One who thinks of him, and thereby it comes to pass that the lover gets what he gives.

Look at the duplication: what the lover does, that he is, or he becomes that; what he gives, that he has, or he gets it — wonderful, as that "out of the eater came forth meat." Still, perhaps someone says, "It is not so wonderful that the lover has what he gives, that is always the case; what one does not have, one cannot give." Oh, well, but is it then also always the case that one keeps what one gives, or that one gets that which one gives to

another; that just by giving one gets, and gets exactly the same one gives, so that the thing given and the thing received are one and the same? Ordinarily this is probably not the case, but, on the contrary, what I give the other gets, not that I myself get that which I give to another.

So love is always duplicated in itself. This holds true, too, when it is said that love covers a multitude of sins.

In the Scriptures we read that which is "love's" own word, that many sins were forgiven to the one who loved much — because the love in him conceals the multitude of sins. However, we shall not speak about that at this time. In this little essay we are constantly discussing the works of love, consequently we are looking at love directed outward. With this meaning in mind, we shall now speak about:

LOVE COVERETH A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

Love covers a multitude of sins. For it does not discover the sins; but the fact that it does not discover what still must exist, insofar as they can be discovered, that is hiding them.

The concept "multiplicity" is in itself indefinite. Thus we speak about all the multiplicity of creation, yet this same word signifies something very different, depending on who is speaking. A man who has spent his entire life in an out-of-the-way place, and has therefore acquired little taste for studying nature: how little does he know, and yet he speaks about the multiplicity of creation! A naturalist, however, who has traveled around the world, who has been almost everywhere, both above and beneath the surface of the earth, who has seen the much that he has seen; who has by the use of the telescope sometimes discovered otherwise invisible stars, sometimes by the use of the microscope has discovered otherwise invisible insects; what an astonishing variety he knows, yet he uses the same word, "the multiplicity of creation." And further; while the naturalist rejoices at what he succeeded in seeing, he readily admits that there is no limit to

discoveries, since there is no limit to the invention of instruments used in making these discoveries. Consequently the multiplicity of creation, with new instruments constantly being invented, becomes greater and greater, and can always appear to increase — while it still, all things considered, is comprehended in the phrase, “multiplicity of creation.” The same holds true about the multitude of sins, in that the word may signify very different things, depending on who the speaker is.

Consequently one discovers that the multitude of sins is constantly increasing; that is, through their discovery, it constantly seems to be increasing, naturally also by the help of the discoveries one makes about how cunningly, how suspiciously one acts in order to make discoveries. He who makes no discoveries, consequently hides the multitude of sins, for to him the multitude is less.

But discovery is something praiseworthy, something admirable, even if this admiration is sometimes forced to bring the heterogeneous together in a strange way; for one admires the naturalist who discovers a bird, but one also admires the dog that discovered purple. Still, we shall let this pass for what it is worth, but it is certain that the world admires and praises discoveries. And on the other hand one who makes no discoveries, or as good as none, is rated very low. We readily say about someone, in order to brand as an eccentric one who is wrapped up in his own thoughts, “He really does not discover anything.” And if we wish to designate one as being especially limited and stupid, we say, “He will certainly never invent gunpowder!” — which certainly is not necessary in our time, since it has already been invented; so it would be an even more questionable matter if someone in our time were to think that he was the one who invented it. Oh, but the fact of having made some discovery is so admired by the world that one cannot forget the enviable lot: of the one who discovered gunpowder!

Of course it is easy to see that the lover who discovers nothing looks very mediocre in the eyes of the world. For even in regard to evil, in regard to sin and the multiplicity of sin, one discovers that there is the smooth, cunning, obtrusive, perhaps half-corrupt observer, who really can make discoveries: that is highly regarded in the world. Even the youth the very moment that he steps out into life (for he would certainly object to having the world call him a fool) is most willing to disclose how he knows and has discovered evil. Even a woman in her earliest youth (for she would then object to having the world call her a little goose, or a rustic innocent), will readily disclose that she is vain of being a judge of character, naturally in the direction of evil. Moreover, it is incredible how the world has changed in comparison with old times: then there were some few who knew themselves; now all men are judges of character. And this is the curious thing; if someone had discovered how fundamentally humane almost every man is, he would scarcely dare to make his discovery known for fear of being laughed at; perhaps he might even fear that the community would feel insulted at the idea. On the other hand, if someone pretends that he has discovered how fundamentally paltry every man is, how envious, how selfish, how faithless, what abominations can dwell secretly in even the purest, that is, in the one who is regarded by fools and geese and rustic innocents as the purest: then he knows vaingloriously that he is welcome, that the world is longing to hear the results of his observations, his research, his stories. Thus have sin and evil acquired a greater power over men than one ordinarily imagines: it is so silly to be good, so intellectually stupid to believe the good, so provincial to betray ignorance, or that one is not an initiate — an initiate into the most intimate mysteries of sin.

Here we see very clearly how evil and sin in a great measure are the consequence of a vainglorious comparison of one’s self with the world and with other men. For one can be quite certain that the same men, just because

they vaingloriously fear the judgment of the world, strive in their intercourse with others to be agreeable and interesting by betraying a sophisticated knowledge of evil. One can be quite certain that those same men, when they are alone in quiet meditation, where they do not need to be ashamed of the good, hold a very different view. But in intercourse with others, in society, when one is with many or at least a few, and hence where the company affords a comparison, a comparison-relation, of which vanity cannot possibly remain unconscious: each one tempts the other to disclose what he has discovered.

Yet there are times when even the absolutely worldly-minded man makes an exception, sometimes judges a little more leniently the one who discovers nothing. Suppose that two shrewd men of affairs had some decision to make to which they did not wish to have witnesses, but they were unable to arrange it otherwise, so that their conference must take place in a room where a third party was present — and this third party, as they knew, was very much in love, happy in the first days of love: is it not true that one of the businessmen might say to the other, “Well, it doesn’t matter if he is present, he won’t hear anything”? They would say it with a smile, and by this smile they would pay tribute to their own astuteness; but they would still have a kind of respect for the lover who discovers nothing.

And now the lover! For whether the world laughs at him, whether it ridicules him, whether it pities him, or whatever the world says about him, it is certain that concerning the multitude of sins, he discovers nothing, not even this laughter, this ridicule, this pity; he discovers nothing, and he sees but very little. He discovers nothing; we here make a difference between discovering as a conscious act, as a deliberate attempt to find out something, and the involuntary seeing or hearing something. He discovers nothing. And yet, whether one laughs at him or not, whether or not one

ridicules him: fundamentally one has an inward respect for him, because resting in, engrossed in his love he discovers nothing.

The lover discovers nothing, hence he conceals the multitude of sins which would be exposed through the discovery. The life of the lover is an expression of the apostolic precept of being a child in malice. That which the world really admires as shrewdness is an understanding of evil — wisdom is essentially the understanding of the good. The lover has no understanding of evil and does not wish to have; he is and remains, he wishes to be and to continue to be in this respect a child. Place a child in a den of thieves (but the child must not remain there so long that it becomes itself perverted), hence let it remain there only a very short time; then let it come home and tell of all its experiences: you will see that the child, who (like every child) is a good observer and has an excellent memory, will tell everything with the utmost detail, yet in such a way that in a sense the most important things are omitted, so that one who did not know that the child had been among bandits, would least suspect it from the child's narrative. What is it then which the child omits? What is it that the child did not discover? It is the evil. And yet the child's description of what it saw and heard is absolutely accurate. What is it then the child lacks? What is it that so frequently makes a child's narration the most profound mockery of its elders? It is the sense of evil, and that the child lacks the sense of evil, so that the child finds no pleasure in wishing to understand it. Herein the lover resembles the child. But as a basis of all understanding there must first and foremost be an understanding between the one who will understand and the thing which shall be understood. Therefore, too, the understanding of evil (however much it wishes to delude itself and others into thinking that it can preserve its purity, that it has a pure understanding of evil) is still in understanding with the evil; if this understanding did not exist, if the intelligent man did not take pleasure in understanding it, then he would

abominate the understanding of it, would prefer not to understand it. Even if this sense of evil indicates nothing else, it is still a dangerous curiosity about evil; or it is a cunning search for an excuse for its own fault in spreading evil by the aid of knowledge; or it is the false reckoning which exaggerates a man's feeling of importance by the help of his knowledge about another man's corruption.

But let one set a strict guard upon himself; for if out of curiosity one offers evil the little finger, it soon takes the whole hand. And it is most dangerous of all to have ready a stock of excuses; and to become better, or to seem to be better, through comparison with the badness of others, is to become better in a bad way. However, if even this understanding discovers the multitude of sins, what discoveries must not the even more confidential understanding, which is really in a covenant with evil, be able to make! As the jaundiced see everything as yellow, so such a man discovers, as he sinks deeper and deeper, an increasing manifold of sin about him. His eye is alert and trained, not for the understanding of truth, hence for untruth; consequently his sight is prejudiced more and more, so that increasingly defiled, he sees evil in everything, impurity even in what is purest — and this sight (O terrible thought!) is still to him a kind of consolation, for it is important to him to discover as boundless a multitude as possible. At last there are no limits to his discovery; for now he discovers sin even where he himself knows that there is none; he discovers it by the help of backbiting, slander, the fabrication of lies, in which he has trained himself so long that he at last believes it. Such a man has discovered the multitude of sins!

But the lover discovers nothing. There is something so infinitely solemn and yet also so childlike, something which recalls a childish game, when the lover by discovering nothing at all, hides the multitude of sins; something that recalls a childish game; for that is the way we play with a child. We play that we cannot see the child who is standing in front of us, or the child

plays that it cannot see us, and this the child finds indescribably amusing. The childlikeness here is that the lover, as in the game, with his eyes wide open, cannot see what is happening just in front of him; the solemnity consists in the fact that it is the evil which he cannot see. We all know that orientals honor a demented person, but this lover, who is worthy of honor, is, as it were, a demented person. We all know that in the old times they made, and rightly, a great distinction between the two kinds of madness, one was a distressing sickness, and one bemoaned such a misfortune; the other was called a divine madness. If we may for once be excused for using the pagan word "divine": it is a divine kind of madness, lovingly not to be able to see the evil which lies just in front of one. Truly, it is really necessary in these clever times, which have so much understanding of evil, that we should make some effort to learn to honor this madness; for unfortunately it is all too frequent in these times that such a lover, who has a great understanding of the good but does not wish to understand the evil, is looked upon as a madman.

Imagine, to mention the supreme example, imagine Christ at the moment when He was silent before the Counsel; imagine the infuriated mob, imagine the group of dignitaries — and then imagine how many a glance they directed towards Him, their eyes upon Him, only waiting for Him to look at them so that their glance might convey their mockery, their contempt, their pity, their insults, to the accused! But He discovered nothing; lovingly He concealed the multitude of their sins. Imagine how many an abusive epithet, how many insults, how many taunts were shouted at Him — and each participant was so terribly insistent that his voice should be heard, so that, above all, it might not seem that he had been so indescribably stupid as to have missed the opportunity, as not to have been there participating in common with everyone else, hence as the true instrument of public opinion, in insulting, in injuring, in mistreating an

innocent man! But He discovered nothing; lovingly He hid the multitude of their sins — by discovering nothing.

And He is the pattern; the lover has learned from Him, when he discovers nothing and thereby hides the multitude of sins, when like a worthy disciple, “forsaken, hated, bearing his cross,” he walks between mockery and pity, between insults and lamentations, and yet lovingly discovers nothing — in truth more wonderful than when the three men walked unscathed in the fiery furnace. Still, ridicule and insults really do no harm, if the one insulted does not harm himself by discovering them, that is, by becoming resentful. For if he is resentful he discovers the multitude of sins. If you really wish to illustrate more clearly how the lover by discovering nothing hides the multitude of sins, then sometime do away with love. Imagine that the lover had a wife who loved him. Therefore, just because she loved him, she would discover how many sinned against him; she would, affronted, with resentment in her soul, discover every mocking glance; with bruised heart she would hear the insults — whereas he, the lover, would discover nothing. And when the lover, insofar as he could not avoid seeing and hearing some things, would still have the excuse ready for the aggressor, that he himself was at fault; then his wife would not be able to discover any fault in him, but only the more, how many had sinned against him. Do you see now, as you consider what his wife and with truth discovered, do you see how true it is that the lover who discovers nothing, hides a multitude of sins? Imagine this applied to all the relationships of life, and you will admit that the lover really hides a multitude of sins.

Love covers a multitude of sins; for what it cannot avoid seeing or hearing, it hides by keeping silent, by a lenient explanation, by forgiveness.

Through silence it hides the multitude of sins.

It is sometimes the case that two lovers wish to keep their relationship secret. Suppose now that at the moment they confessed their love for each

other and promised each other secrecy, there happened quite accidentally to be a third party present, but this intruder was an honest and kindly man who could be relied on, and that he pledged them his silence: would not the love of the two be concealed and continue to be so? But this is the way the lover behaves when he inadvertently, quite accidentally, never because he has tried to, becomes cognizant of a man's sin, of his fault, of how he had offended, or how he had been overtaken in a fault: the lover keeps silent, and hides a multitude of sins.

Say not that "the multitude of sins still remains equally great whether one keeps silent or tells about them, since the silence certainly does not take them away merely because no one mentions them"; rather answer the question: "Does not the one who discloses his neighbor's faults and sins, increase the multitude of sins?" Even if it be true that the multitude of sins remains equally great whether I keep silent about them or not, when I keep silent, I am still doing my part to conceal them. And, furthermore, do we not say that rumor really increases them? We mean thereby that rumor makes the guilt greater than it actually is. Still, I am not thinking of this now. It is in quite a different sense that we may say that the rumor which tells of the neighbor's fault, increases the multitude of sins. Let one not take too thoughtlessly the knowledge of a neighbor's faults, as if it were quite proper if it was once decided that what was said was true. Truly not every witness as to what is true concerning a neighbor's faults, is therefore without guilt; and just through being made a witness to a neighbor's fault, one may easily himself become guilty. So rumor grows, or the one who tells of his neighbor's fault, increases the multitude of sins. The fact that men through rumor, through village gossip, are accustomed inquisitively, frivolously, enviously, maliciously perhaps, to learn of their neighbor's faults, that is debasing to men. It would certainly be desirable if men once more learned how to be silent. But if there must be talk, and consequently

inquisitive and frivolous talk, then let it be about stuff and nonsense — the neighbor's fault is and ought to be too serious a matter; inquisitively, frivolously, enviously, to talk about that is, therefore, a sign of depravity. But he who, by telling of his neighbor's faults, helps to pervert men, he increases the multitude of sins.

It is unfortunately only too certain that every man has a strong propensity for seeing his neighbor's faults, and perhaps for making them even greater in telling about them. If there were nothing more to this (alas, but there is) than, to use the mildest expression possible, a kind of nervousness which makes one so weak in this temptation, in this excitement of being able to tell something bad about one's neighbor, in securing to one's self for a moment breathless attention by the help of such an interesting story! But that which is already pernicious enough as a nervous desire which cannot keep silent, is sometimes in a man a horrible, devilish passion developed on the most terrible scale. Is any robber, any thief, any bandit, in short, any criminal, at bottom so depraved as the man who has made it his task, his despicable occupation, on the greatest possible scale, more vociferously than any word of truth ever sounds, extending far over the whole land as anything profitable rarely does, intruding into every corner where the word of God scarcely enters, to proclaim his neighbor's fault, his neighbor's weaknesses, his neighbor's sins; to obtrude on everyone, even the most unstable youth, this defiling knowledge — is there really any criminal so fundamentally depraved as such a man, even if it were so, even if the evil he told about were true! Even if it were so; but it is inconceivable that one who had the earnestness of eternity could be strict in verifying that the evil he described was unconditionally true, and so could be willing to sacrifice his life in this — abhorrent service of truth: the telling of evil. In our prayers to God we pray that God will not lead us into temptation; but if it should happen, and if it should happen that I fell into

temptation — merciful God, yet one favor, that my sin and my guilt might be such as the world rightly regards as abominable and rebellious! The most terrible thing of all must still be to incarnate guilt, heaven-crying guilt, to incarnate guilt and again guilt and new guilt day in and day out — and simply not notice it, because one's whole environment, because existence itself, had changed into an illusion, which confirmed one in thinking that it was nothing, that it not only was not guilt, but that it was almost meritorious!

Oh, there are criminals whom the world does not call criminals, whom it rewards and almost honors — and yet, yet would I rather, which God forbid! but I would rather enter into eternity with three repented-of murders on my conscience than as a worn-out slanderer with this horrible, interminable burden of offense, which had been accumulating year after year, which had been spreading itself to an almost inconceivable degree, which had laid men in the grave, embittered the most intimate relationships, injured the most innocent compassion, defiled youth, led astray and perverted both old and young, in short, extended itself on a scale which even the most vivid imagination can form no conception of — this horrible burden of offense, which I still had never found time to begin to repent of, because the time must be used in committing new offenses, and because the infinitude of the offenses had secured me wealth, influence, everything but esteem and, above all, an enjoyable life!

We still make a difference, with respect to incendiarism, whether the one who sets fire to a house, knows that it is occupied by a number of people or that it is vacant: but through scandal to set, as it were, a whole community on fire, that is not even regarded as a crime. We still quarantine against the plague — but that plague, which is worse than the oriental pestilence, the slander which perverts the soul and mind, that we open our house to, we

pay money in order to be defiled, we greet as a welcome guest that which brings defilement!

Say, then, whether it is not true, that the lover by keeping silent about his neighbor's faults hides a multitude of sins, when you consider how by telling them, one increases them.

By an extenuating explanation, the lover hides the multitude of sins.

There is always an explanation for something being what it is. The fact or the facts underlie the situation, but the explanation swings the balance. Every event, every word, every act, in short, everything, may be explained in many ways; as someone has falsely said that clothes make the man, so one can truly say that the explanation makes the object of the explanation into what it is. As regards another man's words, deeds, modes of thought, and so on, there is no such certainty, so that to accept them really indicates choosing. The interpretation, the explanation is therefore, just because a different explanation is possible, a choice. But if there is a choice, then it constantly lies in my power, if I am the lover, to choose the more extenuating explanation. If, then, this milder or more extenuating explanation explains what others frivolously, overhastily, hardheartedly, enviously, maliciously, in short, unlovingly, as a matter of course, explain as guilt, if the extenuating explanation explains this in another way, then it takes away now one fault, now another, and thus makes the multitude of sins less, or conceals it.

Oh, if men would rightly understand what a beautiful use they could make of their imagination, their acuteness, their ingenuity, their ability to co-ordinate, by using it in every possible way to discover an extenuating explanation: then would they increasingly taste one of the most beautiful joys in life; it could become to them a passionate pleasure and need, which would cause them to forget everything else.

Do we not see this in other relationships, how, to mention this one instance, the hunter with every year becomes more and more passionately devoted to the chase? We do not commend his choice, but we are not speaking about that; we are speaking only about how with every passing year, he devotes himself more and more passionately to this occupation. And why does he do this? Because with every year his experience increases, he becomes more and more resourceful, he overcomes more and more difficulties, so he, the old, experienced hunter, now knows trails no one else knows, knows how to track the game where no one else is able to, now has signs that no one else understands how to make use of, now has discovered a more ingenious method of setting traps, so that he is fairly certain of always succeeding in having a good hunt, even when everyone else is unsuccessful.

We regard it as a burdensome, but yet in another respect, a satisfying and fascinating occupation to be the servants of justice who track down guilt and crime. We are astonished at such knowledge of the human heart, at their knowledge of all, even the most sophistical excuses and inventions, how they can remember from year to year, all, even the most trivial circumstances, just in order, if possible, to secure a clue; at how, if they only glance at the circumstances, they can, as it were, adjure them so they will provide the proof against the guilty; how nothing is too humble to attract their attention, insofar as it might contribute to enlightening their understanding of crime. We admire him when such an officer of justice, by bearing with what he calls a really hardened and thoroughgoing hypocrite, at last succeeds in wresting away his disguise and making his guilt evident. Ought it not to be just as satisfying, just as fascinating, by bearing with what one calls an occasional unseemly conduct, to discover that it was really something quite different, something well-intentioned! Let the judge be appointed by the state, let the officers of justice work to discover guilt

and crime: the rest of us are neither called on to be the judge nor the officer of justice, but, on the contrary, we are called by God to love, hence by the help of the extenuating explanation, to cover the multitude of sins. Imagine such a lover, equipped by nature with the most glorious capacities, which every judge must envy him, but all these capacities employed with a zeal and an endeavor which would do honor to a judge, in the service of love, in order to train himself in the art, in order to practice the art, the art of interpretation, which by the help of an extenuating explanation, conceals the multitude of sins! Imagine his rich, his blessed experience, considered in its noblest sense; what a knowledge he has of the human heart; how many noteworthy and touching incidents he has seen, in which, no matter how complicated they seemed, he still succeeded in discovering the good, or even the better, because he had for a long, long time held his judgment in suspense, until quite definitely a little circumstance came to light which led him to a clue; how by swiftly and boldly centering his whole attention on a quite different aspect of the matter, he had had the good fortune to discover what he was looking for; how by thoroughly exploring the man's life-relationships, by obtaining the most meticulous enlightenment about his condition, he finally triumphed in his explanation! Hence, he "came upon the trail," "he had the good fortune to find what he sought," "he triumphed in his explanation" — alas, is it not strange that whenever these words are read outside of their context, almost every man involuntarily connects them with the uncovering of a crime: we are all so much more apt to think about discovering evil than about discovering good. So the state appoints the judges and the civil officers for the purpose of discovering and punishing the evil. As to the rest, we form associations for the praiseworthy purpose of relieving the poor, educating the orphans and lifting up the fallen: but, in addition to these worthy undertakings, to get by means of the extenuating

explanation only a little power, even if it were very little, over the multitude of sins — for this purpose no association has been created!

However, how the lover by means of the extenuating explanation hides the multitude of sins, we do not care to pursue further at this time, since in the two preceding reflections we have considered that love believes all things and hopes all things. But lovingly to believe all things and lovingly to hope all things are the two principal expedients which love, that lenient interpreter, uses for the extenuating explanation which hides a multitude of sins.

Through forgiveness love covers a multitude of sins.

Silence really takes nothing away from the multitude of notorious sins. The extenuating explanation takes away some from the multitude by showing that this or that was not really sin; forgiveness takes away that which still cannot be denied as being sin. So love strives in every way to hide the multitude of sins; but forgiveness is the most outstanding way.

In one of the preceding pages we were reminded of the expression "multiplicity of creation"; let us again employ it for the purpose of illustration. When we say that the investigator discovers a multitude of things, while in comparison with him, the ignorant, who also speak about the multiplicity of creation, certainly know very little: then, consequently, the ignorant do not know that this and that exists, but it exists for all that; it is not taken away by nature because of their ignorance; it is only that in their ignorance it does not exist for them. It is different concerning the relation of forgiveness of sins to the multitude of sins; forgiveness takes the forgiven sins away.

This is a wonderful thought, hence also the thought of faith; for faith always lays hold on that which is not seen. I believe that the visible has come into existence from that which is not seen; I see the world, but the invisible I do not see, I believe it. So there is also in "forgiveness — and

sin” a relation of faith, which one more rarely notices. What here is the invisible? The invisible is, that forgiveness takes away that which still exists; the invisible is, that that which is seen, yet still is not seen; for when it is seen it is evidently invisible so that it is not seen. The lover sees the sin he forgives, but he believes that forgiveness takes it away. This cannot be seen, since the sin can be seen; and, on the other hand, if the sin could not be seen, then neither could it be forgiven. As one, therefore, through faith believes the invisible in the visible, so the lover through forgiveness believes the visible away. Both premises are true. Blessed the believer, he believes what he cannot see; blessed the lover, he believes that away which he still can see.

Who can believe this? The lover. But why is forgiveness so rare? Is it not because faith in the power of forgiveness is so little and so rare? Even a better man, who is by no means inclined to bear malice or spite, and far from being unforgiving, is often heard to say: “I could readily forgive him, but I don’t see how that can help.” Oh, it is not seen! Still, if you have ever yourself needed forgiveness, then you know what forgiveness can do: why do you speak with so little experience or with such unkindness about forgiveness? For there is something really unkind in saying: “I do not see how my forgiveness can help him.” We are not saying that as if a man should become self-important through having it in his power to be able to forgive another man, far from it. This would also be unkindness; truly there is a way to forgive which perceptibly increases the guilt instead of diminishing it. Only love has — know it seems like jesting, but let us speak thus, only love is resourceful enough through its forgiveness to take the sin away. When I am oppressed by the thought of forgiveness (the fact that I am slow to forgive, or that being able to forgive makes me feel self-important), then no miracle takes place. But when love forgives, the miracle of faith takes place (and since every miracle is one of faith, what wonder, therefore,

that along with faith miracles, too, are abolished!): so that which is seen, yet through being forgiven, is not seen.

It is erased, it is forgiven and forgotten, or, as the Scriptures say about what God forgives, it is hidden behind His back. But that which is forgotten, one is not ignorant of, for one is ignorant only of that which one does not know and never has known; what one has forgotten that one has known. Forgetting is in this highest sense the opposite not of remembering but of hoping; for hoping is in reflection to give existence; forgetting is in reflection to take existence from that which still exists, to erase it. The Scriptures teach that faith lays hold on things not seen, but they also say that faith is the substance of things hoped for; which means that that which is hoped for is, as it were, the unseen, that which does not exist, that to which, on the contrary, hope through reflection gives existence. Forgetting, when God does it in relation to sin, is the opposite of creating; for creating is bringing forth from nothing; forgetting is resolving back into nothing. What is hidden from my eyes, that I have never seen; but what is hidden behind my back, that I have seen. And just in this way does the lover forgive: he forgives, he forgets, he erases the sin; affectionately he turns toward the one he forgives; but when he turns toward him he cannot see what is lying behind his back. That it is impossible to see what lies behind one's back is easy to understand, as also that this expression is also rightly the invention of love; but, on the other hand, it is perhaps then difficult to become the lover who by the aid of forgiveness puts the other's fault behind his own back. It is generally easy for men to place the guilt, even of a murder, upon another man's conscience; but by the aid of forgiveness to put his guilt behind his own back, that is difficult. However, not for the lover; for he hides the multitude of sins.

Do not say, "The multitude of sins remains equally great, whether the sin is forgiven or not, since forgiveness neither takes from nor adds to." Rather

answer the question: “Does not the one who unlovingly refuses his forgiveness increase the multitude of sins, not only by the fact that this, his unforgivingness, becomes one sin more, which nevertheless is true and ought then to be taken into account?” Still, we shall not emphasize this at this time But is there not a secret relationship between sin and forgiveness? When a sin is not forgiven, it demands punishment; it cries to men or to God for punishment; but when a sin cries for punishment, then it looks quite different, far greater than when the same sin is forgiven. Is this only an optical illusion? No, it is actually so. It is, to use a rather imperfect figure, not an optical illusion that a sore which has looked dreadful, after the doctor has drained and treated it, looks far less dreadful, although it is, nevertheless, the same sore. What does the one who refuses forgiveness do? He increases the sin, he makes it seem greater. And next, forgiveness takes the life from the sin; but denying forgiveness nourishes the sin. Therefore, even if no new sin appears, if the same old sin still persists, the multitude of sins is really increased. When a sin persists, a new sin really comes, for sin increases through sin; the fact that sin persists is really a new sin. And this new sin you might have prevented by lovingly forgiving, by taking away the old sin, as the lover does who hides a multitude of sins.

Love covers a multitude of sins; for love prevents the sin from coming into existence, strangles it at birth.

Even though with respect to one or another undertaking, a work one wishes to accomplish, one has everything in readiness: one must still wait for one thing, the occasion. So, too, with sin; when it is in a man, it waits for an occasion to manifest itself.

The occasions can be very diversified. The Scripture says that sin takes occasion by the commandment or by the prohibition. Just the fact that something is commanded or prohibited becomes then the occasion; not as if the occasion brought forth sin, for the occasion never produces anything.

The occasion is like a middleman, a broker, only helpful in the turnover; it occasions only that which has already been brought about, that which in another sense already existed, namely, as possibility. The commandment, the prohibition tempts, just because it wishes to constrain the evil, and now if sin takes occasion it takes it, because the prohibition is the occasion. Thus the occasion is, as it were, nothing, a swift something which walks between the sin and the prohibition; in a certain sense it belongs to both, while in another sense, it is as if it did not exist, although, however, again nothing, which is actually existent, came into existence without an occasion.

The commandment, the prohibition is the occasion. In an even more distressing sense, sin in others is the occasion which produces sin in everyone who comes in contact with it. Oh, how often has not an unconsidered, a thoughtless, casually dropped word, been sufficient to furnish an occasion for sin! How frequently has not a frivolous glance caused the multitude of sins to become greater! To say nothing of when a man lives under daily circumstances where he sees and hears nothing but sin and ungodliness; what a rich occasion for the sin in him, how easy the transposition between this, giving occasion and taking occasion! When the sin in a man is encompassed by sin, is it not as if it were in its own element? Nourished by the perpetual occasion, it thrives and grows (if one may be allowed to speak of thriving in connection with evil); it becomes more and more malignant; it takes on a more and more definite form (if one may speak about gaining form in connection with evil, since evil is a lie and a deception, hence without form). It consolidates itself more and more, even though its life is hovering over the abyss, hence without a foothold.

Still, everything which is occasion contributes, insofar as the occasion to sin is taken advantage of, to increase the multitude of sins.

But there is one environment which absolutely does not give and is not an occasion for sin: that is love. When a man’s sin is encompassed by love,

than it is outside its own element; it is like a beleaguered city whose every connection with its own people is cut off; it is like a man who has been addicted to drink; when placed upon a scanty ration he loses his strength, vainly waiting an occasion to become intoxicated. It is certainly true, it is possible (for what cannot a depraved man divert to his own depravity!), that sin can make love the occasion for resentment, can rage against it. However, sin cannot in the long run hold out with love; such advantage as it has is generally at the beginning; just as when the drunkard in the first days, before the medical treatment has had the necessary time to make its effects felt, rages with the strength of his infirmity. And next, if there were really a man such that even love — must give up, ho, love never does that, but a man who, continually without love, took occasion to sin: just because there is one incorrigible, it does not necessarily follow that there are not many who are healed. So it continues to be exactly and absolutely true that love does cover a multitude of sins.

Oh, the magistrate must often devise very ingenious means to hold a criminal prisoner, and a physician often employs great ingenuity in formulating coercive methods for restraining a demented person; in connection with sin there is no environment so coercive, but also no coercive environment so saving, as love. How often was not the wrath that smoldered within a man only awaiting an occasion; how often was it not stifled because love gave it no occasion! How often did not the evil passion which in the sensual apprehension of curiosity sat on the lookout, spying for an occasion, perish; how often did it not perish at birth because love gave it no occasion, and lovingly watched to see that no occasion should be given! How often did it not free its soul from that resentment, which was so assured of and so prepared, moreover so set upon being able to find ever new occasions to be resentful of the world, of God, of everything; how often did it not find alleviation in a milder mood because love gave no

occasion at all for resentment! How often this conceited and defiant mood, which, believing itself injured and misunderstood, therefore took occasion to become even more conceited, desired only a new occasion to prove that it was right, melted away; how often it again died down, because love so soothing, so mildly discutient, simply gave no occasion to the sick conceit! How often did it not go back to what it had contemplated, just to see if it might not succeed in finding an occasion which would justify it, and how often it returned, because love simply gave no occasion for finding an excuse for the evil! Oh, how many crimes have not been prevented, how many evil purposes defeated, how many desperate resolutions consigned to oblivion, how many sinful thoughts halted on the way to becoming deeds, how many rash words repressed in time because love gave no occasion!

Woe to the man by whom the offense cometh; blessed the lover who by refusing to furnish the occasion covers a multitude of sins!

VI. LOVE ABIDETH

Now abideth… love. — I Corinthians 13:13

YES, GOD BE PRAISED, love abides! Whatever the world may take from you, even if it were your dearest; whatever may befall you in life; however much you may in your striving for the good have to suffer, as you will if men turn indifferently away from you, or as enemies against you; if no one is willing to recognize you or he is ashamed to confess how much he, nevertheless, owes you; if even your own best friend should deny you — if you still in some of your striving, in some of your work, in some of your words have truly been inspired by love: then be comforted, for love abides. What you know of love will be a comfort to you to remember — oh, more blessed than any achievement that man may have accomplished; more blessed even than having spirits subject unto you; more blessed than being remembered by love! What you know of love will be a comfort to you to remember, that neither the present nor the future, nor angels nor devils, and also, praise God, neither your own timid thoughts which spring from a confusion of mind, nor the stormiest and most difficult moment of your life, any more than its last moment, shall be able to take this love away from you; for love abides!

And if at first despondency should make you weak so that you lose the desire to will, in order again to make you strong, alas, in the way despondency does it, strong in the defiance of despondency; if despondency wishes to make everything empty for you, wishes to transform all life into a monotonous and meaningless repetition, so that you look at everything, but so indifferently; you see the fields and forests again become green, you see the manifold life again moving in the air and water; you hear again the

chorus of singing birds, again see men everywhere engaged in all kinds of labor — and you know of a truth that God exists, but it seems to you as if He had withdrawn into Himself as if He were far away in heaven, so infinitely far away from all these trivialities, which are hardly worth living for; when despondency would drain the soul out of life, then you still know, but so dubiously, that Christ has existed, but, on the other hand, you realize with an alarming clarity that it was eighteen hundred years ago, so He seems infinitely far away from all these trivialities which are hardly worth living for, then remember that love abides! For if love abides it is equally certain that it is in the future, should this be the comfort you need and it is in the present, if this is the comfort you need. Set this consolation against all the terrors of the future, that love abides; set this consolation against all the anxieties and weaknesses of the present, that love abides! Oh, it is consoling to dwellers in the desert when they know with certainty that there are water springs, and that there will be water springs however far they travel: what water springs would be so missed, what manner of death would entail so much suffering as if love had not existed and would not exist eternally!

Behold, this is a very edifying thought, that love abides. We are speaking now, when we speak thus, of the love which sustains the whole of existence, the love of God. If for a moment, a single moment, it were to cease, then would everything be thrown into confusion. But it does not cease, and therefore, however confused everything else may become for you — love abides. Hence we speak about the love of God, about this quality of abiding.

However, in this little work we are constantly dealing only with the works of love, and therefore not with the love of God, but with human love. Naturally no man is love; if he is in love, he is a lover. On the other hand, love is everywhere present where there is a lover. One might believe and one certainly thinks more frequently, that love between man and man is a relation between two. This is indeed true, but untrue insofar as this relation

is also a relation between three. First there is the lover; next the one, or the ones, who are the object of his love; but for the third person, love itself is present. When then, in relation to human love, we speak about love abiding, this readily appears to be an act, or that it is not an abiding quality which love has as such, but a quality acquired at every moment, and which also, every moment it is acquired, is again an actual work. The lover abides, he abides in love, preserves himself in love; just by that he brings it about so that his love for men abides. He continues to be lover by abiding in love; through abiding in love, his love abides; it abides, and it is this thought upon which we shall now meditate, that:

LOVE ABIDES.

Love never faileth — it abides.

When a child has been away all day among strangers and now considers that it ought to go home, but is afraid to go alone, and yet really wants to stay as long as possible, it says to the older children, who perhaps wished to leave earlier, 'Wait for me'; and so the older ones do as the child asks. When of two equals one is more advanced than the other, the latter says to the first, "Wait for me"; and so the second does what the first asks. When two have planned and taken pleasure in the thought of a trip together, but one of them is taken sick, the sick man says, 'Wait for me, and so the other does as requested. If one man owes another man money and cannot pay, then he says, "Wait on me," and so the other man grants his request. When the maiden in love sees that there will be great and perhaps complicated difficulties in the way of her union with the beloved, she says to him, "Wait for me," and so the beloved does as he is asked. And all this is very excellent and commendable, to wait thus on another man. But whether it is love which thus waits, we have not yet seen. Perhaps the interval of waiting

is too short really to show how far that which determines the one thus to wait, deserves in a decisive sense to be called love. Alas! perhaps the interval of waiting was so long that the older children said to the child, “No, we can’t wait any longer for you.” Perhaps the time of waiting went so slowly that the one more advanced said, “No, I can’t wait for you any longer without retarding myself too much.” Perhaps the sickness dragged out so long that the friend said, “No, I can’t wait any longer for you, I shall have to go alone.” Perhaps the time dragged out so long for the man who could not pay his debt, that the other said, “No, I can’t wait any longer on you. I must have my money now.” Perhaps the prospect of marriage with the young girl became so remote that the lover said, “No, I can’t wait any longer for you; I owe it to myself and my life not to put it off in this way any longer, hoping year after year for that which is uncertain.” — But love abides.

The fact of love abiding, or, perhaps more correctly, the question of whether it really abides in this or that case, or whether it ceases: is something which occupies the thoughts of men in such manifold ways, is so frequently the subject of their conversation, and very frequently the principal content of all their poets’ works. It is regarded as praiseworthy that love abides, but as unworthy that it does not last, that it ceases, that it changes. Only the first is love; the other seems, because of the change, not to be love — and consequently not to have been love. The facts are these, one cannot cease to be loving; if one is in truth loving, one remains so; if one ceases to be loving, then one was not loving. Ceasing to love has therefore, in relation to love, a retroactive power. Moreover, I can never weary of saying this and of demonstrating it: wherever there is love, there is something infinitely profound. For instance, a man may have had money, and when he no longer has it, it still remains entirely true that he had had money. But when one ceases to be loving, he has never been loving. What

is still so gentle as love, and what so strict, so jealous for itself, so chastening as love!

Furthermore! If then love ceases, if in the love, the friendship, in short, in the affectionate relation between two, something comes between them so love ceases: then there takes place, as we say, a breach between these two. Love was the connection, was in good understanding between them; then when something comes between them, then is the love displaced, it ceases, the connection between them is broken, and the breach effects a separation between them. Consequently there is a breach. Christianity, however, does not know this manner of speaking, does not understand it, does not wish to understand it. If one speaks about there being a breach, this is because one believes that love is a relation only between two, instead of its being a relation between three, as was shown. This talk about there being a breach between the two is much too thoughtless; it gives the impression of the love-relationship being merely a matter between these two, as if there were no third party whom it concerned. If then the two are agreed about breaking with each other, there would consequently be no one to object to it. Again, because these two break with each other, it does not follow that these same two might not have affection for others; hence they retain their loving attributes, but their love now applies only in relation to others. Again, the one guilty of causing the breach would have the upper hand, and the innocent one would be defenseless. Still it would be pitiful for an innocent person to be the weaker; it certainly is this way in this world, but eternally understood it can never be this way. Therefore what does Christianity do? Its earnestness immediately fixes the attention of eternity upon the individual, upon each of the two. Just as the two clung to each other in love, each one especially clings in himself to “love.” Now that does not simply go out with the breach. Before it comes to the breach, before one came to break his love-relationship with the other, he must first have fallen away

from “love.” This is the important thing; therefore Christianity does not speak of the breach between the two, but always only about what the individual can do who falls away from “love” A breach between two smacks too much of business in the temporal existence, as if then the matter were not so dangerous; but to fall away from “love,” this expression has the seriousness of eternity. Lo, now everything is in order; now eternity can maintain discipline and order; now will the innocent sufferer in and through the breach, yet become the stronger, if he, too, does not fall away from “love.” If love were solely a relationship between two, then the one would constantly be in the other’s power, insofar as the other were an unprincipled man who wished to dissolve the relationship. When a relationship is only between two, then one constantly dominates the relationship through being able to break it; for as soon as one has broken it, the relationship is broken. But when there are three, then one alone cannot do it. The third, as we said, is “love” itself, to whom in the breach the innocent sufferer can cling, so that the breach has no power over him. Nor will the guilty be able to flatter himself on making a good bargain in getting out of the affair; for to fall away from “love,” that is certainly the dearest possible price; it has an earnestness different from the hasty breaking with a particular man — and then in other respects being a good and loving man in every way.

But the true lover never falls away from “love”; therefore for him there can never come a breach; for love abides. Still in a relationship between two, can one prevent the breach if the other breaks it? It must indeed seem that one of the two is sufficient to break the relationship, and if it is broken, then there is a breach. In a certain sense this is indeed true, but if the lover still does not fall away from “love,” he can prevent the breach, he can effect the miraculous; for if he abides, the breach can never really be brought about. Through abiding (and in this abiding the lover is in a covenant with the eternal) he retains superiority over the past, so he transforms what in the

past and through it, is a breach, into a possible future relationship. If viewed in connection with the past, the breach becomes with every day and with every year clearer and clearer; but the lover who abides, belongs, through abiding, to the future, to the eternal, and from the viewpoint of the future the breach is not a breach; on the contrary, it is a possibility. But to that the forces of eternity belong; and therefore the lover who abides, must abide in "love," otherwise the past, nevertheless, gradually acquires power, and then gradually the breach becomes evident. Oh, and to this, belong the powers of eternity, in the decisive moment, immediately to transform the past into the future! Yet it has this power of abiding.

How shall I now describe this work of love? Oh, that I might be inexhaustible in describing what is so indescribably joyous, and so edifying to consider!

So, then, a breach took place between the two; it was a misunderstanding, yet the one broke the relationship. But the lover says, "I abide" — so there is still no breach. Imagine a compound word, the last word is missing; there is only the first word and the hyphen (for the one who breaks the relationship can still not take the hyphen with him, the lover retains the hyphen, as naturally belonging to him), consequently imagine the first word of a compound word and the hyphen, and imagine that you know nothing further of what belongs with it; what will you say then? You will say the word is not finished, that something is missing. So with the lover. That it came to a breach cannot be plainly seen, it can only be known by an understanding of the past. But the lover will not know the past, for he abides; and abiding is in the direction of the future. Hence the lover expresses the fact that the relationship, which the other calls a breach, is a relationship which is not yet finished. But because something is lacking, it is not therefore yet a breach. It depends, consequently, on how the relationship is regarded; and the lover, he abides.

So if it then came to a breach, it was a dispute which separated the two; yet if one broke it, he said, “It is all finished between us.” But the lover abides, he says, “It is not finished between us; we are still midway in the sentence, it is only the sentence which is not finished.” Is this not true? What is the difference between a fragment and an unfinished sentence? In order to call something a fragment, one must know that there is nothing more to come; if one knows nothing about it, then one says that the sentence is not yet finished. From the standpoint of the past, that it is decided that there is no more to come, we say. It is a broken-off fragment.” As concerns the future, waiting for the next, we say, “The sentence is not finished, something is still lacking.” So if it then came to a breach, it would be dejection, coldness, indifference, which separated them; yet if one caused the breach, he says, “I no longer talk with that man, I do not even see him.” But the lover says, “I abide, so we shall still talk with each other, for in conversation silence is sometimes part of it.” Is this not true? But suppose it was now three years since they last talked together. Behold, it happens here again.

That it was three years ago, one can only know by an understanding of the past; but the lover who each day renews himself through the eternal and abides, over him the past has no power. If you saw two men sitting silently side by side, and you knew nothing else about them, would you infer that it was three years since they had talked with each other? Can anyone determine how long the silence must continue before a man can say, “Now there is no more conversation”? And if one can determine that, can one still know in the particular case, except in the sense of what was past, whether it was true, for time must certainly have elapsed? But the lover who abides constantly extricates himself from his knowledge of the past; he knows no past, he waits only on the future. Is the dancing interrupted because one dancer has gone away? In a certain sense. But if the other one continues to

stand in the position which expresses the bowing toward one who is not seen, and if you know nothing about the past: then you will say, “Now the dancing ought to begin, if only the other would come for whom they are waiting.” Do away with the past; drown it in the oblivion of eternity through lovingly abiding: then is the end the beginning, and there is no breach!

If the faithless lover has deserted the maiden, but she in the darkening afterglow sits each evening by the window and waits, so she exclaims every evening: “Now he is coming, he is coming right away”; it looks every evening as if there had been no breach, for she abides. That she has sat thus every evening for three years, that she does not say on the individual evenings; therefore the past does not discover it, as little as she herself is aware of it, if she really does abide in love. Still, perhaps the maiden really loved herself. She desired union with the beloved for her own sake; it was her sole desire; her soul was at one with her desire. In gratitude for its fulfillment she would do everything to make the life of the beloved as beautiful as possible; yes, it is true, but still, still it was for her own sake that she desired the union. If this is true, if she becomes weary, if she adverts to the past, to the length of time — then she no longer sits at the window, she expresses the fact that there is a breach; but love abides.

So then it came to a breach, whatever the occasion was; the one broke the relationship; it was terrible, hate, everlasting, unforgiving hate, would for the future fill his soul: “I will never look at this man again, our ways are forever separated, the abysmal depths of hate lie between us.” He concedes certainly that inasmuch as life is a way, they are on the way together, but not in any other sense; he carefully avoids allowing his path to cross the path of the one he hates; the world is almost too small to hold them both; it is agony to him to breathe the same air as the other does; he shudders at the thought that eternity must hold them both. But the lover abides. “I abide,”

he says, "so we are still on the way together." Is this not so? When two balls (as everyone can prove for himself) strike together, so that by repulsion one takes the other with it in its course, are they not then on the way together? That it happened through repulsion is not seen, that is something in the past which has to be known. But the lover does not wish to know the past, he abides; he continues on the way with the one who hates him, so there is consequently no breach.

What wonderful strength does love not have! The most powerful word ever spoken, moreover, the creative word of God, is: "Be." But the most powerful word any man has uttered is when the true lover says, "I abide." Reconciled with himself and with his conscience, the friend of God, in a covenant with all good angels the lover walks defenseless in the most terrible war; he says only, "I abide." And so he truly is the lover, he will yet conquer, will triumph through his abiding, triumph even more gloriously than did that Roman through his hesitation. For love's abiding is in itself far more glorious. So truly he is the lover: there is no misunderstanding save the one that sooner or later must be overcome by his abiding; there is no hate such but that it must at last give up, and give way to his abiding — if not before, then in eternity. Lo, the one who secured for himself another man's love, and consequently is in possession of it, may every moment be in fear of losing it. But the one who was hated for his love, he is everlastingly certain of gaining love. If time cannot, then will eternity take away the other's hatred, open his eyes to "love" and thereby to the love which continued for the whole life, and now abides in eternity. So love never fails — it abides.

LOVE ABIDETH — IT NEVER FAILS.

That a certain natural, good disposition, a certain benevolent sympathy and helpfulness, which we gratefully appreciate, still has to spend some time in affectionately waiting — that it becomes weary in the course of

time, or when it progresses so slowly and consequently over a long period of time: is only too certain. The long process of time is certainly the exigency which causes most people to liquidate their estates. In the commercial world it generally happens that a house fails because suddenly there is all at once a great run on it; but in the spiritual world it is the long time which makes away with so many. Men have spiritual strength enough for a moment, but in the long run, on the contrary, they become irresponsible. Yet love abides. Oh, how well do not the poet and the novelist know how to describe the mutability of everything, to show the power of time over all things which existed in time, over the greatest, the mightiest, the most glorious achievements, over the wonders of the world, which in time became almost unrecognizable ruins; over the most immortal names, which in time ended in the vagueness of legends!

But cannot something happen to love now while it abides, so that although it abides it is transformed in time, but yet in such a way that this transformation is not its fault but is something suffered? Consequently the relationship would be: love abides, no circumstance alters it or forces it to give itself up, yet it is transformed in a change which we call decrepitude, and that although we may say about this same love, that it never failed.

Let us for a moment speak about that which occupies men so much, about earthly love, or about that maiden, who according to the poet's tale, sits in the afterglow of evening by the window, and waits for her beloved; alas, while "time comes and time goes." Now it is something long past, for it happened, says the poet, "in a long-vanished age." The maiden did not mark how time came and went, while she waited — and while time marked her. Ordinarily we merely say that time passes; oh, it passes so swiftly for the happy, so indescribably slowly for the sorrowing! Or we say that "time is coming." Oh, it comes so slowly for the hoping, only too swiftly for the fearful. But here the poet says, and excellently, that time comes and time

goes, for he wishes to describe the expectant; and for such a one it neither merely goes nor merely comes, it comes and goes. Out of sympathy for the waiting girl time, as it were, undertook to do what the faithless lover should have done. Then when the time came when "he" ought to have come, then time came, but "he" did not come; so time went again, until the time came when it was time that "he" should come who did not come. And thus time soothed the waiting maiden by coming and going, until, rocked by this movement, she rested in her expectation. Wonderful! One would think that expectation would be more apt to keep a man awake, yet expectation, when one resigns himself to it, is so soothing, and is it not then wonderful! For if you had lain down to sleep, and then suddenly while you slept a powerful fountain had begun its lofty play, you would suddenly wake up startled. But if you lie down to rest by a fountain, you never sleep more soundly, more sweetly, more refreshingly, more deliciously, than when soothed by the rippling play of this fountain.

Consequently time came and time went; the girl truly did not fall away from her love, but yet she fell away — for it was not time which vanished, no, it came and went, but the maiden wasted away. Honor to her steadfast soul! She, too, has honor, the greatest human honor: that a poet has celebrated her in his songs, not as an occasional-poet does for money, not because a girl was from a distinguished family, not because the poet had perhaps known her. No, her name is unknown, it was only her beautiful devotion which inspired the true poet. Let us never forget that thus to remain faithful to her love is a noble, womanly act, a great and glorious deed. As long as there lives a poet she will be highly honoured in the world, despite all talk about a busy domestic life; and if the world becomes so wretched that a poet no longer exists, then will the race learn to despair over having no poet, and then a poet will again come who will do her honor.

She wasted away — a sacrifice to love. And yet this is precisely the highest that can be said of any man: he is sacrificed. The problem is only about whether that for which he was sacrificed, was the highest. But the fact of being sacrificed is and remains as long as the world remains a world, eternally understood, a far greater achievement than the fact of triumphing. For the world truly is not so perfect, so the fact of triumphing in the world, precisely through identification with the world, has a serious admixture of the world's paltriness. That is, triumphing in the world is like becoming something great in the world; it is as a rule a dubious matter to become something great in the world, for the world is not so excellent that its judgment about greatness would have great significance — except as an unconscious sarcasm.

Hence the maiden is sacrificed to love. Alas, but earthly love is not in the highest sense love, and not the highest love: lo, therefore she faded away — Gloving in death as she had been in life, but mark, that earthly love had been her highest aspiration. And earthly love is a wish for this life; therefore time had power over her, therefore she faded away in love, until it also dwindled away, while she, nevertheless, showed that she had power over time, for she did not herself fall away from her love.

But love abides — it never fails. For in spiritual love itself is the spring which wells up in eternal life. That this lover, too, grows old in years and dies sometime in time, proves nothing, for his love remains eternally young. In his love he does not lay hold on the temporal existence as does earthly love, dependent on the temporal existence; for his love eternity is the true season. When he dies he has simply reached the goal; when he dies it simply shows that he had not waited in vain. Alas, when the young maiden died, we simply said: "Unfortunately it seems that she waited in vain." And how could the love which abides become infirm? Can then immortality become infirm? But what is it which gives a man immortality, what except

the love which abides? For earthly love is of the temporal existence the most beautiful of temporal things, but yet the frail invention of the temporal existence. Therefore there is here a more profound contradiction. There was no fault in the maiden; she was and remained true to her love. Yet her love changed somewhat through the years. This change lies in the nature of the earthly love. The contradiction is then this: that one with the most honest intentions, willing to be sacrificed, cannot in the deepest sense be absolutely steadfast, or abide in what does not itself abide eternally — and earthly love does not do this. Perhaps the girl herself did not understand this connection; but this persistence of the self-contradiction was what made her death sad. That she is sacrificed has not the solemnity of the eternal, and, hence, neither its inspiration nor its elevation, but it has the sadness of the temporal existence, and so it inspires the poet.

The young maiden wasted away. Even if "he" had come, consequently had come before her death, it would still have been too late. She remained; but time had weakened her desire, the desire for which she lived, while at the same time the desire consumed her. In the most profound sense, on the contrary, the lover who abides, does not become infirm; his love does not consume away. If the one who misunderstood him, the one who became cold to him, the one who hated him, returns, he finds him unchanged, unchanged in his same longing for the eternal, and with the same quiet calmness in the temporal. His love is eternal, he lays hold on the eternal, he rests in the eternal; therefore he expects each moment the same as he expects eternally, and therefore he is without disquietude, for in eternity there is time enough.

When an expectation of love is essentially able to make a man infirm, it must be because his expectation halts in a dependent-relationship to time, so that time has it in its power to determine whether the expectation is fulfilled or not. That is to say, the expectation is principally a temporal expectation;

but such an expectation does not have the love which abides. That an expectation is essentially merely temporal, produces unrest in the expectation. Time does not really exist without unrest; it does not exist for dumb animals who are absolutely without anxiety; and the watch which tells the time cannot do it when the movement stops. But when the disquietude, as is the case in the merely temporal expectation, oscillates between fulfillment and non-fulfillment, so that the movement becomes swifter in time because of the passing of time, the fact that time elapses precipitates the disquietude, since the fulfillment, if it does not take place in time, cannot take place at all — when this is the case, the expectation is consumed. At last the unrest apparently disappears, alas, just as when sickness has developed into consumption. But the lover who abides, has an eternal expectation, and this eternal expectation gives a sense of proportion in the unrest, which certainly in time swings between fulfillment and non-fulfillment, but independently of time, for the fulfillment is by no means made impossible because time is past: this lover is not consumed.

What faithfulness in the love which abides! It is far from our intention to wish to disparage the loving maiden, as if it were a kind of disloyalty in her (alas, a disloyalty — to a faithless lover!) that she weakened through the years and faded away, so that her earthly love became changed in the change which is the change of love itself through the years. And yet, yet — aye, it is a strange intercrossing of the self-contradictory thought, but it cannot now be otherwise with even the highest form of faithfulness in earthly love, than that it almost seems to be disloyalty, because the earthly love is not the eternal. The contradiction does not lie in the girl, she remained faithful; the contradiction, which the girl herself suffered, lies in the fact that the earthly love is not the eternal, and consequently in the fact that it is impossible with eternal loyalty to lay hold on that which is not in itself the eternal. What faithfulness of love, on the other hand, to abide

completely unchanged, without the slightest weakening, the same at every moment — whenever, at whatever time or hour, the misunderstanding, the enemy, the hater wishes to return to this lover! That he who abides never becomes infirm, is indeed to him an eternal gain; but it is in addition, and thus we here regard it, and thus he himself regards it, a work of love in faithfulness to those he loves.

And what would be so disconsolate, something indeed almost to despair over, as if, when the moment came when the mistaken one turned back and sought understanding, when the enemy turned back and sought friendship, when the one who had hated turned back and sought reconciliation — what would be so disconsolate as for the lover then to become worn out, so that neither understanding, nor the re-establishment of friendship, nor the renewed reconciliation in love would be able to bring about this blessed joy of eternity! And, on the other hand, what can make the moment of forgiveness, the transition to reconciliation so natural, so easy, as the fact that the lover (as was shown in the preceding) by constantly abiding has put the past away from him; for then on his part reconciliation is ready, just as if there had been no separation. When two people both have an idea about the past, or about the separation having been long, then the forgiveness is often a difficult collision, the relationship perhaps never becomes completely re-established. But the lover knows nothing about the past, therefore he does even this last thing in love, he reduces the shock, so that no collision can take place: the transition to forgiveness cannot be made easier. How often have not two been almost on the verge of a reconciliation, but one became hurt, as they say? If this is the case it must be because something unkind from the past has been brought out; for it is indeed impossible for one to hurt one's self on what is softer than the softest, on love. Truly, no boat which glides softly through the smooth water to where the rushes halt its

progress and close about it, can be more certain of not being overturned than the one who returns and seeks reconciliation with the love that abides!

Such is the lover. That the most beautiful of everything, that the moment of reconciliation, should become a fruitless effort, a vain attempt, because by that time he had changed: he prevents that; for he abides, and never becomes worn out. And that the transition of forgiveness may be as easy as the meeting with one whom one has not seen for a long time; that the conversation of love may immediately be as natural as it is with one with whom one carries on a conversation; that the rambling pace may be as swift in measure as it is between two who for the first time begin a new life — in short, that there may be nothing, simply no halting, which might repel, not a second, not a split second: the lover effects this, for he abides and never becomes infirm.

VII. MERCY, A WORK OF LOVE, EVEN IF IT CAN GIVE NOTHING AND CAN DO NOTHING

"But to do good and to communicate, forget not" — but neither forget that this incessant worldly talk about charity and benevolence and generosity and liberality and gifts and donations is almost unmerciful. Oh, let news writers and tax gatherers and parish beadles talk about generosity and count and count the receipts; but let us never fail to realize that Christianity essentially speaks about mercy, that Christianity would be the last of all to reward the unmerciful; as if the poor and the wretched were not only in want of money, and so on, but were also excluded from the highest power of all, that of being able to show mercy, because they are not able to be generous, charitable and benevolent. But one preaches and preaches, ecclesiastically and secularly, about liberality and generosity — one forgets even while delivering the sermon, about mercy. This from the Christian standpoint is an indecency. The poor man who sits in church must groan; and why must he groan? Is it so that his groaning, together with the preacher's eloquence, might help to get the purse strings of the rich opened up? Oh, no, he must groan, in the scriptural sense he must "groan against" the preacher, because just when one is so eager to help him, one suffers the greatest injustice. Woe to the one who consumes the inheritance of the widow and the fatherless, but woe, too, to the preacher who keeps silent about mercy in order to speak about charity! The preaching should be solely and alone about mercy. If you know how to speak effectively about that, then will the benevolence follow as a matter of course, in proportion to the individual ability. But consider this, that if a man by talking about charity procured money, money, money, consider this, that by keeping silent about mercy, he acted unmercifully toward the very poor and wretched, for whom

he secured relief through the help afforded by the rich gifts of charity. Consider this, that if the poor and the wretched disturb us by their petitions, we may be able to get their poverty relieved by charity, but then consider that it would be far more terrible if we forced the poor and the wretched to “hinder our prayers” by groaning against us to God, as the Scriptures say, because we atrociously treated the poor and the wretched unfairly by not telling them that they can practice mercy.

We shall in this talk about mercy keep dose to this thought, and try to guard ourselves against confusing mercy with what really belongs to external conditions, over which consequently, as such, love has no control, while it does truly have mercy in its power, just as certainly as love has a heart in its bosom. Because a man has a heart in his bosom, it by no means follows that he has money in his pocket, but the former is far more important, and is certainly decisive as regards mercy. And truly, if one had no money but really knew how to encourage and inspire the poor and the wretched by talking about mercy; then he would have done quite as much as the one who throws some money to the poor, or holds forth about charity from the rich.

So we shall meditate on:

MERCY, A WORK OF LOVE, EVEN IF IT CAN GIVE NOTHING AND CAN DO NOTHING.

We shall strive, according to the ability granted us, to make it as obvious as possible, as alluring as possible, to bring as close home to the poor as possible, what consolation there is for him in being able to be merciful. We shall speak about this by doing away with a part of the worldly illusion. But truly our desire is, by means of what we say, to contribute whatever is needed to make the one who can be charitable and benevolent as humble as possible in his giving, as is well pleasing unto God; as modest in divine shyness as is becoming to a Christian; as willing to give and yet as

unwilling to confess that it is alms, as is the one who turns away his face in order not to be shamed by others seeing that it brings him honor; or as the one whose left hand actually does not know what his right hand does.

Mercy has nothing to give. It follows as a matter of course that if the merciful has anything to give, then he gives it most willingly. But it is not on this we focus our attention, but on the fact that one can be merciful without having the least thing to give. And this is of great importance, since the fact of being able to be merciful is a far greater perfection than having money, and hence being able to give.

If that man celebrated for eighteen hundred years, the good Samaritan, had not been riding but walking on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, where he saw the unfortunate man lying; if he had carried nothing with him with which to bind up his sores; if he had then lifted the unfortunate in up, laid him upon his own shoulders and borne him nearest inn, where the landlord would under no conditions receive either him or the unfortunate, because the Samaritan did not have even a farthing, and could only beg and beseech the hard-hearted landlord to be merciful, since a man's life was at stake: if he had not therefore... still, no, the story is not even finished — hence, if the Samaritan now, far from losing patience because of this, had again gone on, carrying the unfortunate man, had looked for a softer bed for the wounded, had sat by his side, had done everything he could to stanch the flow of blood, but the unfortunate man had died on his hands: would he not then have been just as merciful, quite as merciful, as that merciful Samaritan? Or would there be any objection to calling this the story of the good Samaritan?

Take the story about the woman who laid the two pennies in the Temple chest, but let us make a little poetic change in the story. The two pennies were to her a great sum, which she had not accumulated all at once. She had saved for a long time in order to get them together; and for that she had

treasured them wrapped up in a little cloth, in which to carry them when she went up to the Temple. However, a thief had noticed that she had these pennies, had stolen them from her, and had left a similar cloth in place of hers, which contained nothing — something the widow did not know. Hence she went up to the Temple, carrying, as she supposed, the two pennies, that is, nothing to the Temple chest: I wonder if Christ would still not have said what He did say of her, that "she gave more than all the rich"!

Still, mercy without money, what significance has it? Furthermore, the worldly arrogance of charity and benevolence finally goes so far as to laugh at a mercy which has nothing! For it is already bad and revolting enough, this mercilessness of the earthly existence, that when the poor gives his last shilling, and then the rich comes and gives a hundred dollars, that then all see the hundred dollars, that is, that the rich by his gifts entirely obscures the gift of the poor — his mercy. But what madness, if what Christ says is still true, that the poor gave the most, what madness: that the one who gives less (the rich — and the great sum) obscures the one who gives more (the poor — and the small portion), moreover, even obscures the one who gives most! However, of course, the world does not say that; it says that the rich gave most, and why does the world say this? Because the world understands only about money — and Christ only about mercy. And just because Christ understood only about mercy, that is why He was so particular about the fact that the widow gave only two pennies; and just for this reason He would say that not even so much was needed, or that she might have given less, and even in giving the less have given more. Wonderful arithmetic! Or rather a wonderful kind of reckoning, not to be found in any arithmetic! He uses a remarkable expression about this widow, "that she gave of her poverty." But the magnitude of the gift increases in proportion to the extent of the poverty, hence, contrary to what the world believes (that the magnitude of the gift is in proportion to the wealth), so the one who is even

poorer than that widow, by giving one penny out of his poverty, gives even more than that widow, who still in comparison with all the rich gave most.

To the world this may seem the most tiresome kind of reckoning, where one penny can become so significant, can become the most significant gift. The world and the world's charity would prefer to deal with great amounts, so great that they are astonishing; and one penny certainly does not astonish — just as little as mercy is one of the shining virtues. Eternally understood, however, this kind of reckoning is the only true one, and it is learned only from eternity, and by abandoning worldly and temporal illusions. For eternity has the keenest eye for and the most completely developed sense of mercy, but no sense at all of money, as little as eternity is in financial embarrassment, or has, according to the Word, the least use for money. Really this is something both to laugh at and to weep over! It would undeniably be an excellent invention on the part of laughter to imagine eternity in financial embarrassment: oh, but let us then weep a little over the fact that the temporal existence has so completely forgotten eternity, and forgotten that, eternally, money is less than nothing! Alas, many believe that the eternal is a delusion, money the actuality: whereas money is, in the understanding of eternity and truth, a delusion! Imagine eternity as you will; confess only that from what you have seen of the temporal existence, there is much of it that you would like to find again in eternity, that you would wish to see again the trees and flowers and stars, to hear again the song of birds and the rippling of brooks. But could it occur to you that there should be money in eternity? No, for then the kingdom of heaven itself would become a land of wretchedness; and therefore this cannot possibly occur to you, just as it cannot possibly occur to the one who believes that money is the actual, that there is an eternity. There is nothing of all you see that you can be so certain will never enter into heaven as: money. And on the

contrary, there is nothing which is so certain of heaven as mercy. So you see that mercy infinitely has no relation to money.

Yet money, money, money! That foreign prince may have said, when he turned his back on mighty Rome, “Here lies a city which is for sale, and only waits a buyer”: oh, how often has one not been tempted by despondency to turn his back on existence, with these words: “Here lies a world which is for sale, and only waits a buyer” — insofar as one is not ready to say that the devil has already purchased it!

What is the earnestness of life? If you have in truth propounded this earnest question to yourself, then remember how you answered it; or let me remind you of how you answered it. Earnestness is a man’s God-relationship. Everywhere where the thought of God is present in what a man does, thinks and says, there is earnestness, in that is there earnestness. But money is the world’s god; therefore it thinks that everything that has to do with money, or has some relation to money, is earnestness. Look at that noble, simple wise man of old; he would not take money for his instruction; and the apostle Paul preferred to work with his own hands rather than defile the Gospel and degrade his apostolic mission and falsify the proclamation of the Gospel, by taking money for it. How does the world judge about such things? However, let us not foolishly ask what the judgment of the world is about that noble, simple man and about the holy apostle, for now the world has learned to pronounce by rote a panegyric upon them. But if a single contemporary in this age were to do at this moment as those two did, how would his contemporaries judge him? They would judge that he was an eccentric, that he was visionary; they would judge that such a man “lacks earnestness.” For to make money, that is earnestness; to make much money, even if it was by selling men, that is earnestness; to make much money by contemptible slander, that is earnestness. To proclaim some truth — if one also earns much money in so doing (for the fact of its being true is not

taken into consideration, but only the fact that one makes money), that is earnestness. Money, money, that is earnestness.

Thus we are trained from our earliest childhood, disciplined in the ungodly worship of money. Let me cite an example, the first that offers among thousands and thousands — for there are not more herring ahead of the boat that works its way through a shoal of herring, than there are actual examples of training in the worship of money. Imagine, then, a household where the head of the family has issued orders that the next day (which consequently is Sunday) they must all go to church together. But what happens? Sunday morning when it is time to go, the girls are found not to have finished dressing. Then what does the father say, the — earnest father, who earnestly trains his children to worship money? Yes, he naturally says nothing, or as good as nothing, for here there is no occasion for a warning or a reprimand; he says, to be sure, "If the girls are not ready, they will have to stay at home, that is all there is to it." But imagine, just imagine, how terrible it would have been, if it had been the theater, and the girls had not been ready at the proper time. Imagine then how this — earnest father would have taken on, and why? Because they had wasted so much money — while, on the contrary, by remaining home one Sunday, they had even saved the collection money. Now, however, the girls will get a severe — earnest, fatherly reprimand; now it is a great fault, a great sin, not to have been ready — and therefore that earnest father who brings up his children with earnestness, must not allow a second offense to go unpunished. For the fact that it is disobedience on the part of the girls, is the least of it — in that case the fault would be just as great on Sundays; no, the serious thing was that the money was wasted. Lo, one is called to be a father, one is expected to have a fatherly dignity and to make a responsible use of this dignity; he is expected to educate his children. Now this may be educating, but one does not train human beings in this manner, but only fools and monsters!

But if a man has this conception about money, what conception can he have about the mercy which has no money? Such a mercy must be regarded as a kind of madness, an illusion. Yet then, too, must eternity and Christianity be regarded as a kind of madness, an illusion. A pagan emperor may have said that one should not smell of money. On the contrary, Christianity teaches how rightly to smell of money. It teaches that money as such smells bad. Therefore is some powerful perfume needed to drive out the stench. Have mercy: let it be present in giving money; without it money has a bad odor. Lo, even a beggar can say this, and he ought to become just as immortal by his expression as that emperor — and capitalist. Mercy is the most powerful perfume. If prayer is the offering of the lips and acceptable to God, then mercy is truly the offering of the heart, and is, as the Scriptures say, a sweet savor in God's nostrils. Oh, never forget in your thoughts about God, that He has not the slightest understanding of money!

My hearer, if you were a speaker, which task would you choose: the one of speaking to the rich about practicing charity, or the one of speaking to the poor about being merciful? I certainly know which I would choose, or rather which I would have chosen — if only I were a speaker. Oh, there is something so indescribably conciliatory in speaking to the poor about practicing mercy! Oh, how necessary it is, if not for the sake of the poor, then for your own sake, something you can readily verify. For if you only try it, you will see that your ideas about it will constantly reverse themselves, as if it would do no good to speak to the poor about mercy, since they have nothing to give, and therefore one ought to speak to the rich about mercy to the poor. Thus if the poor is indigent in his poverty, and then the world rejects his idea that he might be able to practice mercy, so he is pointed out, abandoned, as a pitiful object of charity, who at most can bow in humble gratitude — while the rich are so kind in practicing mercy! Merciful God, how unmerciful!

So the speech is addressed to you, the poor and the wretched! Oh, be merciful! Preserve that heart in your bosom which in spite of poverty and wretchedness, still has sympathy for the wretchedness of others; that heart which before God has confidence to know that one can be merciful, moreover, that one can be merciful to the highest degree, in a remarkable and superior sense, even though one has nothing to give.

“Oh, be merciful!” See, here it is again, and who does not immediately and involuntarily think of the poor, of the cry of the beggars to the rich, “Be merciful”? — however incorrect this expression is, since it is charity which is asked for. And therefore we speak correctly, we who say to the poor, to the poorest of all: “Oh, be merciful!” Finally let not this envious pettiness of earthly existence so corrupt you as to make you forget that you can be merciful; so corrupt you that a false bashfulness stifles the best in you! A false bashfulness — yes, for until the true comes, oh, that it might always come, but in any case, it ought to come with money; if you get money, and then consequently can give, then, not till then, have you anything to be ashamed of. Be merciful, be merciful toward the rich! Remember, you have mercy in your power, while he has money! Do not misuse this power; do not be so unmerciful as to cry to heaven for punishment upon his lack of mercy! Moreover, we know well how little the world cares about the sigh of the poor to God when it accuses the rich, and yet this air-borne sigh, this ignored word, is the most important of all: but yet, yet, although not unacquainted with the loud scream — I blow all that away, if only no poor man may with justice accuse me in secret before God. Oh, be merciful! If the rich man is stingy and close, or, even if he is not stingy about money, is yet taciturn and repellent: then do you be rich in mercy and compassion. For compassion works wonders; it makes the two pennies into a great sum when the poor widow gives them; it makes the sparse gift into a greater amount, when the poor mercifully does not reproach the rich; it makes the churlish

giver less guilty, when the poor mercifully conceal it. Oh, how many has not money made unmerciful! Shall money also have the power to make those unmerciful who have no money? Then the power of money has completely triumphed. But if the power of money has completely triumphed, then, too, is mercy absolutely abolished.

Mercy is able to do nothing. The sacred stories have among other things this remarkable quality that in all their simplicity, they still always get everything said that should be said. Such is also the case in the Gospel about the rich and the poor man. Neither the misery of Lazarus nor the luxury of the rich is minutely painted and described; yet there is one detail added that is well worth our attention. It is said that Lazarus was laid at the rich man's door full of sores, but the dogs came and licked his sores. What is it that the rich man represents? Mercilessness, or more exactly, inhuman mercilessness. In order to illustrate the lack of mercy, we may place a merciful man by his side. This is what was done in the story of the good Samaritan, who by contrast throws light upon the Levite and the priest. But the rich man was cruel; therefore the evangelist uses dogs for illustration. What a contrast! We shall not exaggerate and say that a dog can be merciful; but in contrast to the rich man, it is as if the dogs were merciful. And this is the horrifying thing, that when the rich man had refused mercy, then the dogs had to be merciful. But there is something else to be found in this comparison between the rich man and the dogs. The rich man certainly had it in his power to do something for Lazarus. The dogs could do nothing; and yet it seems as if the dogs were compassionate.

Notice, that this is just what we are speaking about in this meditation. It naturally follows that if the compassionate can do anything, then he is only too glad to. But it is not upon this that we shall focus our attention; on the contrary, it must be focused on the fact that one can be compassionate without being able to do the least thing. And this is of great importance,

since the fact of being able to be compassionate is a far greater perfection than being able to do something.

Suppose it had not been one man traveling from Jericho to Jerusalem, but two, and that they were both attacked by robbers, disabled, and that no traveler came by — suppose then, that the one of them could do nothing but groan, while the other forgot and overcame his own suffering in order to speak soothing and friendly words, or, in what involved great pain, he dragged himself to a little water in order to fetch the other a refreshing drink. Or suppose they had both been deprived of speech, but one of them in his silent prayer sighed to God for the other one, too: would he not then have been compassionate? If someone has cut my hands off, I cannot play the zither, and if someone has cut my leg off, then I cannot dance; and if I lie crippled on the shore, then I cannot throw myself into the sea to save another man's life; and if I myself lie with a broken arm or leg, then I cannot rush into the flames to save another's life: but I can be compassionate everywhere.

I have often thought about how an artist might represent compassion, but I am satisfied that it cannot be done. As soon as an artist has done it, it becomes doubtful whether what he has represented is compassion or something else. Compassion is certainly shown when the poor gives the half-shilling and yet all that he owns, when the helpless can do nothing and yet is compassionate. But the artist would prefer to portray the gift, consequently the charity, and would rather portray that which looks best painted, the great achievement. Try to paint this: a poor woman, who gives the other person the only bread she has — and you will certainly find that you cannot portray the most important thing; you can express that it is one loaf, but not that it is the only one she owns. The Danish people are familiar with the dangers of the sea. There is a picture which represents a brave sailor who was responsible for the pilot boat's so frequently having saved

human lives. His picture is shown, and below at one side a wreck, and on the other side a pilot boat. You see this can be painted. And it is glorious to steer like an angel of salvation, through the breakers, and to do it bravely, courageously, and, if you like, compassionately. Oh, but have you never seen, have you never imagined the wretchedness of those who, perhaps from childhood or from later in life, have been so unhappily scolded, so ill-treated, that they are not able to do anything, anything at all, are perhaps scarcely able to express their sympathy in dear words: shall we now be unmerciful enough to add this new cruelty to all their misery, to deny them the power of compassion — because it certainly cannot be represented, since such a subject cannot be portrayed except as an object of compassion! And yet it is certain that the compassion of such people is the most beautiful and the truest, and is worth more because they have not been so dulled by their own suffering that they have lost sympathy with others.

Imagine a widow in her poverty; she has but one daughter, but nature has been a stepmother to this daughter, has denied her almost every gift that might make her a comfort to the mother — imagine that this unfortunate girl, who groans under the heavy burden, yet in proportion to the tiny ability granted her is inexhaustible in devising ways to do the little, the nothing, she can do to ease her mother's life. Lo, this is compassion! No rich man would squander a thousand dollars to have an artist paint it, for it cannot be painted. But every time the distinguished benefactor, who assists the mother, comes to them, the poor girl stands embarrassed; for "he" can do so much — his compassion obscures that of the girl! Oh, well, that is the way it looks in the eyes of the world, perhaps, too, in the eyes of a painter and a connoisseur.

So the speech is addressed to you, you wretched one, who can do simply nothing: do not forget to be compassionate! Be merciful; this consolation, that you can be compassionate, to say nothing of the fact that you are

compassionate, is far greater than if I could guarantee that the most powerful will show you compassion. Be merciful toward us more fortunate ones! Your sorrow-filled life is like a dangerous indictment of the loving Providence; you have it in your power, therefore, to frighten the rest of us; be merciful! Truly, how much compassion from such an unfortunate one do not the mighty and the happy certainly need! Which is more compassionate, capably to relieve the needs of others, or by suffering quietly and patiently, mercifully to take pains not to disturb the joy and happiness of others? Which of these two loves more: the happy who sympathizes with another's suffering, or the unhappy who truly sympathizes with others' joy and happiness?

"But the principal consideration is still the fact that the needy must be helped in every way, and that everything possible must be done to relieve the needy." So speaks the well-intentioned temporal existence, and it can never speak otherwise. On the contrary, eternity says: there is only one danger, the danger that no compassion is shown; even if all necessity were relieved, it is not therefore decided that it is done through compassion, and if this were not the case, then would the wretchedness arising from the fact that it was done without compassion, be greater than that from any temporal need.

The principal trouble is that the world does not understand eternity. Temporal existence has a temporal, and insofar a hasty conception of the need, and also a sensual conception about the greatness of the gift, and about being able to do something to relieve the need. "The poor, the wretched man might die — consequently it is of the utmost importance that he should be helped." No, answers eternity, the most important thing is that compassion be shown him, or that the assistance is the assistance of compassion. "Raise money, build us hospitals, that is of the utmost importance!" No, says eternity, the most important thing is compassion.

That a man dies is, eternally understood, no misfortune, but it is unfortunate if no compassion is shown. There also hangs, remarkably enough, beneath that picture which represents a wreck on one side and a pilot boat on the other, there hangs the picture: “Poverty — and Violent Death; Prosperity — and Natural Death,” hence death on both sides. And eternity holds it unshakably true that compassion is the more important. No thinker can be so persistent in this thought as eternity is; no thinker is so calm, so undisturbed by momentary appearances and momentary dangers as eternity, which seems to emphasize that it is still more important that help be afforded in every possible way; no thinker is so calm, so untroubled, as eternity. And no thinker is so certain that men must at last give in and accept his opinion as eternity is, for it says: only wait, we shall talk this over in eternity, and there the talk will be solely about compassion, and solely about the difference: merciful — not-merciful. Oh, that I might show the face eternity will put on when the rich man in reply to the question as to whether he has been merciful, answers: “I have given away a hundred thousand dollars to the poor!” For eternity will look at him surprised, as one who cannot get it into his head what the rich man is talking about; and then eternity will again submit the question: Have you been merciful? Imagine a man who went out to a mountain to talk with it about his affairs; or that a man had dealings with the wind about his own achievements: eternity will no more understand what the rich man is talking about concerning the hundred thousand dollars, and what the powerful men mean by saying that they have done everything, than the mountain or the wind would understand what was said to them.

Is it compassionate to give hundreds of thousands to the poor? No. Is it compassionate to give half a shilling to the poor? No. Compassion depends on how it is given. But then the hundred thousand and the half-shilling are of no consequence. That is, I can see compassion just as much in the one as

the other; that is, compassion can be, and can be as perfectly manifest in the half-shilling as in the hundred thousand which is given. But if I can really see compassion as well in the half-shilling as in the hundred thousand, then I can really see it better in the half-shilling; for the hundred thousand have an accidental significance which easily attracts the sensual attention to itself, and thereby confuses me in seeing the compassion. Is it compassion when the one who can do everything does everything for the wretched? No. Is it compassion when the one who can do practically nothing, does this nothing for the wretched? No. Compassion depends on how all this and this nothing is done. But then I can equally well see compassion in this everything and in this nothing; and if this is so, then I can really see it best in this nothing, for the being able to do everything is a glittering externality; it has an accidental kind of significance, which still reacts strongly upon the sensual in me, easily attracts my attention to itself, and interferes with my sense of compassion.

Let me continue the illustration. If you wished to observe the movements and the circles which a stone produces when it is thrown into the water: would you journey to those foreign parts where the mighty waterfall dashes roaring down, and there cast in the stone, or would you throw it out into the swelling sea? No, you would do neither. For although the stone would produce movements and create circles here as everywhere, you would be prevented from seeing them. Therefore you would do exactly the opposite; you would seek a quiet little pool, really the smaller the better, and now undisturbed by anything irrelevant, you could really center your attention on the movements you wished to observe.

What do you understand by a significant man? Is it indeed a man who has significant inward worth? If you now seriously desire to absorb yourself in the observation of such a man, would you prefer to see him in the midst of great wealth, or decked out with stars and ribbons? Or would you not

think that this precisely interfered with your completely centering your mind on the contemplation of his significant inwardness? So with mercy. Mercy is the true significance. The hundred thousand or the worldly doing of everything, is the significant gift, the significant assistance. But the one significance is that one which must be regarded; the other significance, that one which must be left out of account. And because of distrust of yourself, you wish that away which you must disregard — alas, while the world believes it far easier to pay attention to mercy when it gives a hundred thousand than when it gives a half-shilling, and consequently thinks it easier to see the compassion by looking at that which must be disregarded, if one really wishes to see the compassion.

Still, let us not forget that compassion may be shown in both instances, in the half-shilling and in the hundred thousand, in the everything of the powerful and in the nothing of the wretched. But even if it is conceded that compassion is present, you will still easily convince yourself that the greater, the more astonishing the gift is, the more wonderful the help is, the more there is something which will hinder you from completely dwelling on the compassion. It is told of the apostle Peter, that one day when he went up into the Temple, he met a lame man who begged alms of him. But Peter said to him: "Silver and gold I have none, but that which I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. And immediately the man's legs and ankles became strong, and he leaped up, stood, and walked about. Who would dare doubt that this was an act of compassion, and, more, it was a miracle? But a miracle immediately attracts attention to itself, and thereby in part away from the compassion, which is never more apparent than when it can do nothing at all; for then there is simply nothing at all to hinder seeing quite definitely and exactly, what compassion is.

Eternity alone understands about compassion; if you therefore wish to learn to understand compassion, you must learn it from eternity. But if you wish to understand the eternal, then there must be quiet about you, while you absolutely center your attention on inwardness. Alas, the hundred thousand, they make a noise, at least they are easily able to make a noise; you are, as it were, stunned by the thought of being able to give a hundred thousand as easily as you give four shillings; your mind is diverted, you begin to think of the glorious circumstance of being able to do good on such a scale. But then the eternal is disturbed: that the glorious, the blessed, the most blessed condition is to be compassionate.

And now power and might! This again easily confuses the mind; you are amazed at external things. But if you are amazed, then you may be certain that it is not compassion that you see, for compassion does not arouse amazement. What is there, indeed, to be amazed over when even the most wretched, and he best of all, can practice mercy? Oh, compassion, if you in truth see it, it does not awaken amazement; it touches you, it makes, because it is inwardness, the most intimate impression upon you. But when is the inwardness ever more distinct than when there is nothing external in it, or when the external through humility and insignificance, is rather like an opposition, and, sensually understood, literally is a hindrance to seeing the inwardness? And when this is the case with respect to compassion, then we have the mercy which is the subject of the discourse, the mercy which is a work of love, even if it has nothing to give, and is able to do nothing.

VIII. THE VICTORY OF THE RECONCILIATION IN LOVE, WHICH WINS THE VANQUISHED

"AND HAVING DONE ALL, to stand." But is not this then easy enough, is it not a matter of course that one stands, or remains standing, when one has overcome everything? If one actually has overcome everything, what then would be able to pull one down? If one has actually overcome everything, then is there anything more against which one has to stand? Oh, that experienced apostle knew well whereof he spoke! It follows as a matter of course that one who cowardly and fearful never exposes himself to danger, never triumphs, never overcomes anything; that he is, on the contrary, the one overcome is conceded in advance, because he gave up. But, on the other hand, just when a man has overcome everything, he is perhaps nearest to losing everything — if at that moment he loses anything, he really loses everything, which too is only possible for one who has won everything. The moment of victory is perhaps the most difficult of all, far more difficult than any moment of conflict. Precisely the cry of victory, "Everything is decided," is perhaps the most ambiguous word of all, if at the very second it is uttered, "now everything is decided," it means that "everything is lost." Consequently there is something to be said about standing after having overcome everything; moreover, it is really only from that moment that anything can really be said about it.

Now we are ready to understand the concept of overcoming. When you say that one overcomes something, you picture him to yourself as bent forward to push against that which is resisting him. Hence, in the most profound sense, there can be no talk about standing; for although the resistance stands against him, in another sense it holds up the one who leans forward against it. But now, now everything has been overcome. Now it

depends on his standing and on his continuing to stand, so that he does not lose the victory as swiftly as he won it. Is this not so? The weak, the timorous, succumb to the resistance; but the courageous, who boldly walks into danger, if he falls, he really falls, as we say, over his own legs: as courageous he overcomes the opposition, and yet he falls. He does not fall in the danger but in his impetus, hence because he did not stand.

Paul says in another place, that we are more than conquerors through faith. But can one do more than conquer? Yes, one can, if one stands after having conquered, preserves the victory and abides in the victory. How often has it not been seen that the one who had conquered had also exerted himself so, that, unlike that Greek commander, he did not even need one more such victory — for this -was enough for his destruction! How often has it not been seen that the one who had lifted a weight, could not support the weight after having lifted it; or that the one who pressed victoriously against the storm without weakening, exhausted could not endure the calm which came with the victory; or the one who was so hardy he could endure all the changes of weather, heat and cold, but could not stand the strong breeze at the moment of victory! And how often has not a victory been won in vain, if the victor then became proud, conceited, arrogant, self-satisfied, and thus lost just through having conquered!

If we were then to express in a qualification of the thought, what lies in that apostolic word (to stand after having overcome everything), we should have to say: spiritually understood there are always two victories, a first victory, and then the second by which the first victory is preserved. We certainly cannot express the distinction between the godly and the worldly more accurately than by saying: the worldly always talks only about one victory, the godly always about two. That no man should deem himself happy until he is dead (and thereby has left it to the survivors), that idea the worldly mind can also get into its head; but, on the contrary, the worldly

mind will become impatient when it hears anything said about the second victory. There will, namely, be talk to some purpose about this, or about standing after having conquered, if a man happens to fail in that on which the worldly mind naturally sets the greatest store, to fail in that for whose sake one has endured all the hardships of war; for if this is so, a man never has a chance to be proud of the victory he is granted, not even at the very moment.

On the contrary, at the very moment of his triumph, when he wishes to make preparation for the celebration of the triumph, just at that very moment the godly reflection carries him into a new conflict, in every way the most difficult one, because it is the most inward one, because in it he strives with himself and with God. If he falls in this conflict, then he falls by his own hand; for physically and externally understood, I can fall by the hand of another, but spiritually there is only one who can destroy me, and that is myself; spiritually a murder is inconceivable — certainly no man of violence can murder an immortal spirit. Spiritually only self-destruction is possible. And if a man triumphs in this second fight, it precisely signifies that he gets no honor from the first victory; for conquering signifies in this connection, giving God the honor. In the first conflict, he fought against the world for the victory which was won; in the second conflict he fights with God about that victory. A man only stands then after having overcome everything, when he immediately, at the very moment of victory, ascribes the victory to God. As long as he was striving, the opposition would, in a certain sense, be that which helped him to stand; but when he has ascribed to God the honor of the victory, God is the support by whose help he stands. That it was also through God's assistance that he conquered (although there can also be victory in an external sense without God's assistance) is certainly possible; but God's assistance does not really become clear until

after man has conquered. Oh, in the eyes of the world, what folly: to need God's assistance most of all after one has conquered!

It is such a twofold conflict or twofold victory we shall now make the object of a more intensive reflection, as we speak about:

THE VICTORY OF THE RECONCILIATION IN LOVE, WHICH WINS THE VANQUISHED.

There is presupposed consequently, when there is talk about a "vanquished," a first victory which has been already won. What is this? It is overcoming evil with good. The conflict may have been slow and difficult enough; for if the lover is to overcome evil with good, this is not decided all at once or with one blow; on the contrary' the combat often becomes more and more strenuous, and, if you will, more dangerous — if one is willing to understand what the dangerous is. The more good the lover has shown toward the unloving, the longer he has held out in requiting evil with good: the nearer, in a certain sense, comes the danger that at last the evil might still overcome the lover, if in no other way, then by making him cold and indifferent toward such an unkind man. Oh, there must be a great depth of wealth in goodness, as only the lover has it, a steady warmth of inextinguishable, purifying fire over a long time, to be able to hold out in requiting evil with good! — But this victory is won, the non-lover is vanquished.

What is the relationship in this conflict? On the one side stood the lover (or what we might also call him: the good, the noble; for in the first conflict it was not readily apparent that he was the lover), and he had the good on his side. On the other side stood the non-lover, fighting by the aid of evil. Thus they strove. The lover had for his task to preserve himself in the good, so that the evil might get no power over him. Consequently he did not have so much to do with the non-lover as with himself. It was not for the sake of

the non-lover but for the sake of the good, also in a noble sense for his own sake, that he strove to conquer in this conflict. The two consequently, as regards themselves, are striving with each other, but, outside of each other, they are in a certain sense irreconcilably striving, as the conflict is between good and evil. The one strove by the help of the good, the other in a covenant with evil; and the latter was vanquished.

Now the relationship is changed; it now becomes readily apparent that the lover is present in the conflict; for he not only fights that the good may abide in himself, but he fights appeasingly so that the good may triumph in the unloving, or he fights in order to win the vanquished. The relationship is consequently no longer a simple conflict-relationship, for the lover fights on the side of his enemy in his behalf; he wishes to fight out the cause of the non-lover to victory.

This is reconciliation in love. For when the enemy, or the one who committed the wrong, comes to you and seeks forgiveness — so that you are willing to forgive: that is commendable and praiseworthy, and also loving. Oh, but how tardy! Do not say that "you granted it immediately, as soon as he begged for it" — consider rather what promptitude in reconciliation true love has in comparison with that, or in comparison with a promptitude which, by being dependent on another's haste or slowness in asking for forgiveness, is precisely essentially, thereby tardiness, even if accidentally it comes very swiftly.

Long, long before the enemy considers seeking reconciliation, the lover is already reconciled with him. And not only this; no, he has gone over to the enemy's side, he fights for his case, even if he does not understand or wish to understand it; therefore he labors to bring about the reconciliation. Lo, we may call it the fight of love, or the fight in love! To fight with the assistance of the good against the enemy — that is praiseworthy and noble; but to fight for the enemy — and against whom? against himself, if you

wish to express it thus: that is, yes, that is loving, or it is reconciliation in love! And thus, too, is reconciliation enjoined in the Holy Scriptures. The words read, “When you offer your gift upon the altar, and there remember...” — but what would you expect would now follow? Is it not that you have something against someone? But that is not the way it is. It reads “... and you there remember that your brother has aught against you, then leave your gift before the altar (for there is no hurry about the gift if this is so), and go out and be reconciled with your brother (for reconciliation needs this haste, also for the sake of the gift which waits upon the altar), and then come and offer your gift.” But is not this too much to ask? Who is it who needs forgiveness: the one who did the wrong or the one who suffered the wrong? Certainly it is the one who did the wrong who needs forgiveness. Oh, but the lover, who suffered wrong, he needs to forgive, he needs reconciliation, appeasement, which word, unlike the word “forgiveness,” makes a distinction by reminding about right and wrong, but lovingly notes that both are needed. It is not in the most perfect sense reconciliation to forgive when forgiveness is asked for; but it is reconciliation to need to forgive almost before the other has thought of seeking forgiveness. Therefore the Scriptures say, “Agree with thine adversary quickly”; but one can never be more benevolent then when one is one’s self the needy; and “quicker” to forgive than when one gives his forgiveness before it is asked, fights to give it while there is still opposition — not against giving, but against receiving forgiveness.

Oh, heed well what the relationship is; for the true Christian is always exactly the opposite of that which the natural man most easily and most naturally understands. “To fight for forgiveness,” who does not understand this immediately about fighting in order to get forgiveness? — Alas, for humanly speaking this is often considered hard enough. And yet it is not simply that about which we are speaking; we are talking about lovingly

fighting to have the other accept forgiveness, to allow himself to be reconciled. Is not this the Christian way? It is God in heaven who through the apostle says: “Be ye reconciled”: it is not men who say to God, “Forgive us.” No, God loved us first. And, again another time, when the question was about reconciliation, God was the one who came first — although yet, from the standpoint of righteousness. He was the one who had waited longest. So, too, in the relation between man and man: the true reconciliation is, it is well to note, when the one who offers forgiveness is not the one who needs it.

So the lover then in reconciliation fights to win the one vanquished. — To win the one vanquished! What a beautiful use of language, of the word “to win”! For listen to what follows! When we say “to win” a victory, then we immediately hear the violence of the conflict; but when we speak of winning someone, of winning someone to ourselves, what an infinite gentleness is not contained in that word! What is so intriguing as the thought and the phrase, “to win one”; how could it suggest any thought of strife! For in all strife two are needed, and here there is only one: the non-lover; for the lover is in his reconciliation his best friend, who wishes to win the vanquished. To win the vanquished. What a wonderful reversal is not this whole ideal One might believe that the winning would be less than the overcoming, for “over” suggests how it surpasses winning. And yet the speech here is really an ascending climax, is about the higher, although it is still about winning the one overcome. Perhaps from the standpoint of pride overcoming is greater, but in the understanding of love, this less is the eater, “the winning of the overcome.” Beautiful conflict, more beautiful than the lovers’ quarrel when the lover must be the one, and hence so much more the loving, when he must be the one to fight through to reconciliation! Beautiful victory, most beautiful of all victories, when the lover succeeds in winning the vanquished!

To win the vanquished. Do you now see the twofold victory we are speaking about! For if the lover only wishes to fight the one war, to overcome evil with good, and he has then conquered, then let him look well to it that he stands after having overcome everything. Oh, his fall is only too near at hand, if he does not let love and the godly reflection carry him at once into the next conflict, the winning of the vanquished. When this is done, then he has steered safely past the dangerous rocks, where one becomes proud of having held out in requiting evil with good; where one becomes self-important because of having requited evil with good. For if you go immediately into the next conflict, who then becomes the more important? Still, I suppose, the one you are striving to win. But consequently, you are not the more important. Still, just this is the humiliating thing which only love can endure, that one goes backward, as it were, when one is going forward, so everything is reversed; when one has one's self vanquished everything, the vanquished has become the more important. Let us assume that the brother of the prodigal son had been willing to do everything for his brother — one thing had still never entered his head, that the prodigal brother could become the more important. Now it is difficult to get this idea into one's head; it does not enter into a man in that way.

But to win a vanquished adversary is always difficult and has in the relationship of which we speak, a special difficulty. To be vanquished gives a humiliating feeling; therefore the one vanquished prefers to avoid the one who vanquished him; for by contrast his defeat becomes greater, but no one makes the fact of his defeat so clear as the one who overcame him. And yet it is here the victor who must win the vanquished, consequently they must be brought together. Again the situation has a special difficulty. In less important matters it might be handled so that the victor concealed from the vanquished that he was the vanquished, piously deceived him, as if it were

he who was right; appeasingly yielded, even to allowing him to be right where he was wrong. We shall not attempt to decide how far this may ever be permissible; but in the relationship of which we are speaking, the lover dared least of all to do this. It would have been weakness, not love, to allow the non-lover to imagine that he had been right in the evil he did; it would not have been reconciliation, but a betrayal, which would confirm him in the evil. No, it is precisely of importance, it belongs to the works of love, that by the help of the lover it should become obvious to the non-lover how unjustifiably he had acted, so that he may deeply feel the wrong he has been guilty of. This the lover must do; and thereby he will also win the vanquished; yet, no, it is not "also," for it is one and the same thing, since he can truly only wish to win him for himself, or to win him for the truth and himself, not to win him for himself by deceiving him. But the more profoundly the vanquished comes to feel his wrong, and also insofar his defeat, the more he must feel repelled from the one who — lovingly inflicts upon him this deathblow. Oh, difficult task: at once to repel from one's self, and to win to one's self; at one and the same time to be as severe as the truth demands, and yet also as gentle as love desires, in order to win the one against whom severity is used! In truth, a miracle, if one succeeds; for it, like everything Christian, contradicts the proverb: that one cannot do two things at the same time. That a vanquished man should attempt to see how he could falsely find the most lenient interpretation is easy to understand; but to win one to one's self by the help of the strict interpretation of the truth — that is difficult.

Reflection is halted by the idea of the task. Consider what might happen if the non-lover came into collision with another non-lover, who had nourished and stimulated all his evil passions. Consider this, as you pause for the purpose of seeing clearly how the lover behaves.

The non-lover is vanquished. But what does this mean, that he is vanquished? It means that he has been overcome by the good, the true. And what is it the lover desires? He wishes to win him to the good and the true. But to be overcome, when this means being won for the good and the true — is this then so humiliating? Look at love and reconciliation. The lover does not let it appear at all, nor does it occur to him that it is he who has conquered, that he is the victor — no, it is the good that has conquered. In order to take the humiliation and injury away, the lover slips a higher one between himself and the non-lover, and thereby removes himself. When there is not a third party between man and man, every such relation becomes a false one, either too passionate, or too resentful. This third, which philosophers would call the Idea, is the true, the good, or, more correctly, the God-relationship; this third is in certain phases of the relationship the cooling, in other instances the appeasing element. Truly, the lover is too loving thus to place himself over against the vanquished, and himself to be the victor who enjoys the victory — while the other is the vanquished; it is precisely unloving thus to wish to dominate another man. By the help of the third party whom the lover brings in between them, they are both humbled: for the lover humbles himself before the good whose humble servant he IS, and, as he himself confesses, in weakness; and the vanquished humbly himself not before the lover, but before the good. But when in a relationship between two, both are humbled, there is nothing humiliating for either of them. How resourceful love can be, what a jack-of-all-trades it is!

Would you rather that I should, as you say, speak more seriously? Oh, you may believe that the lover would rather that I should speak thus; for even in connection with what occupies one with the earnestness of eternity, there is a joy in succeeding which makes one prefer to speak in this way. There is, too, in speaking in this manner, a kind of shyness, and insofar also,

a solicitude for the one who was wrong. Alas, a reconcilement in love is perhaps often unsuccessful because one took it too earnestly, that is, because one had not learned from God the art (and one learns it from God) of being earnest enough, but being able to do it so easily, as even the truth can permit. Never believe that earnestness is surly, never believe that that is earnestness, that distorted face which makes one sick to look at it: no one was ever earnest who had not learned from earnestness that one can also appear too earnest. If it has really become second nature with you to wish to win your enemy, you will also have become so familiar with that kind of problems that they will occupy you merely as stopgaps. If there is constantly in you a fresh influx of love, if the source of this supply is in order, then there is also time to be resourceful. But if there is opposition in the man himself, if in contemplating the law's severe command, he must force himself to go to become reconciled with his enemy: then the matter may easily become too earnest, and fail just because of — overmuch earnestness. But this "great earnestness," however respectable it may be, especially in contrast to irreconcilement, is still not that which we should strive for. No, the true lover is very resourceful.

So the lover also conceals something from the vanquished. But not as the weakly indulgent does, who hides the truth: for the lover hides himself. That he may not disturb the vanquished, he is, as it were, only secretly present, while that which really is present is the lofty majesty of the good and the true. If one is only heedful of it, there is also something so elevated present, that the slight difference between man and man readily disappears. And this is the way that love always behaves. The true lover, who cannot find it in his heart, at any price, to allow the beloved maiden to feel embarrassed, conveys the truth to her in such a way that she does not notice that he is teaching her. He elicits the truth from her; he places it upon her lips; and consequently he does not hear himself, but he hears her speaking

it; or he promotes the truth, and conceals himself. Is it then humiliating to her to learn the truth in this way?

And so with the vanquished of whom we are speaking. The expression of pain for the past, the dejection over his offense, the prayer for forgiveness: all these in a certain sense the lover accepts, but he immediately pushes them to one side with a sacred horror, as one puts aside that which is not his due; that is, he indicates that this is not due him; he transfers everything to a higher category, ascribes everything to God, as the one to whom it belongs.

That is the way love always behaves. If the maiden, indescribably happy over the joy she finds in union with the beloved, were to thank him for it, would he not then, if he were a true lover, prevent this trepidation, and say, "No, dear, that is a little misunderstanding, and there must be no misunderstanding between us; you must not thank me, but you must thank God, if this means as much to you as you think. If you do this, then you will be sure of not making any mistake, for even supposing your happiness were not as great as you thought, it would still be a great happiness that you had thanked God for it." This is what is inseparable from all true love: the sacred bashfulness. For woman's modesty is beyond the earthly, and in her bashfulness she feels superior, while the converse pains; but the divine bashfulness is caused by the fact that God exists, and in his bashfulness man feels his own humility. As soon as the most remote allusion wishes to recall what modesty is ignorant of, there is bashfulness in the woman; but as soon as a man in relation to another man considers that God exists, then is the divine bashfulness there. One is not bashful before the other man, but before the third who is present; or one is bashful before the other man insofar as one considers what the presence of this third makes the other man. This is true even in human relationships. For when two men are talking together, and the king is present as a third party, but only recognized by one of them, then that one acts somewhat differently, for he is somewhat

bashful — before the king. The thought about God's presence makes a man bashful with respect to the other man, for God's presence makes the two essentially equal. As to the rest, whatever difference, humanly speaking, there had been between the two men, even if it were the most glaring: God has it in His power to say: "When I am present no one will presume to be conscious of this difference; for that would be standing and talking with each other before me, as if I were not present."

But when the lover himself is bashful, when he scarcely dares to raise his eyes to look at the vanquished, how can it be so humiliating to be the vanquished? A man is bashful if another looks at him; but if this other, who by looking at him makes him bashful, is himself bashful, then there is no one who looks at him. But if there is no one who looks at him, then there can be nothing humiliating in humbling himself before the good, or before God.

Consequently the lover does not look at the vanquished. This was the first step, in order to prevent humiliation. But in another sense the lover still looks at him. This is the next step.

Oh, that I were able to describe how the lover looks at the vanquished, how the joy shines in his eyes; how his loving glance rests so mildly upon him; how, alluring and beckoning, it seeks to win him! For to the lover it is so indescribably important that nothing disturbing should enter; that no ill-omened word should inadvertently pass between them; that no unpremeditated glance should accidentally be exchanged between them, which might perhaps disturb everything again for a long time. Thus the lover looks at him; as calm as only the eternal can make a man. For the lover truly wishes to win this vanquished, but this, his wish, is too sacred to have the kind of passion a wish ordinarily has. The mere desire of passion very frequently makes a man a little confused; on the contrary, the purity and sacredness of this wish gives the lover an exalted tranquility, which

again helps him to win the victory of reconciliation, the most beautiful and the most difficult, for mere strength here is not enough, the strength must be in weakness.

But is there anything humiliating in feeling that one is so important to another man? Is there anything humiliating to the girl that the lover solicits her love? Is there anything humiliating to her that it is so evident how much he is interested in winning her? Is there anything humiliating to her in seeing his gladness in advance, if he succeeds? No, there certainly is not. But the lover who by reconciliation would win the vanquished, he is, in a far higher sense, in precisely the same situation in apprehending the other man's love. And the lover knows only too well how difficult it is to free in this way, to set one free from the evil, to free him from the humiliation of defeat, to free him from thinking dejectedly of the forgiveness which he needs: consequently, in spite of all these difficulties, to win his love.

Yet the lover succeeds in winning the vanquished. Everything confusing, every conceivable object is removed as by an enchantment: while the vanquished lays hold on forgiveness, the lover lays hold on the love of the vanquished. Oh, it is not true: that one always gets an answer if one asks; Christianity has also made this proverb untrue, like all the proverbs of human wisdom. For when the vanquished asks, "Have you now really forgiven me?" the lover answers, "Do you now really love me?" But he does not answer the question asked him. No, he does not answer it, he is too loving to do so, he will not even answer the question about forgiveness; for this word, especially if it were emphasized, might easily make the matter too serious, in a harmful sense. Wonderful conversation! There seems to be no meaning in it. The one asks in the east, and the other answers in the west; and yet they say, moreover love understands it, they both say one and the same thing.

But the lover has the last word. For whenever there is an exchange between them, then so the one says, “Have you really forgiven me?” and the other answers, “Do you now really love me?” Behold, nothing, nothing, can hold out against a lover, not even the one who begs forgiveness. At last he will break himself of asking for forgiveness.

So he, the lover, has conquered, for he has won the vanquished.

IX. THE WORK OF LOVE IN REMEMBERING THE DEAD

IF A MAN FOR ONE REASON or another fears that he will not be able to keep in mind a general survey of some long and complicated matter, then he tries to secure or obtain a brief epitomization of it as a summary. So death is the briefest epitome of life, or it is life carried back to its shortest form. That is why it has always been so important to those who truly reflect on the meaning of human life, to test very frequently by means of the brief epitome what they have understood about life. For no thinker has such a grasp on life as has death, that powerful thinker, who cannot merely think through every illusion, but can think it in part and as a whole, can think it to nothingness. If then all the manifold ways of life, as you survey them, create a confusion of mind, then go out to the dead, "where all ways meet" — there the survey becomes easy. If your head swims from constantly looking at and hearing about the diversities of life, then go out to the dead; there you have power over the differences: between the "kinships of clay" there are no diversities, but only the dose kinship. For the fact that all men are blood-relations, hence of one blood, this kinship is frequently denied in life; but that they are of one clay, this kinship of death, no one can deny.

Moreover, go out once more to the dead, in order there to get a view of life. That is the way a sharpshooter behaves; he looks for a place where the enemy cannot hit him, but from which he can hit the enemy, and where he can have a perfect position for taking aim. Do not choose the evening hour for your visit, for the tranquility created by the evening and by an evening spent among the dead, is frequently not far removed from a certain exaltation of mood which strains and "fills one with unrest," and submits new riddles, instead of explaining those already given. No, go out there in the early morning, when the morning sun peeps between the green leaves

with changing lights and shadows, when the beauty and friendliness of the sea, when the whistling of the birds and the multitudinous life everywhere almost enable you to forget that you are among the dead. It will be to you as if you had come into a foreign land, which had remained unfamiliar with the confusions and separations of life; in the state of childhood, consisting for the most part of small families. Out here, namely, we may attain that to which we aspire in vain in life: the equal share. Each family has a little plot of earth for itself, of about equal size. The prospect is about the same for all. The sun may happen to shine equally over all; no building rises so high that it cuts off the rays of the sun or the refreshment of the rain or the fresh gusts of wind or the echo of singing birds, from neighbor or neighbor. No, here the shares are equal. For in life it may certainly happen that at times a family, which has lived in a prosperous abundance, must restrict itself; but in death they are all restricted. A little difference there may be, perhaps the difference of a cubit in the size of the lot, or one family may own a tree, which the other earthly lodger does not have upon his lot. Why do you think this difference is there? Its purpose is, by means of a profound jest, to remind you through its littleness of how great the difference was. So loving is death! For it is precisely love on the part of death, that by the aid of this little difference it reminds you in an elevating jest of how great the difference had been. Death does not say: "There is simply no difference"; it says, "There you can see how great the difference was: a half cubit." If there were not this little difference, then neither would the concept of death be completely reliable. Thus in death life reverts to childishness. In the age of childhood it also made a great difference that one owned a tree, a flower, a stone. And this difference was an anticipation of the differences that would appear in life on quite a different scale. Now life is past, and between the dead a little hint of the difference remains behind which, as in jest, softens the memory of what had been.

Lo, out here is the place to meditate on life; by the aid of the brief epitome, which abbreviates all the complicated extensiveness of the relationship, to get a survey. How then could I, in writing about love, let the opportunity pass to make a test of what love really is? Truly, if you wish to ascertain what love is in yourself or another man, then must you notice how he behaves with respect to the dead. In order to make observations of a man, it is very important, for the sake of the observation, to see him in proportion, to see him by himself. But if a relationship exists between two actual men, so that the two are always seen together, the relationship becomes complicated, and makes the observation of the one alone difficult. This second man, namely, conceals something of the first man, and, furthermore, the second man may have so much influence over the first, that the first man seems to be different from what he actually is. Consequently a twofold appraisal is here necessary; the observer must take into account what influence the second man exercises through his personality, his characteristics, his virtues and his vices, upon the man who is the object of observation. If you should happen to see a man shadow-boxing in earnest, or if you should see a man dancing solo the dance he usually dances with someone else: then you would be able to observe his movements better than if he boxed with another actual man, or if he danced with another actual man. And if in conversation you understand the art of making yourself a cipher, you best get to know what is in the other man.

Oh, but when a man is related to the dead, then in this relationship there is only one, for the dead man is not a reality. No one, no one can so well make himself into “no one” as the dead, for he is “no one.” Hence there can here be no question of any irregularity in the observation; here the living becomes manifest, here he must appear as he absolutely is; for a dead man, aye, he is a subtle man, he has completely withdrawn himself; he has not the slightest influence, either disturbing or abetting, on the living who is

related to him. A dead man is no actual object, he is only the occasion which constantly reveals what the living is who is related to him, or which helps to reveal how the living is, who is not related to him.

For we also certainly have duties toward the dead. If we ought to love the men we see, then, too, those we have seen, but see no longer, because death has taken them from us. We should not disturb the dead by lamentations and weeping; we should behave toward the dead as we behave toward one who is sleeping, whom we do not have the heart to awaken, because we hope that he will soon awaken of himself. “Weep then softly over the dead, for he has attained repose,” says Sirach; and I know no better way of signifying true remembrance than by this gentle weeping, which does not begin to sob immediately — and soon ceases. No, one should remember the dead, weeping softly, but weeping long. How long cannot be determined in advance, since no one in remembering knows definitely how long he will be separated from the dead. But the one who affectionately remembers the dead, may use some words from David’s psalm, where, too, there is talk about remembering, in his “If I forget thee, let my right hand forget its cunning; my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee; if I prefer not thee above my chief joy.” — Let him only remember that the task does not consist in saying this at once on the first day, but in continuing faithful to himself and to the dead in this mood, even if one is silent about it, which is usually preferable both for the sake of a certain sense of decency and of assurance.

It is a task; and one need not have seen much of life to have seen enough to assure him that it might well be emphasized that there is a task, a duty to be performed, in remembering the dead: the irresponsibility of supercharged human feelings, taken by itself, perhaps never appears greater than in just this relationship. And yet neither this feeling nor its violent expression is therefore false, that is to say, one believes what one says in the moment of

speaking, but one satisfies one's self and the passion of his undisciplined emotions by using expressions which bind him in a peculiar way; that is, there is perhaps seldom one who does not by his later expressions make his first expressions, although they were once true, untrue.

Oh, we speak so often about what a different view of human life we should have if everything was made manifest which life conceals — ah, if death would come out with what it knows about the living: what a terrible contribution to the sum of human knowledge, which at least human love simply does not encourage!

So let us then among the works of love not forget this one, not forget to observe

THE WORK OF LOVE IN REMEMBERING THE DEAD.

The work of love in remembering the dead is a work of the most disinterested love.

If we wish to assure ourselves that love is entirely disinterested, we must remove every possibility of requital. But this is exactly what happens with respect to the dead. If love persists notwithstanding this, then it is in truth disinterested.

Requitals, as regards love, may be very diversified. One may for that matter make it simply a matter of advantage and profit. It is certainly a very general practice, this 'heathenish" "loving those who can make requital." A requital in this significance is somewhat different from love itself, it is the heterogeneous. But there is also a requital homogeneous with love: love reciprocated. And there is still so much of good in the great majority of men that they would as a rule regard this requital of gratitude, discernment, renunciation, in short, the requital of love reciprocated, as the most significant one, even if, in another sense, they would not perhaps admit that it is a requital; therefore they would think that one could not call love self-

interested because it aspires to this requital. — But the dead make no requital in any sense.

There is in this respect a resemblance between lovingly remembering the dead and the love of parents for their children. The parents love the children almost before they are born, and long before they themselves develop consciousness, hence as non-beings. But a dead man is also a non-being. And these are the two greatest benefactions: to give a human being life, and to remember the dead; however, for the first there is a reciprocity of love, a requital. If the parents simply had no hope, no prospect at all, of sometime having joy in their children and reward for their loving solicitude — still there would certainly be many fathers and mothers who would always lovingly do everything for their children. Oh, but it is also certain that there would be many fathers and mothers whose love would become cold. It is not our intention thereby at once to pronounce such a father or mother as too unloving. No, but the love in them would still be so weak or the selfishness so strong, that there would be needed this joyous hope, this encouraging prospect. And with this hope and this prospect, everything would be all right. The parents can say to each other, "Certainly our little child has many years of life ahead of him; but during all these years we shall be enjoying him, and we hope that he will sometime reward our love, will, if he does nothing else, make our old age happy, as a requital for our care."

The dead, on the contrary, make no requital. The one who lovingly remembers may perhaps also say: "I have a long time before me dedicated to remembering, but the prospect is first and last the same; there is in a certain sense nothing to hinder the prospect, for there is no prospect at all." Oh, it is so hopeless in a certain sense, so ungrateful a task in the sense in which the countryman says it, so disheartening an occupation, to remember the dead! For a dead man does not thrive and grow as the child does, to

meet the future: a dead man only molders more and more in certain corruption. A dead man does not gladden the one who remembers, as the child gladdens the mother; does not gladden him as the child gladdens her, when in answer to the question whom it loves best, it answers, “Mother.” The dead man loves no one best, he seems to love no one at all. Oh, it is so discouraging that he thus remains quiet down in the grave, while the yearning for him increases; so dispiriting that there can be no thought of any change except that of dissolution, more and more rapid! It is certainly true that he is not difficult as a child may sometimes be; he does not cause sleepless nights, at least not through his difficult behavior — for strangely enough, the good child does not occasion sleepless nights, while, on the contrary, the better the dead man was, the more sleepless nights he occasions. Oh, but even with respect to the difficult child, there is still hope of and a prospect of requital through reciprocated love. But the dead makes no requital at all; whether you are sleepless and expectant on his account, or you absolutely forget him, it seems to be a matter of complete indifference to him.

If you therefore wish to prove whether you love disinterestedly, then sometime pay attention to how you behave toward the dead. Much love, unquestionably the most, if subjected to a sharper testing, would appear to be selfishness. But the fact of the matter is, that in a love-relationship between the living, there is always a hope and a prospect of requital, at least of a reciprocated love; and generally speaking, this is what happens. But this hope, this prospect, together with the requital, produces such an effect that one cannot definitely see what is love and what is selfishness, because one cannot see quite definitely whether requital is expected or not, and in what way. As regards the dead, the observation is so easy. Oh, if men were accustomed to love truly disinterestedly, one would certainly also remember the dead in a different way from what one ordinarily does, after the first,

sometimes a fairly short, interval is past, in which one loves the dead with an extravagant wailing and lamentation.

The work of love in remembering the dead is a work of the freest love.

In order really to prove whether love is entirely free, one may remove all that which in any way might force from one the work of love. But this is precisely absent in relation to the dead. If then love, nevertheless, abides, then it is the freest love.

The things which can force the work of love from a man may be very different, and thus cannot be enumerated. The child cries, the poor begs, the widow importunes, regard compels, the wretched brings pressure, and so on. But none of the love in the work which is thus constrained is quite free.

The more insistent the needy are, the less free is the love. We generally take this into consideration concerning the parents' love for the child. If one really desires to describe helplessness, and describe it in its most urgent form, one usually thinks about a tiny babe who lies in all its helplessness, by which it, as it were, compels the love of the parents — seems to compel, for actually it compels only the love of the parents who are not what they ought to be. Hence, the tiny babe in all its helplessness! And yet, when a man first lies in the grave with three cubits of earth above him, then he is more helpless than that child!

But the child cries! If the child could not cry — yes, there are still many fathers and mothers who would nevertheless tend it with loving care! Oh, but there would also be many who would at least many times forget the child. It is not our intention just on that account to call such a father or mother unloving; but the love in them is so weak, so selfish, that they need to be reminded of the child's need.

The dead, on the contrary, does not cry like the child; he does not call himself to memory like the needy; he does not importune like the beggar; he does not compel regard; he does not force you by his evident

wretchedness; he does not importune you as the widow did the judge: the dead is silent and says not a single word; he remains quite still, he does not move from his place — and perhaps he does not suffer evil! There is no one who troubles a living man less than the dead, and no one easier for the living to avoid than the dead. You can place your child out among strangers in order not to hear its crying; you can say you are not at home to avoid the beggar's plea; you can disguise yourself so that no one will know you: in short, as regards the living, you may adopt many precautionary expedients, which still perhaps will not be completely able to reassure you; but with respect to the dead you do not need to use the least caution, and yet you are completely certain.

If that is anyone's purpose, if it seems best to him to be quit of the dead, the sooner the better, then he may without any criticism and without being made the object of any lawsuit, become cold almost as soon as the dead man is cold. If it is only from a sense of shame (and then it is not on account of the dead) that he remembers to weep a little in the newspaper on the day of the burial, if he only takes care to show the dead the last honors — for the sake of appearances: then he might as well laugh at the dead in his — no, not before his eyes, for they are now closed. A dead man naturally has no rights at all in life; there is no magistrate who has anything to say about your remembering the dead; no magistrate who mixes into this relationship, as happens sometimes in the relationship between parents and children — and the dead himself certainly takes no step for the purpose of importuning or compelling. — If you therefore wish to prove whether your love is free, then pay attention occasionally as to how, in the course of time, you behave toward the dead.

If it did not seem so much like jesting (which it certainly is not, except for the one who does not know what earnestness is), then I should say we might place as an inscription over the gate to the burial place of the dead,

“Here is no compulsion,” or “With us is no compulsion.” And yet I may well say it, I may well also have said it, and I may well maintain having said it; for I have reflected too much over death not to know that he who does not know before the resurrection from the dead, please note, how to make use of all the subtlety, all the profound playfulness that resides in death, simply cannot speak earnestly about it. Death is not earnest in the same way the eternal is. To the earnestness of death belongs exactly that strange awakening, that consonance of a profound mockery, which torn away from the thought of the eternal, is an empty often an impudent jest, but which in conjunction with the thought of the eternal, is precisely what it ought to be, and very different from the vapid earnestness which least of all lays hold on any thought involving such suspense as does the thought of death.

Oh, there is so much said in the world about the fact that love must be free; that one cannot love where there is the least coercion; that with respect to love, there simply must be nothing forced: oh, well, let us see then, when it comes to the point, how it stands with free love — how the dead is remembered in love! for a dead man plainly does not compel. Moreover, at the moment of separation, when one cannot do without the dead, then there is lamentation. Is this the much discussed free love? Is this love for the dead? And then little by little, gradually as the dead molders away, so too the memory crumbles away between the fingers; one does not know what became of it; little by little one becomes free of this — difficult remembering. But to become free in this way, is this the free love, is this love for the dead? The proverb says, “Out of sight, out of mind.” And one can always be certain that a proverb is right about worldly matters. It is another thing that from the Christian standpoint, every proverb is untrue.

If it were true, all this which is said about free love, that is, if it happened, if it were carried into effect, if men were accustomed to love in

this way, then men would also love the dead differently from the way they do. But the fact is that with respect to other human love, there is so frequently some compulsion, if no other, then the daily sight and habit, and therefore one cannot definitely see how far it is the love that freely holds its object fast, or how far it is the object which in one way or another, compels assistance. But with respect to the dead, everything is manifest. Here there is nothing, no compulsion at all. On the contrary, the loving memory of the dead has to defend itself against the actuality about one, so that it does not through ever new impressions, get complete power to erase the memory; and it has to defend itself against time: in short, it has to defend its own freedom in remembering against that which wishes to compel one to forget. And the power of time is great. Perhaps one does not notice it in time, for time cunningly steals from one a little at a time; one will not perhaps really realize this before eternity, when one wishes to look around and back to see what one has got together with the help of time and his forty years. Yes, time is a dangerous power; it makes it so easy to begin again from the beginning in time, and so to forget where one left off. When therefore one even merely begins to read a very large book and does not really trust his memory, he places a mark in it: oh, but how often a man forgets throughout his whole life, to place markers so that he will really be able to find his place! And now in the course of years, to be obliged to remember the dead — alas, while he does nothing at all to help one; rather, if he does anything, or by simply doing nothing, he does everything to show one how completely indifferent he is about it! In the meantime the manifold demands of life beckon to one; the living beckon to one and say: “Come to us, we will love you.” The dead, on the contrary, cannot beckon; even if he wished to, he cannot beckon, he can do nothing at all to attract our attention, he cannot move a finger; he lies and molders — how easy for the power of life and of the moment to win over such impotence! Oh, there is no one so

helpless as a dead man, while in his helplessness he also has not the slightest compulsion! And therefore there is no other love so free as the work of love which remembers a dead man — for remembering him is somewhat different from at first not being able to forget him.

The work of love in remembering the dead is a work of the most faithful love.

In order really to test whether a man's love is steadfast, one must remove everything whereby the object might in anyway help him to be steadfast. But all this simply does not apply with respect to the dead where there is no actual object. If then love persists, this is the most faithful love.

There is so much said about the lack of faithfulness in the love between men. So then the one places the fault on the other and says: "It was not I who changed, it was he who changed." Well! And what then? Did you then remain unchanged? "No, I naturally resented it, so then I changed." We shall not pause here to explain how meaningless this presumable resentment is, by which it follows as a matter of course that I change because another changes. No, we are speaking about the relation to the dead, and here we cannot say that it was the dead who was changed. If a change enters into this relationship, it must be I who changed. If you therefore wish to prove whether you love faithfully, then give heed to how you behave toward the dead.

But this is how it is: it is truly a difficult task to maintain one's self unchanged in time. And also the truth is that men love to deceive themselves with all kinds of illusions more than they love either the living or the dead. Oh, how many are not firmly convinced, so firmly they are willing to die for it, that if the others had not changed, they too would have remained unchanged. But if that is true, then is anyone living absolutely unchanged as regards the dead? Oh, there is perhaps no relation in which the change is so noticeable, so great, as the one between the living and the

dead — while it still continues to be true that the dead man is not the one who changes.

When two persons are limited in love, then the one lays hold on the other, and the union lays hold on both. But with the dead man no union is possible. In the first moment following death, he may perhaps be said to lay hold on one, a consequence of the union, and therefore it is most frequently the case that he is generally remembered at this time. In the course of time, on the contrary, he has no hold upon the living; and the relation ceases unless the living holds to him. But what is faithfulness? Is it steadfastness that another clings to me?

When then death separates the two, the survivor — faithful in the first moment, swears that "he will never forget the dead." Oh, how reckless! For truly, a dead man is a cunning man to talk with, except that his cunning is not like that of the one about whom we say: "One can't always find him where one left him"; for the cunning of the dead consists precisely in the fact that we cannot get him away from the place where we left him. We are often tempted to believe that men have the idea that one can say almost anything one wishes to a dead because he is dead, hears nothing and answers nothing. And yet, yet, be most cautious of all in what you say to the dead. You may perhaps say quite calmly to a living man, "I shall never forget you." And then when some years have passed, then it is to be hoped that you have both fortunately forgotten the whole affair — at least it will be more seldom that you will be unlucky enough to meet a less forgetful man. But be cautious about the dead! For the dead is a man finished and decided; he is not like the rest of us, still in search of adventures, in which we may experience many exciting events, and seventeen times forget what we have said. When you say to a dead man, "I shall never forget you," then it is as if he answered, "Good! Rest assured that I shall never forget that you have said this." And even if all your contemporaries were to assure you that

he has forgotten it, you will never hear that from the mouth of the dead. No, he goes to his own place — but he is not changed. You cannot say to a dead man that it was he who had become older, and that this explains your changed relation to him — for a dead man does not become older. Nor can you say to a dead man that it was he who in the course of time became cold — for he is not colder than he was when you were so warm; nor that it was because he had become more ill-favored that you could no longer love him — for he has not essentially become more ill-favored than when he was a handsome corpse, which yet is not regarded as an object of love; nor that it was he who had become interested in others — for a dead man does not associate with others. No, whether you are willing to begin again where you left off or not, a dead man begins with the most punctilious exactness just there where you left off. For a dead man is, although one does not notice it, a strong man: he has the strength of unchangeableness. And a dead man is a proud man. Have you not noticed that a proud man, precisely in relation to the man he despises most, takes the most pains not to betray anything, to appear entirely unchanged, to pretend to be unconscious of everything, in order to allow the despised to sink lower and lower — for the proud man only benevolently calls the attention of the one he loves to his error, in order by so doing to help him to the right! Oh, but a dead man — who is so proudly able as he to betray nothing at all, even if he despises the living who forgets him and the parting words — a dead man even does everything to bring about his own oblivion. The dead does not come to you and remind you; he does not look at you in passing; you never meet him; and if you met him and looked at him, there is no involuntary expression in his face which against his will might betray what he thinks and judges about you; for a dead man has his countenance under control. Truly we should guard against conjuring forth the dead in a poetic way in order to call him to remembrance: the most fearful thing of all is that the dead betrays nothing

at all. Fear therefore the dead, fear his shrewdness, fear his determination, fear his strength, fear his pride! But if you love him, then remember him affectionately, and you will have no reason to fear; you will learn from the dead, and precisely from him as the dead, the shrewdness of thought, the definiteness of expression, the strength of unchangeableness, the pride of life, as you could learn it from no man, not even the most richly endowed.

The dead man does not change; there is no thought of any possible excuse through shoving the guilt onto him. Hence he is steadfast. Yes, that is true; but he has no actuality, and he therefore does nothing, simply nothing, to retain his hold on you, except that he does not change. If, then, any change enters into the relation between the living and the dead, then it must be clear that it is the living who has changed. If, on the contrary, no change enters, then it is the living who has truly been faithful, faithful in lovingly remembering him — alas, while he could do nothing to hold you; alas, while he was doing everything as if to pretend that he had entirely forgotten you, and what you said to him. For no one who has actually forgotten what has been said to him, can express more definitely that he has forgotten it, that its entire relation to him, that the whole matter, is forgotten, than the dead man can.

The work of love in remembering the dead is thus a work of the most disinterested, the freest, the most faithful love. So go out, then, and do this; remember the dead, and just by so doing learn to love the living, disinterestedly, freely, faithfully. In your relation to the dead you have a standard by which you can test yourself. The one who employs this standard will easily reduce the extensiveness of the most complicated relationship, and will learn to be repelled by all the mass of excuses actuality usually has immediately at hand for the purpose of showing that it is the other who is selfish, the other who is himself guilty of being forgotten, because he did not call himself to mind, the other who is

faithless. Remember the dead; then you have a foretaste of the blessing which is inseparable from this work of love, also the best guidance in rightly understanding life: that it is a duty to love the men we do not see, but likewise those we do see. Our duty to love the men we see cannot cease because death separates them from us, for the duty is eternal; but hence the duty toward the dead cannot so separate our contemporaries from us that these do not become the object of our love.

X. THE WORK OF LOVE IN RECOMMENDING LOVE

"ART CONSISTS IN DEEDS, not words." This is a proverbial remark which is also quite true if one reasonably excludes the accidental circumstance where the art really consists in "saying it." For it would certainly be strange were anyone to deny that the poet's art consists precisely in "saying it," since truly not everyone can say that which the poet says in such a way that he thereby proves himself to be a poet. This is also partly true about the art of speaking.

But in relation to love, it is neither wholly nor partly true that the art consists in saying it, or that to be able to say it in any essential way, is conditioned by the accidental endowment. That is why it is so edifying to speak about love, because one must constantly think and say to one's self: "Everyone can love," or, "Everyone ought to be able to love" — while it would be a strange way of speaking to say that everyone was or could become a poet. Love which overcomes all differences, which loosens all bonds, in order to bind everything together in the bond of love, must naturally take loving heed that here a certain kind of difference does not suddenly and contentiously assert itself.

Because the matter stands thus, because there is no "art" in recommending love, just therefore does loving constitute a work; for "art" is related to the accidental endowment; the work is related to the universal. So the proverb may find its application in a peculiar manner. Thus if one should in a hasty, casual remark, in a hasty proposition (which seems especially acceptable to these times), say, "It would be a good thing if someone were to undertake to recommend love," one would have to answer that, "Saying it is no art, but doing it" — and that although "doing it" in this connection would indicate that saying it, as has been proved with reference

to love, is no art, and so consequently it is art and yet not art, but a deed. The proof then consists in working out such a recommendation of love as to require both time and diligence. If it were an art to recommend love, the relationship would not be such. For with respect to a certain kind of art, it is truly not given to everyone to practice it, even if he is willing to spend both time and diligence in acquiring it. Love, on the other hand, oh, it is not like art, jealous of itself, and therefore poured out only on the few. Everyone who wishes to have love, to him it is given, and if he is willing to assume the task of recommending it, he will also succeed.

So let us now consider

THE WORK OF LOVE IN RECOMMENDING LOVE.

It is a work, and naturally a work of love, for it can only be performed in love, more precisely defined, in love of the truth. We shall endeavor to be more explicit as to how this work may be accomplished.

The work of recommending love must be done inwardly in self-denial.

If the recommending of love is to be performed effectually, then one must for a long time stick to thinking one thought, to holding it, spiritually understood, in the strictest continence with respect to everything heterogeneous, alien, irrelevant and disturbing; must stick to it with the most punctilious and obediently exact renunciation of every other thought. But this is very exhausting. That way it is easy enough to disavow the meaning and, in this connection, the understanding of the thought; and that will also be the case if the single thought which occupies one is a particular finite conception, not one infinite thought. But if it is also the one thought which saves and preserves the understanding, it is still very exhausting. Consequently, to think a single thought in inwardness away from all distraction, to advance from month to month in making the hand stronger and stronger which stretches the thread of thought; and then, on the other

side, in rising to learn always more obediently, more humbly to make the hand lighter and more supple in guidance, the hand which at any second, if necessary, must relax and ease the tension, consequently with mounting passion to grasp more and more firmly, more and more certainly, and in increasing humility be able, if the moment makes it necessary, to let go more and more easily: that is very exhausting. And yet we cannot conceal from one that this is the one thing needful, nor can we conceal it from one if one does it; for when one thinks but one thought, the direction is inward.

It is one thing to think in such a way that one's attention is always directed outward toward the object, which is something external; it is another thing to have one's thoughts so reversed that one is at every moment conscious of himself, conscious of the effect of the thought, or how the thought affects his own condition. But only the latter is essentially thinking, that is, clarity of thought. The first is unclear thinking, which suffers from the contradiction that the reflection which clarifies another thought is in the final analysis itself confused. Such a thinker explains another by his thinking, and, lo, he does not understand himself. As far as an external object of thought is concerned, he makes a very profound use of his natural abilities, but as regards inwardness, a very superficial use, and therefore all his thinking, however profound it may seem, is still at bottom superficial. But when the object of one's reflection is externally complicated, or when one transforms that of which he is thinking into an erudite object of reflection, or when one leaps from one subject of thought to another, then one does not discover this last irregularity: that at the bottom of all the clarity there lies a lack of clarity, instead of the true clarity alone being brought to light. If, on the contrary, one has but one thought, then there is no external object, then one's thoughts are directed inward in self-absorption, then one must discover his own inner condition; and at first this discovery is very humiliating. The forces of the human spirit do not

behave in the same way as do physical forces. If one overstrains his physical strength he is injured, and thereby he gains nothing. But, if one, simply by choosing inwardness, does not exert his spiritual forces, as such, to the limit, he simply does not discover, at least not in the deeper sense, that God exists; and if this is so, then he has lost the thing of greatest importance, or the most important thing has essentially eluded him. In physical strength, as such, there is nothing selfish, but in the human spirit, as such, there lies a selfishness which must be humbled, if the God-relationship is to be gained in truth. This, then, is what the one must experience who concentrates upon a single thought; he must experience the intrusion of interruptions wherein it is as if everything were taken from him; he must encounter the perils of life where it holds good about losing one's life in order to save it. He must go forward on this way, if he is to bring anything deeper to light. If he shies away from this difficulty, then his thought becomes superficial — although in these clever times men have certainly assumed between themselves, although without referring it to God or the eternal, that such an exertion is not necessary, moreover, that it is an eccentricity. Now of course it is not needed in order to lead a comfortable and irresponsible life, or to satisfy his own contemporaries with the admired perfection which to a T absolutely resembles that of everyone else. But nevertheless it is certain that without being tested in this difficulty and without this strenuous exertion, one's thought becomes superficial. For spiritually understood it is true that not until a man has overexerted his spiritual strength as such, can he become an instrument; he will from that moment, if he endures in sincerity and faith, gain his greatest strength; but it is not his own strength, he acquires it in his self-abnegation.

Oh, I do not know to whom I may be speaking concerning this matter, how far there is anyone who is concerned about such things; but this I do know, that such people have lived, and I know this, that just those who have

effectually recommended love have been people well-trained and able-bodied in these, for the most part, unfamiliar waters. And to them I can write, comforting myself with the beautiful word "Write!" "For whom?" "For the dead, for those whom you have loved in the past!" — and in loving them I shall also meet together with the dearest among my contemporaries.

If one concentrates upon but one thought, one must in relation to it consider discovering self-denial, and it is the self-denial which discovers that God exists. Just this becomes the contradiction in blessedness and in terror: to have an all-powerful one as one's collaborator. For an all-powerful one cannot be your collaborator, the collaborator of a man, without this signifying that you can do nothing at all. And, on the other hand, if He is your assistant, then you can do everything. The exhaustive thing is that there is at once a contradiction, so that you do not experience the one today, the other tomorrow; and it is exhausting that this contradiction is not something you can be conscious of at intervals, but it is something you must be conscious of at every moment. It is at the very moment when you are able to do everything — and a selfish thought creeps in, as if it were you who had been able to do all this — at that very moment you may lose everything; and at the very moment the selfish thought is surrendered, you may again have everything. But God is not seen; and consequently when God uses this instrument, into which man made himself by his self-denial, then it looks as if it were the instrument which could do everything, and even the instrument is tempted to understand it in this way — until he can again do nothing. It is always difficult to collaborate with another man. Oh, but to collaborate with the Almighty! Moreover, it is easy enough to understand in a certain sense; for what [I] cannot do, I can leave to Him. Consequently the difficulty is just that I must collaborate, if not with another, then through constantly understanding that I can do nothing at all, which is not something which can be understood once for all.

And this is difficult to understand, not difficult to understand at the moment when one can really do nothing, when one is sick or indisposed, but to understand just at the moment when one can apparently do everything. However, there is nothing so swift as thought, and nothing which strikes one with such force as a thought when it comes upon one. And now, out on the sea of thought, on the "70,000 fathoms deep" — before one learns when night comes to be able to sleep tranquilly away from the thoughts, confident that God who is love, has them in abundance, and to be able to awake in full confidence to the thoughts, assured that God has not slept! A mighty oriental emperor had a servant whose duty it was daily to remind him of a certain definite undertaking: but that a humble man should be able to reverse the relation and say to God the Almighty, "Remind me finally of this or that"; and that then God should do it! Is not this enough to make one lose one's reason, that a man should have the right to sleep safely and sweetly if he only says to God, like the emperor to his servant, "Be sure to remind me of this or that!" But then again this Almighty is so jealous for Himself that merely a selfish word in this foolhardy freedom which He allows, and everything is lost; so that God does not only not remember this and that, but it is as if He would never forget the this and that which is deserved. No, then it is far safer to be able to do a little less, and so in a common human wisdom imagine that one is certain one can do it; it is far safer than this exhausting: absolutely and to the letter being able to do nothing, and, on the contrary, in a certain figurative sense, being able to do everything.

Still only in self-denial can a man completely recommend love; for God is love, and only in self-abnegation can a man hold God fast. What a man learns from himself about love is very superficial; he must learn from God to know it more profoundly, that is, he must in his self-abnegation become what every man may become (for self-denial is related to the universal, and

thus different from being specially called and chosen), an instrument of God. So every man can get to know everything about love, just as every man can get to know that he, like every other man, is loved by God. The difference is merely that some (which does not seem so surprising to me) find this thought more than sufficient for the longest life, so that even in their seventieth year they do not think they have wondered enough over it; and others, on the contrary (which seems to me very strange and deplorable), find this thought so insignificant, since being loved by God is nothing more than is true of every man — as if it were therefore less important.

Only in self-abnegation can a man completely recommend love. No poet can do it. The poet can sing about love and friendship, which is indeed a rare gift, but "the poet" cannot recommend love. For to the poet his relation to the spirit of inspiration is like a jest, the evocation of its assistance is like a jest (and this might well correspond to the self-denial and the prayer). His natural endowment, on the other hand, is the decisive thing, and the outcome of his relation to the spirit of inspiration is to him the principal thing, it is the poem, the poetical production, which determines the outcome. But for the one who will recommend love (which, since everyone may do this, indicates no superiority), the relation of the self-abnegation to God or the laying hold on God in self-abnegation, ought to be everything, ought to be the earnest thing; the fact of whether the production is finished or not, ought to be a jest, that is, the God-relationship itself ought to be more important to him than the outcome. And in his self-abnegation it is his absolutely earnest conviction that it is God who helps him.

Oh, if a man in his self-abnegation could really put away all the sensual illusion of being able himself to do anything; if he could really understand that of himself he can do nothing at all; that is, if a man could really win the victory of self-denial, and then to that victory add the triumph of self-denial,

in sincerity and truth finding his entire happiness in this self being able to do nothing at all: what a wonderful speech such a man would be able to make about love! For in the extreme exertion of self-denial, in all this swooning and fainting of its own strength in being happy, in feeling itself happy, what is this other than loving God in truth? But God is love. Who then is better able to recommend love than the one who truly loves God? — for he lays hold on his object in the only right way: he lays hold on God and on loving Him in truth.

This is the inward condition or way in which love must be recommended. To perform this has naturally its own reward in itself, even if, in addition, it also has as its object the winning of men to it by recommending love as far as it is possible; to make men really attentive to what in reconciliation is granted every man, namely, the Highest. For one who recommends art and science still sows the dissension of endowment and non-endowment between men. But he who recommends love, reconciles all, not in a common poverty, nor in a common mediocrity, but in the loftiest fellowship.

The work of recommending love must be done outwardly in devoted disinterestedness.

Through self-abnegation a man gains the power to become the instrument when he inwardly makes himself into nothing before God; through devoted disinterestedness he makes himself outwardly into nothing, into an unprofitable servant: inwardly he does not become self-important, for he is nothing; nor outwardly does he become self-important, for he is nothing; he is nothing before God — and he does not forget that he is before God, wherever he is. Oh, it may happen that a man fails at the last moment, in that he, truly humble before God, when he approaches men, becomes proud of what he can do. It is then a temptation of comparison which causes his fall. He understood that he could not compare himself with God, before

whom he was conscious of being nothing; but in comparison with men he still seems to be something. That is to say, he forgets the self-abnegation, he is ensnared in a delusion, as if he were only at certain hours in the presence of God, just as one at a particular hour has audience with the royal majesty. What a distressing confusion! For with respect to a man it is certainly feasible to speak with him in one way in his presence, and in a quite different way about him in his absence. But could one speak about God — in His absence? This correctly understood is, then, devoted disinterestedness, one and the same thing as the self-abnegation.

It would also be the most terrible contradiction if anyone wished to dominate another — through recommending love — So the devoted disinterestedness is in a certain sense, that is, inwardly understood, a natural consequence of the self-abnegation, or it is one with the self-abnegation.

But outwardly the devoted disinterestedness is necessary if love is to be truly recommended; and this is truly a work of love to wish to recommend love in the love of truth. One can easily enough secure his earthly advantage, and what is most distressing of all, gain the support of men in proclaiming all kinds of deception. But truly this is not loving. For the opposite is loving: in love for the truth and for men to be willing to make every sacrifice in order to proclaim the truth, and conversely not to be willing to make the least sacrifice of the truth.

The true must essentially be regarded as in conflict with this world; the world has never been so good, and will never become so good, that the majority will desire the truth, or have the true conception of it in such a way that its proclamation must consequently immediately gain the support of everyone. No, he who will proclaim some truth in truth, must prepare himself in some other way than by the help of such a foolish expectation; he must be willing essentially to relinquish the immediate. Even an apostle may well say that he strives “to persuade men,” but still with the added

phrase, “but before God are we all made manifest.” So there is then least of all in these words any thought of the selfish or cowardly, timorous craving to gain the assistance of men — as if it would be the assistance of men which should decide whether something was true or not. No, before God the apostle is made manifest when he seeks to persuade men; consequently he does not wish to win them for himself, but for the truth. As soon as he sees that he can win them in such a way that they become attached to him, but misunderstand him, misrepresent his teachings, then he wishes immediately to repel them — in order to win them. Consequently he does not wish to have any advantage for himself in winning them, but he wishes at all costs, hence even at the sacrifice of their assistance, to win them to the truth — if he succeeds; it is this he wishes. Therefore the same apostle says in another place, “So we speak, not as wishing to please men, but God. Neither did we use flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness; nor did we seek honor of men, neither of you nor of others, when we might have been burdensome to you, as apostles of Christ.” How much devotion do not these words conceal! He had not sought any advantage, had not allowed himself to be paid, not even so much as he might rightly have demanded, as an apostle of Christ; he had renounced their respect, their assistance, their devotion. Impoverished he had exposed himself to their misjudgment, their ridicule: and all this he had done — in order to win them. Moreover, it is certainly permissible to do everything in this way, even if it were to be executed, for the sake of winning men; for it is precisely in self-sacrifice and disinterestedness to abandon all immediate means, through which one gains the immediate — and loses the truth. The apostle stands on the solid foundation of the eternal; it is he who will gain men by the forces of the eternal in self-sacrifice. It is not the apostle, who in order himself to endure, needs them, and therefore pounces upon the first that offers the cleverest

method, in order to win them — not in order to win them to the truth, for such methods cannot be used for this purpose.

And now in these times; how greatly do we need this disinterestedness; in these times when everything is done to make everything immediate, and the immediate everything! For is not everything done to make the immediate as predominant as possible, predominant over the eternal, over the true? Is not everything done to make the immediate so self-satisfied in an almost superior unconsciousness of God and the eternal; so conceited in a presumed possession of all truth; so arrogant in the idea of being the inventor of truth! How many better men have not submitted to the power of the immediate and thereby made the immediate even worse. For just the one who would be a better man, when he weakly or selfishly gives way, must then in the tumult of the immediate seek oblivion for his failure; he must now work with all his might to make the immediate even more conceited.

Alas, the age of thinkers seems to be past! The quiet patience, the humble and obedient longing, the exalted relinquishment of immediate results, the remoteness of infinity from the immediate, his thought and his God-devoted love, which are needed in order to think one thought alone: these seem to have disappeared, they have become almost a laughingstock to men. "Man is" has again become "the measure of all things," and entirely in the sense of the immediate. All communication must be planned to appear conveniently in a trivial pamphlet, or to be supported by untruth in untruth. Moreover, it is as if finally all communication must be so planned that it may be delivered in an hour at most, to an audience which also wastes half an hour in its expressions of approval or disapproval, and during the other half hour is too excited to concentrate its thoughts. And yet we aim at this as the highest. Children are trained to regard this as best: to be catechized and congratulated in the space of an hour. Thus the standard of what a man ought to be is degraded. There is no more said about the

highest, about being acceptable unto God, as the apostle says, or about pleasing those glorious ones who have lived in the past, or about pleasing the few eminent ones who are your contemporaries: no, to satisfy in a single hour a mixed assembly of the outstanding, the best men brought together, who too have not had time or opportunity to reflect on the truth, and who consequently demand superficial half-truths if they are to reward with their assistance: this is their aspiration. That is to say, in order to make it fairly worthwhile aspiring to, we help with a little falsehood; we delude ourselves into thinking that those assembled are truly wise, that every assembly is composed only of the wise. It is exactly as it was in the time of Socrates, according to the accusation brought against him: "Everyone understood how to instruct the young men; there was but one single individual who did not understand it — that was Socrates." So in our time, "all" are wise, there is only a single individual here and there, who is a fool. So near is the world to having achieved perfection that now "all" are wise; if it were not for the individual cranks and fools the world would be absolutely perfect.

Through all this, God sits and waits in heaven. No one longs to be away from the noise and clamor of the moment in order to find the stillness in which God dwells. While man admires man, and admires him — because he is just like everyone else, no one longs for the solitude wherein one worships God. No one disdains this cheap intermission from aiming at the highest, by longing for the standard of the eternal! So important has the immediate itself become. It is for this reason that sacrificial disinterestedness is needed. Oh, that I might in truth present such a disinterested figure! But here is not the place for this, where the speech is really about the task of recommending love — and therefore here is another wish: would that the immediate, if such a figure should be forthcoming, might have time to contemplate him!

But what applies to all love of the truth in relation to the immediate, also applies to what concerns it, the recommending of love in truth. Before one attempts to secure the assistance of the immediate for his recommendation of love, one must first ascertain how far the immediate has a true understanding of love. Has the immediate, as it is now, or can the immediate ever have a true conception of what love is? No, it is impossible. Love in the understanding of the moment, or of the immediate is neither more nor less than selfishness. Consequently it is selfish to speak thus about love, and selfish to gain this assistance. True love is the self-denying love. But what is self-denial? It consists precisely in renouncing the immediate and immediacy. But then is it entirely impossible to gain the assistance of the immediate — through a true discussion of the love, which is precisely the true love, by renouncing the immediate? It is impossible, it is so impossible that the speaker, that is, if the truth is more important to him than the assistance of the immediate, owes it to himself to point out the misunderstanding; insofar he might chance to gain the assistance of the immediate. From this discussion it is also easy to see that the conclusion is by no means correct, which without further ceremony concludes: He who recommends love, must himself be or come to be loved — in a world which crucified the One who was love, in a world which has persecuted and exterminated so many witnesses of love.

And have the circumstances even changed in this respect, even if it is no longer carried to the extreme and decisive limits whereby witnesses of the truth must sacrifice their lives and blood? Essentially the world has not become better, it is only a little less passionate and more petty. Therefore that which the world generally calls being kind, eternity will naturally regard as something reprehensible and culpable. What the world calls a kind man is a man who above all takes care not to take the demand of eternity or of God for an essential and essentially strenuous existence, too literally. The

kind man knows all about all possible excuses and evasions and doctrines of prudence; about bargaining and haggling and throwing off; and so he is kind enough to spare a little of his shrewdness to others, by whose help he thereupon arranges his life to his own advantage, easily and comfortably. In the company of the kind man everything is so safe, so pleasing; no occasion ever leads him to consider that anything eternal exists, or what claim this eternal has on the life of every man, or that the eternal lies so near that the claim might concern this very day. This is the kind man. But that man is unkind who, without demanding anything of another, but by seriously and strictly demanding much of himself, nevertheless draws attention to the fact that such a demand exists. In his company the excuses and evasions do not look so good; everything which one lives for is seen in an objectionable light; one cannot really be comfortable in his company; even less does he by means of the worldly or even the comfortably religious indulgence, help one to adjust his comfortable pillow.

But what really is this kindness? It is treachery toward the eternal. That is why the temporal existence likes it so well. And this is why the world is always scandalized by the statement that “love to God is hatred of the world.” If, namely, the claim of eternity is really valid, then it looks as if such a man hated everything which the majority of men live for. How disturbing therefore, how strange, how disagreeable! How agreeable, on the other hand, and how lovable to confirm and assist men in their cherished errors. But is it, then, love to deceive men? Is it therefore certain that it is love because the deceived regard it as love, because they thank the deceiver as if he were their greatest benefactor? Is it love to love in a deception, and to be loved in return in a deception? I thought that love was: being willing to make every personal sacrifice in communicating the truth, but being unwilling to sacrifice the least fragment of the truth.

However, even if we wished to forget actuality, to forget how the world is and poetically transfer the whole relationship into the realm of the imagination: it lies in the very nature of the case that in the relation between man and man, disinterestedness is needed in order truly to recommend love. Let us venture on such a poetic attempt where we have nothing at all to do with the real world, but where merely in the remoteness of thought we survey the thought of recommending love. If, poetically understood, a man should speak quite truly about the true love, then is a reduplication necessary: the speaker must transform himself into the selfish, and the content of the speech must he about loving the unlovable object. But if this is done, it is impossible to have any advantage from recommending love; for one can only gain an advantage when either the speaker is regarded as the lover, or the content of the speech is the ingratiating speech about loving the lovable object. And when there is no advantage to be gained through recommending love, then it is disinterested to do it.

Consider that simple wise man of antiquity who knew best of anyone how to speak of the love that loves the beautiful and the good. He was in fact the ugliest man in the whole country, the ugliest man among the most beautiful people. One would think that this fact might have deterred him from talking about the love which loves the beautiful — one certainly avoids speaking of the noose in the hangman's house, and even the beautiful avoid speaking about beauty in the presence of the exceptionally ugly, to say nothing of the ugly himself talking about it. But, no, Socrates was odd and peculiar enough to find this amusing and inspiring, consequently odd and peculiar enough to put himself in the most disadvantageous position possible. For when he spoke about the beautiful, when in his longing for the beautiful his speech and thought completely carried his hearer away — and then this person happened accidentally to look at him: then he at once became as ugly as he already was, he who was

already the ugliest man of all his people. The more he talked, the more beautifully he talked about beauty, the uglier he himself became by contrast. He must have been an eccentric, this wise man; he must not only have been the ugliest but also the most peculiar man among his people. Or what could have determined him to do this? I think if he had had a beautiful nose (which he did not have, strikingly conspicuous among the Greeks who all had beautiful noses), then he would not have wished to say even a single word about loving the beautiful; it would have been impossible for him for fear lest someone might believe that he was speaking about himself, or at least about his beautiful nose. That would have grieved his soul, as if he were defrauding the subject of his speech, beauty, of which he was speaking, by calling some attention to his own beauty. But in his assurance of being the ugliest man, he believed that he could with a good conscience say everything, everything, everything in praise of beauty, without the least advantage to himself from so doing, he who merely became uglier and uglier by contrast.

Still the love which loves the beautiful is not the true love, which is self-denying love. With this in mind the speaker must now, if everything is to be in order and poetically perfected, make himself into the selfish, the self-lover. To recommend the self-denying love and then even to wish to be the lover is, yes, it is a lack of self-abnegation. If the speaker is not selfish, then he easily becomes uncertain or false; he will either be tempted to take advantage of the recommendation, which thus defeats the purpose of the speech, or he will suffer from a kind of embarrassment, so that he will not dare to say everything about how glorious this love is, for fear that someone might believe that he was speaking about himself. But if the speaker is selfish, or, in order to perfect the poetic thought, if he is the most selfish among a people which admiring speakers call a people of love, then, certainly then, he can speak freely about the self-denying love, more happy

in having made himself into the most selfish man than that simple wise man was in being the ugliest. Under actual conditions a long preparation would certainly be needed to enable one to speak of the self-denying love. But the preparation would not consist in reading many books, or in being honoured and respected by everyone for his celebrated self-denial (if it is ordinarily possible for one to show self-denial by doing that which everyone understands as being self-denial on his part), but conversely, in changing himself into the selfish, to accomplish it by coming to be regarded as the most selfish. And this would still not be very easy to accomplish. The fact of being distinguished through a test and the fact of acquiring the lowest character, absolutely the lowest, are about equally difficult, so there is really an equally large number of both. This, concerning the speaker.

But the content of the speech should be: about loving the unlovable. Behold that simple wise man of antiquity, who knew how to speak so beautifully about loving the beautiful; he sometimes made a different kind of speech when he talked about loving the ugly. He did not deny that love consists in loving the beautiful, but yet he spoke, in fact it was a kind of joke, about loving the ugly. What then are we to understand by "the beautiful"? "The beautiful" is the immediate and direct object of the immediate love, the choice of inclination and passion. One certainly does not need to command one to love the beautiful. But the ugly! That is not something to offer inclination and passion, which turn away and say, "Is that anything to love!" And then again, what, according to our conception of love, is "the beautiful"? It is the beloved and the friend. For the beloved and the friend are the immediate and simple objects of the immediate love, the choice of inclination and passion. And what is "the ugly"? It is "the neighbor," whom one must love. One must love him; this is something that simple wise man knew nothing about; he did not know that the neighbor existed, and that one ought to love him. The fact that he talked about loving

the ugly was merely jesting. The neighbor is the unlovable object, is not something to invite inclination or passion, which turn away from him and say, "Is that anything to love!" But therefore there is no advantage to be gained by speaking about the duty of loving the unlovable. And yet true love is exactly love for the neighbor, or, it is not the fact of finding the lovable object, but the fact of finding the unlovable object lovable. If, then, in order that something absolutely true may be said about the true love, the speaker must have transformed himself into the selfish, and the content of his speech must be about loving the unlovable object: then no advantage or benefit is possible. The speaker does not even have love as a reward, for his selfishness only becomes more manifest by the contrast; and the content of the speech is not adapted to ingratiating itself with men, who really wish to hear about what inclination and passion so easily and readily understand, but who are not willing to listen to that which is in no way acceptable to inclination and passion.

However, this poetic experiment is quite proper, and among other results may perhaps serve to throw light on a deception or misunderstanding which has certainly appeared repeatedly throughout Christendom. A man takes the Christian humility and self-denial in vain because, although no doubt he denies himself in one respect, he does not have the courage to do it decisively, for which reason he takes care to have his humility and self-denial recognized; consequently he becomes respected and honoured for his humility and self-denial — which, after all, is not self-abnegation.

Consequently, in order to be able to recommend love, inward self-abnegation and outward sacrificing disinterestedness are both required. Therefore if one undertakes to recommend love, and the question is asked whether he really does it from love, then the answer must be, that "this is something that no one can definitely decide; it is possible that it is vanity, pride, in short, evil, but it is also possible that it is love."

CONCLUSION

IN THE PRECEDING treatise we have endeavored "many times and in many ways" to recommend love. As we thank God that we have succeeded in finishing the work we wished to do, we shall in our conclusion introduce the apostle John who says: "In love, let us love one another." These words, which consequently have apostolic authority, have also, if you reflect on them, a mediating sound, a mediating mood in relation to the contradictions in love itself, which may be due to the fact that they are spoken by a man who became perfect in love. In these words you do not hear the austerity of duty; the apostle does not say, "You shall love one another"; but neither do you hear poetic passion or the violence of affection. There is something transfigured and blessed in these words, but there is also a sadness which touches upon life and is softened by the eternal. It is as if the apostle said, "Well, what is there after all to prevent your loving? What on the whole do you gain by selfishness! The commandment is that thou shalt love. Oh, but if you wish to understand yourself and life, it ought not to be necessary to be commanded; for the fact of loving men is still the only thing that is worth living for; without this love, you do not really live. And the fact of loving men is the one blessed consolation, both for here and hereafter; and the fact of loving men affords, the only true knowledge of whether you are a Christian" — truly a confession of faith is not enough. Love is from the Christian standpoint commanded; but the commandment of love is the old commandment which is always new. It is not with the commandment of love as with the human commandment which becomes antiquated and disregarded with the lapse of years, or is changed in accordance with what those agree on who must obey it. No, the commandment of love continues new until the last day, equally new, even on the day when it has become the

oldest. Consequently the commandment is not changed in the slightest degree, least of all by an apostle. The only change then may be that the lover becomes on more and more intimate terms with the commandment, becomes as one with the commandment he loves: that is why he speaks so gently, so sadly, almost as if he had forgotten that love is a commandment. On the other hand, if you forget that it is the apostle of love who is speaking, then you will not understand him; for such words are not the beginning of a talk about love, but they are its consummation. We do not ourselves presume to speak in this way. What is truth on the lips of a venerable and consecrated apostle might very readily be an affectation in the mouth of a beginner, whereby he would run away from the school of the commandment much too early, and escape the "school yoke." We introduce the apostle who is speaking; we do not make his words our own, but we make ourselves his hearers, "In love, let us love one another!"

And so, only one thing more, remember the Christian *like for like*, the *like for like* of eternity. That Christian *like for like* is such an important and decisive Christian qualification that I could wish to end at least one, if not every work, where to the best of my ability I develop the Christian idea, with this thought.

Christianity is less talked about relatively in these times (I mean compared with those things about which there is so much said). But in the discourses which are heard (for attacks upon it are certainly not speeches about Christianity), the Christian doctrine is frequently presented as a certain soft, almost enervated form of love. After all, there is love and love; you predict for yourself and for your own flesh and blood, good days or happy days without anxiety, for God is love and love — about austerity there must be nothing said; everything must be about the free and easy language and nature of love. Yet thus understood, God's love easily becomes a fabulous and childish conception, the figure of Christ something

so insipid and mawkish as to render it impossible that He could have been a stumbling block to the Jews or foolishness to the Greeks: that is, as Christianity was taught in our childhood.

The matter is simple enough. Christianity has abolished the Jewish *like for like*: “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”; but it has, substituted in its place the *like for like* of eternity. Christianity always directs the attention entirely away from the external, turns it inward, and makes each one of your relationships with other men into a God-relationship: so you will surely in both senses get *like for like*. From the Christian standpoint a man has ultimately and essentially to do only with God, although he will still remain in the world and in the earthly relationships as they are allotted to him. But the fact of having to do with God (so one is consequently never retarded on the way, or halfway, by information or by human judgment, as if that were decisive) makes at one and the same time for the highest consolation and the greatest exertion, the greatest mildness and the greatest severity. This is man’s education; for the true God-relationship is an education, God is the Teacher. But true education must be just as strict as it is mild, and conversely. And when a human teacher has many children to train at the same time, how does he carry this on? To do all this, there is naturally not time for much talking and reproof and verbosity, and if there were time, that education becomes bad as a matter of course, where there is too much talk. No, the efficient teacher trains preferably by means of the eyes. He takes the individual child’s eyes away from him, that is, he compels the child to look to him for everything. God does just this. He rules the whole world, and He trains these innumerable men by His glance. For what is conscience? In the conscience it is God who looks at a man, so the man must in everything see God. Thus does God educate. But the child who is being educated easily imagines that his relationship to his companions,

the tiny world they form, is actuality, whereas the teacher by his glance teaches him that all this is used for the purpose of educating the child.

The older man also thus easily imagines that what he has to do with the world is actuality; but God teaches him to understand that all this is used only for his education. So God is the Teacher; His love combines the greatest mildness with the greatest strictness. It is as it is in nature where heaviness is also lightness. The celestial body floats easily in the infinite — sustained by the force of gravity; but if it leaves its orbit, if it becomes too light, then the lightness becomes heaviness, and it falls heavily — because of its lightness. So is God's strictness mildness in the lover and the humble, but to the hard of heart his mildness is severity. The fact that God has wished to save the world, this mildness is to the one who will not accept salvation the greatest severity, an even greater severity than if God had never wished it, but wished only to judge the world. Lo, this is the synthesis of the severity and the mildness; the fact that in everything you lay hold on God, the greatest mildness and the greatest severity.

If you will therefore listen carefully, you will yourself hear the severity in what must very definitely be called the Gospel. Thus when it was said to the centurion from Capernaum, "Be it unto you according to your faith," no more joyful tidings can be imagined, no gentler, more merciful word! And yet what was it that was said? It was said, "Be it unto you as you have believed." If we wish to apply these words to ourselves, we must say, "It will be to you as you believe; if you have the faith for salvation, then are you saved." How mild, how merciful! But is it now also certain that I have faith? — for the fact that the centurion believed, I still cannot offhand transfer to myself, as if I had faith because the centurion had it. Let us imagine that someone asked Christianity, "Is it now absolutely certain that I have faith?" Then would Christianity answer, "Be it unto you according to your faith" — or I wonder what Christ would have thought of the centurion,

if instead of coming to Him in faith, he had come to Him in order thus privately to find out whether he had faith! “Be it unto you according to your faith,” that is to say, it is everlastingly certain that it will be to you as you believe, that Christianity vouches for. But the fact as to whether you, just “you,” have faith, is certainly not a part of the Christian doctrine d preaching, so it should tell you that you have faith.

When the timid, anxious doubts arise, lest you perhaps do not have faith, then Christianity repeats the words unchanged, “Be it unto you according to your faith.” How severe! You learn to know from the story about the centurion that he had faith. That has really nothing to do with you. And then you get to know the Christian fact, that it happened to him according to his faith — but you are not the centurion. Let us imagine that someone should say to Christianity, “It is quite certain that I have been baptized, but is it also absolutely certain that I have faith?” Then would Christianity reply, “It is to you according to your faith.” The centurion, although not baptized, believed; therefore it happened to him according to his faith; only through his faith does the Gospel become a Gospel. Had the centurion, although he did come and ask Christ for help, still been somewhat irresolute in his soul as to how far Christ would be able to help him, and Christ had still said the same words to him, “Be it unto you according to your faith,” then what? Would it then be a Gospel? No, not for the centurion, for it would be a judgment upon him. This “be it unto you” comes so swiftly, but it holds so powerfully this next phrase, “as you believe.” Using these words as a text, one can equally well preach severity or mildness; for there is also severity in these words, the Christian severity which has not hesitated to exclude the timorous from the kingdom of God, or perhaps better, has not hesitated to teach that the timorous exclude themselves, so that, consequently, just as little as one enters into the kingdom of God through defiance, just as little does he cowardly and effeminately whine his way in.

But in these times where concerning political and economic relations, so much is said about security and safety, this is finally carried over into Christianity, and baptism is allowed to be the assurance — which is no doubt right enough, if you really believe the assurance that "it is to you as you believe." If one had the right to make baptism the assurance as a matter of course, then it would certainly be all over with severity. But God is not mocked, nor can He be cheated. He is too highly exalted in heaven for it to occur to Him that a man's exertion should in any way render him deserving. Yet He requires it; and then one thing more, that the man himself shall not presume to believe that it is something meritorious. But God is also too highly exalted in heaven childishly to play the good God with a cowardly and abandoned man. It is everlastingly certain that it will be to you as you believe; but the assurance of faith, or the assurance that you, just you, believe, you must acquire in every moment by the help of God, hence not in any external manner. You must have God's help in order to believe that you are saved through baptism. You must have God's help in order to believe that in the communion your sins are graciously forgiven. For certainly the forgiveness of sins which is promised, is also promised to you, but the preacher has no right to say to you that you have faith, and yet it is promised to you only if you have faith. It is to you according to your faith. But everything in you which is of flesh and blood and connected with the earthly and the fearful, must despair, so that it is not possible for you to get an external certainty, a certainty once for all, and in the easier way. Lo, this is the conflict of faith in which every day may give you the opportunity to be tested. The Gospel is not the law; the Gospel will not save you through severity but through mildness; but this mildness will save you, it will not deceive you, therefore there is severity in it.

And if this *like for like* holds good even in relation to what most definitely may he called the Gospel, how much more then when Christianity

itself proclaims the lam. It is said, “Forgive and you will also be forgiven.” However, one might succeed in misunderstanding these words so that he imagined that it might be possible even for him to get forgiveness although he did not forgive. Truly that is a misunderstanding. The Christian meaning is: forgiveness is forgivingness; your forgiveness is your forgivingness; your forgivingness to another is your own forgiveness; the forgiveness you grant, that you get, not conversely, the forgiveness that you get, that you give. It is as if Christianity would say: “Pray to God humbly and believingly for your own forgiveness, for He is merciful as no man is. But if you wish to make a test of how you forgive, then observe yourself. If you sincerely and with all your heart forgive your enemy (but if you do this, remember that God can see it), then you also dare hope for forgiveness, for it is one and the same thing; God forgives you neither more nor less nor otherwise than as you forgive your debtors. It is only an illusion to imagine that one has forgiveness while one is slow to forgive others. No, there is not a more exact agreement between heaven above and its image in the sea, which is exactly as deep as it is high, than there is between forgiveness and forgivingness. It is also an illusion for a man to believe in his own forgiveness, if he will not forgive; for how could a man in truth believe in forgiveness whose own life is an argument against there being forgiveness! But one imagines that one personally has a God-relationship, and, on the other hand, with reference to another man, that he has a relationship to that other man, instead of seeing a God-relationship in everything. Therefore the fact of accusing another man before God is to accuse himself, *like for like*. If, humanly speaking, a man actually suffers wrong, then let him notice that he goes too far in accusing the guilty before God. Oh, that a man is so ready to deceive himself, is so ready to delude himself with the idea that a man might personally have, as it were, a private relationship to God. But the relationship with God is like a relationship with a public official. You

cannot talk confidentially with a magistrate about that which is his business — but God's business is to be God. If a servant, whom you perhaps feel a regard for, has committed a crime, a theft, for' example, and you do not know what you ought to do about it, then' you do not refer the matter privately to the superior sitting magistrate; for in his private capacity he does not understand anything about a theft; he immediately has the guilty apprehended and the case begins. And thus also, if you wish to pretend that you were quite outside the matter in question, and now privately wish to complain to God about your enemies: then God makes short work of it, and lays a charge against you; for before God you are yourself an offender — the fact of accusing another is an accusation against yourself. You think that God might, as it were, take your part; that God and you together might turn against your enemy, against the one who wronged you. But this is a misunderstanding. God looks impartially upon all and is the whole, while you only wish to make Him a part. If you apply to Him in His capacity as judge — moreover as a favor on His part. He warns you against doing this, for He knows what will follow as a matter of course, how severe it will be for you. But if you do not wish to have this said to you, if you refer to Him in His capacity as judge: then it does not help you because you think it is another He will judge; for you yourself made Him into your judge, and He is, *like for like*, at the same moment your judge, that is. He judges you also. On the other hand, if you do not undertake to accuse anyone before God, or to make God a judge, then is God the gracious God.

Let me illustrate the above by an incident. There was once a criminal who had stolen some money, among the rest a hundred dollar note. He wished to change this, and therefore he offered it to another criminal who lived in the same house. He accepted the note, went into the next room as if to get change, came out again, innocently greeted the waiting visitor as if he now saw him for the first time: in short, he defrauded him out of the

hundred dollar note. The first man became so enraged at this, that in his indignation he reported the matter to the legal authorities, telling how shamefully he had been swindled. The other was naturally arrested, and arraigned as an impostor. Alas, in the trial, the first question the magistrate asked was how the accuser had obtained the money. So there were two cases. Of course the first man was wholly right in thinking that he had been swindled; he would now be the honest man, the good citizen, who reported the matter to the authorities in order to secure his rights. Oh, but the judge does not deal with matters in his private capacity, or with an isolated case one chooses to bring before him; nor does he always give the case the turn which the accuser and informer gives: the magistrate looks deeper into the matter. And so with the God-relationship. As soon as you accuse another man before God, then there are immediately found to be two cases; just when you come to lay information about the other man, God begins to consider how you are connected with the case.

Like for like; in fact Christianity is so strict that it even maintains a rigorous inequality. It is written, "Why do you see the mote in your brother's eye but do not know of the beam in your own eye?" A devout man has piously interpreted these words in this way: The beam in your own eye is neither more nor less than the seeing, the judging the mote in your brother's eye. But the most severe *like for like* would certainly consist in being able to see the mote in your brother's eye become the beam in your own eye. Still Christianity is even more severe; this mote, or the looking at it judgingly, is a beam. And even if you do not see the beam, and even if no man sees it, nevertheless God sees it. Consequently a mote is a beam! Is not this a severity that transforms a mite into an elephant? Oh, if you consider that from the true Christian standpoint God is always present in everything, that everything revolves solely about Him, then you will no doubt be able to understand this severity; you will understand that seeing the mote in your

brother's eye — in God's presence (and God is always present) is *lese majesty*. No doubt if you could choose a time and place for seeing the mote where God was not present! But in the Christian understanding this is what you must learn to realize, that God is always present; and if He is present He is also looking at you. In the moment that you are truly aware of God's presence you certainly would not think of looking at a mote in your brother's eye, nor would you think of applying this terribly strict standard — you who are yourself guilty. The fact is, that even if every better man for his own sake applies himself to thinking about God's omnipresence as present (and nothing more preposterous could be imagined than to think of God's omnipresence at a distance), then he frequently forgets God's omnipresence in his relationship to other men, forgets that God is present in the relationship, is satisfied with a merely human comparison. So one needs confidence and quiet to discover the mote. What is now the fault? The fact that you yourself forget that God is present (and He is certainly always present) or that you forget yourself in His presence. How imprudent in God's presence to judge as strictly as a mote is judged — *like for like*; if you will be so severe, then can God overbid you — there is a beam in your own eye! The magistrate may well have regarded it as an impudence on the part of that criminal of whom we have spoken, that he should wish to play the part of an honest man who, pursuant to law and justice, prosecutes a criminal, alas, a criminal who will himself be prosecuted pursuant to law and justice: but God regards it as presumption that a man should wish to play the pure and judge the mote in his brother's eye.

How strict is not this Christian *like for like*! The Jewish, the worldly, the busy *like for like* is: as others do to you, see that you finally do the same to them. But the Christian *like for like* is: as you do to others, so God will do to you. From the Christian standpoint it does not concern you what the others do to you, it does not concern you personally; it is curiosity, an

impertinence, a lack of sense to meddle in things which are as entirely irrelevant to you as if you were absent. You need only concern yourself with what you do to others, or with how you discover what others do to you; the direction is inward, essentially you have only to do with yourself before God.

This world of inwardness, this version of what other men call actuality, it is actuality. In this inward world the Christian *like for like* is native; it turns itself and wishes to turn you away from the external (yet without taking you out of the world), upward or inward. For from the Christian standpoint to love men is to love God, and to love God is to love men: what you do to men you do to God, and therefore what you do to men, that God does to you. If you are indignant at the men who wrong you, you are really indignant at God; for in the last analysis it is God who permits you to be wronged. On the contrary, if you accept with gratitude the injury from God's hand "as a good and perfect gift," then you will not be indignant at men. If you are not willing to forgive, then you really wish to do something else, you wish to make God hardhearted so that He should not forgive: how could this hard-hearted God then forgive you? If you cannot bear men's offenses against you, how should God bear your sins against Him? No, *like for like*. For God Himself is really this pure *like for like*, the pure reproduction of what you yourself are. If you are angry, then is God angry at you; if mildness and mercy rule in your heart, then is God merciful to you. The infinite lover shows in that He will on the whole concern Himself with you, and that no one, no one so affectionately discovers even the least love in you as God does. God's relationship to man is at every moment to make more infinite that which at any moment is in man. Echo, as you know, dwells in solitude. It attends exactly, oh, so exactly, to every sound, even the least, and reproduces it exactly, oh, so exactly. If there is a word which you would not like to hear said to you, then guard yourself in saying it, watch

that it does not escape you in solitude, for Echo repeats it immediately and says it to "you." If you have never been solitary, then you have never discovered that God exists; but if you truly were solitary, then you also learned that everything you say or do to another man, that God merely repeats. He repeats it with the intensification of infinity: the word of grace or of judgment which you express about another, that God repeats; He says the same word for word, about you: and this same word is for you grace or judgment. But who believes in Echo, when day and night he lives in the tumult of the city? And who believes that such an observer exists, who corresponds so exactly to the *like for like*? Who believes in it, if from earliest childhood he has been accustomed to live in tumult? If in the confusion he hears something about the Christian way, he is still unable to hear rightly; as the Christianly does not echo in his inner man, he does not discover the echo which is the Christian *like for like*. Here in the midst of life's alarms he perhaps does not notice eternity's or God's repetition of the spoken word; he imagines that its reproduction would perhaps be in the external and in an outward manner. But the external is too dense a body to be the echo, and the sensual ear is too dull to catch the repetition of eternity. But whether a man discovers it or not, that same word is still said about him that he himself uttered. Such a man lives on then as one who does not know what is said about him. Now perhaps it is just as well if a man is unconscious of what the town says about him; besides it might be untrue. Oh, but how does it help either for the moment or through the years, to be unconscious of what eternity says about him — if it is nevertheless the truth!

No, *like for like*! We truly do not say that as if we meant that a man ultimately deserved grace. Oh, the fact that you learn from the first to lay hold on God is everything, is just that you simply have no merit. Test this merely by saying to eternity, "I have deserved," then eternity answers, "You

have deserved....” If you will have merit and have deserved something, then is it only punishment. If not believing you will appropriate to yourself another’s merit, then you get according to your merit. We do not say this as if we meant that it would be better if anyone day in and day out were to sit in the fear of death in order to listen to the repetition of eternity; we do not even say that it would be better than the pettiness which in these times makes use of the love of God to sell indulgences from every more dangerous and more strenuous conflict. No, but as the well-disciplined child has an unforgettable impression of the strictness, so must also the man who lays hold upon the love of God, if he does not wish effeminately or thoughtlessly to take it in vain, have an unforgettable fear and trembling, although he rests in the love of God. Such a one will certainly avoid speaking to God about another’s wrong to him, about the mote in his brother’s eye. For such a one will prefer to speak to God only about grace, in order that this fateful word “justice” shall not cause him to forfeit everything through what he has himself evoked, the strict *like for like*.

Christian Discourses (1848)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1940

CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

NOTES CULLED FROM THE JOURNAL

PREFACE

FROM THE JOURNAL

THE ANXIETIES OF THE HEATHEN CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES by S. KIERKEGAARD

FROM THE JOURNAL

PRAYER

INTRODUCTORY

PART I

I. THE ANXIETY OF POVERTY

II. THE ANXIETY OF ABUNDANCE

III. THE ANXIETY OF LOWLINESS

IV. THE ANXIETY OF HIGHNESS

V. THE ANXIETY OF PRESUMPTION

VI. THE ANXIETY OF SELF-TORMENT

VI. THE ANXIETY OF IRRESOLUTION, FICKLENESS AND DISCONSOLATENESS

PART II

JOYFUL NOTES IN THE STRIFE OF SUFFERING CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES by S. KIERKEGAARD
I. THE JOY OF IT — THAT WE SUFFER ONLY ONCE, BUT TRIUMPH ETERNALLY
II. THE JOY OF IT — THAT AFFLICTION DOES NOT BEREAVE OF HOPE, BUT RECRUITS HOPE
III. THE JOY OF IT — THAT THE POORER THOU DOST BECOME, THE RICHER THOU CANST MAKE OTHERS
IV. THE JOY OF IT — THAT THE WEAKER THOU DOST BECOME, THE STRONGER DOES GOD BECOME IN THEE
V. THE JOY OF IT — THAT WHAT THOU DOST LOSE TEMPORALLY THOU DOST GAIN ETERNALLY
VI. THE JOY OF IT — THAT WHEN I 'GAIN ALL' I LOSE NOTHING AT ALL
VII. THE JOY OF IT — THAT MISFORTUNE IS GOOD FORTUNE

PART III

THOUGHTS WHICH WOUND FROM BEHIND — FOR EDIFICATION CHRISTIAN ADDRESSES BY S. KIERKEGAARD
I. KEEP THY FOOT WHEN THOU GOEST TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD
II. BEHOLD, WE HAVE FORSAKEN ALL AND FOLLOWED THEE; WHAT SHALL WE HAVE THEREFORE? (Matt. XIX. 27) AND WHAT SHALL WE HAVE?
III. ALL THINGS MUST WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR GOOD — IF WE LOVE GOD
IV. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IS AT HAND... OF THE JUST AND OF THE UNJUST

V. NOW ARE WE NEARER OUR SALVATION... THAN WHEN WE BECAME BELIEVERS
VI. IT IS BLESSED NEVERTHELESS... TO SUFFER DERISION IN A GOOD CAUSE
VII. HE WAS BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD

PART IV

DISCOURSES AT THE COMMUNION ON FRIDAYS
PREFACE
PRAYER
PRAYER
PRAYER
PRAYER
PRAYER
PRAYER
PRAYER

A late nineteenth century engraving of Kierkegaard

PREFACE

IN THE CO-OPERATIVE labour of making the works of Kierkegaard available to English readers, I have chosen as my part the task of translating the works written after the profound religious experience of Holy Week 1848, which for the first time made 'direct communication' possible to the author and finally issued in the directest speech that was ever uttered by a Christian against Christendom. I have not included in my task the tremendous attack upon established Christianity which S. K. waged openly in newspapers and pamphlets, and died in the doing of it; for though I admit my sympathy with this attack and believe that it is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, I account that it would not be profitable to make it available in English until it has become clearly evident, through the publication of the decisively Christian writings of S. K.'s last years, that (unlike most attacks upon the Church) this was not from without but from *within.*

It was the last and the most trenchant of his *religious* writings I translated *first*, because they seem to me the most important, and because they are the most important to me. But with that I found myself in a dilemma. For not only had I forged ahead of my fellow-workers who might be expected to make S. K.'s earlier works available (especially the pseudonymous or 'aesthetic' works), but I had outstripped myself by translating *first* the works which ought to be published *last* — namely, *Training in Christianity*, *For Self-examination*, and *Judge for Yourselves.* Professor Swenson was troubled when he learned that I proposed to publish these works at once. Because I felt the force of his objection I have deferred them. For these last works insist so strongly upon the Christian ideal — which he declines to regard as a counsel of perfection which the average Christian might safely

disregard — that they cannot but be terrible to a man who takes them seriously, and it may be that the reader who is unacquainted with the milder tone of the earlier discourses is more likely to be repelled by them than one who has been gradually educated by Kierkegaard. I can only regret that no one has translated the *Eighteen Edifying Discourses* which 'accompanied' by twos and threes Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works and ultimately were collected in one volume. But Professor Swenson has translated three of them, the *Three Edifying Discourses* which accompanied the *Philosophical Fragments* he lately translated. However, they are printed only privately. It is fortunate (it might seem fortuitous) that the most important of the *Three Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits* was translated at the same time in America by Professor Steere (*Purity of Heart,* Harpers, 1938) and in England by Messrs Aldworth and Ferrie (*Purify your Hearts!* Daniel, London, 1937). So of the distinctively religious works nothing remains entirely unaccounted for but *The Works of Love.*

Of the pseudonymous or 'aesthetic' works there are several which are due to appear before this volume. Mr. Payne's translations of Fear and Trembling and Repetition will be published, I understand, on the same day by the Oxford University Press, and Mr. Jensen tells me that he has found an American publisher for his translation of the first of these books. He has also translated the other. This is an evident proof that the interest in Kierkegaard which developed so recently, I might say, so suddenly, in England and America, is already widespread. In order to complete the publication of the more strictly biographical material initiated by my Kierkegaard and Mr. Dru's Journals, the Oxford University Press will bring out on the same day, and somewhat in advance of this volume, my translation of The Point of View, etc., and Mr. Dru's translation of Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises, etc. If his translation of The Concept of Dread and Mr. Payne's translation of The Sickness unto Death are not out

before this volume, they will not be tardy in following it. As Mr. Dru is at work on the translation of Either/Or*,* there is no important pseudonymous work except the *Stages* which remains unaccounted *for* and that I have undertaken. This incredible accomplishment in so short a time is due chiefly to the wisdom and audacity of the Oxford University Press — more particularly to Mr. Charles Williams.

And now, to redress so far as I am able the embarrassing situation produced by getting the last works ready first, I have hastened to translate the three series of 'discourses' which are now presented in this volume. The others, though they were the first to be translated, must wait a few months longer before they see the light. The discourses contained in this volume, although they were published in 1848 and 1849 (that is to say, at the same time when the more trenchant works were written) are many of them in a tone as mild as Kierkegaard ever used, and since they are as 'poetical' as anything he ever wrote, they express the thought of God's immanence, which in the later writings is obscured by the solemn emphasis upon His transcendence.

In this instance I regret to say (and it is the first time I have to say it) that there is no one to whom I can express obligation for aid in the preparation of this book. If S. K. is here worthily translated, I cannot ascribe it to my proficiency in the Danish language; I would ascribe it to Providence or (to use S. K.'s word) to Governance, being conscious of a strange congeniality with S. K.'s way of thinking, so that I feel as if I knew beforehand what he wants to say, just as he himself was conscious of congeniality with Socrates, and as Hamann boasted of an almost mystical intimacy with Plato, asserting that he 'would have been able to transcribe the half of Plato without having read him.'

I may need to remark expressly that all the notes are mine — not S. K.'s. There can be no confusion here between 'mine and thine', for S. K.

consistently treated his Discourses as delivered addresses, and hence added no footnotes, such as in his other works he used freely. But why add any notes (some one may ask superciliously), seeing that the German translations have none, and the Danish editions have none worth mentioning? To this I make no answer. Yet I hope that ‘the individual’ may be grateful for just these little helps which I felt the need of and sought in vain when I was first struggling to orient myself in this immense field of literature (‘a literature within a literature’) which one man produced. And it is my opinion that it would be profitable to add many more notes, with more precise data of reference, when the time comes that all of S. K.’s works shall have been published in English, and when a man comes who is competent to survey the whole. This would be a legitimate way of co-ordinating S. K.’s thoughts, whereas in the spirit of the polemical Dane I must oppose indignantly the insistence of several critics (all of them of course ‘professors’) that what the age demands is a compendious and systematic presentation of S. K.’s thoughts on all subjects, so that in this pre-digested form (which resolves into ‘direct communication’ even the ‘indirect communication’ of the pseudonyms) the reader may be able to appropriate the ‘results’ of the author’s thought without passing through the same laborious process of thinking. A far more profitable thing than these pretentious compendiums (which have been produced in abundance by men who, as S. K. complained, were ‘eating’ him), but a far more humble task, would be the production of a real index. Such a thing does not exist. The Danish editors, at the expense of the munificent Carlsberg Fund, have published an immense volume called an Index — which is of no use whatever because it deals only with *words*, without the least selection or discrimination. Even if it were well done, its value would be diminished by half for the fact that it does not include the Journal. S. K. has been shabbily treated in Denmark. The complete edition of his works (at the expense of

the Carlsberg Fund) seems to be meant chiefly for public libraries, as if it were inconceivable that any individual might want to possess a few of the books; for the works are lumped in big volumes on a chronological principle, and not even the ordinary facilities for finding the book one wants are provided for the reader — not even the titles of the works appear on the outside of the volumes. But S. K.'s works were most of them small in compass (there being only four exceptions), and they were published separately in handy volumes which could be readily bought as well as easily carried about. Although some of these works are too small for the modern market, it is proposed by the English translators (following the criteria proposed by Mr. Dru) to make S. K.'s works easily available. In this volume, and in others for which I am responsible, several kindred works are published together in one volume; but this is done in part for the convenience of the reader, and only in part to facilitate the task of the publisher.

With the thrift for which my race is notorious I have employed the empty pages which follow the titles, etc., of the *Christian Discourses* by printing there pertinent entries from the Journal, which otherwise would encumber the Introduction and might not be remembered in the right place.

WALTER LOWRIE.

PRINCETON, May 5, 1939.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE YEAR 1848

By the Translator

KIERKEGAARD said of the year 1848, 'It was beyond all comparison the richest and most fruitful year I have experienced as an author.' That is saying a great deal, considering how much he had produced every year since 1841, when (according to his reckoning) he first became an author. But 1848 was also a critical year in S. K.'s life. Externally, it was a year of political change, for after a short war with Germany Denmark lost the provinces of Schleswig and Holstein, and by a bloodless revolution, which was tardily incited by the liberal political ideas of the French Revolution, the absolute power of its monarchy was abolished. Although these changes do not seem very momentous in retrospect, they seemed catastrophic to S. K. and his contemporaries. And internally, S. K. experienced a change which was one of the most momentous of his life. We may think of it as a conversion — it was the third and last which he experienced on the way to 'becoming a Christian'. He did not use this word, but he called it a 'metamorphosis' — which certainly does not indicate a less striking experience. In his Journal, on the date of April 19, 1848, which was Wednesday in Holy Week, he exclaimed, 'My whole nature is changed. I must speak' — meaning that for the first time in his life he could speak, i.e.. employ 'direct communication'. But though in this entry he mentions only the *effect,* we learn that the deep cause of it was the instantaneous apprehension that God had *forgotten* his sins — as well as forgiven them.

The result of this metamorphosis is apparent in his writings, which from this time on are characterized by ‘direct communication’. Although he still clung for a while to the use of a pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, this meant anything but a relapse into maieutic or ‘indirect communication’. In 1847 he spent much labour upon a treatise (never completed) on ‘The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication’, in which he elaborated and defended his favourite thesis that such communication must always be indirect. He never completely renounced his attachment to this thesis, but the ‘change’ in his whole nature is demonstrated by the fact he no longer acted in accordance with the theory, and expressly recognized that there comes a time sooner or later when Christian communication must be direct, must be personal ‘witness’— ‘maieutic cannot be the last form’.

The most ostensible sign of his metamorphosis is the ease with which he wrote The Point of View for my work as an Author, which is an exquisitely personal revelation of himself. Only the year before (in 1847) he had attempted in vain to write his ‘Apology’, with the aim of explaining to his contemporaries the purpose and purport of his pseudonymous works, which he had enveloped in so much mystification that no one could be expected to divine their serious religious purpose. An ‘apology’, of course, was the last thing one could expect from S. K.; but, after all, he had the example of ‘The Apology’ of Socrates, and the need of an explanation was pressing. In the year 1847 he even proposed to deliver a course of lectures on ‘The Organizing Tendency in My Writings’ — but that naturally came to nothing. In 1848 The Point of View was written without difficulty in two months — but at the thought of publishing it, of baring himself before the eyes of his contemporaries, he drew back, and the manuscript was left to be published after his death as ‘a report to history’. What had to be done in his lifetime to explain the works, he did more briefly and far less personally in

the short work entitled On My Work as an Author, which he wrote in 1849 and published not long before August 7, 1851.

The Sickness unto Death, ‘a Christian psychological exposition for edification and awakening,’ which S. K. regarded as the greatest of his religious works, was produced in 1848 and published on June 30 of the following year.

In 1846 S. K. had become profoundly engrossed with the ‘phenomenon’ of Magister Adler, a priest in the Danish Church who was deposed for the claim he too lightly made and unmade that his books were written at the direct dictation of Jesus Christ. S. K. wrote and rewrote and rewrote again his ‘big book on Adler’ — and in the end felt that it could not be published because, dealing so personally with Adler, it would seem like striking a man when he was down. Perhaps also the multitude of thoughts which the case suggested to S. K. were so personal to him, and in another sense so peculiar, that he was diffident about making them public. And yet they were so important to him that he was continually occupied with them for two more years, and he felt that they ought to be made known. In 1848 he attempted to present a number of these thoughts in a work which was to have been entitled, ‘A Cycle of Ethico-Religious Treatises.’ That was never finished — not to say published — although he was working at it again in 1849. However something did come out of it: Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises, which Mr. Dru has lately published. The first of them is entitled ‘Has a man a right to let himself be put to death for the truth?’ The second, ‘On the difference between a genius and an Apostle.’ S. K. could not muster up courage to publish them till May 19, 1849.

To get a notion of the literary activity of this year one must take into account not only the productions which were not produced, but several which were merely planned. In January S. K. was planning a quarterly which was to be sold by subscription, with the title, ‘Edifying Reading’. In

July he was thinking of a book to be entitled, ‘Fundamental Cure, or the Forgiveness and Atonement of Sin’. In November he considered publishing in one volume several of the works which he had already completed, and of giving it the title, ‘The Collected Works of Completion.’ By December he had written in a fair copy his appreciation of a celebrated actor who was his neighbour: ‘Herr Pheister, in the role of Captain Scipio.’ In giving an account of S. K.’s literary labours one must not omit to mention the Journal for this year, which as it is now printed occupies 390 large pages. No single book written during this period was so large as that.

It is reasonable enough to remark, as a way of accounting for the amazing mass of S. K.’s literary production, that he had absolutely nothing else to do, had no companionship at home to distract him, and no diversion abroad except his solitary carriage-rides in the country and his social promenades in the street. But it must be remembered that this year he had assumed responsibility for a disciple. In spite of his dictum that ‘the greatest of all misfortunes is a disciple’, he had admitted to this status Rasmus Nielsen, Professor of Philosophy in the University. To this he was moved by the consideration that, were he to die during that year, as he thought likely, there would at least be one who understood the intent of his works. Thus the disciple was in a way a substitute for the ‘Apology’ which he did not feel free to publish. His assumption of Rasmus Nielsen as a disciple was a consequence of the metamorphosis, another instance of ‘direct communication’ prompted by the pressure of the feeling, ‘I must speak.’ But we can easily understand that this involved much time and trouble, and that for a solitary like S. K. it must occasionally have been vexatious.

In the course of this year there were other vexations. In January he had to find a new home, and on April 1, the conventional ‘moving day’, he had to move into it. And in this emergency he was deprived of his faithful servitor Anders, who had been called to the colours. Nor did this represent all he

suffered on account of the disastrous war with Germany, for by the fall of securities he lost a great part of the sum he had received for the sale of his father's house, and this accounts in part for the economic anxieties which now began to trouble him. The reader will hardly need to be reminded that what he says in the *Christian Discourses* about the 'anxieties of the heathen' were addressed in the first place to himself, to comfort and sustain himself — and as a rebuke to himself. His contemporaries thought that he was indifferent to the political revolution in Denmark; but perhaps no one felt it more deeply than this essentially aristocratic and conservative man, who had presaged it, and who better than any one else was able to understand its significance. And yet perhaps the deepest distress he suffered during the course of this year was the dramatic failure of his attempt to approach Councillor Olsen, the father of his one-time fiancée — the Councillor ran away as fast as his legs would carry him.

A little book, The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress, was published in the first instance as a feuilleton in a daily paper (July 24 — 7, 1848). It was the last 'aesthetic' work to be published, and S. K. was dubious about publishing it at a time when he had long been engaged exclusively with serious religious writing. As it was written in 1847 it does not belong strictly to the productions of the year we are here dealing with, though his agonizing debate whether or not he ought to publish it involved no inconsiderable activity of mind and spirit. The Christian Discourses with which this volume begins were published on April 26, 1848 (a week after the metamorphosis), but they were of course written before that event; in fact they had been sent to the printer on March 6, and the greater part had been finished in 1847.

An entry in the Journal contains 'instructions' for the second part of this work, 'Joyful Notes in the Strife of Suffering.' In this we have a hint which the contemporary readers did not have — unless they were able to perceive

it in the introductory disquisition about the significance of the edifying. It shows how much mystification and 'craftiness' there was in S. K.'s writings before his nature was 'entirely changed'. 'These Discourses are constantly kept tangential to the consciousness of sin and the sufferings of sin. Sin is another matter, and these Discourses just reach that point. While consolation rises lyrically as high as possible above every earthly need and wretchedness, even such as are hardest to bear, the dreadfulness of sin is constantly indicated. Thus there is craftily concealed in these Discourses another theme: Sin is man's ruin.' The very title of these '*Christian* Discourses' implies an advance towards 'direct communication' — even before the liberating experience of 1848. For the earlier Discourses could be religiously 'edifying' without stressing the positions most distinctive of Christianity. Hence S. K. was scrupulous not to call them Christian. What is more, he was honest enough not to express in the earlier Discourses positions which he himself had not yet securely attained on his laborious path to 'becoming' a Christian. Moreover, in the title to the third part of the 'Christian Discourses' ('Thoughts which wound from behind... for edification') he contrived slyly to introduce the phrase, 'for edification', which hitherto (with a subtilty of distinction between this and the qualification 'edifying', which is not visible to most of us) he had doggedly maintained was 'not my category'. The reader of these 'Christian Discourses' will doubtless find occasion to observe that thoughts which stab from behind are not confined to Part Three, but emerge disconcertingly in other places.

Just before the entry recording the metamorphosis we find the first suggestion of the Part I. of Training in Christianity. The idea of the third and second parts (in this order) had come to him in the course of the previous year. This book — one of his greatest works — was written in 1848, but qualms about making it public retarded its publication until 1850.

The moment of conversion was evidently richly productive, for three days later (on Easter Even) the Journal records the first idea of the ‘Three Godly Discourses’ about The Lilies and the Birds, which also was written in the course of this year, although it was not published until May 14, 1849. S. K.’s interest in birds may be inferred from the many discourses in which he treats them as an instructive parable. It is confirmed by the fact that, although in his youth he had thought of devoting himself to natural science, in his large library, when after his death it was catalogued for sale, there were found but two books which had any relation to this subject, and one of them was a book about ‘The Birds of Denmark’. The idea of the three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays (‘The High Priest’ etc. etc.), which conclude this volume, was first recorded on September 1.

Until this year S. K. was fairly well content with his description of himself as ‘a poet and thinker’, which combines qualities which are not commonly found together — and besides, as he said, he was a very peculiar sort of thinker and a very passionate one. After the metamorphosis this no longer contented him — he recognized that the poetical must go, but he would give it a festal send off. The Discourses on the Lilies and the Birds were to be a poem to end poetry. He says in his Journal: ‘The purpose of these discourses therefore will be to make evident the conflict between poetry and Christianity, how Christianity, in a certain sense, when compared with poetry (which is wishful, infatuating, benumbing, transforming life’s reality into an oriental dream, as when a young girl could wish to lie all day on a sofa and let herself be enchanted) — how Christianity in comparison with this is prose — and yet is precisely the poetry of eternity. Consequently the lilies and the birds (i.e.. the description of nature) shall on this occasion receive a more poetical colouring and splendour of hue, just to show that the poetical is to be given up. For when poetry really must fall (not before the rant of a glum and sullen parson) it must wear its festal

dress.' The reader has an opportunity here to see how this programme was carried out.

One of S. K.'s preoccupations since the middle of the year 1847 was the popular demand for a second edition of Either/Or. It was distasteful to him to fix attention upon this popular 'aesthetic' book at a time when his whole effort was concentrated on the task of propounding 'directly' the most decisive categories of Christianity. Moreover, he was in conflict with the publisher, who offered him 500 Danish dollars, whereas S. K. held out for 700. It was not until 1849 he decided to republish it, and then he was tormented by the problem of selecting from among the many works already finished the one most fit to 'accompany' it. His choice happily fell upon The Lilies and the Birds, and both were published on the same day, May 14, 1849.

In reading the three works published in this volume, the first of which was written before the metamorphosis, and the others after, the reader may be at a loss to detect any great difference with respect to 'direct communication'. But that is not strange, for S. K. constantly affirmed that his 'Discourses, which always were published in his own name, were instances of "direct communication"'. That is quite true in a way — only he had hitherto been reticent about expressing *all* that he believed — because of the characteristic scruple 'whether a man has a right to let it be known how good he is'. 'Discourse' was the word he elected to use in order to avoid the implication that he claimed the authority which belongs to the 'sermon'. When he gave up 'indirect communication' he naturally clung to the form of the discourse, and everything he wrote from this time on — even the works ascribed to Anti-Climacus — were homoletical, based upon a passage of Scripture as a text which he faithfully commented upon. They are sermons which certainly have a tone of authority.

Nevertheless there is a difference observable even as between the works contained in this volume which were so closely related in time, and still more between the earlier Discourses on the one hand, and the trenchant attacks upon the corruptions of Christianity which are not obscurely veiled in *Training in Christianity*, *For Self-Examination*, and *Judge for Yourselves*, or even in the Discourses which accompanied these — all of which are to be published before long in two volumes. Comparing the works published in this present volume, the reader will easily perceive that in the Discourses on *The Lilies and the Birds* there is no theme 'craftily concealed', as, according to the hint quoted above, there was in the second part of the *Christian Discourses.* In the third part, 'Thoughts which wound from behind' (as though a friend were to approach smilingly to embrace you — and you felt his dagger in your loins), there is not much concealment — and for this reason S. K. was reluctant to publish it. But so far as the first part is concerned, S. K. hints plainly enough in the Introduction what a double-edged dagger the word 'heathen' is.

S. K. (God be praised!) remained subtle to the end, but from this period on he was not over-subtle and he resorted to no mystification. That is the reason why I was eager to translate *first* the last books, in which he makes as clear as day what he is aiming at, so that the reader can decide at once whether he wants to listen to anything more from this author. It is only for prudential ('economic') reasons that the first Discourses of 1848 are now presented first — and I expect that the later works will follow in a few months.

NOTES CULLED FROM THE JOURNAL

THE *CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES* were published without a preface, but in the Journal we find the first draft of a preface which contains a sharp expression of S. K.'s bitter resentment against Copenhagen, 'the market town', which counts it 'a crime for a man to be more gifted and industrious than the average', and which 'prostrates its spirit in the idolatrous worship of undanish *[viz. German]* spirit, instead of favouring and encouraging its legitimate children'. Later this was abbreviated by the omission of the more violent protest, and though it still seemed to S. K. too personal to be made public, it is to be found among his Papers in the following form.

PREFACE

'I WOULD BEG the reader in plain terms, as I have never before done, not to lose patience. I myself perceive very clearly how difficult it must be for a contemporary to keep up with me without growing weary, since I grant no repose either to him or to myself. I perceive how difficult it must be to get the right impression. This I myself perceive full well, precisely because, better than any one else perhaps, I understand that only after I am dead and gone will the time come for my works, when they and my life will (as the artists say) be seen to advantage and show off well, because so long as I live it is part of my task to employ about two-thirds of my strength in confusing, in working against myself and weakening the impression — which is precisely what makes me difficult for the contemporaries.'

Nothing could show more plainly the difficulty — and misfortune — of 'indirect communication'. But this blunt statement also shows that in 1847 S. K. was on the point of emancipating himself. To the psychologist this is an interesting instance of the fact that what suddenly emerges in consciousness has been slowly elaborated below the threshold of consciousness. For it was not till Holy Week of the following year that S. K. became suddenly conscious of his liberation — that he 'must', and by implication could, speak out. And when on December 28, 1847, he conceived of the theme of Part III, 'Thoughts which wound from behind,' and early in 1848 embodied it in seven most trenchant discourses, he was already in full swing of 'direct communication'.

'Thoughts which attack from behind' was one of the first suggestions for the title, and 'A Christian Attack' for the sub-title. But before this 'assault of thoughts' (as he called it in one place) was published (although the manuscript had long been in the hands of the printer), Germany had

assaulted Denmark, and the Danes were engaged in a very different sort of strife. This total change in the situation prompted in S. K. the misgivings which he expressed in the following entries in the Journal.

‘Perhaps not a soul will read my Christian Discourses — perhaps there will be a tumult in the camp, and I the maltreated sacrifice. Perhaps. Oh, it is hard to support the thought of such a possibility.’

‘What is it after all for one in a confused state of mind to let oneself be killed on the field of battle, arm-in-arm with a thousand others, carried along by public opinion, perhaps in the end without having a single thought, at the most an obscure feeling — what is that in comparison with this slow, consciously arranged advance, with the constant possibility of being able to prevent the decisive engagement!’

FROM THE JOURNAL

March 27, ‘48.

Again I have for a moment taken into consideration my responsibility for letting the Christian Discourses, especially Part III., appear at this time. It is plainly perilous for me to let that which was written in a totally different situation be read in this situation. But I can do no other. It is providence which has arranged the thing thus for me. It is not that I have cast myself into danger. My manuscript was delivered to the printer long before this last thing happened, which doubtless has altered men a great deal. Nothing is more certain than that every word in my Discourses is true; I have nothing to alter. So then, should I now take it back for fear of personal danger? No, that I dare not do. What I am, I am solely and only by believing and obeying God. The moment I catch myself in fleeing cowardly from any danger into which He would lead me, I have avoided sure enough the danger — but to my own destruction. Woe unto me, I collapse into nothing! But along with God I can endure everything — so I hope to God — without Him, nothing.

Perhaps there is also much hypochondria in this fear of mine; but that’s neither here nor there. God knows how I suffer — but God also will help me and my cause.

So here I sit. Outside everything is in movement, nationalism surges high in all, everyone talks of sacrificing life and blood, is perhaps also ready to do it, but supported by the omnipotence of public opinion. And here I sit in a quiet room (doubtless I soon will be in bad repute for indifference to the national cause); I recognize only one danger; the religious danger. But about that no one cares — and no one has a presentiment of what is going on in

me. Thus it is with my life, I cannot escape it. Always misunderstanding. Where I suffer I am not understood — and I am hated.

[Marginal note. On a week-day I opened the book and read my sermon by Mynster, as I am accustomed to do only on Sundays; and, behold, it was on Nicodemus. What a warning not to retreat!]

And now that existence entirely corresponds with all I have been expounding, now that providence has helped me by the fact that I had already delivered the manuscript to the printer, there is here no question of taking a step forward, but of taking a cowardly step backward; now that I entirely understood myself in being a solitary man, without relationship to anybody, with deep inward pains, with only one comfort, God who is love, only one friend Whom I crave, the Lord Jesus Christ, with a yearning for a deceased father, being separated by worse than death from the only person now living whom I have loved in a decisive sense — now to retreat... no, no!

If one is to lift a whole generation, verily one must know it. Hence it is that these proclaimers of Christianity who begin straightway with orthodoxy have not much influence, and that only upon the few. For Christendom is very far behind. One must begin with paganism. So it was that I began with *Either/Or.* Thereby I got the generation to go with me; it did not even dream whither it was going, or where we now are. But people became aware of the problems. They cannot be quit of me, just because they went along with *Either/Or* so gladly, so gladly. They might now leave me alone, they might put me to death — it avails nothing, they have me for life. If a man begins at once with Christianity, they say, ‘That isn't anything for us,’ so at once they are on the defensive.

But, as the title of my last Discourses suggests, my whole work as an author is one great thought, and that is; to wound from behind.

THE ANXIETIES OF THE HEATHEN CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES by S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen, 1848

FROM THE JOURNAL

THE MAN WHOM in the first Discourse of ‘The Anxieties of the Heathen’ I have represented as talking so crudely about the seriousness of life is not, as one can promptly perceive, what we call a poor man. Ah, it never could occur to me to talk to such a man in such a way. No, it is a journalist of sorts, one of those who live by — and perhaps in luxury and abundance live by — writing on... pauperism.

PRAYER

Father in heaven, when spring is come, everything in nature returns in new freshness and beauty, the lilies and the birds have lost nothing of their charm — oh, that we also might return to the instruction of these teachers! Ah, but if in the time that has elapsed we have lost our health, would that we might regain it by learning again from the lilies of the field and the birds of the air!

The Gospel for the 15th Sunday after Trinity. (Matt. vi. 24-34)

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathen seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom and his

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow shall be anxious for itself. Every day has enough in its own worries.

INTRODUCTORY

IT WAS ON the summit of Sinai the Law was given, amidst the thunders of heaven; every beast that approached the holy mountain (alas, innocently and unawares) must be put to death — according to the Law. It is at the foot of the mountain the Sermon on the Mount is preached. Thus it is the Law is related to the Gospel, which is the heavenly come down to earth. It is at the foot of the mountain; so mild is the Gospel, so close is the heavenly which descends, and yet all the more heavenly for that. It is at the foot of the mountain; yea, what is more, the birds and the lilies are in the company — it sounds almost as if it were turning the thing into a jest that they come along... playfully. For although the seriousness becomes all the more sacred just for the reason that the birds and the lilies are in the company, yet the jest continues, and it remains nevertheless a jest that the lilies and the birds are in the company, they are in the company, and what is more they are there to teach; for it is true enough that the Gospel itself is the real teacher, that He is 'the Teacher' — and the Way and the Truth and the Life in the instruction, and yet the birds and the lilies come along as assistant teachers of a sort.

How is this possible? Well, really, the thing is not so difficult. For the fact is that neither the lilies nor the birds are heathen, but neither are the lilies and the birds Christians, and just for this reason they could be especially helpful by way of giving instruction in Christianity. Consider the lilies and the birds, and then thou dost discover how the heathen live, for it is precisely not like the lilies and the birds that they live; if thou dost live like the lilies and the birds, thou art a Christian — which the lilies and the birds neither are nor can become. Paganism stands in opposition to Christianity, but the lilies and the birds stand in no opposition to any of

these contending parties; if one may say so, they play apart by themselves, keep shrewdly aloof from all oppositions. So then, the Gospel, in order not to condemn and denounce, uses the lilies and the birds to show what paganism is, but also at the same time to show what is required of Christians. In order to avoid a tone of condemnation the lilies and the birds are thrust in between; for the lilies and the birds condemn nobody — and as for thee, thou shalt not condemn the heathen, thou shalt learn from the lilies and the birds. Yes, it is a difficult task the lilies and the birds have, a difficult position they are in as instructors; there was nobody else could do it, every other teacher would so easily be tempted to accuse and condemn the heathen and praise the Christians (instead of imparting instruction), or mockingly to condemn the so-called Christians who do not live as they ought. But the lilies and the birds, which are engaged solely in teaching and are absorbed in it, do not express any opinions, look neither to the right hand nor to the left, neither commend nor reprove, as teachers generally are wont to do. Like Him, 'the Teacher', of whom it is said, that He 'careth not for any man' (Mark xii. 14), so they care not for any man, or rather they care for themselves. And yet, and yet it is almost an impossibility not to learn something from them, if one considers them. Ah, a man may do all he is capable of doing, and yet it sometimes may be doubtful whether the pupil learns anything from him; but the lilies and the birds do nothing whatever, and yet it is almost an impossibility not to learn something from them. Surely one can learn from them in the very first instance what it is to teach, what it is to teach in a Christian sense, can learn from them the great art of teaching, namely, to be careless about it, to care for oneself, and yet to do this in such an arousing way, so arrestingly, so ingratiatingly, and, so far as expense is concerned, so cheaply, and withal so persuasively, that it is impossible not to learn something from it. For doubtless when a human teacher has done everything and the pupil has learned nothing, he can say,

‘It is not owing to me!’ Oh, but when thou hast learnt so much from the lilies and the birds, is it not as though they said, ‘It is not owing to us’? So benevolent are these teachers towards the pupil, so benevolent, so humane, so worthy of their divine commission. If thou hast forgotten something, they are willing at once to repeat it to thee, and to repeat and repeat, so that at last thou mightest learn it; if thou dost learn nothing from them, they do not reproach thee, but merely continue with rare zeal to go on with the instruction, concerned only with teaching; and if *thou* dost learn something from them, they attribute it all to thee, act as if they had no part in it, as if it were not to them thou owest it. They despair of no one, however indocile he may be, and they do not require slavish dependence upon them, even of him who has learnt the most. Ah, ye marvellous teachers, if one were to learn from you nothing else; if only he learned to teach, how much he would have learnt! It is already a great thing if a human teacher put into effect some part of his own teaching, since usually one makes much ado and does little — ah, but also this observation about others the lilies and the birds never made! But you marvellous teachers — well in a certain sense you do not do what you say; you do it without saying anything. Yet this laconic silence of yours and this faithfulness towards yourselves, year in and year out, long as the day may be, whether you are appreciated or unappreciated, understood or misunderstood, seen or unseen, doing the same thing — oh, marvellous masters of the art of teaching!

So then, by the aid of the lilies and the birds, we learn to know the anxieties of the heathen, what they are, such, namely, as the lilies and the birds do not have, notwithstanding they have the corresponding needs. One might, however, learn to know these anxieties in another way: by journeying to a heathen land and seeing how men live there, what they are anxious about. And finally in a third way: by journeying — but what am I saying? — why ‘journeying’? we are in fact living on the spot, in a

Christian land where all are Christians, so that one might conclude that the anxieties which are not found among us, notwithstanding that the corresponding needs and pressure are present, must be the anxieties of the heathen. So one might conclude — if, alas, another consideration did not take away from us the power of drawing this conclusion by taking away the hypothesis, and we were compelled to conclude in another way: ‘These anxieties are found amongst men in this land, *ergo* this Christian land is pagan.’ The discourse about the anxieties of the heathen will then sound like sly mockery. Yet we dare not permit ourselves to take such a severe view of Christendom, or to employ this almost cruel mockery, a mockery, be it observed, which would finally fall upon the head of the speaker himself, who doubtless is not by any means such a perfect Christian. But let us not forget that the discourse might as it were have this mockery up its sleeve, that if an angel were to speak, he might thus make sport of us who call ourselves Christians, by giving this turn to his discourse, and instead of rebuking our mediocre Christianity, he might describe the heathen anxieties, adding immediately, ‘but in this land which is Christian there are to be found of course no such anxieties, drawing his conclusion from the consideration that these anxieties are in fact the anxieties of the heathen; or, conversely, proceeding from the assumption that the land is indeed Christian, he might conclude that such anxieties were therefore not justly called heathen; or, by imagining a Christian land where there really were none but Christians, and assuming that this land is our land, he might conclude: ‘Since these anxieties are not to be found there, they must be the anxieties of the heathen.’ Let us not forget this, neither let us forget that the heathen who are to be found in Christendom are the most deeply sunken. Those in the heathen land have not yet been lifted up to Christianity, these have sunk beneath the level of paganism; those belong to the fallen race, these, after having been lifted up, have fallen again, and fallen still deeper.

Thus the edifying address combats in many ways to bring it about that the eternal may be victorious in men, but it does not forget at the right place to soften this combat to a smile. O thou combatant, let thyself be softened! One may forget how to laugh, but God preserve a man from ever forgetting how to smile! A man can forget much without detriment, and in old age one must put up with forgetting much one might wish to remember; but God forbid that up to his last blessed end a man should *forget* the lilies and the birds!

PART I

I. THE ANXIETY OF POVERTY

Be not therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? — after all these things do the heathen seek.

THIS *ANXIETY THE bird has not.* What does the bird live on — for about the lily we will say nothing, it can get along of course, for it lives on air — but what does the bird live on? The civil magistrate has, as every one knows, much to be anxious about; at one moment he has the anxiety that there are some people who have nothing to live on, but then again at other times he is not satisfied to know that a man has something to live on, he summons him and interrogates him about what he lives on. What then does the bird live on? Surely not on what it gathers into barns, for it does not gather into barns — and really a man never lives on what he has laid up in the barn. But what does the bird live on? The bird cannot give an account of itself; in case it were to be summoned, it would have to answer like the man born blind, who was interrogated about Him who had given him his sight, and said, 'I know not, but this I know, that I, the blind man, see.' So the bird must make answer, 'I know not, but this I know, that I live.' On what does it live? The bird lives on the '*daily bread*', this heavenly food which cannot be too long kept, [The allusion here and hereafter is to the manna (Exodus xvi.).] this immense store of provision which is in such good custody that no one can steal it; for only that which is kept over the night can the thief steal, that which is used during the day no one can steal.

So then the daily bread is the bird's living. The daily bread is the most scantily measured supply, it is exactly enough, but not the least bit more, it is that little which poverty needs. But then, indeed, the bird is poor. Instead of answering we will ask, Is the bird poor? No, the bird is not poor. Behold,

here it appears that the bird is a teacher: it is in such a situation that, to judge by its outward condition, one must call it poor, and yet it is not poor; it never could occur to any one to call it poor. And what does this mean? It means that its condition is that of poverty, but it has not the anxiety of poverty. If it were to be summoned — there is not the least doubt that the magistrate would find that in the strictest sense it belongs under Poor Relief; but if only one lets it fly away again, it is not poor. True enough, if the Poor Relief were allowed to have its way, the bird would still be poor; for one would torment it with so many questions about its way of gaining a living, that it would observe for itself that it was poor.

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? — after all these things do the heathen seek; for *the Christian does not have this anxiety.* Is the Christian then rich? Well, perhaps it may well be that there is a Christian who is rich; but about that in fact we are not talking, we are talking about the Christian who is poor, about the poor Christian. He is poor, but he has not this anxiety, so he is poor and yet not poor. For when in poverty one is without the anxiety of poverty, one is poor and yet not poor, and then one is — if one is not a bird but a man, and yet like a bird... then one is a Christian.

What then does the poor Christian live on? On the *daily bread.* Therein he resembles the bird. But the bird, which true enough is not a heathen, is yet not a Christian either — for the Christian *prays* for the daily bread. But then is he not even poorer than the bird, for the fact that he must pray for it, whereas the bird gets it without praying? Yes, so the heathen thinks. The Christian prays for the daily bread, by praying for it he receives it, yet without having anything to keep over night; he prays for it, and by praying for it he keeps away the anxiety at night, while he sleeps soundly, to awaken the next day to the daily bread which he prays for. The Christian therefore does not live on the daily bread like the bird or like a character in a fairy-

tale who takes it where he finds it; for the Christian finds it where he seeks it, and he seeks it by praying. But therefore he has also, however poor he may be, something more to live on than the daily bread, which to him has an added flavour, a value, a satisfying quality, which it does not have for the bird; for the Christian indeed prays for it, and so he knows that the daily bread is *from God.* And in another sphere, does not a trifling gift, a little insignificance, possess infinite value for the lover because he knows that it comes from the beloved? Therefore the Christian does not say merely that the daily bread is enough for him, in so far as it supplies his earthly want and need, but he speaks also of something else (and no bird and no heathen knows what it is he is talking about) when he says, 'For me it is enough, it is from Him', that is, from God. Like the simple wise man [Socrates] who talked constantly about food and drink, yet talked profoundly of the highest things, so does the poor Christian, when he talks about food, talk with simplicity of the highest things; for when he says, 'the daily bread', he is not thinking so much about food as of the fact that he receives it from God's table. So also the bird does not live on the daily bread; it surely does not, like the heathen, live to eat, it eats to live — and yet does it really *live?*

The Christian lives on the daily bread; there is no question about that, but neither is there any question about what he shall eat or what he shall drink. He knows that in this respect he is understood by the heavenly Father, who knows that he has need of all these things; the poor Christian does not question about all such things as the heathen seek after. On the other hand, there is something else he seeks, and therefore he lives (for indeed it seemed doubtful in how far one can properly say that the bird 'lives') — he lives therefore, or it is for this he lives, and it is for this reason he can say that he lives. He believes that he has a Father in heaven who every day openeth His bountiful hand and filleth all things living (him included) with blessing; yet what he seeks is not the satisfaction of his

appetite, it is the heavenly Father. He believes that man is not distinguished from the birds for the fact that he cannot live on so little, but for the fact that he cannot live ‘on bread alone’; he believes that it is the blessing which satisfies; yet what he seeks is not to be satisfied, but the blessing. He believes (what no sparrow knows anything of — and what does it help a sparrow that it is so?) that no sparrow falls to the ground without the will of the heavenly Father. He believes that so long as he has to live here on earth he surely will receive the daily bread, and that then some day he shall live blessedly in the hereafter. Thus it is he explains the saying that ‘the life is more than food’; for no doubt the temporal life is more than food, but an eternal life is surely beyond comparison with food and drink, wherein a man’s life does no more consist than does the kingdom of God! He constantly bears in mind that a life of holiness was led here on earth in poverty, that ‘He’ was hungry in the desert and thirsted upon the cross; so that not only can one live in poverty, but in poverty one can *live*. — Hence he prays, it is true, for the daily bread, and gives thanks for it, but to pray and give thanks is to him more important than the food, and is indeed his meat, as it was Christ’s ‘meat to do the Father’s will’.

But then indeed the poor Christian is rich? Yes, without doubt he is rich. For the bird which in poverty is without the anxiety of poverty, the poor bird, is to be sure no heathen, and therefore is not really poor; but neither is it a Christian, and hence it is poor nevertheless — the poor bird, ah, indescribably poor! How poor not to be able to pray, how poor not to be able to give thanks, how poor to have to receive everything as with ingratitude, how poor to be as it were non-existent for its Benefactor to whom it owes life! For to be able to pray and to give thanks is precisely to be existent for God, who certainly did not once for all give him earthly riches, ah, no, He every day gives him the daily bread. Every day! Yes, every day the poor Christian has occasion to be aware of his Benefactor, in

prayer and thanksgiving. And his riches indeed increase with every time he prays and gives thanks, with every time it becomes clearer that he exists for God and God for him; whereas earthly riches become poorer and poorer with every time the rich man forgets to pray and to give thanks. Ah, how poor to have received thus once for all his provision for the whole of life; what riches on the other hand to receive his provision 'every day'! How dubious a blessing to have occasion almost every day to forget that man has received what he has; how blessed to be reminded of it every day, that is, to be reminded of his Benefactor, that is, of his God, his Creator, his Provider, his Father in heaven, and so of the love for which alone life is worth living, and which alone is worth living for!

But then indeed the poor Christian is rich? Yes, certainly he is rich, and thou shalt recognize him by the fact that he does not wish to talk about his earthly poverty, but rather of his heavenly riches. And hence his talk sometimes sounds so strange. For while everything about him recalls his poverty, he talks of his riches — and hence no one can understand him... except a Christian. It is related of a hermit who for many, many years, dead to the world, had lived in the strict observance of the vows of poverty, that he had won the friendship and devotion of a rich man. Then the rich man died, and that hermit, who now for so long a time had lived on the daily bread, was constituted heir to his whole fortune. But when one came and reported this to the hermit, he replied, 'It must be a mistake. How can he make me his heir, seeing that I am dead long before him!' Ah, what a poor showing riches make by the side of... riches! Earthly riches always make a poor showing in relation to death. But the Christian who in poverty is without the anxiety of poverty is also dead to the world and from the world. Hence he *lives*. For the bird ceases to live by dying, but the Christian lives by dying. And therefore all the wealth of the world which suffices a man for a whole life makes so poor a showing in comparison with his... poverty,

yea, or his riches. That a dead man needs no money, we all know; but the living man who really has no use for it must either be very rich — and then it well may be that he needs much of it — or he must be a poor Christian.

In so far then as the poor Christian is rich he does not resemble the bird. For the bird is poor and yet not poor; but the Christian is poor yet not poor, rich. The bird is not anxious for the lower things which it does not seek, but neither does it seek the higher things; the bird itself is without anxiety, but also, for it, its life is as though it were not the object of anxiety for any one else. The Christian shares as it were with God; he lets God take thought for meat and drink and all such things, while he seeks God's kingdom and His righteousness. The poor bird soars high aloft in the sky without being weighed down by the anxiety of poverty, but the Christian soars still higher; it is as though the bird were seeking God in its flight towards heaven, but the Christian finds Him; it is as though the bird were flying far, far away after God, but the Christian finds Him, and he finds Him (oh, heavenly bliss!), he finds Him upon earth; it is as though the bird were flying into heaven, yet heaven remains closed to it, only for the Christian does heaven open!

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink — after all these things do the heathen seek. Y*ea, the heathen are anxious about such things.*

The bird is in poverty without the anxiety of poverty — it keeps silent; the Christian is in poverty without the anxiety of poverty, but he does not talk of his poverty, rather of his riches. The heathen has the anxiety of poverty. Instead of being in poverty without anxiety, he is (and the one thing corresponds exactly to the other) 'without God in the world' (Ephes. ii. 12). Behold, for this reason he has anxiety. He does not keep silent like the care-free bird, he does not talk like the Christian, who talks of his riches; he actually has and knows nothing to talk of except poverty and its anxiety. He

asks, What shall I eat? and What shall I drink? — today, tomorrow, the day after, the coming winter, the following spring, when I am old, as for me and mine and the whole land, what shall we eat and drink? This question he does not ask only at a moment, alas, of pressing anxiety, then again to regret it however; alas, in a time of distress, then again praying God to forgive it however. No, he is without God in the world and he gives himself importance by asking the question which he calls the real vital question; he becomes self-important with the thought that he concerns himself exclusively with this vital question; he finds it inexcusable of the public authority (for with God he has nothing to do) if he lacks something, he who lives solely for this vital question. Every one who does not concern himself therewith, or it may be with supporting him, he regards as a dreamer; even the highest and the holiest thoughts, in comparison with this deepest vital question, he regards as vain trumpery. He finds it foolish to refer a grown man to birds and lilies; for what might there be there to see, and what could one learn from them! When one is a man like him, a man who has learnt the seriousness of life, when one is a man, a citizen and a father, it is surely a rather insipid joke and a childish conceit to require one to pay attention to the lilies and the birds, as if one had nothing else to attend to. 'If it were not for a sense of propriety and a regard for my children, who after all must be given the customary instruction in religion, I would say quite openly that one finds mighty little in Holy Scripture in answer to the most important question, and on the whole very little that is of practical advantage, with the exception of one single splendid passage. One reads about Christ and the Apostles, but there is not the least contribution to the question which really is the most vital, namely, what they lived on, how they managed to pay every man his due and meet the rent and taxes. To solve the problem of death by a miracle is a very fatuous answer to this question — even if it is true, what does it prove? To have neglected entirely beforehand to think of

any expedient, and then when the time-limit was reached and the payment of the tax was demanded, then to have a disciple pull a fish out of the water with a stater in its mouth with which one pays the tax — even if it is true, what does it prove? In general I feel the lack of seriousness in the Holy Scriptures, of a serious reply to a serious question, a serious man does not wish to be taken for a fool, as if one were engaging in a comedy. Let the parsons preachify about such things to women and children; every serious and enlightened man must in his secret heart agree with me, and where serious people come together, as in public meetings, honour is paid only to the shrewdness which has a sense for reality.'

So speaks the heathen. For paganism was without God in the world, but Christianity makes it perfectly clear that paganism is ungodliness. The ungodliness does not consist after all in being anxious, though certainly it is not Christian to be so; the ungodliness consists in not being willing to know anything else, and not being willing to know that this anxiety is sinful, and that for this reason the Scripture says that in exactly the same sense in which a man can 'overcharge' his heart with surfeiting and drunkenness he can overcharge it with the cares of this life (Luke xxi. 34). Everywhere in life there are cross-ways. Every man stands once, in the beginning, at the cross-ways — this is his perfection, not his merit. Where he stands at the conclusion (for at the conclusion it is impossible to stand at the cross-ways) is his choice and his responsibility. For him who is in poverty and thus cannot veer from the path of poverty, the cross-ways is either to turn away from anxiety in a Christian spirit by turning to 'the Way', upward — or to abandon himself to anxiety in an ungodly fashion by deviating into a by-way, downward; for in the eternal understanding of the situation there are never two ways, in spite of the name cross-ways, there is only one way, the other way is a by-way. The deeper he then sinks in anxiety, the farther he removes himself from God and from the Christian position; he is most

deeply sunken when he *will* not know anything higher, but on the contrary wills that this anxiety shall be, not merely the heaviest (which in truth it is not, for the heaviest is the pain of repentance), no, but that it shall be the highest.

But they that desire to be rich fall into manifold temptations and snares; and what is the anxiety of poverty if it is not that of desiring to be rich? Perhaps the anxiety does not at once require riches; compelled by hard necessity, and in the impossibility (of obtaining more), it is perhaps for the time being content with less. Yet this same anxiety, if it gets its present wish fulfilled, if there is opened a prospect of more, will continually covet more and more. It is a delusion to think that the anxiety of poverty, in case it has not been willing to accept godly healing (and in this case the healing may begin with a little less just as well as with a little more), would find any condition in life that contented it short of attaining riches — and with that it would not be content. Oh, what a long road lies before the anxiety of poverty, and the most dreadful part of it is that this road is everywhere intersected by temptations! For we all are in danger wheresoever we go, but he who desires to be rich is everywhere in danger, and it is inevitable that he shall fall into this temptation, into which God has not led him, but into which he has cast himself. He who is in poverty is for this very fact in a difficult position, but not in the least forsaken of God; the salvation is commanded, namely, to be without anxiety — for that the salvation proffered by God is the only true salvation is to be known precisely by the fact that it is ‘commanded’. To be without anxiety, yea, that is a difficult gait to go, almost like walking upon the water; but if thou art able to believe, it can nevertheless be done. It is true of all danger that the principal thing is to get away from the thought of it. Thou canst not get away from poverty, but thou canst get away from the thought of it by thinking constantly of God. So it is the Christian goes his gait; he turns his eyes

upward, he looks away from danger, in poverty he is without the anxiety of poverty. But he who desires to be rich — his thought is constantly upon the ground, with his anxiety about earthly things; he walks with bowed head, looking constantly before him, if perchance he might find riches. He looks constantly before him — ah, commonly this is the best means of avoiding temptation, but for him (alas, he know it not), for him this looking before him is precisely the way to walk into the pitfall, the way to discover temptations which are ever greater and greater, and to sink deeper and deeper in them. He already is in temptation's power, for anxiety is temptation's shrewdest servant; and temptation is down upon the earth, where are 'all such things as the heathen seek after'; and temptation is down upon the earth — and the more it gets a man to look down towards it, so much the more certain is his destruction. For what is *the* temptation, seeing that in itself temptation is the manifold? It is the temptation — not indeed like the glutton to live in order to eat, but (ah, what rebellion against the divine order!) — to live *in order* to slave; it is the temptation to lose oneself, to lose one's soul, to cease to be a man and to live like a man, instead of being freer than the bird, to slave, godforsaken, more wretched than the beast. Yes, to slave! Instead of *labouring* for the daily bread, as every man is commanded to do, to *slave* for it — because one has become the slave of man and of his own anxiety, and has forgotten that it is to God one should pray for it. Instead of being willing to be what one is, a poor man, but at the same time beloved of God, which also one is, never to be happy in oneself, never happy in God, to subject oneself and one's life to the curse of this slavery, in despondent grief day and night, in gloomy and brooding dejection, in spiritless activity, the heart oppressed with care about sustenance — infected with avarice although in poverty!

Think in conclusion of the bird, which has its place in the Gospel, and should have its place in the discourse. In comparison with the ungodly

melancholy of the heathen, the bird, which in poverty is without the anxiety of poverty, is care-free; in comparison with the pious faith of the Christian, the care-freeness of the bird is light-mindedness. In comparison with the lightness of the bird, the heathen is as heavily weighted as a stone; in comparison with the freedom of the Christian, the bird too, however, is subjected to the law of gravity. In comparison with the bird, which is alive, the heathen is dead; in comparison with the Christian, however, one cannot properly say that the bird lives. In comparison with the bird, which keeps silent, the heathen is garrulous; in comparison with the Christian, however, the heathen is dumb, he neither prays nor gives thanks, and that in the deepest sense is human language, everything else, everything the heathen says, is related to this as a bird which has learnt to talk is related to a man. The bird is poor and yet not poor; the Christian is poor yet not poor, rich; the heathen is poor, and poor, and poor, and poorer than the poorest bird. *Who* is *that* poor man who is so poor that this is the only thing one can say about him, just as it is the only thing he himself can talk about? It is the heathen. According to the teaching of Christianity, no one else, no one is poor, neither the bird nor the Christian. It is a long road — in poverty to desire to be rich. The bird's short cut is the shortest, the Christian's way the most blessed.

II. THE ANXIETY OF ABUNDANCE

BE NOT THEREFORE anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? — after all such things do the heathen seek.

THIS anxiety the bird has not. But is abundance then an anxiety? Perhaps it is merely disingenuous sophistry to talk in like terms of things so different as poverty and abundance, to treat them as equivalent in the way the Gospel does, ah, rather almost as if abundance were simply abundance of anxiety. A person supposes, in fact, that riches and abundance should keep him free from anxieties — also from anxiety for riches I should like to know! For riches and abundance come hypocritically clad in sheep's clothing, pretending to be security against anxieties, and they become then the object of anxiety, of 'the anxiety'; they secure a man against anxieties just about as well as the wolf which is put to tending the sheep secures them... against the wolf.

The bird, however, has not this anxiety. Is the bird poor? No; this we have made clear in the foregoing discourse. Is then the bird rich? Yes, though if it is that, it must not know it, if it is that, it must be ignorant of it. Or where has the bird stored its provision? If every proprietor and every crofter were to stand by his barn and say, 'No, away from here! This is mine', where is the barn that belongs to the bird? So then, the bird has not the anxiety of possessing abundance, it has not the anxiety of abundance, the anxiety that others own more, nor, alas, that others own less or nothing at all.

How then does the bird live? Well, it is God who every day metes out to the bird the definite measure, i.e.. enough; but it never occurs to the bird that it has or might wish to have more than enough. What God gives every

day is... enough. But the bird does not desire to have either more or less than enough. The measure which God employs in meting out food to the bird is the same measure, if I may say so, which the bird has in its mouth: He gives the bird ‘enough’, then the bird measures it and says, ‘It is enough.’ If the little bird quenches its thirst on a dew-drop, which is exactly enough, or if it drinks from the largest lake, it takes just as little, it does not require to have all that it sees, not to have the whole lake because it drinks from it, not to take the lake with it so that it may be secured for its whole life; although at the season of harvest the bird has the richest provision, it does not know what abundance is, what it is for more abundant knowledge; although in the forest where the bird builds and dwells with its family there is the greatest possible abundance of everything he and his have need of, yet were it to live never so long, it does not know what abundance is, neither it nor its mate nor its young — but when a person even when he has abundance does not know what abundance is, it is then impossible that abundance should be an occasion for anxiety. When the bird has eaten and drunken it never occurs to it to ask, Where am I to get something the next time? Therefore the poor bird is not poor after all, but it never occurs to it to ask what it shall do with the remainder, with the whole lake, with the immense provision of corn which remains over when the bird has taken the three grains which were ‘enough’ — it has not, it does not possess, abundance, and has not the anxiety of it. And when the season comes and the longing to be off is aroused, it then leaves the house and home which is all that it possesses and has, the nest built with diligence and art, the favourable spot so happily chosen, the like of which perhaps it never will find again: it thinks, Sufficient unto the day is the evil — and so the bird flies away. For the bird is a traveller, even the bird which does not migrate is a traveller, hence it will have nothing to do with abundance, and nothing to do with its anxiety.

So it depends in fact upon the bird that it has not abundance and that it has not the anxiety of abundance. The first barrel of gold, says the capitalist, will be the most difficult to gain; when one has that, the rest comes of itself. But the first farthing, with the knowledge that one is beginning to lay up for abundance, is also earnest-money — the bird will have nothing, not a farthing, in the way of abundance, in order to avoid the rest (which follows of itself): anxiety. With the most punctilious precision it regularly takes each time exactly ‘enough’, not the least bit more, in order not to come into contact in the remotest way with the equivocal knowledge about what abundance is. In poverty the bird is without the anxiety of poverty; against the anxiety of abundance it has prudently secured itself.

How is it now that the bird is a teacher? where is the point of contact in the instruction it imparts? Why! naturally, it teaches us the surest way to avoid the anxiety of riches and abundance, namely, not to lay up riches and abundance — bearing in mind that one is a traveller; and in the second place, it teaches us (what is especially appropriate to this discourse), in abundance to be ignorant of the fact that one has abundance — bearing in mind that one is a traveller. For, like that simple wise man of ancient times, the bird imparts to us instruction in ignorance. Ah, it is difficult, when one is beautiful, not to know it (a thing, however, which both the bird and the lily can do), still more difficult, when one has abundance, not to know it! But in abundance the bird is as ignorant of the fact that it has abundance as if it did not have it.

The Christian has not this anxiety of abundance. Is then the Christian poor? Certainly there are Christians who are poor; but about that we are not talking here, we are talking about the rich Christian who has riches and abundance, and we are saying that nevertheless he has not anxiety. For when one in abundance is without the anxiety of it... through ignorance, he is either a bird, or (in case he is a man and yet like a bird) he is a Christian.

So the rich Christian *has* abundance but is ignorant of it, and that then is something he must *have become.* For it requires no art to be ignorant, but to *become* ignorant, and by becoming so, to be ignorant, that is the art. To this extent the Christian is different from the bird, for the bird *is* ignorant, but the Christian becomes ignorant; the bird begins with ignorance and ends with it, the Christian ends by being ignorant — and Christianly the question is never raised what a man was, but what he became, not about what sort of a man he was, but what sort he became, not about the beginning, but about the end. But to become ignorant in this wise may take a long time and is a difficult task, before a man succeeds little by little, and until he succeeds thoroughly, in being ignorant of what he knows, and in becoming ignorant in such wise, and continuing to be so, that he does not sink back again, captured in the snare of knowledge. The Christian when he has abundance is as one who has not abundance; and so he is ignorant, and so in fact he has not abundance, if he really is as one who has it not. But primarily the Christian is a man, and as such he is not like this; he becomes such as a Christian, and the more he becomes a Christian, the more he is as one who has not.

For what is it that is able to deprive a man of riches and abundance? That is something need and want is able to do, or the God who gave can also take away. When this occurs the... formerly rich man becomes actually poor. Of this however we are not talking, nor of the consideration that the rich man may give away all his riches and abundance, for then indeed he becomes a formerly rich man. But is there not something that is able so to take away from a man riches and abundance that he is deprived of it without becoming a... formerly rich man, that he is deprived of it and still is the rich man? Indeed there is such a thing. What power then is this? It is thought and the power of thought. Can thought then take abundance away from the rich man in any outward way? No, that is not in the power of thought. In connexion

with abundance, *thought can* take from the rich man the thought of *possession,* the thought that he owns and possesses this wealth and abundance as *his.* And yet thought allows him to retain the whole of it in an outward sense; there is no other man who gets his riches and abundance, every one else must say that they belong to the rich man. Thus it is thought goes about it; if it succeeds, if the rich man consents to it, abandons himself and his abundance entirely to the power of thought, then is he who has as one who has not. And this the Christian does.

Yes, it is a cunning power, this power of thought! In such wise no thief can steal, no ruffian can rob, in such wise even God cannot take away from the rich man, even when he takes from him the power of thought and understanding; and yet no thief and no robber can so thoroughly take everything from the rich man as thought can when it is allowed to have its way. How then does this come about? When I do not know what I am to live on tomorrow, I evidently possess nothing. But when I reflect that I might die tonight, 'this very night', then I possess nothing, however rich I may be. To be rich I must possess something until the morrow, etc., must be secured for the morrow; but to be rich I must also be assured of the morrow. Take away riches, and then no longer can I be called rich; but take away the morrow, and then too, alas, I no longer can be called rich. For to be rich I must possess something, but to be rich I must also surely be in existence. And this the rich man does not know, he does not know whether he will be alive on the morrow, or he knows that he does not know it. At bottom every man knows it; but the Christian bears in mind, 'this very day' and every day, that he does not know it, does not know whether perchance he will die 'this very night'. — Moreover, when I possess nothing, and so can lose nothing, I am not rich; but when unfortunately I possess something which can be lost and which every instant can be lost, am I then rich? When I have nothing in my hand, then I hold on to nothing; but when I hold in the hand

what runs through the fingers, what is liable to loss, what then do I hold on to? Riches are indeed a possession, but really and essentially to possess that the essential property of which is that it can be lost, liability to loss, is just as impossible as to sit and yet walk — thought at any rate cannot get it through its head that this might be anything but an illusion. But if it is true that liability to loss is an essential attribute of wealth, it is evident that no essential change has been wrought in it when it is lost; it is essentially the same thing; but then it is essentially the same while I possess it: it is lost. For it must be essentially the same every instant. When lost it is essentially the same; when possessed it is essentially the same, i.e.. lost — which means that in a deeper sense it may not be possessed, the notion of possession is an illusion. From all unlawful goods the thought of retributive justice can, after its manner, take away the thought of possession... by harsh means; but from riches and abundance, even if they are lawfully possessed, the thought of eternity takes away the thought of possession... by fair means, without employing any other power than the power of thought, and just in the degree than a man will abandon himself to the power of thought, or wills his own good.

Yes, it is a cunning power, this power of thought; if man were not in so many ways secured, or had... secured himself, against this power, he would acknowledge that it is cunning, but at the same time he would sense that it is in the service of truth it is so cunning. The sharp-sighted eye of the falcon does not so promptly and so surely discover its prey as this saving thought discovers what it shall swoop down upon. It does not sight with false aim at the strife of words about who is to be called wealthy, who prosperous, who well-to-do, etc., it aims at the thought of possession. And the Christian does not seek to screen himself from being thus aimed at, he himself helps to make the healing wound as deep as possible.

Then thought directs its aim also in another way at the thought of possession. If I am to be rich, I must indeed possess something, and that which I possess is accordingly mine. But then when I possess something which is not mine! Behold, here is a contradiction; and this strife of contradiction can be fought out only in the relationship of man to man. In so far as it is not mine I do not properly possess it; and yet there is no other man who possesses it, humanly speaking it is mine; but if it is mine, then I do indeed possess it. But this is meaningless. There must therefore (for the sake of meaning and thought) be a third party which has to be taken into account whenever in these innumerable relationships between man and man there is a question of 'mine', a third party who says, 'It is mine.' It is like the echo: every time a man says, 'Mine', it is heard repeating, 'Mine'. 'It is mine,' thou sayest; 'It is mine,' says He, He who is the third party. 'It is all mine,' says He, 'as everything is.' Really everybody knows well enough that no one has but what was given him — at bottom everybody knows this. But the rich Christian bears in mind that he knows it, and he takes account of his responsibility if he does not know it; this is all a part of his accounting for mine and thine. He bears in mind that he possesses nothing except what has been given him, not to the intent that he should retain it, but as a loan, as a trust. That in the last resort no man can retain the riches he has, that everybody knows substantially; but the rich Christian bears in mind that he has not received them in order to retain them but as a trust. So therefore he administers them in the best way, as accountable to the owner, shuddering at the mere thought that there might be a false entry in the account of mine and thine. But the owner is God. And God does not, as though He were a capitalist, want his fortune to be increased by sagacious investments, but on the contrary, to have it administered in an entirely different way, if He is to be well pleased. This the rich Christian who is a householder understands full well — and hence he cannot understand why

interpreters have encountered such great difficulty in explaining the parable of the unjust steward. For, says he, supposing it had been the lawful property of that steward, God has no objection if thou wouldst sit down and write... false acquittances, writing acquittances on receipt of half as much as was due, that is, God has no objection if thou wouldst remit thy creditors half their debt; thou well mayest remit the whole of it, and in that way acquire friends who could receive thee in the hereafter. The unfaithfulness was that the steward dealt thus with the property of another. Therefore it was shrewd, and hence the children of this world, who have understanding of the affairs of this world, extol his shrewdness. If he had not been the steward but the master, and had dealt with his own property as the steward did with his master's, that would have been noble, highminded, Christian — and then the children of this world, not only would not have found it shrewd, but would have found it weak and foolish, and would have derided him. Properly the parable would teach that in this world the noble is regarded as stupidity, evil as shrewdness. For by remitting a debt — to steal from one's own pocket, how stupid! But to steal deftly from another man's pocket, how shrewd! The parable extols nevertheless the nobility of acting as the steward did — but, but with one's own property. Yet what am I saying? One's own property', the rich Christian understands precisely that in the highest sense riches are not his own; property. Are we then back again in the same position as the steward? Oh, no; the proprietor is God, who wishes His property administered exactly in this way. So far from calling the earthly riches 'mine', the rich Christian realizes that they are God's, and that they are to be administered as far as possible in accordance with the proprietor's wish, administered with the proprietor's indifference to money and money value, administered by giving them away at the right time and place.

However, when earthly goods are to be thus administered they are best administered by a traveller — the steward also, so soon as he had done the shrewdest thing, was considering the equally shrewd expedient... of packing up. And we, though certainly we should not resemble the steward, might learn from him. But like the bird, every Christian is a traveller; so too the rich Christian. As a traveller he is a Christian, and as a Christian he is a traveller who knows precisely what he shall take with him and what he shall not take with him, what is his and what is not his. One has perhaps occasionally something in the house which is not one's own property but is kept there for some use; the moment however one thinks of travelling one distinguishes scrupulously between what is one's own and what is another's. And the rich Christian, who every moment is a traveller, thinks and speaks thus every moment about his earthly riches; having quite different things to think about, he does not wish to be reminded precisely now... at the last moment, of what he is to take with him, and what is not his. Perhaps for thee it is rather difficult to understand him? Well, he understands that, and he understands himself; at one time perhaps it was difficult for him to understand it, but now he understands it. [This is evidently autobiographical, for at one time it was difficult for S. K. to understand it. Now when he understands it he is on the point of becoming... 'a formerly rich man'.] Sometimes it is difficult perhaps for the wife and children of the rich man to understand him, they are so much inclined to obtrude upon him a knowledge of his riches, to make him believe that he has abundance; but then he says reprovingly, 'I don't want to have anything to say about such things, and I don't want to hear it from you, especially now, at this last moment.' And so there is no one except a Christian that can understand him, since he neither is sick, nor, so far as the passport office knows, is he about to start tomorrow on a journey. So ignorant is he of his earthly riches — as he became and becomes by becoming aware of

something quite different (for by becoming aware of something else one becomes ignorant of what one previously knew), [There is a play on words which cannot be rendered: ‘become aware’ (blive vidende), ‘become ignorant’ (vorder uvidende).] aware, namely, that he might die this very night, that earthly riches cannot essentially be possessed, that they are a trust, that he himself is a traveller; so ignorant is the rich Christian of his earthly riches — even like an absent-minded person.

The rich Christian, being thus ignorant of the abundance he has, cannot possibly have the anxiety of abundance: he has no anxiety with regard to that which, according to a pretty saying, is commonly gathered with disquietude and abandoned with disquietude. He has no anxiety in gathering abundance, for he does not care to gather abundance; he has no anxiety in retaining, for it is easy enough to retain what one has not, and he is as one who has not; he has no anxiety about losing, for he indeed is as one who has not; he has no anxiety for the fact that others possess more, for he is as one who possesses nothing; he knows without anxiety that others possess less, for he is as one who possesses nothing; and he has no anxiety about what he shall leave to his heirs. Thus he has no anxiety because of his abundance, and on the other hand he has the surprise, every time he employs his means to do good therewith, he has such a surprise as when one finds something; for since he who has is as one who has not, he in fact finds what he has not.

But then indeed the rich Christian is essentially just as poor as the poor Christian, is he not? Yes, that he is. But he is rich as a Christian. As ignorant as the poor Christian is of his earthly poverty, just so ignorant is the rich Christian of his earthly riches; as the former does not talk of his earthly poverty, so he too does not talk of his earthly riches; they both talk of one and the same thing, of the heavenly riches, of being in existence for God as one who prays and gives thanks for the daily bread, as one who is God’s steward.

And with this understanding, but only with this understanding, the rich Christian has joy in his earthly riches. But is it not very observable how much quicker it went when starting from poverty and attaining joy, and on the other hand how many difficulties are connected with starting from earthly riches and attaining joy? So then, as a Christian, the Christian has joy in his earthly riches. He believes as a Christian that he has a Father in heaven, and that it is this Father who gives him the earthly riches; yet for him the giver is infinitely more than the gift, he therefore does not seek the gift but the giver. He believes (what every Christian believes, but what for the rich Christian is so necessary) that the riches of a Christian are in heaven; hence his heart tends thither where his treasure is. He keeps constantly in mind that He who possessed all the riches of the world gave up all that He possessed and lived in poverty, that therefore the life of holiness is lived in poverty, and so again in ignorance of all the riches that are possessed. Hence the rich Christian is in a position to have joy in his earthly riches, finding joy whenever he is granted opportunity to do some good with his riches, that he can do another man a service, and by this same act can serve God. Oh, it is accounted a difficult thing to do two things at the same time; but it surely would be difficult to find a more blessed two-fold action to be done at the same time, than to do a service to another man and by the same act to do a service to God! It is accounted difficult to remember two things at once, difficult enough for many a man to remember the word, 'To do good and to communicate forget not', and yet the rich Christian remembers one more word, 'Forget not God when thou doest good and dost communicate.' Hence the rich Christian has a double joy in doing good, because he is at the same time led to think of God. The rich Christian believes (what seems most nearly to concern the receiver, but Christianly concerns quite as much the giver) that every good and perfect gift is from above, so that if the gift he gives is to be good and perfect, it

must be God that gives it through him. Hence he has joy in his riches because it gives him occasion to learn to know God, who indeed is the real, the hidden, giver, the rich man being His confidant who is employed on these errands of blessing; and therefore the rich Christian has joy in his earthly riches for the fact that he helps others to thank and praise God, whereas in turn he also makes to himself friends, who indeed cannot make requital, but who nevertheless (ah, this is almost usury!) can in requital receive him in the hereafter.

Thus the rich Christian in abundance is without the anxiety of abundance, as ignorant as the bird, to that extent as poor as the poor Christian, and so has infinite joy in his earthly riches.

He has an advantage over the bird in being rich as a Christian, and, with this understanding, he has in turn the advantage of joy in his earthly riches; he is not merely without anxiety like the bird.

Therefore you are not to ask What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? — after all such things do the heathen seek. *For the rich heathen has this anxiety.*

The rich heathen is as far as possible from being ignorant of his riches and abundance. For a man can *become* ignorant of his riches and abundance only by becoming aware of something else; but the rich heathen neither knows nor wishes to know of anything else. Yes, it is difficult for a man who has riches and abundance to be unaware of that which day in and day out, so many times and in so many ways, but always ensnaringly, obtrudes itself upon one. Nevertheless it is a thing that can be done by becoming aware of God. For this knowledge entirely employs the Christian's mind and thought, excludes everything else from his memory, captivates his heart for ever, so that he becomes entirely ignorant. The rich heathen, on the other hand, has also only one thought, that of riches; about that all his thoughts revolve — yet he is anything but a thinker. Not only is he without God in

the world, but riches is his god, attracting his every thought. He has need of but one thing, the one thing needful — and so he does not need God. But where one's treasure is, there will one's heart be also, and the rich heathen's heart is with riches, it is on the earth — he is no traveller, he is bound as a serf to the soil. If the rich Christian who has riches is as one who has not, the rich heathen is as one who has nothing else — nothing else to think of, nothing else to put his trust in, nothing else to be glad of, nothing else to be anxious for, nothing else to talk of. He is in a position to be able to look away from everything else, from everything that is lofty and noble and holy and lovely, but to look away from his riches is not possible to him for an instant.

Yes, the rich heathen has indeed knowledge of his riches and abundance, and with the increase of knowledge the increase of anxiety; he is aware of that which causes anxiety, and as this is the only thing he is aware of, he has nothing but anxiety. Thou canst see it in him by looking upon him, upon him the sallow tight-wad who gathers and gathers... anxiety unto himself; him the famished gourmand who is hungry in abundance, who also says, What shall I eat? and, What shall I drink? How will it be possible tomorrow (for today is provided for) to discover a dish so delicate that it could please my palate? him the sleepless niggard whom money, more cruel than the cruellest executioner, keeps more sleepless than the most abominable criminal; him the squinting money-changer who never looks away from his money except to see with envy that another possesses more; him the withered miser who for money starves himself to death — a thing which no one else has ever been heard of doing for money. Behold them — and hear what they say; they all say, and this is the only thing they talk about, they all say substantially, What shall we eat? and, What shall we drink? For the more riches and abundance they get, the more knowledge they acquire also,

and this knowledge is anxiety, it does not satisfy hunger, it does not quench thirst; no, it stimulates hunger, it incites thirst.

Verily, they that desire to be rich fall into many temptations and snares which corrupt a man — and what indeed is the temptation of riches but that of desiring to be rich — of desiring to be quite certain of remaining rich, of desiring to be richer? It is a delusion that the anxiety of riches, which is not healed in a godly way (and in such case this may just as well occur whether one possesses a little less or a little more), might find any condition in life wherewith it would be content; as there never has lived any bird which ever took more than 'enough', so there never has lived a rich heathen who had 'enough'. No, there is no hunger so insatiable as the unnatural hunger of abundance, no knowledge so dissatisfied as the defiling knowledge of riches and abundance.

And what then is *the temptation* which comprises the many temptations? It is, by doing away with God, to cease to be a man; instead of being purer than the innocent bird, to be godforsaken, worse than bestially defiled, to sink lower than the beast; poorer than the poorest slave of the heathen, to serve in the most miserable and senseless thraldom, in abundance to slave for meat and drink, in wealth to slave for money, a curse to oneself, to nature an abhorrence, to the race a defilement.

Let us now in conclusion consider the bird, which indeed has its place in the Gospel and should have a place in the discourse. The bird is — well, if it is rich, it is ignorant that it is rich; the rich Christian *became* ignorant of it, he is rich, poor, rich; the rich heathen is poor, poor, poor. The bird keeps silent, it can well do that, it keeps silent about what it does not know; the rich Christian does not talk at all of his earthly riches, but only of the riches; the rich heathen knows of nothing to talk about except his mammon. In comparison with the ignorant bird the rich Christian is a wise man in ignorance, but the rich heathen is a fool, exceedingly knowing in the

knowledge which is foolishness. The ignorant bird is, in comparison with the Christian, like a little booby; in comparison with the heathen it is like a wise man. The ignorant bird is innocently aware of nothing, the rich heathen is guiltily aware, and only aware, of that which is defiling. The ignorant bird lives like a somnambulist in the power of slumber, it sees nothing; the rich Christian who became ignorant of his earthly riches can, as though in a game, see nothing — because eternity blinds him he cannot see by the earthly light of day; the rich heathen sees dismally only in the dark — he cannot see by the light of eternity. The bird is the light and nimble traveller; the rich Christian who became ignorant travelled for ever farther afield; the rich heathen remained heavy, like a stone, upon the ground, all the heavier by reason of his defilement. When one is rich there is only one way of becoming rich: that of becoming ignorant of one's riches, of becoming poor. The bird's way is the shortest, that of the Christian the most blessed. According to the teaching of Christianity, there is only one rich man, namely, the Christian; every one else is poor, both the poor man and the rich. A man is most healthy when he does not notice at all or know that he has a body, and the rich man is in health when, as healthy as the bird, he knows nothing of his earthly riches; but when he knows of it, when it is the only thing he knows, then he is lost. When the rich Christian became entirely ignorant of his earthly riches he gained more than the bird, he gained heaven; when the rich heathen became entirely and solely conscious of his riches he lost what no bird loses when it falls to the ground, he lost heaven.

III. THE ANXIETY OF LOWLINESS

BE NOT ANXIOUS what ye shall put on — after all such things do the heathen seek.

THE sparrows are divided into grey sparrows and yellow, or if you will, golden sparrows; but this distinction, this division, lowly/superior, does not exist for them, not for any one of them. The bird which flies at the head when they are flocking, or on the right hand, is followed indeed by the others, there is a distinction between the foremost and the hindmost, between right and left, but the distinction lowly/superior does not exist; in the active swing of their flight, as the flock describes free and graceful figures in the air, the positions of first and last, of right and left, are altered. And when the thousands of voices sing in chorus there likely is one which gives the note, this distinction there is, but lowly/superior is a distinction which does not exist, and joy is unrestrained in the interchange of voices. It delights 'the individual' bird indescribably to sing in chorus with the others, yet it does not sing to delight the others, it is delighted by its own song and by the song of the others, hence it breaks off quite arbitrarily, ceases for an instant, until again it feels like joining in... and hearing itself.

So the bird has not this anxiety. How then does this come about? It is due to the fact that the bird is what it is, is itself, content to be itself, delighted with itself; it hardly knows distinctly, or is in its own mind quite clear what it is, and still less what others are. But it is delighted with itself and with what it is... whatever that may be; for it has no time for reflection, or even for making a start at it, so delighted it is with being what it is. In order to be, in order to have joy in being, it does not have to take the long road of learning first to know something about the others in order thereby to learn to know what it is itself. No, it takes the most delightful short cut; it is what

it is; for it there is no question about ‘to be or not to be’; by the help of the short cut it easily avoids all those anxieties of difference. Whether a bird’s a bird for a’ that, whether it is ‘just as good a bird’ as the others of the same species; yes, even if it is like its mate — about all such matters it thinks not at all, so impatient is it in its joy at being; no young girl who is on tiptoe to go to a dance can be so impatient to be off as is the bird to get started at being what it is. For it has not an instant to waste if this might delay it born being; the shortest instant would be a distressingly long period, if in that time it might not be what it is; it would die of impatience at the very least objection to being allowed without more ado to... be. It is what it is, but it is; it lets five be an even number... and it is. Such surely is the case with the bird. If thou hast not beheld the proud soaring of the royal bird — if thou seest merely the little bird that sits and swings on a twig and amuses itself by singing — is there the least trace of the anxiety of lowliness? For thou wilt surely not raise the objection (which is precisely the instructive thought) that the bird is ‘high upon a straw’ [a proverbial expression for, ‘in high station’]. And if thou wilt — then take the straw upon which it sits. Although more vivacious than the lily in its joy at being, the bird is yet quite like the lily in its innocent self-contentment. If thou hast never beheld the splendid lily which in its beauty humbly holds its head so high — when thou seest merely the insignificant flower which stands in a ditch and jests with the wind as though it were its peer, if only thou wouldst see it after a storm has done its best to make the flower feel its insignificance, if thou wouldst consider it as it sticks its head out again to see if it might not be fair weather again — does it seem to thee that there is the least trace of the anxiety of lowliness? Or when it stands at the foot of the mighty tree and looks up at it with astonishment, does it seem to thee that there is the least trace of the anxiety of lowliness on the part of the astonished lily? Or dost thou believe that it would feel itself belittled if the tree were half as big

again? Is it not rather as if it had the conceit to imagine that everything was for its sake?

So easy it is for the lily and the bird to be, they are so easygoing about this matter of living; the beginning, or making a start at it, strikes them as a thing so natural. For the lily and the bird are fortunately favoured by the fact that it is so easy for them to begin to exist that no sooner have they come into existence than they have at once begun, are at once in the full swing of being, they feel not the least need of anything that is to come before the beginning, and they are not in the least tempted by that trial which amongst men is so much talked about and is described as a difficulty so fraught with peril, the difficulty of beginning.

How then is the bird a teacher, and where is the point of contact in the instruction it gives? Why surely in this, that it makes the circuitous route to reach the beginning, this route which can be so very long — that it makes it as short as possible, in order as quickly as possible to come to itself, to be itself.

This anxiety the lowly Christian has not. Yet he is different from the bird in this respect, that he must be tried in this difficulty of beginning; for he is aware of the distinction lowly/ superior. He knows, and he knows that the others know this same thing of him, that he is a lowly man; and he knows what this means. He knows also what is to be understood by the advantages of worldly station, and that whereas ordinarily they exist to express what the others are who possess these advantages, in his case they serve only to indicate how lowly he is. For with every new advantage the superior person attains, the more superior he becomes, and with every advantage the lowly man must admit he is denied, the more lowly, in one sense, he becomes; that which exists for the sake of indicating how much the superior person is, seems from the other side to exist in order to indicate how little there is to the lowly man. — Oh, how difficult is the beginning of existence or of

coming into existence: to exist, thereupon to continue in existence, and only after all that to exist; ah, cunningly hidden snare which is not spread for any bird! For it seems indeed as if, in order to be himself, a man must first be expertly informed about what the others are, and thereby learn to know what he himself is — in order then to be that. However, if he walks into the snare of this optical illusion, he never reaches the point of being himself. He goes then on and on like one who follows a road which the passers-by tell him certainly leads to the city, but neglect to tell him that if he would go to the city, he must turn around; for he is following the road which leads to the city, that he is following it... away from the city.

But the lowly Christian does not walk into this snare of optical illusion, he sees with the eyes of faith, and with the swiftness of the faith which seeks God he is at the beginning, he is himself before God, content with being himself. He has learned to know from the world or from the others that he is a lowly man, but he has not abandoned himself to this knowledge, he does not lose himself in it after a worldly fashion, he does not altogether realize it, by holding on to God with the tenacity of eternity he has become himself. He is like one who has two names, one of them being for all the rest, the other for his dearest ones; in the world, in intercourse with the others, he is the lowly man, he does not give himself out as anything else, and he is not taken for anything else, but before God he is himself. In the contacts of daily intercourse it seems as though he must constantly wait for the others in order to learn to know what he is now, at this moment. But he does not wait; he makes speed by being before God. He is the lowly man as a part of the multitude of men, and what he is as such depends upon his relationship to them; but in being himself he is not dependent upon the multitude, before God he is himself. For from 'the others', naturally, one properly only learns to know what the others are — it is in this way the world would beguile a man from being himself. 'The others', in turn do not

know at all what they themselves are, but only what the others are. There is only One who knows what He Himself is, that is God; and He knows also what every man in himself is, for it is precisely by being before God that every man is. The man who is not before God is not himself, for this a man can be only by being before Him who is in and for himself. [What the 'self' is, 'the individual', what it means for a man to be 'before God' — these are the themes which most engrossed S. K. But fortunately he rarely uses in the Discourses the abstract vocabulary of German philosophy: *an sich*; *das an-und-fur-sich-Seiende.]* If one is oneself by being in Him who is in and for Himself, one can be in others or before others, but one cannot by being merely before others be oneself.

The lowly Christian is himself *before God.* In this wise the bird is not itself; for the bird simply *is* what it is. By the aid of this mode of being it has every instant evaded the difficulty of the beginning, but in this wise it did not attain the glorious end of the difficult beginning, to be doubly itself. The bird is like a single cipher, a man who is himself is more than a decade. The bird luckily evades the difficulty of the beginning and therefore gets no conception how lowly it is; but thus it is incomparably more lowly than one who knows how lowly he is. The *conception* of lowliness is nonexistent for the bird; but the lowly Christian *is not essentially existent for this conception*, he will not be essentially existent for it, for essentially he is and wills to be himself before God. The bird therefore is properly the lowly one. The lowly Christian is, in opposition to his lowliness, himself — without for this cause wishing to cease to be the lowly man he is in relation to others; he is *in lowliness* himself. And thus the lowly Christian is in lowliness without the anxiety of lowliness. Wherein does this lowliness consist? In the relationship to 'the others'. But what is the ground of this anxiety? It lies in existing only before others, in not knowing anything else but the relationship to others. The bird is not aware of the relationship to

others, and to that extent it is not lowly, and again to that extent it is without the anxiety of lowliness; but of course it is not aware that it has a higher relationship.

And what then is the lowly Christian who before God is himself? He is a *man.* In so far as he is a man he is in a certain sense like the bird, which is what it is. But upon this we will not here dwell further.

But at the same time he is a *Christian*, as is implied in the question which asks what the lowly *Christian* is. In so far as he is a Christian he is not like the bird, for the bird *is* what it is. But it is not thus one can be a Christian; if one is a Christian, he must *have become* such. So the lowly Christian too has become (amounted to) something in the world; alas, the bird cannot become (amount to) anything, it is what it is. In likeness to the bird, the lowly Christian was a man, but then he became a Christian, he became (amounted to) something in the world. And he can constantly become (amount to) more and more, for he can constantly become more and more a Christian. *As* a man he was not created in the image (pattern) of God, but as a Christian he has God for a pattern! This disquieting thought (a pattern) which incessantly challenges one, the bird does not know; the bird is what it is, nothing whatever disturbs it in that being it has; yes, it is true, nothing disturbs it — not even the blissful thought of having God for its pattern. A pattern is to be sure a challenge... but what bliss! Even in the case of the poet we speak of it as good fortune when we say there is something within him which challenges him to sing; but the pattern is a still stronger challenge, an even stronger stimulus, to every one before whose eyes it is shown, for whom it is existent. The pattern is a promise, no other is so sure, for the pattern is indeed the fulfilment. — For the bird there is no pattern, but for the lowly Christian the pattern is in existence, and he is in existence for his Pattern — he can constantly grow to resemble it more and more.

[Christ as the Pattern is the persistent theme of S. K.'s last works: *Training in Christianity* and *Judge for Yourselves.]*

The lowly Christian who is himself before God is as a Christian in existence for his Pattern. He believes that He has lived on earth, that He let Himself be born in poor and lowly circumstances, yes, in dishonour, and thereupon as a child lived with the simple man He called His father and with the despised maiden who was His mother. That thereupon He wandered about in the lowly form of a servant, not to be distinguished from other lowly men even by His extraordinary lowliness, until He ended in the utmost wretchedness, crucified as a criminal — and then, to be sure, left behind Him a Name; but the lowly Christian's request is merely to dare in life and in death to appropriate His Name, or to be named after Him. The lowly Christian believes that, as it is related, He chose for His disciples lowly men of the simplest condition, and sought out for His companions those whom the world repudiated and despised; that throughout the various vicissitudes of His life, when men would highly exalt Him, and when they would abase Him if possible even more than He had abased Himself, He remained faithful to the lowly people to whom He was bound by the closer ties, faithful to the lowly men whom He had bound to Himself, faithful to the despised men whom they had even expelled from the synagogue because He had helped them. The lowly Christian believes that this lowly man, or that His life in lowliness, has showed how much a lowly man matters, and, alas, humanly speaking, what it means to be a superior man, how infinitely much it may mean to be a lowly man, and how infinitely little to be a superior man, if one is nothing else. The lowly man believes that this Pattern exists expressly for him who in fact is a lowly man, struggling perhaps with poverty and narrow circumstances, or, more lowly still, being despised and rejected. He admits indeed that it was not he himself that chose this scorned and despised condition of lowliness, and that

to this extent he does not resemble the Pattern; yet he consoles himself with the thought that the Pattern exists for him, this Pattern which by means of lowliness presses itself as it were compassionately upon him, as though it would say to him, 'Lowly man, canst thou not perceive that the Pattern is for thee?' True, he has not himself, with his own eyes, seen the Pattern, but he believes that He existed. There was, in a certain sense, nothing at all to see — except lowliness (for glory is something that must be *believed*), and of lowliness he is well able to form a conception. He has not with his own eyes seen the Pattern, nor does he make any attempt to have the senses construct such a picture. Yet he often sees the Pattern. For as often as in faith's gladness at the glory of this Pattern he completely forgets his poverty, his lowliness, the contempt in which he is held, he sees the Pattern — and he himself approximately resembles it. For if in such a blissful moment, when he is lost to himself in the Pattern, another man beholds him, this other man sees before his eyes merely a lowly man — precisely so it was in the case of the Pattern, one saw merely a lowly man. He believes and hopes that he shall approach ever more and more to likeness with this Pattern, who only in the beyond will reveal Himself in glory, for here on earth the Pattern can only be in lowliness and can only be seen in lowliness. He believes that this Pattern, if he steadily strives to resemble it, brings him again into kinship with God, and into a still closer kinship, that he not only has God for his Creator, as all creatures have, but has God for his Brother.

But then after all the lowly Christian is something rather exalted? Yes, that he is, to be sure, something so exalted that one quite loses sight of the bird. Like the bird he is lowly without the anxiety of lowliness, though oppressed in a certain sense, as the bird is not, he is nevertheless highly exalted. He does not talk of his lowliness, at least not despondently; it only reminds him of the Pattern, and with that he thinks of His exaltation — and when he does so he is himself approximately a reminder of the Pattern.

The lowly heathen, *on the other hand*, *has this anxiety.* The lowly *heathen* is without God in the world, and moreover he is never essentially himself (which one only is by being before God), nor ever satisfied with being himself, which of course one cannot be if one is not oneself. He is not himself, not content with being himself, not content like the bird with being what it is; he is discontented with what he is, a burden to himself, he sighs and protests against his fate.

What is he then? He is the lowly man, nothing else, that is, he is what the others make of him, and what he makes of himself by only being for others. His anxiety is that he is nothing, yes, nothing whatever. So far is he from being like the bird, which is what it is. And hence again his anxiety is *to become something* in the world. To exist before God, that, as he thinks, is not to be anything — that makes no showing in the world in contrast or in comparison with others. To be a man, that, as he thinks, is not to be anything — that is in fact to be nothing, for in this there is no distinction from nor advantage over all other men. To be a Christian, as he thinks, is not to be anything — that indeed we all are. But to be Councillor of Justice — that would be something — and by all means he must become something in the world, it is enough to drive one to despair not to be anything at all.

'That is enough to drive one to despair' — he talks as if he were not already in despair; yet he is in despair, and despair is his anxiety. It is assumed indeed that in every state the lowly man is ordinarily exempted from bearing the burdens which the more favoured classes have to bear; but the lowly man who is in despair, i.e.. the heathen, even though he is lowly, is not exempted from bearing the heaviest of all burdens. They talk about the king bearing the weight of the crown, the man in high place bearing the weight of responsibility for government, him to whom much is given the weight of looking out for others, whereas it must also be taken into account that the king after all is the king, the man in high place is highly placed, the

man to whom much is given is the man who has much; but the lowly man in despair, the heathen, worries himself to death under the weight of what he is not, he strains himself (yes, the situation is a crazy one) under the weight of a burden he doesn't bear. Whether it is a fact that it is the king who, like the foundation, sustains all the others, or that the others sustain the king as the topmost, we will not investigate here — but the lowly man in despair, the heathen, bears up all the others. This prodigious weight, 'all the others', weighs upon him, and that with the redoubled weight of despair, for it is not through the conception that he is something this weight weighs upon him, no, it weighs upon him through the conception that he is nothing. Verily, so inhumanly has no state or society ever dealt with any man, that by reason of the circumstance that one is nothing one should bear the burden of all; so inhumanly does only the lowly man in despair, the heathen, deal with himself. Deeper and deeper he sinks in the anxiety of despair, but he finds no footing to support the weight — he is in fact nothing, as to his own anguish he becomes convinced of it through the conception of what the others are. More and more ridiculous — oh, no, more and more pitiable, or rather more and more ungodly, more and more inhuman he becomes in his foolish effort to become something after all, something, however little it might be, which according to his notion was worth being.

Thus the lowly man in despair, the heathen, sinks under the prodigious weight of comparison which he lays upon himself. The thing of being a lowly man, which for the lowly Christian is a part of being a Christian, just as the weak and scarcely audible breathing is a part of the audible letter (and thus it is the lowly Christian talks about his lowliness, he talks about it only as a way of expressing the fact that he is a Christian) — this for the heathen is his anxiety day and night, about this his every thought is employed. Without the prospect of eternity, never strengthened by the heavenly hope, never himself, godforsaken, he lives in despair, as if for a

punishment he were condemned to live these seventy years, tortured by the thought of being nothing, tortured by the fruitlessness of his effort to be something. For him the bird suggests no thought of self-reliance, heaven has no comfort — and that is only natural, for neither has the earth any comfort for him. It cannot be said of him that he is bound in thraldom to the earth, overcome by the enchantments of earthly life which made him forgetful of heaven; no, it is rather as if the temporal did everything to repel him by bringing him to nothing. And yet he desires to belong to the temporal on the most miserable conditions, he will not let it go, he clings tighter to being nothing, tighter and tighter as he seeks in vain to be something in a worldly sense, he clings despairingly tighter and tighter... to that which to the point of despair he would not be; thus he lives, not upon the earth, but as if he were cast out into the underworld. Behold that king [Tantalus] whom the gods punished, he suffered the dreadful punishment that whenever he was hungry the most delicious fruits appeared, but when he grasped at them they vanished; the lowly man in despair, the heathen, suffers a more anguishing punishment through self-contradiction. For while, tormented by being nothing, he seeks in vain to be something, he is not merely something but much; it is not fruits which withdraw themselves from him, it is he himself that withdraws even from being what he is. For he is not a man — and he cannot become a Christian.

Let us then in conclusion think of the bird; it has its place in the Gospel and should have its place in the discourse. The lowly bird is without the anxiety of lowliness; the lowly Christian is in lowly station without having the anxiety of lowliness, and so... is highly exalted above all earthly highness; the lowly heathen is in his anxiety far below himself, even if he were the lowest of the low. The bird does not look narrowly into what it is, the lowly Christian looks narrowly into what he is as a Christian; the lowly heathen gazes fixedly in desperation upon the fact that he is lowly. 'What!...

lowly...' says the bird, 'let us never think of such things, one flies away from them!'

'What!... lowly,' says the Christian, 'I am a Christian!'

'Alas, lowly!' says the heathen. 'I am what I am,' says the bird; 'What I shall be is not yet revealed,' says the lowly Christian; 'I am nothing, and I come to nothing,' says the lowly heathen. 'I exist,' says the bird; 'In death life begins,' says the lowly Christian; 'I am nothing, and in death I become nothing,' says the lowly heathen. In comparison with the lowly Christian the bird is a child; in comparison with the lowly heathen it is a happy child. Like the free bird as it soars highest in the joy of existing, so does the lowly Christian rise even higher; like the captured bird when in discouragement and anguish it beats itself to death in the net, so does the lowly heathen deprive himself of life still more pitiably in captivity to nothingness. According to the teaching of Christianity there is only one exaltation, that of being a Christian, everything else is lowly, both lowliness and exaltation. When one is lowly there is only one way to exaltation, that of becoming a Christian; this way the bird does not know, it remains what it is; but then there is another way which the bird does not know, that is the way the heathen takes. The bird's way of being is enigmatical, it is not to be found; the Christian's way was found by Him who is the Way; the heathen's way ends in darkness, no one has found his way back by that way. The bird avoids all danger by that byway it has; the lowly Christian does not take the by-way and is saved blissfully in glory; the lowly heathen chooses the by-way and 'goes his own way' to perdition.

IV. THE ANXIETY OF HIGHNESS

BE NOT ANXIOUS what ye shall put on — after all such things do the heathen seek.

Thi*s anxiety the bird, has not.* But is highness then an anxiety? One would think that the higher a man stood, the more he would be exempted from all anxieties, for he has all the more men about him who are anxious and employed about nothing else but to keep all anxieties away from him. Alas, there is no false sarcasm in talking, as the Gospel does, in perfectly equivalent terms of the anxiety of highness and the anxiety of lowliness. For highness and power and honour and prestige tender their... faithful services as myrmidons which are to stand about the man of high estate to protect him from every anxiety, as it were on bended knee they promise... faithful allegiance — oh, but it is just this body-guard with which the man of high estate has not the courage to break, it is just this body-guard, which for safety's sake is so close to his body, just this it is that costs him his night's sleep. A factual situation may serve as a symbol: an emperor who rules over the whole world, surrounded by his faithful body-guard which rules over the emperor; an emperor who makes the whole world tremble, surrounded by his brave body-guard behind which and before which the emperor trembles.

But the bird, notwithstanding it always is on high, has not the anxiety of highness — *neither* that anxiety which is not in question here, the anxiety which does honour to the man of high station, that of being careful for the welfare of those committed to him (for in this little work we talk only of the anxiety a man may be without, indeed should be without, not of the anxiety without which it is impossible to be a Christian); *nor* that anxiety which

here is in question. It hardly occurs to the bird to be careful of itself, still less that it might be commissioned to take care of others; the bird says in all innocence about its relationship to others, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ It never occurs to any bird, not even to the bird that flies highest, that it might be so high that it should rule over others; but thus it has no anxiety whatever as to whether the others show it due deference or refuse to show it — or whether perhaps they even may be plotting to cast it down from its highness. No bird is so highly placed as that.

And yet every bird is in fact on high; but it is as though essentially every bird were placed equally high. This heavenly equality amongst the birds, or their equal highness under heaven, has something in common with the highness of eternal life — where likewise there is neither high nor low, and yet there is highness. Under the dome of heaven there is abundant room for the bird to soar as high as it will; but also the bird which walks on the ground is on high. The bird has no other way of understanding the thing. If one were to say to it, ‘But then thou art not really exalted if thou art not *more* exalted than the others,’ the bird would reply, ‘Why, how is that? Am I not on high?’ — and with that the bird flies high, or it remains on the ground, where it is none the less on high and conscious of its highness. Hence it is on high without the anxiety of highness, on high without being exalted over any one — under the dome of heaven there is too much room for that... or there is no room for narrow-mindedness.

Do but regard that solitary bird where it holds itself high aloft in the sky, so calm, so proud, without the least movement, not even the flap of a wing. And if thou perhaps hast attended to thy business and after the lapse of several hours dost return to the same place — look, it remains in the air unaltered, resting proudly upon the outstretched wings which it does not move, while it surveys the earth. It is difficult for the unpractised eye to estimate distance in the air or upon the water, but perhaps it has not altered

its position by half a yard. It stands without footing, for it stands upon the air, so tranquil in highness — shall I say, so like a ruler of men? Or was there never a ruler so tranquil? It fears nothing, it beholds no danger, no abyss beneath it, its eye is never dizzy at that height, its sight never confused by the altitude, ah, and yet there never was a man so sharp-sighted, not even one who in lowliness envies highness. But what is it then which keeps it so tranquil on high? It is highness. For in highness in and for itself there is no danger, and beneath it there is no abyss. Only when beneath it there is highness which yet is more lowly than it is, and so on in turn — in short when there is somebody beneath it, then there is something beneath it, and then also there is the abyss beneath it. But for the bird there is no one lowlier, hence it is on high without having the abyss beneath it, and hence without anxiety, which comes with and from the abyss.

The bird is on high without being higher than anybody else, therefore without the anxiety of highness. Thus it is an apt teacher, and here is the point of contact in the instruction. To be on high in that fashion is possible without anxiety. If some one were to say, 'To be on high in that fashion is not to be on high at all, it is merely a play on words to talk of the bird as His Highness' — well, that only proves him an indocile pupil, a naughty boy who will not sit still during the lesson hour, but disturbs the instruction. For it is true enough that if he will not take pains to understand the bird, if instead of learning to reform his notions in conformity with the instruction the bird gives, he would take the bird to task and require it to accept his notions, thus rejecting it as a teacher, then indeed it is impossible to learn anything from the bird — and (be it said to the credit of the bird) this is literally the only way one cannot learn anything from the bird. But he who desires to learn will learn about highness that the only way one who is on high can truly be without anxiety is not to be higher than any one else.

The Christian of high position has not this anxiety. What then is the Christian of high rank? Well, if thou dost ask in a worldly sense whether he be king or emperor, or his highness, or his grace, etc., it is impossible to give an answer which covers the case generally. But if thou dost ask in a Christian sense, the answer is easy. He is a Christian. And as a Christian he knows full well all about shutting the door when he is to talk with God — not lest any one might get to know that he was talking with God, but lest anything or anybody might disturb him; when he talks with God he lays aside all earthly and all spurious pomp and glory, but also all false illusions.

He believes that there is a God in heaven with whom there is no respect of persons, that the man (if such a thing can be imagined) who might rule over the whole human race is not the least bit more important to God than the lowliest man — or than the sparrow which falls to the ground. He understands it therefore as an illusion that because he is so important to all men, or to such a countless number of them, and is plainly important to so many for their very life, that because he enjoys in his lifetime the heightened consciousness of being indispensable, and by anticipation the rich consciousness of being missed after his death, that therefore his life should also be more important to God; for to God he is not more important than the sparrow which falls to the ground — neither he, the mightiest of men, nor the wisest man that ever lived, nor any man whatsoever. He believes (instead of heeding the much talk about the many who could not live without him) that it is he who in order to live has need every instant, yea, every second, of this God, without whose will doubtless no sparrow falls to the ground, but without whom also no sparrow comes into existence and is. If the rest of us have another understanding, thinking that prayers are made for him because we need him, have need of his continuing in life, he for his part has a different understanding with God, recognizing that he, precisely for the fact that his task is incomparably the greatest, has more

need than any other man that prayers be made for him. He believes that it is an unchangeable God who dwells in heaven, who will have His way — although all were to rise up against Him, which to Him would signify nothing; an unchangeable God who requires obedience, as well in the greatest matters as in the least, in the least detail of the most comprehensive world-historical achievement as in the most every-day undertaking, as well of the mightiest man that has ever lived as of the lowliest, and of all nature as well, which does not presume to do anything whatever without His will. He understands therefore that it is an illusion if any one would make him believe that because a word of power from him is enough *to set in motion* thousands of men, yea, almost to transform the face of the earth, because thousands press upon him and court the smile of the mighty, that therefore God should treat him differently than He does every other man, that towards him the unchangeable God should not also be unchangeable, unchangeable as eternity, unchangeable as the rocks — but believes that God might be almightily able to transform everything, more dreadfully than he, both the throne and the legions, both heaven and earth. He believes that before this God he is a sinner, and that this God is just as jealous of sin whoever the sinner may be. He understands therefore that it is an illusion if any one would make him believe that because there is hardly a man who is capable of taking account of his stewardship, of what he wrongly did and of what he left undone, because no man dares to condemn him, that therefore the righteous God (for whom it is not more important that the mightiest sins than that the lowliest does so — however different, humanly speaking, the magnitude of the consequences are — not more forgivable that the mightiest sins than that the lowliest does so), being amazed at human power, might not be able, or might not dare, to judge him with all the severity of the law. He believes that every instant he needs the forgiveness of the gracious God. Therefore he believes that God walked upon earth in

lowliness, and thus pronounced all earthly power and might to be nothing. He believes that as no one enters into the kingdom of heaven except by becoming again as a little child, so no one comes to Christ except *as* a lowly man, as one who by himself and with all that he is by himself is nothing. He believes that even if Christ had not chosen lowly men for His disciples, but men of high station, these must first have become lowly men in order to be His disciples. He believes that before Christ there is no respect of persons, because before Christ there is only lowliness; that as certainly as no hale man can be healed by Christ, just so certainly can no superior man be saved as such, but only as a lowly man. For no one can become or be a Christian except in the character of, or as, a lowly man.

'But then in fact the Christian of high rank is essentially just as lowly as the lowly Christian?' Yes, certainly, that he is. 'But then essentially the Christian of high rank really doesn't know how superior he is?' No, essentially he doesn't know that. 'But then really the discourse has deceived the reader by not talking of earthly highness, of titles, dignities, and of their anxiety!' Well, yes — and yet no, the discourse has not deceived, for the Christian of high rank has not this anxiety — and this is precisely what the discourse is about, that he has not this anxiety. And what discourse is it which most truly expresses this; is it one which protests and protests that he has not this anxiety, or is it one which, by talking of that which properly engages the mind of the Christian of rank, namely, *lowliness*, lets it tacitly be understood that he has not that anxiety of *highness*?

One can become or be a Christian only as, or in the character of, a lowly man. The thing of becoming (and so also of being) a Christian is surely a thought, but it is a duplex thought, which consequently has duplex vision. It is therefore one and the same thought which permits the lowly Christian to understand his highness and the Christian of high rank to understand his lowliness. The Christian of rank and position lets the conception (the

Christian conception) take from him the power and highness (of the earthly sort), or, in other words, he abandons himself to the power of the conception; therewith he becomes the lowly man which one must be in order to become and to be a Christian. In case an actor were to go out in the street and be a king because he played the part of a king the night before, everybody would laugh at him. In case a child who in a game with children of his own age was ‘the Emperor’ were to approach his elders with the same presumption, we should all laugh at the child. And why? Because the play and the children’s game are unreality. But the thing of being in reality of superior rank is not, Christianly understood, reality; the real is the eternal, the Christian. The true highness is the Christian highness; but in true Christian highness no one is higher than the others. So this thing of rank is unreality in comparison with the true highness. And so, Christianly, it is quite right that the superior Christian himself (for that others should do so has no place nor justification in Christianity, but only in the disgusting impudence of ungodly worldliness) should smile at his earthly highness, at his so-called real highness; for only the Christian highness is the real.

Yet if such is the case, has it not been more difficult for the man of high station to become a Christian (for here we are talking of the Christian of high station) than for the lowly man? To this question the Scripture answers, Yes. It is commonly thought, I know, that it must be equally easy and equally difficult for the lowly man and for the lofty to become a Christian, for it is said that the lowliness here in question is not the outward but the inward thing, a sense of one’s own lowliness, which the man of high station can have just as well as the lowly man; Christianity is far too spiritual a thing to talk about outward lowliness. Well, that is true in a way. However, the Scripture does nevertheless (perhaps as a precaution and with knowledge of the human heart) talk also in another fashion, it talks of being literally a lowly man; and so also does the Pattern, witnessing more potently

than any words or phrases, for ‘He’ lived in actual earthly lowliness; accordingly, in resolving to be the Pattern, he did not choose to be a man of rank and yet inwardly the lowly man. No, He was literally the lowly man, and that in a much more serious sense than when a king lays aside momentarily his dignity — and is recognized by the courtiers and then still more applauded... for his humility.

There is something in the spiritual life which corresponds to what spelling is in contrast to continuous reading. One spells, one advances slowly, distinguishing clearly and evidently between details, for fear of finally reducing the whole content of life to ‘resolved moments’ and life itself to much ado about nothing. So it is with the possession of external superiority in connexion with becoming a Christian. Christianity has never taught that to be literally a lowly man is synonymous with being a Christian, nor that from the literal condition of lowliness there is direct transition as a matter of course to becoming a Christian; neither has it taught that if the man of worldly position were to give up all his power, he therefore would be a Christian. But from literal lowliness to the point of becoming a Christian there is however only one step. The position of being literally a lowly man is by no means an unfavourable preparation for becoming a Christian; the position of being in possession of the advantages of outward circumstance is a circuitous path, which for the more scrupulous makes necessary a double preparation. In mathematical science one speaks of a ‘help-line’ and draws the helpline as it is called; the proof of the proposition can be inferred without the help-line, but one draws it — not for the sake of the proof, but to help oneself; it is not the proof which stands in need of the help-line, but we ourselves. So likewise one who has the advantages of outward circumstance helps himself by becoming literally poor, despised and lowly. If he does not do this he must with all the more inward concern watch over himself, wondering if he dare trust himself, and

if he knows in his own heart that nothing of all this outward rank and highness has so blinded him that he could not easily endure to be the lowly man of the people.

In this way, undeniably, the thing can be done. Christianity has never required unconditionally of any one that he should literally give up the advantages of outward circumstance, it has proposed to men rather a little precautionary rule. If one thinks one does not need it, as they thought they did in those ages when they scrupulously spelled their way — oh, what a strenuous life, to stand there on high, surrounded by all this seduction, and to be sure of oneself that one could easily endure to be the simple labouring man, because to be a Christian is of such great importance to one that with the strictest self-examination one has convinced oneself naturally that there is nothing whatever in all this which infatuates him in the least degree! What prodigious precaution with fire and light one must take if one lives, in a powder magazine; and what strenuous precautions if one would be a Christian in this environment! Oh, what a difficult life it is to live thus! Thou wilt have only a slight hint of the daily difficulty of this life if thou wilt consider how much easier it proved in the foregoing discourse to advance from lowliness and attain the Christian highness, than it is here from earthly highness, through lowliness, to attain the Christian highness. Yet the Christian of high position lives thus. He has power and honour and public esteem, is in possession of earthly advantages, but he is as one who has not; he sees all this around him, sees how as in an enchantment it only awaits his bidding, only the expression of his wish, but he is as one that sees it not, being under the spell of a still greater enchantment; he hears all this, with its almost constant flattery perhaps, but his ears are closed — for him all this is merely like being the king in a play, and like the child who in his game is ‘the Emperor’ — for he is a Christian.

And as a Christian he is in real highness. For, in the Christian understanding of it, in God's kingdom it is precisely as under the blue sky: there all are on high, but without being higher than anybody else. The bird is on high without being higher than anybody; the Christian of high station, although in earthly highness exalted above others, is on high without being higher than anybody else. Hence he is without the anxiety of highness; for, as has been said, in this way it is possible for one to be a Christian. And when in this way one is on high, if one is not a bird, or if one is a man and yet like a bird, then one is a Christian — it makes no difference if by the by he is in a worldly sense high or low.

The heathen in high place on the other hand has this anxiety. The heathen in high place is without God in the world; if the Christian of high station is in ignorance of his earthly highness, the heathen is ignorant of what true highness is. He knows no other highness than this earthly sort — and to learn to know truly what highness is, is impossible, since he is in himself untruth, vapour, vain imagination, from which no cognition of truth can issue, except that this is what it is. He knows from the bottom up all about high, higher, highest, allerhöchste, but he does not know that at the bottom of all this lies nothing, and that therefore all that he knows is nothing. In this nothingness he has his place. What this is he defines by means of definitions which belong within nothingness. One describes a nightmare as a 'ghost-ride' — the sleeper groans and pants, but he does not budge from the spot. So it is with the heathen man in high station. Now he mounts on high, now he sinks, he exults, he sighs, he pants, he groans, but he does not budge from the spot; now there is another who mounts above him, now one who plunges down from on high — yet nothing, nothing whatsoever, not even this last, can awaken him from sleep, disabuse him of his vain imagination, open his eyes to perceive that the whole thing is nothing. But might this really be nothing? Is there need of any better proof that it is not

nothing than merely to look at him, how he struggles and fights and craves and aspires, and never grants himself an instant of repose, how many he holds venally in his service, with how many he keeps on good terms that they may be helpful to him in grasping what he aspires after? Might this nevertheless be nothing, might 'nothing' be able to set things thus in motion? Why, then that busy man also must have been in the wrong when he argues that he had a great deal of business from the fact that he keeps five clerks and himself has no time to eat or drink.

Thus it is the heathen of high estate lives in highness. That there are many beneath him he knows full well; but what he does not know is beneath him, that nevertheless is beneath him — the abyss. For, as has been remarked, when one in highness is above others, or is higher than others, one has also the abyss beneath one, and in earthly highness it is only thus one can be on high. And the heathen of high station, who knows nothing else and has nothing else to think about but his earthly highness, has therefore not present to him the knowledge of the true highness which might keep him suspended aloft in ignorance of the earthly highness. No, he has the abyss beneath him, and from this the anxiety arises, or he sinks into the anxiety.

And what is the anxiety? A longing to become more and more... nothing, for it all indeed is nothing; a longing to rise higher and higher in highness, that is, to sink deeper and deeper into the anxiety of the abyss — for what is the anxiety of earthly highness but anxiety of the abyss? And what is this anxiety? The anxiety is lest any one by guile, by might, by lies, or by the truth, might take this vain imagination from him. Hence he secures himself in every way, since he descries danger everywhere, plots everywhere, envy everywhere, ghosts everywhere — naturally enough, for not in the darkest night is there so much that can afright the imagination of even a nervous person, as there are terrors in a vain imagination.

In the end the anxiety devours its prey. As pithless stumps of rotten trees shine in the darkness, as the will-o'-the-wisp glimmers in dank mists, so is he existent for others in the glimmering light of this earthly highness of his. But his self is nonexistent, his inmost being has become pithless and corroded in the service of nothingness; the thrall of vanity, having no command of himself, in the power of giddy worldliness, godforsaken, he ceases to be a man, in his most inward being he is as dead, but his highness walks ghostlike among us — it lives. It is not with a man thou art talking when thou talkest with him; in his hankering after highness he had become the thing he aspired to — he is a title. Within there is mere emptiness and vanity, yea, there is nothing; but the appearance is there, the vain appearance which wears the distinctive insignia of worldly highness, which the passers-by point out with deference — whereas he bears all this business rather as at his burial the cushions bear the medals and decorations. Oh, it may be dreadful to see a man who is almost unrecognizable in his humbleness and wretchedness, to see such wretchedness that one can hardly distinguish a man; but to see meaningless highness and to perceive that there is no man there, is horrible. It may be dreadful to see a man going about like a shadow of his former highness; but to see worldly highness and within it hardly the shadow of a man, is horrible. Him death does not have to bring to nothing; he does not need to be buried; while he lives one already can say, as is often said at the grave, 'Behold what earthly highness is!'

Let us then in conclusion think of the bird, which had its place in the Gospel and should have a place in the discourse. The bird is on high without the anxiety of highness; the Christian of high station, who in earthly highness is exalted above others, is on high without the anxiety of highness; the heathen of high station belongs with his anxiety to the abyss, he is not really on high but in the abyss. The bird is on high, the Christian of high

station is on high, the heathen of high station is in the abyss. The bird's highness is a symbol of the Christian's highness, which in turn is a counterpart of the bird's highness, the one corresponding to the other with perfect understanding, though with endless difference; thou canst understand the bird's highness by understanding that of the Christian, and by understanding the bird's thou canst understand the Christian's; the highness of the heathen is nowhere at home, either in heaven or on earth. The highness of the bird is a shadow, that of the Christian reality, that of the heathen nothingness. The bird has air within it, hence it holds itself aloft; the heathen of high station has emptiness within him, hence his highness is imaginary; the Christian of high station has faith within him, hence he soars above the abyss of earthly highness. The Christian in his highness never forgets the bird, which to him is more than the nautical signal is to the mariner, it is the teacher, and yet, alas, it is in turn a teacher whom the disciple left far behind him as it called out, 'Remember me when thou comest into thy highness'; the heathen of high station never saw the bird. The bird is on high, and yet really is only on the way to highness, and if it could understand this, it must sink; the Christian understands this, and precisely by this understanding attains to highness. There is, however, according to the teaching of Christianity, only one highness, that of being a Christian; and one abyss, heathenism; to that height no bird ever attained, nor ever flew over this abyss. Over this abyss no bird can fly, it must perish on the way; that height no bird can attain, it is only on the way. Thus the bird is happy in its highness, ignorant of the abyss, but also ignorant of blessedness; the Christian is blessed in his highness; the proud heathen is haplessly lost in the abyss.

V. THE ANXIETY OF PRESUMPTION

No one can add a cubit unto his stature — after all such things do the heathen seek.

THIS ANXIETY THE lily and the bird have not; for neither the lily nor the bird is presumptuous. It is not the same with presumptuousness as it was with poverty and abundance, with lowliness and highness. In the former case (to mention only a single instance) poverty was assumed, and the task was to be poor without the anxiety of poverty. But it is not so here, as though it were assumed that a person must be presumptuous, and the task were to be presumptuous without the anxiety of presumption. No, here no situation is posited, the task is, not to be presumptuous; and this is the only way to be without the anxiety of presumption. For poverty and abundance, lowliness and highness, are things in themselves indifferent, innocent things, not what one is entirely responsible for having or for being. Hence the discourse begins with the anxiety, it does not inveigh against poverty or abundance, against lowliness or highness, but against the anxiety. With presumption it is different; no one ever turned out to be presumptuous without being responsible for it, hence the address aims precisely at that, and not so much at the anxiety of presumption. Indeed, if it were possible to accomplish the impossible and remove the anxiety without removing the presumption, the discourse would by no means desire it; hence the anxiety is to be regarded precisely as a curse upon presumptuousness.

The lily and the bird, however, have not this anxiety. Though an individual lily with erect stem shoots up almost to a man's height — it does not crave to add either a cubit or an inch unto its stature, it does not crave anything more; neither is there any presumption in the height it reaches in

comparison with other lilies which likewise do not crave this distinction — *that* indeed would be presumption. That the golden sparrow wears all its finery, whereas the grey sparrow is poorly clad, implies no presumption on the part of the golden sparrow; the grey sparrow does not crave it — *that* indeed would be presumption. And when the bird casts itself down from the dizzy height, there is in that no presumption, nor is it tempting God — there is One that bears it up more securely than if all angels were bearing it up lest it dash its foot against a stone. And even though the bird sees so distinctly that it sees the grass grow, there is no presumption in that, it does not with its sharp sight pry into forbidden knowledge; nor when it sees clearly in the darkness of the night, for it employs no unlawful means. And though the bird is ignorant of God, there is no presumption in that; for it is innocently ignorant, not spiritlessly ignorant.

So then, neither the bird nor the lily is guilty of any presumption, and therefore self-evidently they are without the anxiety of presumption. How does this come about? It comes from the fact that the bird and the lily *constantly will as God wills and constantly do as God wills.* Because the bird constantly wills as God wills, therefore it enjoys without anxiety all its freedom. And so, when it is flying in the air at its best, and gets a notion that it would like to sit down, down it sits on a branch, and this (yes, here comes the strange part) — this is precisely what God would have it do. And then when one morning it wakes and makes up its mind, 'Today thou must travel,' it accordingly travels many, many hundreds of miles, and (yes, here comes the strange part) — this is precisely what God would have it do. Heavy as the stork is, it travels the long road thither and the long road back, it never takes it differently than precisely as it does now; it knows no other road than precisely this one on which it travels now; it takes no observations of the road for the sake of the next journey, no note of time for the sake of the next journey; it engages in no deliberation before, and in

none afterwards. But then, when one morning it wakes, that same morning it journeys, and this then was precisely what God would have it do. A man usually needs long deliberation and preparation for a journey, and yet perhaps rarely has any one ever undertaken a journey with such assurance that it is God's will, as the bird when it journeys. Good luck to thee then, thou hasty traveller, if thou hast any need of our good wishes! Men have envied thee, they have envied thine easy conveyance through the air — if I were to envy thee, I should envy the sureness with which thou dost always do so precisely that which is God's will for thee! With regard to subsistence, it is true that thou hast it only *from* hand to mouth; ah, but then again thou hast a still shorter way from thought to execution, from resolution to the decisive act! Hence thine inexplicable sureness! Thou art happily hindered from being able to be presumptuous. — Because the lily constantly wills as God wills and constantly does as God wills, therefore it enjoys its happy existence without anxiety, being beautiful without the knowledge which desecrates beauty. And then when it thinks it has been standing long enough looking like a dunce, it one day throws off all its outer garments and stands forth in all its beauty, and this (yes, here comes the strange part) — this is precisely what God would have it do. It never occurs to the lily to wish to wear its finery at any other season or day than precisely when God wills. — And because it is thus with the lily and the bird, it is as if God, were He to speak about them, would say, 'After all, the lilies and the birds are the children in whom I have most joy, they are the easiest to bring up, they are thoroughly good natured and never naughty; they constantly will what I will and constantly do what I will; in them I have nothing but pleasure.' And He has no need to add, as parents commonly do, 'I hope it will continue thus.'

But how then are the lilies and the birds teachers? This surely is easy to perceive. It is perfectly certain that neither the lilies nor the birds permit

themselves the least act of presumption — so be thou like the lilies and the birds. For in their relationship to God the lilies and the birds are like a child in its tender years when it still is practically one with the mother. But when the child has become bigger, although it is in the house of its parents, as close to them as can be, never out of their sight, there is nevertheless an endless distance between it and the parents, and in this distance lies the possibility of being able to be presumptuous. Though the mother grasps the child, though she folds it in her arms in order by her closeness to insure it completely against every danger, nevertheless, in the possibility of being able to be presumptuous, it is endlessly far away from her. It is an immense distance, an immense remoteness. For surely he too lives remote who lives in the old familiar place but remote from his only wish — so also the child, although in the home of its parents, is remote by reason of this possibility of being able to act presumptuously.

And so also the man, in the possibility of being able to act presumptuously, is endlessly remote from God, in whom nevertheless he lives and moves and has his being. But if again he comes, from this remoteness and in this remoteness, anything like so near as the bird and the lily, then he has become a Christian.

The Christian has not this anxiety. Yet what is presumptuousness? — for it is about this we are talking, about not being presumptuous. What presumptuousness is, that is to say, what the particular expressions of it are, we shall learn to recognize better when we are speaking about the heathen, who have in fact this anxiety. But here we have to know provisionally what presumptuousness is in order to see that the Christian is not presumptuous, or that precisely by never being presumptuous in the least degree he is a Christian. Presumption essentially has to do with a man's relationship to God, and hence it is indifferent whether a man is presumptuous in the smallest matter or in the greatest, for even the least presumption is the

greatest, being against God. Presumption is essentially against God, and from this is derived the secondary but correct use of the word when we say that a child acts presumptuously towards the parents, a subject towards the king, a pupil towards the teacher. Between God and man there is the everlasting and essential difference of eternity; and when this distinction is in any way encroached upon, we have presumption. Presumption therefore is *either*, in a forbidden, in a rebellious, in an ungodly way, *to want to have God's help*, *or* in a forbidden, in a rebellious, in an ungodly way, *to want to dispense with God's help.*

Therefore, first and foremost, it is presumptuous to be spiritlessly ignorant of how much a man needs God's help every instant, and that without God he is nothing. So perhaps it is that many men are living, lost in worldliness and sensuality. They think they understand life and themselves, and yet they have left out God entirely; but they are only too self-assured, they are just like the others — they are in fact, if one may say so, false reprints; for every man as he comes from God's hand is an original edition. If then one were to reproach them for acting presumptuously towards God, they would surely reply, 'That really is a thing that never occurred to us.' But precisely this is the presumption, that it never occurred to them... to think of God; or if once in their youth they had been required to think of the Creator, this then is the presumption, that they have subsequently forgotten Him entirely — worse than the beast, for the beast has nothing to forget.

But the Christian knows that a sense of the need of God is man's perfection. Thus the Christian is *once for all* aware of God and is saved from the presumption which might be called ungodly unawareness. The Christian is not aware of God once in a while during his life, on the occasion of great events and such like; no, with daily attentiveness he is aware that he cannot do without God for an instant. Thus the Christian is awake, as neither the innocent bird is, nor the man who is spiritlessly

ignorant; he is awake, awakened to God. The Christian is awake, and he is incessantly awake to God's will, he craves only *to be satisfied with God's grace,* he does not ask that he may help himself, but prays for God's grace, nor does he ask that God should help him otherwise than as God wills, he prays only to be satisfied with God's grace. The Christian has no self-will, he surrenders unconditionally. But again in relation to God's grace he has no self-will, he is satisfied with God's grace. He accepts everything by God's grace... even the grace itself; he understands that he cannot do without God's grace even in praying for His grace. So weakened is the Christian in respect to self-will that in relation to God's grace he is weaker than is the bird in relation to instinct which holds it entirely in its power, is weaker than the bird is strong in relation to instinct, which is its power.

But then at bottom the Christian is farther from presumption towards God than the bird is? Yes, that he is too, in spite of the fact that in the possibility of being able to act presumptuously he was infinitely nearer to it than the bird. But to this end the Christian must *learn* slowly, as the bird is under no necessity of doing, since it finds it easy enough only to will as God wills. The Christian must learn to be satisfied with God's grace, to which end sometimes an angel of Satan may be necessary to smite him upon the mouth lest he exalt himself. For first he must learn to be satisfied with God's grace; but when he is in the course of learning this there comes the last difficulty. Namely, the discovery that to be satisfied with God's grace, which at first sight appears so poor and humiliating a thing, is in reality the highest and most blessed thing — is there in fact any higher good than God's grace? Hence he must learn not to exalt himself, not to be presumptuous... at being satisfied with God's grace.

So the Christian, being schooled thus from the ground up, is far more remote from presumption towards God than the bird is — how might it be possible to be presumptuous towards Him whose will is grace? But only the

Christian knows that God's will is grace, the bird knows at the most that its will is His will. The Christian is far more remote from presumption, and precisely for this cause far nearer to God than the bird is. That there is a God in heaven without whose will no sparrow falls to the ground, concerns also the sparrow; but that there is a gracious God in heaven concerns only the Christian. The bird keeps close to God by willing as He wills; but the Christian keeps still closer to Him by keeping hold of His grace — just as the older but obedient child who desires to please his parents has in a more heartfelt sense the love of the parents and an existence for them than has the tender babe which is one with the mother. The bird with its need is as close as it can be, it can by no means do without Him; the Christian needs Him even more, he knows that he cannot do without Him; the Christian is still closer, he cannot do without... His grace. God encompasses the bird on every side, but holds Himself back; for the Christian He opens Himself, and His grace encompasses the Christian on every side who in nothing is presumptuous, who desires nothing but His grace and never desires anything but His grace. Thus God's grace encompasses the Christian blessedly and closely, and keeps far from him the least expression of presumption. 'His grace prevents the Christian' (Ps. lix. 10), so that he may will to be satisfied with God's grace, and *follows* him, so that he may not have willed in vain, and that in his bliss he may never regret that he was satisfied with God's grace.

The heathen on the contrary has this anxiety; for in reality the heathen is presumptuous and rebellious against God.

First and foremost we mention the presumption of *spiritlessness* in being ignorant of God, a presumption which strictly speaking only occurs in Christendom. It is quite possible that such a heathen, lost in worldliness and sensuality, supposes that he is without anxieties, especially the many useless anxieties with which the God-fearing man plagues himself. But this is not

true. It may well be true that he is without these anxieties with which the God-fearing man plagues himself, and that this is an advantage to him both in this life and in that which is to come; but it is not true that the heathen in his torpid security is without anxiety. On the contrary, he precisely is under the dominion of anguishing *dread*, dreading to live — and dreading to die. Whenever some event or the expectation of it wrenches him out of his brute-transformation, dread which dwells deeply within him awakens and casts him into despair, in which essentially he was.

So presumption is dull ignorance of God. To such a heathen aptly applies what is related in the parable about the husbandmen who appropriated the vineyard and behaved as if the owner were not in existence; and in so far as he is instructed in Christianity, that also applies to him where it is related that they said, 'Let us kill the son, and then the vineyard will be ours.' The life of every man is God's property, man is His bondservant. To kill God, however, is what man cannot do, what he can do is to kill the thought of Him, as they say, and the man who is dully unconscious of God has at one time been conscious of Him, and so, as one says with special emphasis, he has got rid of this thought, slain it. So when one has succeeded in killing the thought of God, suppressing every feeling and mood which as His messenger would remind man of Him, one lives on as if one were one's own master, were the artificer of his own fortune, whether he be one who actually has to provide for himself, or one to whom everything comes as his due — thus cheating God of His due. Is not this also a way of desiring to add a cubit unto one's stature — by getting the proprietor killed, or the thought of him, so as to become oneself the master instead of the bondservant? In dull ignorance of God and in vain knowledge of the world the heathen thus sinks below the beast. To murder God is the most horrible form of suicide, entirely to forget God is man's deepest fall, no beast ever fell so deep as that.

The other form of presumption is that which in a forbidden, a rebellious, and ungodly way, would do without God. This is *unbelief.* Unbelief is not dull ignorance, unbelief would positively deny God, so in a way it has to deal with God.

It may well be that such a heathen declares that he is without anxiety. But it is not so, as in general it is indeed impossible to be presumptuous without having the anxiety of presumption. However he may harden himself, he vet carries in his inmost heart the token that God is the strongest, the token that he *wills* to have God against him. If the God-fearing man 'halts upon his thigh' after having striven with God, truly the unbeliever is inwardly annihilated. And, precisely, his anxiety is to add a cubit unto his stature; for it would be adding an immense cubit unto his stature if a man face to face with God were able to deny God, or if it might even be so that perhaps it is God who stands in need of man (as the wisdom of this age has understood it — if such a thing can be understood)... in order to understand Himself. But it is certain that no blessing goes with stolen goods and that no prescriptive right can be acquired over them, and so the presumptuous man has the anxiety, and has it every instant, that God may take everything from him. And if it is easy to labour when one has God for a helper, verily the hardest labour one can impose upon oneself is the labour of doing without God.

Hence the heathen is really under the dominion of dread; for really he never rightly knows under whose dominion he is — is not this a dreadful anguish? Although an unbeliever, he scarcely knows whether he is under the sway of incredulity or of credulity — and verily it is exceedingly difficult for another man to know this Forsaken of God whom he would deny, overwhelmed by God whom he would dispense with, he is without resource either in God or in himself (for in oneself one has no resource without God's concourse), under the domination of the power of evil, the

domination of incredulity and credulity. In such wise no bird is tossed about even in the most terrible tempest.

Finally, this too is a form of presumption: in a forbidden, a rebellious, and ungodly way, to desire to have God's aid. This is superstition.

In this way the presumptuous heathen would senselessly add a cubit unto his stature, would senselessly will what he denies, in blind confidence would risk a foolhardy act and cast himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple — and what is more presumptuous still, he expects God to help him in it; abandoning himself more and more to this hapless game, he would by illicit means penetrate forbidden places, discover hidden things, behold the future, perhaps, like that Simon of whom the Scripture tells, he would purchase the Holy Ghost with money, or would make money by means of the Holy Ghost, he would be importunate with God, would importune His aid and assistance, he the uncalled would make himself what only God's call can make a man. For the unbeliever would presumptuously dispense with God, is unwilling to let himself be helped by God, and would presumptuously let God know it; but the superstitious man would have God serve him. What else does it mean but that, even though the superstitious man says that it is God's help he would have — when he arbitrarily will have it, what else is this but to will that God shall serve him? Truly that would be adding a cubit to one's stature if a man were to reach the point of being so extraordinary as to have God for a servant. But God will not be mocked. Where therefore is anxiety and dread and pallid fear and the apprehensive shudder more at home than in the mumbling realm of superstition? This dread no bird has known, not even the bird that is startled anxiously in alarm.

So it is with the presumptuous heathen. He does not will as God wills (like the bird); still less is he willing to be satisfied with God's grace (like the Christian); 'on him abideth the wrath of God'. If the bird has not God's

grace, which only the Christian has, neither has it, verily, God's wrath, which only the heathen has. However far the bird flies it never loses its relation to God; but how far should the heathen have to fly! and fly as far as he may, he would fly in vain to escape God's wrath — fly as far as he may, unless he were fleeing to grace. And if there is to be retribution and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil, then first and foremost upon the presumptuous man. For as grace comes by God upon every man who approaches Him as a Christian, so anguish comes by itself upon every one who presumptuously departs from God or presumptuously approaches Him.

Let us in conclusion think of the bird, which had its place in the Gospel and should have a place in the discourse. Let there be joy upon earth over the lilies and the birds which will as God wills and do as God wills; in heaven there is joy over the Christian who is satisfied with God's grace; but there is anguish both here and hereafter upon the heathen who is presumptuous. The nearer the bird is to the Christian, so much farther than the bird is the heathen from God. The greatest distance, greater than that of the farthest star from the earth, greater than human art can depict, is the distance from God's grace to God's wrath, from the Christian to the heathen, from being saved in bliss by God's grace to 'eternal destruction from the face of the Lord', from looking to God... to seeing from the abyss that one has lost God. It would be a meaningless jest were one seriously to make use of the situation of the bird in order to depict that distance. Solely in comparison with the bird can the Christian use this situation as a landmark, but if the distance is Christian — heathen, the bird serves to determine nothing; for here it is not poverty and abundance that is in question, nor lowliness and highness, but presumption.

VI. THE ANXIETY OF SELF-TORMENT

BE NOT THEREFORE anxious for the morrow — after all such things do the heathen seek.

THIS anxiety the bird has not. From whatever height the bird surveyed the whole world, and whatever it saw, it never saw 'the next day'; whatever it saw on its long journeys, it never saw 'the next day'. And though we say of the lily, 'it today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven' — oh, this noble and simple sage, the lily, is as one whom this does not concern, however much and however closely it concerns it; it is solely preoccupied with that which after all concerns it more closely, that it *is* today! However many days the bird saw dawn and come to a close, it never saw 'the next day'. For the bird sees no apparitions — but the next day is to be seen only 'in the spirit'; and the bird is not troubled by dreams — but the next day is a persistent dream which constantly returns; and the bird is never disquieted — but the next day is the disquietude of every day. And when the bird makes the long flight to the distant clime, it is the very bird which arrived that same day at its destination, the self-same day it departed from home. One travels so swiftly by railway that one arrives at a distant place the same day; but the bird is nimbler and swifter, it travels for many, many days and arrives the same day. By railway one cannot travel so quickly as that if one is to travel equally far. No, there is none can make time fly so swiftly as the bird, and none that in so short a time can get so far as the bird. There is no yesterday and no tomorrow for the bird, it lives but one day, and the lily blooms but one day.

Consequently the bird has no anxiety for the next day. But anxiety for the next day is precisely what self-torment is, and hence the bird is without the

anxiety of self-torment. For what is self-torment? It is the worry which today (having enough worry of its own) does not have. And what is it to be a self-tormentor? It is to cause oneself this worry? For the bird also has worry the one day it lives, the day may have for it too enough worry of its own; but the worry of the next day the bird does not have — because it lives but one day, which we might express also in another way, by saying that it has no self. Worry and today are in correspondence with one another; self-torment and the next day are also a pair.

But how then is the bird a teacher? Quite simply. That the bird has no next day is sure enough — so then, be thou like the bird, get rid of the next day, and thus thou art without the anxiety of self-torment; and this must be practicable, precisely for the reason that the next day is derived from the self. On the other hand, if we let today disappear almost entirely in comparison with the next day's worry, we are deepest in self-torment. The whole difference is that of only one day — and yet what an immense difference! It is easy enough for the bird to *be* quit of the next — but to *become* quit of it! Oh, of all the enemies which assail a man by might or by cunning, none perhaps is so obstinately intrusive as this next day, which always is the same next day. It is said that to conquer one's spirit is greater than to take a city; but if one is to conquer his spirit, he must begin by *becoming* quit of the next day. The next day — it is like a goblin which is able to assume every form, it looks so exceedingly different, but for all that it is... the next day.

The Christian has not this anxiety. Anxiety for the next day is commonly associated with anxiety for subsistence. This is a very superficial view. All earthly and worldly anxiety is at bottom anxiety for the next day. Earthly and worldly anxiety is rendered possible by the fact that man, compounded of the temporal and the eternal, became a self; but in becoming a self the next day became existent for him. And here it is fundamentally that the

battle is fought. Ah, worldly and earthly anxiety! — at the mere mention of that word what an immense miscellany is suggested, what a motley crowd of passions, what a mixture of opposites! And yet it is all only one battle, the battle with the next day. And the next day — a little hamlet as it were, which yet became famous and remains so; for it was and is at this point that the greatest battle is fought and the most decisive, here the decision is made between time and eternity. The next day — it is the grappling-hook by which the prodigious hulk of anxiety gets a hold upon 'the individual's' light craft. If it succeeds, then he is under the domination of that power. The next day is the first link of the chain which fetters a man in a gang with thousands to that superfluous anxiety which is of the evil one. The next day — it is strange indeed, for ordinarily when one is sentenced for life the sentence reads, 'for life', but he who sentences himself to anxiety 'for the next day', sentences himself for life. Behold therefore if in heaven there might not be found salvation from the next day, for on earth it is not to be found; not even by dying the next day dost thou avoid it, for it was until that day thou didst live. But if for thee there is no next day, then all earthly anxiety is annihilated — and not only the anxiety about subsistence, for everything earthly and worldly is desirable only for the sake of the next day... and is uncertain by reason of the next day; the next day it loses its enchantment and its anxious uncertainty. And if for thee there is no next day, thou art either a dying man, or one who by dying to the temporal hast grasped the eternal, either one who really is dying or one who *really* lives.

The Gospel says that 'every day has enough worries of its own'. But is this a gospel? It seems rather as if it were from a book of lamentations, in fact it makes the whole of life sheer worry, or admits that it is such, if every day has worry enough. One would think indeed that the Gospel must proclaim that every day was free from worry, or that there were individual unlucky days. Nevertheless it is a gospel, and verily it does not strain out a

gnat to swallow a camel; for it is levelled against the monster of self-torment, and it assumes that with the daily worries a man can manage to get along. It says therefore in effect, every day *shall* have its worries. It is true, this word does not stand in the Gospel; but this stands there: 'for the morrow *shall* be anxious for itself'; but if it shall be anxious for itself, thou shalt be without anxiety for it and let it take care of itself. So, as far as worry is concerned, thou *shalt* have enough in that which each day has, since thou *shalt* let the next day take care of itself. Is not this so? When the teacher says to the pupil, 'Thou shalt leave thy neighbour in peace. Let him take care of himself,' he says in effect, 'Thou hast enough to do to look after thyself, and this *shall* be enough for thee.' Every day shall have its worry, that is to say, take care to be free from the next day's worry, accept tranquilly and gratefully the worry of today, thou dost get off easily with that... by becoming free from the next day's worry. Be thou therefore content, have godliness with contentment; for every day has *enough* of its own worries. In this respect also God provides: He measures out the amount of worry which is *enough* for every day, so take no more than what is measured out, which is exactly enough; to be anxious for the next day is covetousness.

The most important thing in life is to be in the correct position, to assume the correct position. This the Christian assumes in relation to the next day; for to him it is non-existent. — It is well known that in front of the actor, blinded as he is by the footlights, there is the deepest darkness, the blackest night. One might think that this would discompose him, render him uneasy. But no, ask him, and thou shalt hear him admit that this is precisely what gives him support, makes him calm, keeps him in the enchantment of deception. On the other hand, it would discompose him if he could see any single individual, catch a glimpse of an auditor. So it is with the next day. One sometimes complains and finds it tragic that the future is so dark

before one. Ah, the misfortune is just this, that it is not dark enough when fear and presentiment and expectation and earthly impatience glimpse the next day! One who rows a boat turns his back to the goal towards which he labours. So it is with the next day. When by the help of eternity a man lives absorbed in today, he turns his back to the next day. The more he is eternally absorbed in today, the more decisively does he turn his back upon the next day, so that he does not see it at all. If he turns around, eternity is confused before his eyes, it becomes the next day. But if for the sake of labouring more effectually towards the goal (eternity) he turns his back, he does not see the next day at all, whereas by the help of eternity he sees quite clearly today and its task. But if a man is to labour effectually today, he must be in this position. It always involves delay and distraction to want to look impatiently every instant towards the goal, to see if one is coming a little nearer, and now a little nearer. No, be eternally and seriously resolved, then thou dost turn completely to the labour... and turn the back to the goal. Such is one's position in rowing a boat, but such is also the position when one believes. One might think that the believer would be very far from the eternal when he turns his back to it and lives today, while the glimpser stands and looks towards it. And yet it is the believer who is nearest the eternal, while the apocalyptic visionary is farthest from the eternal. Faith turns its back to the eternal in order precisely to have this with him today. But if a man turns, especially with earthly passion, towards the future, then he is farthest from the eternal, and then the next day becomes a prodigious confused figure such as fairy-tales describe. Just as those demons of whom we read in the Book of Genesis begat children by earthly women, so is the future the monstrous demon which of men's womanish imagination begets the next day.

But the Christian believes, therefore he is quit of the next day. The Christian assumes exactly the opposite position to that of the self-

tormentors; for these forget today entirely by reason of their anxiety and preoccupation with the next day. The believer is present, and at the same time is, as this word also denotes in Latin, mighty. The self-tormentor is an absentee, and an enfeebled person. The wish is often heard in the world to be contemporary with one or another great event or great man, with the notion that contemporaneousness might develop a man and make him something great. Perhaps! But might it not be worth more than a wish to be contemporary with oneself? For how rare it is for a man to be contemporary with himself. Most men, in feeling, in imagination, in purpose, in resolution, in wish, in longing, in apocalyptic vision, in theatrical make-believe, are a hundred thousand miles in advance of themselves, or several human generations in advance of themselves. But the believer (being present) is in the highest sense contemporary with himself. And to be by the help of eternity entirely contemporary with oneself is at the same time the thing that most educates and develops, it is the 'great gain' of eternity. Therefore the Christian extols a saying of Sirach (xxx. 23), as one of the severest of the Church Fathers does, not as a rule of shrewdness but as an expression of godliness: 'Love thy soul, and comfort thy heart, and drive care far from thee.' Who indeed is so cruel as the selftormentor is towards himself! But all his pangs, all these cruelly invented and cruelly employed instruments of agonizing torture are comprised in this one word: the next day. And now for the cure of it! It is related that in a library in Spain there was found a book bearing this inscription on the cover: 'The Best Cure for Heretics'. One opened it, or rather tried to; and, lo, it was not a book, it was a case containing a scourge. If one were to write a book entitled 'The Best Cure for Self-Torment', it could be written briefly: 'Let every day have enough in its own worries.' Hence when the Christian works, or when he prays, he talks only of today: he prays for the daily bread 'today', for a blessing upon his work 'today', that he may avoid the snares of the evil one

‘today’, that he may come nearer to God’s kingdom ‘today’. For if a man who had become acquainted with this terror were to pray thus in the passion of his soul, ‘Save me, O God, from myself and from the next day’, he would not be praying Christianly, and the next day would already have acquired too much power over him. For the Christian prays, ‘Save me today from the evil.’ This is the surest salvation from the next day, with the understanding that one will pray thus every day; if for one day this is forgotten, the next day comes at once into view. But the Christian does not forget to pray every day, hence he saves himself throughout his life, faith saves his courage, his joy, his hope. The dreadful enemy is on hand the next day, but the Christian does not paint the devil on the wall, does not conjure up evil and temptation, he does not talk at all of the next day, but only of today, and of this he talks with God.

To live thus, to cram today with eternity and not with the next day, the Christian has learnt and continues to learn (for the Christian is always learning) from the Pattern. How did He manage to live without anxiety for the next day — He who from the first instant of His public life when He stepped forward as a teacher knew how His life would end, that the next day was His crucifixion, knew this while the people exultantly hailed Him as King (ah, bitter knowledge to have at precisely that moment!), knew when they were crying, ‘Hosanna!’, at His entry into Jerusalem that they would cry, ‘Crucify him!’, and that it was to this end He made His entry; He who bore every day the prodigious weight of this superhuman knowledge — how did He manage to live without anxiety for the next day? He who did not suffer as the man suffers upon whom hardships and adversity suddenly fall but who has before him every instant the possibility that everything nevertheless might be redressed — for He knew that it was inevitable; He who knew that with every new sacrifice He made in behalf of the truth He was hastening His persecution and destruction, so that He had control of

His fate, could ensure for Himself the splendour of royal power and the devout admiration of the race if He would let go of the truth, but knew also with even greater certainty that He would ensure His destruction, if (oh, eternally certain way to destruction!) He were in any respect to desert the truth — how did He manage to live without anxiety for the next day? — He who was not unacquainted with the suffering attendant upon this anxiety any more than with every other human suffering, He who in an access of pain uttered the sigh, that His hour was not yet come. In military language they talk of 'covering' the commander of an army, of covering him so that no one may fall upon him in the rear — how did He manage to cover Himself, while He was living today, from the enemy which would fall upon Him in the rear, namely, the next day? For just because, in quite a different way from any man, He had eternity with Him in the day that is called today, just for this reason He turned His back on the next day. How did He manage it? Far be it from us to endeavour to win human admiration by fathoming what is not to be fathomed; we do not believe that He came to this earth to propose to us themes for a learned investigation. But He came to this earth to prescribe the task, to leave behind Him a foot-print, so that we might learn from Him. We have therefore let the answer transpire in the question, have recalled how it was he managed to do what we should learn to do: He had Eternity with Him in the day that is called today, hence the next day had no power over Him, it had no existence for Him. It had no power over Him before it came, and when it came and was the day that is called today it had no other power over Him than that which was the Father's will, to which He had consented with eternal freedom, and to which He obediently bowed.

The heathen, *on the other hand*, *has this anxiety*; for heathenism is precisely self-torment. Instead of casting all his care upon God, the heathen has all the worries; he is without God, and hence he is the worried man, the self-tormentor. For since he is without God, it cannot in any sense be God

that imposes worry upon him. The situation is not this: without God — no worry, with God — with worry; but it is this: with God — no worry, without God — with worry.

'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.' But then indeed the heathen is without anxiety for the next day, in fact he says himself that there is no next day! No — verily he does not deceive Christianity, neither does he succeed in deceiving himself. For just this sort of talk is vibrant with the dread of the next day, the day of annihilation, an anguishing dread which, although it is a shriek from the abyss, is madly meant to indicate joy. He is so much in dread of the next day that he casts himself into wild befuddlement in order to forget it... and to forget how much in dread he is. Is this what it means to be without anxiety for the next day? If there is anything this is 'without', it is without understanding, it means to be insane. And 'tomorrow' is thus the refrain of the day's joy, the verse regularly ends with, 'for tomorrow'. One speaks, it is true, of a *joie de vivre* which, because it has no next day, lives, so it is said, entirely for today. But this is a delusion, for this precisely is the way a man is rendered unable to live in the day that is called today, not to speak of living in it *entirely.* A man has the eternal within him, and therefore he cannot possibly be entirely in the purely momentary. The more effort he makes to do without the eternal, so much the farther he is from living in the day that is called today. Whether the heathen is to die tomorrow, we may leave undetermined, certain it is that he does not *live* today.

'But tomorrow!' For as the Christian constantly talks of today, so the heathen talks only of tomorrow. In reality it is of no consequence to him what today is; whether it be joyful or sorrowful, lucky or unlucky, he cannot reach the point of either enjoying it or employing it, for he cannot get away from the invisible writing on the wall: Tomorrow. Tomorrow I shall perhaps hunger, even if I did not today; tomorrow a thief will perhaps steal my

riches, or a slanderer my honour, corruption my beauty, the envy of fate my good fortune — tomorrow, tomorrow! Today I stand upon the pinnacle of fortune — ah, recount to me while it is still today a misfortune — quickly, quickly! — else tomorrow everything will be lost irrevocably. What is dread? It is the next day. And why was the heathen most in dread when he was most fortunate? Because adversity and misfortune might have served in a way to quench the fire of his earthly anxiety. For earthly anxiety, as the begetter, brings forth dread, which in turn, as the nourisher, brings forth anxieties. For to bring embers to a flame a draught is necessary. But desire (the earthly) and uncertainty (the earthly) — these two currents — constitute precisely the draught which inflames the fire of passion in which dread lurks.

With whom is it then the heathen strives in dread? With himself, with an imagination; for the next day is an impotent nothing if thou dost not thyself give it thy strength. And in case thou dost give it all thy strength, then, like the heathen, thou dost get to know in a terrible way how strong thou art — for what a prodigious power this next day is! The next day, which the heathen with terror in his heart advances to meet, resisting like one who is dragged to the place of execution, vainly striving like one who from a wreck stretches out his arms in desperation to the land, inconsolable like one who from the land sees his whole fortune sink into the sea!

Thus it is the heathen consumes himself, or the next day consumes him. Alas, there a human soul went out, he lost his self. No one knows how it happened; there was no neediness, nor misfortune, nor adversity, no one beheld the terrible power which consumed the man, but he was consumed. Like a hapless spirit which found no repose in the grave, so he lives as a ghost, that is to say, he does not live. As one speaks of intemperately turning night into day, so he in despair would turn today into the next day. ‘He will not live till the next day’, we say of the sick man whom the

physician has given up; but at least the sick man lives today. The self-tormentor, on the other hand, in a still more precise sense will not live till the next day, he is given up, since he gave up God, he does not even live today, in spite of being alive, and still less until tomorrow, for in order to live till tomorrow one must surely be alive today. Like the bird which flies to a painted landscape on the wall in order to perch upon one of the trees, and exhausts itself, perhaps kills itself by wanting to perch upon one of these trees — so the self-tormentor renders himself inanimate by wanting today to live the next day. Like the bird which grew weary on its way over the great ocean and sinks with a feeble flap of its wings to the sea, and now can neither live nor die — so it is with the self-tormentor, who grows weary on his way across the distance between today and the next day. To live is to be in existence today; when one is dead there is no longer a today. But the self-tormentor lives — only not today, he lives not till tomorrow, yet he lives day after day. Upon him the good Lord cannot shed light, for all remains equally dark about him and equally hopeless, whether he be living or dead, who neither lives nor dies, and yet lives... as in a hell.

Let us in conclusion think of the bird, which had its place in the Gospel and should have a place in the discourse. The bird arrives the same day at its far-off destination; the Christian is the same day, ‘this very day’, in heaven where his life is; the heathen never budges from the spot. The bird is an egoist in a good sense, reasonably loving itself, hence it is no self-tormentor; the Christian loves God, hence he is no self-tormentor; the heathen (which God forbid and does indeed forbid) hates himself, he is a self-tormentor. The bird lives only one day, so the next day does not exist for it; the Christian lives eternally, so the next day does not exist for him; the heathen never lives, is always by the next day prevented from living. The bird is exempt from all dread; benediction upon the Christian saves him

from all dread; the anxiety of the heathen is his punishment: self-torment — no sin so punishes itself as self-torment.

VI. THE ANXIETY OF IRRESOLUTION, FICKLENESS AND DISCONSOLATENESS

NO MAN CAN serve two masters — after all such things do the heathen seek.

T*HAT anxiety the bird has not.* If the angels are God's messengers who obey His every behest, if He makes use of the winds as His angels — the bird and the lily are just as obedient, although God does not employ them as His messengers and it is as if He had no use for them. The lily and the bird have no occasion to become self-important in view of the use that is made of them, they feel humiliated, as though they were superfluous. Yet they are not less dear to God on this account, nor is it the lowliest fortune to be superfluous. In man's busy life it is no rare occurrence that precisely the unusually talented person is more or less superfluous because he is not apt to fit into any of all the situations to which the bustle of business would assign him, with which it would occupy him and employ him — and yet precisely his superfluousness does more to magnify the Creator's honour than does all the self-importance of bustle; just as Mary did Christ more honour by sitting at His feet than did the activity of busy Martha — thus the lilies and the birds are a superfluity of beauty and joy which God has lavished upon creation. But just because they are thus superfluous there is required of them also the most perfect obedience. True, all that is is of grace; but he who owes everything to grace in such a degree that he understands he is superfluous must be all the more obedient. True, all that exists is nothing in the hands of the Almighty who created it out of nothing; but that which by coming into existence attains nothing more than to be superfluous must understand most profoundly that it is nothing. When

parents give an entertainment for their own children they expect joyful obedience, or the joy which is obedience; but when they give an entertainment for poor children, doing everything for them just as if they were their own children, they expect still more decisively the joy whose secret is unconditional obedience.

But precisely thus are the lilies and the birds situated, serving only one Master, without a thought of any other, and without a single thought which is not directed to Him, more obedient in His hand than the pliable plant in the hands of the gardener, more obedient to His every behest than the tamed dove to its master. Everything that is called bird and lily belongs to one Master, but every bird and every lily serves only this one Master.

Hence the bird is never *irresolute.* It is not a sign of irresolution that the bird flies hither and thither; exactly the opposite is the case, for it is perfectly certain that it is for joy; it is not the uncertain flight of irresoluteness, it is the light soaring flight of complete obedience. True, the bird is soon weary of its place of residence and flies far away, but this is not *fickleness,* it is exactly the opposite, it is the fixed and firm resolution of perfect obedience; rarely perhaps was any man's resolution so fixed and stood so firm. True, one sometimes sees the bird sitting dejectedly, it must have care and sorrow, but this is not *disconsolateness,* never is the obedient bird without consolation, and essentially its life is care-free, just because it serves only one master, and this is what is of most service both to bird and man, it serves to free them from sorrowing disconsolately.

How is it then that the birds and the lilies are teachers? Quite simply. The birds and the lilies serve only one Master, and, what is the same thing, they serve Him wholly — so be thou like the lilies and the birds, serve thou also only one Master, serve Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength, and so thou too art without anxiety. More noble than the birds and the lilies, thou art akin to that Master (the lilies and the birds are

like the poor children), but none the less thou dost obediently serve the same Master, if like the lilies and the birds thou dost serve Him wholly.

The Christian has not this anxiety. ‘No man can serve two masters,’ or there is only one master whom a man can serve wholly. For in the choice between two masters it is not true that if only a man chooses one of the two and then serves him, no matter which, he is thus serving only one master. No, there is only One who in such wise is Master, is the Lord, that in serving Him one serves one master; and so it is clear enough that, if ‘there is one Lord’ only, one does not serve one master if one does not serve Him! It is not true therefore that one who has chosen to serve mammon wholly, serves only one master; against his will he is none the less in the service of the other master, in the Lord’s service. If a man chooses another master than God, he must hate God, for ‘either he will love the one and hate the other’, that is, if he loves the one he must hate the other; but however much he may hate God, he nevertheless does not escape His service, and so he is not serving one master after all. A man’s relationship to God in service is not the relationship of a man and his manservant who can run away from his service, and so far away that his former master cannot catch him, or may even take refuge in a relationship so altered that the former master must relinquish his claim upon him. No, a man who has chosen to serve another master than ‘the Master’, however desperate and determined his will may be, remains nevertheless in the service of two masters. And just this self-contradiction is his punishment, the contradiction of willing the impossible — for it is impossible to serve two masters. But only then is it possible to serve one master when one has chosen *wholly* to serve ‘the Master’ (the Lord). It looks almost like trying to impose upon one, it is almost as if the Gospel were disposed to behave with human high-handedness when it says: ‘One of the two thou must choose.’ Oh, but just here is the terrible seriousness of eternity in sticking to its position; for only the one canst thou

choose in such a way that in serving Him thou dost serve only one master. Hence it is not true that he who comes to an agreement with himself to doubt serves only one master, doubt; for to doubt, as the origin of the word signifies, is to be in disagreement with oneself, to be divided between two. Neither is it true that one who (abhorrent as this may be) came to an agreement with himself to wish to be a villain serves only one master; for as there is no agreement in a den of robbers, so there is as little in the heart which is a den of robbers. But how might it be possible in *disagreement* to serve only *one master*?

The Christian serves only one Master; and he not merely serves Him but loves Him, he loves the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his strength. Just for this reason he serves Him wholly; for only love unites wholly, unites the most diverse parties in love, and in this instance unites man to God who is love. Love is the firmest of all bonds, for it makes the lover one with the beloved; more firmly no bond can bind, or so firmly can no bond bind. And the love which loves God is the bond of perfectness, which in perfect obedience makes man one with the God he loves. And the love which loves God is the most beneficial bond, which by keeping a man wholly in God's service saves him from anxieties. This love unifies a man, it makes him eternally in agreement with himself and with the Master who is one; and it unifies a man in likeness to God. Ah, blissful service, thus to serve God alone! Hence it sounds so solemn when we express it in one word, for this service is indeed 'divine service', the life of the Christian is nothing but divine service. The bird never attained such a height that one could call its life divine service, never did the bird become so *perfect* in obedience, although it was just as obedient.

But then in fact the Christian is even more obedient than the bird? Yes, that he is too. For the bird has no other will than God's will, but the Christian has another will which he constantly sacrifices in obedience to

God — so much more obedient is he. A hard sacrifice, but well-pleasing to God, and hence so blissful! Ah, one speaks of so many *various* things which a man may love most dearly: a woman, his child, his father, his mother, his fatherland, his art, his science; but what *every* individual loves most, more than his only child, the child of promise, more than his only beloved on earth and in heaven — is his own will. Not for this shalt thou lay thy hand upon this child of thine — God is not cruel; nor forsake thy beloved — God is not hardhearted. There is something else, something far deeper within thee, for thine own salvation it is taken from thee, and yet to thine own hurt there is nothing thou holdest to so tightly, and nothing that holds so tightly to thee (for the child would more readily submit to being sacrificed, and the maiden to being sacrificed) — it is thine own will. See how promptly the bird is at hand to do God's will; but a long way off, in a certain sense, comes the Christian, who yet is more obedient than the bird! Which is the greater promptitude, his who stands at thy side and that very instant responds, or his who from afar off is yet that very instant on the spot? The bird comes as promptly as it can when God calls — all honour to it, this is a joy to behold; but the Christian comes with infinitely greater promptitude, for he comes just as promptly from... giving up his own will.

Hence the Christian also is free from anxiety, never *irresolute* — he is believing; never *fickle* — he is eternally resolved; never *disconsolate* — he is always joyful, always giving thanks. That obedience is the way to this end he has learnt and learns from Him who is the Way, from Him who Himself learned obedience and was obedient, obedient in all things, obedient in giving up all (the glory He had before the foundations of the earth were laid), obedience in doing without all (even that upon which He might lay His head), obedient in taking all upon Himself (the sin of the race), obedient in submitting to everything in life, obedient unto death.

Thus it is the Christian serves with perfect obedience only one Master. As the bird sings without ceasing to the glory of the Creator, such also is the Christian's life, or at least he understands and admits that it should be such; and already this understanding, this admission, ascribes honour to God. So the life of the Christian is a hymn in honour of the Lord, because this life obeys God more willingly and with more blissful accord than do the spheres. This life is a hymn of praise; for only by obedience can a man praise God, and best of all by perfect obedience. But the tone of this hymn is so lofty and so profoundly touching because humble and joyful obedience does not praise what a man understands but what he does not understand. And the instrument which accompanies this hymn is not that toy-trumpet of the human understanding, but it is the heavenly trombone of faith. The Christian's song of praise celebrates one thing, and celebrates that by obedience: that God does all, and that all God does is sheer grace and wisdom. And properly considered it is a kind of pertness and self-will, such as the Christian never could permit himself to display, when one thanks God somehow as a matter of course because that comes about which a man thinks he is able to understand as profitable or joyful. If such things are experienced by a Christian, he does to be sure give thanks, since he is always giving thanks; but precisely in this case he is doubtful, and dubious of himself, he beseeches God for forgiveness if he might be giving thanks too impetuously — too impetuously because, according to his childish notion, that which happened seemed to him profitable or joyful. For this properly is the hymn of praise, the paean, the song of songs: by joyful and unconditional obedience to praise God when one cannot understand Him. To praise Him upon the day when all goes against thee, when it becomes dark before thine eyes, when others perhaps could easily prove to thee that no God exists — then instead of assuming an air of importance by *proving* that there is a God, humbly to prove that thou dost believe that God exists,

to prove it by joyful and unconditional obedience — that is the hymn of praise. The hymn is not something higher than obedience, but obedience is the only true hymn of praise; in obedience the hymn consists, and if the hymn is truth, it is obedience. With respect to a man, it is possible for thee to injure thyself by conforming to his will, though the injury is never great, seeing that there is a benediction upon sacrificing oneself for the sake of another. But might it also be possible that by obeying God's will I could in any wise injure myself — when His will is my only true good? But if this is not so, should not obedience always be joyful, might it hesitate a single instant to be joyful? It is in sooth solely and only my own good that is required of me.

All creatures praise God by obeying His behest; the life of the Christian praises Him by a still more perfect obedience, even when the Christian understands that he does not understand God. Why should the door be left open and the postern gate unguarded, by which irresolution or fickleness, not to speak of disconsolateness, might be able to sneak into the Christian soul? No, there is no fortress so secure as that of faith. Every other fortress — even if the enemy were to find no door open, no path built up the mountain, and no possibility of making it, nevertheless, by cutting it off entirely from all connexion with the surrounding world, from all supplies, he will be able at last to reduce it to starvation and compel it to surrender. But the more thou dost cut off faith from all supplies from the surrounding world (the supplies of irresolution, of fickleness, of disconsolateness — there is nothing else indeed corresponding to the supplies a fortress needs from the surrounding world), all the safer is the fortress; thou art at fault in thinking that in this way thou art attacking it, thou art fortifying it. It is only a splendid untruth to call a fortress a world in itself. But the fortress of faith is a world in itself; and it has power over life; and what it least needs — yea, alas, what is most injurious to it — is supplies of any sort from the

surrounding world. Cut off faith from all connexion with the surrounding world, starve it out — just so much the more impregnable it becomes, just so much the richer is its life. And along with faith in the fortress dwells obedience.

The heathen, *on the contrary*, *has this anxiety.* For heathenism, precisely understood, is doubleness, the two wills, masterlessness, or, what is the same thing, thraldom. Heathenism is a kingdom which is divided against itself, a kingdom in constant rebellion, where the one tyrant succeeds the other, but where for all that there is never any master. Heathenism is a mind in rebellion; by the devil's help the devil of the moment is driven out, and there enter in seven others that are worse. Heathenism, in whatever various ways it may express itself, is in the last resort disobedience, the impotent, self-contradictory attempt to wish to serve two masters. But hence the punishment pronounced upon it: 'Woe unto the sinner that goeth two ways!' One can see this in a congregation where for many years there has been 'no priest', in spite of the fact that there have been many priests. So also it can be seen in the heathen, that there are many lords, or that there have been many lords, but no Lord ruled over this mind. There is one respect in which all heathen resemble one another, namely, disobedience to 'the Lord'; and there is one thing no heathen does, he does not serve one master. In all other ways he tries perhaps to serve one master, who yet is not master, or would wish to be without a master, or would wish to serve many masters — and the more he makes trial of all this, the more his last end becomes worse than his first.

His first is *irresolution.* So long as he is irresolute it appears as if there were no blame attached to it, as if the possibility of choosing the one master were still open to him, as if he were without anxiety and his irresoluteness were serious deliberation. Perhaps it is thought that the longer a man continues to deliberate, the more serious his resolution is. Perhaps... if it

ever comes to that! And above all do not forget that there are certainly some cases where no deliberation is necessary. So it is in relation to a trifling decision; in that case a long deliberation would surely be a very suspicious sign. There are many such trifling decisions in life; but there still remains a something with regard to which it is a very suspicious sign to need long deliberation — that is God, or the choice of God. The trifle stands in no proportion to long deliberation; but God's sublimity is also in no proportion to long deliberation and hesitation. Long deliberation is in this case so far from being seriousness that it proves precisely the lack of seriousness, and proves this by showing itself to be irresolution. For it is very far from being true that the longer a man deliberates and deliberates, the nearer he comes to God; on the contrary, the truth is that the longer the deliberation becomes while the choice is postponed, the farther he removes himself from God. To choose God is certainly the most decisive and the highest choice; but 'alas' for him who needs long deliberation, and 'woe' unto him the longer he needs it. For it is precisely faith's impatient quickness of judgement, the infinite sense of need which will hear of nothing else, that is not merely nearest to the choice but best prepared to choose. He who was guilty of the ungodliness of wanting to propose quite calmly whether he shall now choose God or another master is certainly irresolute, and presumably to such a degree that he never gets out of it. What a strange thing — in the case of a poor family one speaks of their being ashamed of making both ends meet; but he who in irresolution became rich in deliberation has still greater difficulty in getting out of it. For God is not something one buys in the shop, nor like a property which one has shrewdly and cautiously examined for a long time, and after measuring and appraising it has finally convinced himself that it is worth buying. The ungodly calmness with which the irresolute man would begin in the case of God (for he would begin with doubt), precisely this is insubordination; for thereby God is

deposed from the throne, from being the Lord. And when one has done this, one really has already chosen another master, wilfulness, and thus becomes the thrall of irresoluteness.

Then when irresoluteness has ruled long enough, fickleness (Luke xii. 29) assumes the government. For a long while it seemed perhaps as if irresoluteness concealed in itself the elasticity of choice, or its possibility. That is now consumed, if ever it was there, the soul of the heathen is unstrung, it becomes evident what irresoluteness really conceals in itself. In irresoluteness there still is a power of holding out against thoughts, irresolution still makes an effort to be master in the house and to put thoughts in their place. But now masterlessness over the thoughts, or the whim of the moment, has assumed the government, whim rules — even with respect to the question whether to choose God. As a momentary whim it appears then to the heathen that it would be a good thing to choose God, and then again something else as second, and after that a third. But these movements, which signify nothing, have no significance, leave behind no trace, except the increased sluggishness and enervation. As in the sluggishness of stagnant water a bubble slowly rises up and bursts emptily, so does fickleness bubble in the whim, and bubbles yet again.

And then when fickleness has ruled long enough, and of course like all ungodly rulers has sucked the blood and enfeebled the body, *disconsolateness* assumes the government. First the heathen desired to be entirely rid of the thought of God; he desires now to sink down in the inanity of worldliness, there to seek forgetfulness, forgetfulness of the most dangerous thought, because it is the most uplifting of all thoughts, the thought of being remembered by God, the thought of existing before God. For what indeed is more dangerous, if one *will* sink, than everything that would uplift one! Yet he has overcome, as he thinks, his pain, has dispelled all illusions, learned to console himself. Ah! Really! — yes, pretty much as

when one deeply sunken, as a way of consoling himself (oh, dreadful disconsolateness!), says to a man by the sight of whom he is reminded of something higher, ‘Let me count for what I am.’ Then the light of the spirit goes out, a drowsy mist hangs before his eyes, he cares for nothing, but yet he wishes not to die, he is alive after a sort. Oh, what a horrible dissolution, worse than that of death, to rot while he is alive, without strength for even so much as to despair of himself and of his situation! But the light of the spirit has gone out, and the disconsolate man becomes crazily busy about all sorts of things, lest anything *might* remind him of God; he slaves from *morning* till night, makes money, lays by, engages in financial transactions — yea, if thou wert to talk with him, thou wouldst hear him constantly talk of the seriousness of life. Ah, horrible seriousness, it would have been better to lose one’s senses!

What is disconsolateness? The wildest shriek of pain or the presumption of despair — this is not precisely disconsolateness. But this agreement with oneself arrived at in the stillness of extinction, that everything higher is lost, whereas nevertheless one is able to go on living if only nothing reminds him of this — this is disconsolateness. Not even sorrowing disconsolately, but completely ceasing to sorrow, being able to lose God in such a way that one became therewith entirely indifferent and did not even find life unsupportable — this is disconsolateness, and at the same time it is the most dreadful sort of disobedience, more dreadful than any defiance. To hate God and to curse Him is not so dreadful as to lose Him in this way, or, what comes to the same thing, to lose oneself. To lose a trifle in such a way that one has no mind to pick it up — well, perhaps that is natural; but to lose one’s own self (to lose God) in such a way that one has not even an inclination to stoop and pick it up, or in such a way that the loss is not noticed — oh, what a dreadful loss! For not only is there an infinite difference between what one loses and what one loses, but also between

how one loses. To lose God in such a way that repentance hastens at once in contrition to recover what was lost; to lose God in such a way that one is offended in Him, rebels against Him, or sighs against Him; to lose God in such a way that one despairs at it — but to lose God as if He were nothing, and as if the loss were nothing!

Let us in conclusion think of the birds, which had their place in the Gospel and should have their place in the discourse. The bird so obeys God that this is the same thing as being wilful; the Christian so denies himself that this is the same thing as obeying God; the heathen is so wilful that it is eternally apparent that he does not obey God. The bird has no self-will to give up; the Christian gives up his own will; the heathen gives up God. The bird neither won nor lost God; the Christian won God and accounted it as everything; the heathen lost God and accounted it as nothing. The bird serves only one Master whom it does not know; the Christian serves only one Master whom he loves; the heathen serves the master who is the enemy of God. The bird obeys promptly when God calls, the Christian even more promptly; God cannot even call to the heathen, for it is as if there were no one to call upon. The obedience of the bird serves to the honour of God, the Christian's more perfect obedience still more so; the disobedience of the heathen refuses to honour God, he serves for nothing but to be cast out as salt which has lost its savour.

PART II

Before this book was finished S. K. had it in mind to publish another, with the title, ‘Some Joyful Thoughts’, containing four Discourses:

No. 1. Tribulation worketh Patience.

No. 2. Patience worketh Probation.

No. 3. Probation Hope.

No. 4. Hope maketh not Ashamed.

In a marginal note he reflected that the subject of hope might better be included in ‘The Gospel of Sufferings’, which was the title he first proposed to apply to Part III of the *Christian Discourses.*

In another place in the Journal he notes that three of the themes he had in mind for this part were eventually discarded for the sake of keeping the number down to seven. The discarded themes were: No. 1. How joyful — that if in temptation the believer is not able to hold the anchor, the anchor is able to hold the believer; No. 2. [about tribulation, patience, hope]; No. 3. How joyful — that it is for joy one cannot venture to trust the most blessed news. So in Acts xii. 14, the maid Rhoda, who ought to have opened for Peter, on hearing Peter’s voice, ‘she opened not the gate for joy’ — for joy she let him stand outside.

Thou believest it not — but only take courage, for really the reason only is that it is too joyful, take courage, for it is joy that prevents thee — is not this joyful? It is said of the disciples (Luke xxiv. 41) that ‘for joy they disbelieved’.

It appears that S. K. had at his disposal a superabundance of joyful thoughts, of the thoughts which cheer and comfort — a far greater abundance of them than of the thoughts which wound and dismay.

He provided no preface for ‘Notes in the Strife of Suffering’, but he says in the Journal that if any had been used, it would have been to the following effect:

‘The bravest nation of antiquity (the Lacedemonians) prepared themselves for warfare by music: so these are notes (*Stemninger*) of triumphant joy which tune *[stemme]* to warfare, and so far from dejecting *[forstemme*] one, will make one well disposed *[velstemt]* for the contest.’

It is just as well this preface was not used, for it contains little but a play on words, yet it helps us to understand how the title is to be understood and translated.

JOYFUL NOTES IN THE STRIFE OF SUFFERING
CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES by S. KIERKEGAARD

'I WILL INCLINE mine ear to the parable, and propound my dark sayings upon the harp' (Psalm 49. 4).

Copenhagen 1848

I. THE JOY OF IT — THAT WE SUFFER ONLY ONCE, BUT TRIUMPH ETERNALLY

HE WHO WILLS the end must will the means. But this involves, does it not, the assumption or admission that a man knows what he wills. This being assumed, we bring him to a halt by the 'means', by saying, '*Then* thou must also will the means'. Sometimes, however, it may be necessary to go back a step farther and say, 'He who wills something must first of all know what it is he wills, must have an understanding of what he wills'. The impatient person who would attain his end at once finds that even this thing about the means retards him terribly — oh, but how awfully tiresome the slowness of having to begin so far back: 'he who wills something must also know what he wills, must have an understanding of what he wills'.

So it is now with regard to what is indeed the aim of the edifying discourse, namely, to edify, or rather the aim of edifying. Perhaps there was a man who would be edified, is desirous of being edified, one who, if he were to take time to understand what he wants, or take time to have it explained to him, would be more than eager to wish himself exempted from being edified. Such misunderstanding occurs often in life. A man may vehemently, passionately, yea, persistently, desire something the exact nature of which he has no idea of — and, alas, the exact nature of which is perhaps the exact opposite of that which the wisher supposed it to be. So it is with the edifying, which verily is the Good in-and-for-itself, and precisely for this reason must require that the individual who would be edified has understood himself, lest light-mindedly, in a worldly spirit, thoughtlessly wishful, he take the edifying in vain, and then will say, I beg to be excused, when he gets to know more exactly what it is.

For what is the edifying? The first answer to this tells what the edifying first is: it is the *dismaying*. The edifying is not for the healthy-minded but for the sick; to the supposedly healthy and strong it must therefore in the first instance appear as the dismaying. The sick person understands as a matter of course that he is subjected to the treatment of the physician; but for a person in sound health it would be dismaying to discover that he had fallen into the hands of a physician who without more ado was treating him as a sick man. So it is with the edifying, which first is the dismaying — for the non-contrite it is a means to contrition. Where there is nothing at all dismaying and no dismay, there is nothing at all edifying and no edification. There is forgiveness for sin, that is edifying, the dismaying thing is that there is sin; and the degree of the dismay in the inwardness of sin-consciousness corresponds to the degree of edification. There is healing for all pain, victory in all conflict, salvation from all danger — that is edifying; the dismaying thing is that there is pain, conflict, danger; and the degree of the dismaying and of the dismay corresponds to the edifying and to the edification.

So deep lies the edifying. Finding the edifying is like boring an artesian well, where one must sink the shaft many, many fathoms — and all the better, for then the jet is higher. First one must look well to find the dismaying. For the dismaying is related to the edifying as the dowsing-rod is to the spring — when the rod bends down, there in the depths is a spring; and where the dismaying is, there in the vicinity, at the bottom, is the edifying. Thereupon, after one has looked well to find the dismaying, and then looks well again, he finds the edifying.

So sure of itself is the edifying, so reliable in itself. One should not be terrified by the dismay, as though it might stand in the way of edification, nor keep it timorously at a distance, in the hope of making the edification acceptable; for with the fear of dismay the edification vanishes. But on the

other hand it is precisely in dismay that edification lies. So triumphant is the edifying that the very thing which at the first glance might seem to be its enemy is turned into a presupposition, into a servant, into a friend. If the art of the physician triumphantly overcomes the difficulty of transforming poison into a medicine, still more gloriously is dismay transformed into the edifying, for edification.

So it is now with the subject of this discourse. We suffer but once. This is said so glibly that it sounds almost frivolous, just as in the world one often hears the frivolous saying, ‘Enjoy life, we live but once.’ But to find the edifying one must first find the dismaying, and so in this case one must take time to understand that in this saying is implied the gloomiest conception of life. We live but once — that is as if it were to be said of a man that he was sick only once in his life, only once unhappy — that is, all his life long. Now it is that the edification is about to begin. But earthly shrewdness and impatience, and worldly anxiety, which in a worldly way are in search of healing, must not expect the impossible, that one might be able to speak to them for edification, if one is to speak Christianly. For the Christian experience properly begins just there, or the proper Christian experience begins just there, where human impatience will find whatever actual sufferings it has to complain of endlessly increased... by the consolation, yea, by the consolation which drives to despair; for in a worldly sense Christian consolation is more apt to drive to despair than are the heaviest earthly sufferings and the greatest temporal misfortunes. *There* edification begins, the Christian edification which is named after Him, our Lord and Saviour, for He too suffered only once... but His whole life was suffering.

So let us speak about

THE JOY OF IT — THAT WE SUFFER ONLY ONCE, BUT TRIUMPH ETERNALLY.

We suffer only *once*, but we triumph eternally. So far as that goes, we triumph also only *once.* Quite true. But the difference is infinite: that *the once of suffering is the instant, that of triumph, eternity; the "once' of suffering, therefore, when it is past, is no time, the 'once' of triumph is, in another sense, no time, for it is never past; the once of suffering is a transition, or a thing we pass through, that of triumph, an eternally enduring triumph.*

The once of suffering is the instant, or we suffer only once. Though suffering lasts seventy years, that is only once; though the 'once' is the seventy times ten of the seventy years, that is only once, it is still only one time. For time itself in its totality is the instant; eternally understood, the temporal is the instant, and the instant eternally understood is only 'once'. In vain would the temporal assume an air of importance, count the instants, and add them all together — if eternity has any say in the matter, the temporal never gets farther than, never comes to more than, the 'once'. For eternity is the opposite; it is not the opposite to a single instant (this is meaningless), it is the opposite to the temporal as a whole, and it opposes itself with the power of eternity against the temporal amounting to more than that. As God said to the waters, 'Hitherto, and no farther', so says eternity to time, 'Hitherto, and no farther; however long thou mayest last, thou art the instant, neither more nor less; this I vouch for, I that am Eternity, or this I bring about by compulsion, I that am Eternity.' No more than does a parasitical plant, however long it may continue to grow, and however widely it may spread upon the ground, ever grow in height, no more does the temporal, however long it may last, ever become more than the instant and the 'once' — if eternity has anything to say. Therefore the youth who stands at the beginning of life says with the same justification as does the old man who stands at the end of it and looks back over the distance travelled: 'We live only once.' With the same justification, that is

to say, by virtue of eternity, but not with the same truth, although the saying is equally true. For the young man *says what is true*, but the old man has verified it, has *made that true* which yet is eternally true. The only difference here is that which in these times has been overlooked, when with all this proving and proving it has been forgotten that the highest thing a man is capable of is to make an eternal truth true, to make it true, to make it true that it is true... by doing it, by being himself the proof, by a life which also perhaps will be able to convince others. Did Christ ever undertake to prove some truth or another, or to prove the truth? No, but He made the truth true, or He made it true that He is the Truth.

We suffer only once. But just as that parasitical plant which slinks along the ground betrays every instant, if thou wilt observe it, an inclination to grow to a height, and in case it encounters in its path anything upon which it can twine itself, it sneaks up to a height, or arrogates to itself loftiness — so also the temporal, when in its sneaking gate it finds something to which it can cling, would sneak up in order to come to some importance — by foreign assistance. Yes, by foreign assistance — and yet no, not by foreign assistance, for if this comes about, if the temporal comes to some importance, it comes about by the assistance of that man to whose misfortune it comes about. If man does not derive his strength from the eternal and in solidarity with the eternal obtain strength to hold down the temporal, it steals his strength from him and thus becomes something prodigious, it becomes the man's impatience, his despair, perhaps his ruin. Pride slays its own master; but the temporal is just as ungrateful, it comes to something by stealing the strength of eternity from a man, and by way of requital it then remains with him and makes him its slave. Alas, in this way man gets to know a great deal about the instant; bigger and bigger become the figures he calculates with — ah, and this calculation amounts only to 'one times one', if eternity has any say in the matter. Now one day of

suffering is long, one month awfully long, one year terribly long, unendurably long, enough to drive one to despair; now one can recall that time, and that time, and that time, and at last so many times that no one knows the beginning or the end of the many times of suffering. But was not the lord of the vineyard in the right when according to the agreement he let the labourers be paid an equally big wage although they were called to the work at different hours, *eternally* understood was he not in the right, inasmuch as, eternally understood, they had only laboured 'once'? The labourers who complained as though an injustice were done them must have learned to know something about the temporal which is not eternally true, and it is precisely this that accounts for their mistake, and it was they who were in the wrong, not the lord of the vineyard. The lord of the vineyard is eternity, for whom diversity of time does not exist, for whom the temporal is only 'once'; and again the equal reward is eternity. Therefore they had no ground for complaint; for with respect to eternity only one agreement is possible, that which is equal for all men; and with respect to receiving the reward of eternity, the one has not laboured longer because he was called at the third hour than the other who was called at the eleventh.

O thou sufferer, every evening indeed thou dost hear the cry of the night-watchman, 'Be cautious with candles and fire!' Thou dost sometimes hear also perhaps the cry, 'Make use of time! Employ the hour!' I would rather cry out to thee and to myself, 'Take care above all things to deal cautiously with time, more cautiously than with candles and fire, so that it never may become to thee more than the 'once'! Never begin the dreadful calculation which no one who ever began got through with, to want to count instants and times! Take care above all to cancel the fractions continually by the aid of eternity, in which all instants are equated, and in such a way that they only come to 'once'! By this defend thyself from ever in thy life getting to the point of suffering more than 'once'! For if it be 'for once', oh, well, that

is something a man can bear after all; but if he has to suffer twice — then impatience is aroused. Was it not in fact impatience which taught him that it was the second time? By the aid of eternity a man suffers but once. Therefore when evening comes let the day's sufferings be forgotten, so that when the same sufferings begin the next day thou dost still suffer only once! And then when the year is at an end let this year's sufferings be forgotten, so that when the same sufferings begin next year thou dost still suffer only once! And then when thy last hour is come let this life's sufferings be forgotten — yea, it is true, is it not, they are then forgotten, thou dost suffer only once! O thou sufferer, whosoever thou art, however thou dost feel thyself imprisoned in the life-long confinement of suffering, alas, like a captive beast in its cage — see how the captive goes around and around its cage, how it measures the length of its chain to give itself exercise — so do thou measure the length of the chain by going as far as the thought of death and eternity, thus thou wilt get exercise in order to be able to hold out, and thou wilt get the zest of living! Suffer patiently! But everything that can be said about suffering patiently is essentially and substantially comprehended in this one word: Let eternity help thee to be able to suffer but once.

The 'one time' of suffering is no time. As the proverb says, Once is no habit' (literally, one time is no time). Whether this is true in the situation to which the proverb applies, I leave undecided; it is quite possible that the proverb is not true, and yet what the proverb says is true — a proverb in fact is anything but an eternal truth, it talks only of the temporal. But when the contrast is that between time and eternity, it is eternally certain that one time is no time, and in no other case is its truth so clearly and decisively evident. What indeed is seventy years compared with eternity! And in eternity it will be made evident that all this suffering, this 'one time', is no time. One will not be able to observe in the blessed ones that they have suffered, how they have suffered, will not be able to observe it by the

slightest signs; every tear shall be wiped away from the eyes which now glisten with radiant joy, every want shall be appeased in the heart which now blissfully possesses all things, and possesses them *there* (oh, blessed security of ownership!) where nothing can take away the joy of it, there where the hallowed ones say blissfully, Once is no time.'

Sin alone is man's destruction, sin alone has the power to set such a mark upon a man that it is not obliterated at once, or entirely, or perhaps never to all eternity. Of all temporal sufferings it is true that once is no time.

The '*once*' *of suffering is a transition*, *a passage-way.* Thou must go through it, and though it were to last as long as life, and though it were as hard as a sword which transfixes thy heart, it is yet only a passage-way. It is not true that it is the suffering which goes through thee, it is thou that goest through it — in the eternal understanding of the case, entirely unharmed. In time and in the sense of the temporal it seems so dreadful, as though suffering went piercingly through thee, so that thou perished in it. That is an illusion. It is as when one of the actors in the play kills another; it seems exactly as if he pierced him through, but we all know that in fact he did not hurt a hair of his head. But not more unharmed does the murdered actor go again to his home, and not more unharmed did Daniel go from the lions' den, and not more unharmed did the Three Children go into the fiery furnace — than the soul of a believer goes into eternity, unharmed by all the sufferings of the temporal, unharmed by death. For all the sufferings of the temporal are illusion, and death itself, eternally understood, is a comedian! As little as moth and rust can consume the treasure of eternity (and what indeed is more impossible!), as little as a thievish hand can steal it, so little is all temporal suffering, however long it may last, capable in the remotest degree of injuring the soul. This neither sickness can do, nor want, nor distress, nor heat and cold — much as they can consume; this neither

slander can do, nor scorn, nor indignity, nor persecution — whatever they may steal and plunder; this not death itself can do.

The 'once' of suffering is passage-way which leaves no trace at all upon the soul, or, still more gloriously, it is a passage-way which purifies the soul by sanctifying it, so that purity remains as the trace left by the passage-way. For as gold is purified in the fire, so is the soul in suffering. But of what does the fire bereave the gold? Yea, it is a strange mode of speech to call it 'bereaving', it bereaves the gold of all the base constituents. What then does gold lose in the fire? Yea, it is a strange mode of speech to call it 'losing', gold loses in the fire all the base elements, that is, gold gains in the fire. So it is with all temporal suffering; in itself impotent, it is not able to take anything; and, if the sufferer allows eternity to have a say, it takes away the impure elements, that is, it gives purity.

Sin is man's destruction. Only the rust of sin can consume the soul — or eternally *destroy* it. For here indeed is the remarkable thing from which already that simple wise man of olden time derived a proof of the immortality of the soul, that the sickness of the soul (sin) is not like bodily sickness which kills the body. Sin is not a passage-way which a man has to pass through once, for from it one shall flee; sin is not (like suffering) the instant, but an eternal fall from the eternal, hence it is not 'once', and it cannot possibly be that its 'once' is no time. No, just as between that rich man in hell and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom there was a yawning gulf fixed, so is there also a yawning distinction between suffering and sin. Let us not confuse it, lest talk about suffering might become less frank-hearted, because it had also sin in mind, and this less frank-hearted talk might be boldly impudent inasmuch as it was talking in this way about sin. This precisely is the Christian position, that there is this infinite distinction between evil and evil, as they are confusingly named; this precisely is the Christian characteristic, to talk of temporal sufferings ever more and more

frank-heartedly, more triumphantly, more joyfully, because, Christianly regarded, sin, and sin only, is destruction.

We suffer only once, but triumph eternally. Let me make this distinction vivid to thee. In a church somewhere here in the country there is a painting behind the altar which depicts two angels holding out to Christ the cup of suffering. When thou dost contemplate the picture, it makes upon thee at once the impression the artist aimed to produce; thou art absorbed in this impression, for such indeed was the situation, the cup of suffering was held out to Him! But in case thou wert to remain a whole day sitting before the altar and looking at this picture, or in case thou wert to contemplate it every Sunday, year in and year out — ah, it surely is true that, however piously thou wert ever mindful of His suffering, praying Him, moreover, to remind thee constantly of it, surely it is true that there will come an instant when everything is for thee infinitely changed, when the picture will blessedly turn itself around, when thou wilt say to thyself, 'No, after all, it did not last so long, the angels did not keep on holding out to Him the cup; in fact He took it willingly from the hands of the angels, obediently from the hand of God — He has drained it, this cup of suffering, for what He suffered, He suffered once, but He triumphs eternally!' — On the other hand, consider Him in His triumph; yea, if any artist were able to depict this, is it possible — however long thou wert to remain sitting, or though every Sunday thou wert to contemplate this picture — is it possible that the moment would ever come when thou wouldest say to thyself, 'But this lasts too long; why, it never comes to an end!' No, God be praised, it never comes to an end! And yet this triumph also is only once; but the 'once' of triumph is eternity, the 'once' of suffering was the instant. It may, no doubt, be impatience which cannot endure to look at the picture where the cup is held out to Him; but it may also be faith, which consequently does not turn

away impatiently, but believingly substitutes the picture of triumph for that of suffering.

O thou sufferer, whosoever thou art; as thou dost begin every day with God, praying Him to give thee patience to suffer that day, so pray Him also every day to remind thee that a man only suffers once! In Our Father' the Christian prays for the daily bread today. With this one is likely to think more especially of the poor, whose task is to get along with the daily bread of poverty. But thou who with respect to sufferings hast been, perhaps from the very beginning of thy life and for thy whole life, so richly endowed with sufferings in abundance, for thee also this prayer was invented, for thee the task is the opposite and yet the same: to get along with the daily supply of suffering, so that at thy life's end, as the poor man says, 'I made a go of it all the same, and got the daily wherewithal', so thou then mightest be able to say, 'I made a go of it all the same, and got the daily wherewithal.' The poor man makes a go of it, defends himself against poverty, finds the daily wherewithal. It is perhaps more difficult with the abundance of suffering to make a go of it, but that is the task. Lay this also which follows well to heart. Reflect that though a man were to have lived his whole life in the undisturbed enjoyment of all earthly goods, reflect that at the instant of death he has nothing at all to remember, nothing at all with which to go forth to encounter the boundless future of remembrance. For *enjoyment* is agreeable in the instant, but like the vacuous instant it is not material for remembrance, and for an eternal remembrance it simply does not exist. On the other hand, there is no remembrance more blessed, and nothing more blessed to remember, than suffering overcome in solidarity with God; this is the mystery of suffering. So then: either seventy years passed in every possible enjoyment, and nothing, nothing for an eternity (most appalling of all deficiencies, as it is indeed the most long-lasting!); or seventy years past in suffering, and then an eternity for blessed remembrance. Blessed

remembrance of sufferings overcome in alliance with God! Most blessed surely the remembrance of undeserved sufferings in a good cause, as indeed the Lord says, ‘When men shall reproach you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, blessed are ye!’ Yea, blessed it is to suffer thus, the most blessed remembrance! But this applies as well to every suffering which is endured in alliance with God, it is blessed to remember it in eternity. We suffer only once, but we triumph eternally. Strange how the situation is inverted! For long protracted duration, which seems to belong to the temporal, the seventy years, is — if the temporal is held down in subjection — no more than ‘once’; but then it comes again in eternity, where at length it becomes perpetually blessed to remember this ‘once’.

II. THE JOY OF IT — THAT AFFLICTION DOES NOT BEREAVE OF HOPE, BUT RECRUITS HOPE

WHAT A STRANGE business proposition — to acquire hope in a way like that! Is it not as strange as though a merchant were to become rich by having nobody enter his shop, or that a traveller reached his destination because somebody showed him the wrong way? Ah, people often complain that life is so unimportant, so meaningless, so totally lacking in entertainment — it seems to me that in this one thought there is entertainment enough for an eternity! People often complain that life is so empty, so monotonous, leaves one so unstrung — it seems to me that in this one thought there is tension enough for an eternity! Poets often depict in their tales a character enigmatically masked who at the decisive moment turns out to be something quite different from what he appeared — to me it seems that the inventions of the poets in this line, all of them taken together, are mere child's-play in comparison with this disguise invented by eternity, that it is affliction which undertakes to create hope for a man! Or is there in any fairy-tale, in any poem, a character passing for evil (but yet at bottom good) which looks so terrifying as affliction? And to think that it should be affliction which recruits hope! Can any robber be more sure of the result of his thrust when it is aimed directly at the heart than the aim of affliction seems to be surely directed at the life of hope? And yet it is affliction which recruits hope! Marvellous! It does not give hope, it recruits hope. So it is not at one decisive moment it throws aside its disguise and says, 'I only wanted to terrify thee, here is the hope.' So all the while it stood there, this is what it was labouring for, labouring slowly for this one and only end, to provide the sufferer with hope.

Yes, let us wonder at it right heartily! If there is anything people in these times have forgotten, it is this thing of wondering — therefore also the thing of believing and hoping and loving. The very highest thing is proclaimed, the most marvellous, but no one wonders. It is proclaimed that there is forgiveness of sins, but no one says, 'It is impossible.' Hardly does any one turn away offended and say, 'It is impossible'; still less does any one say it in wonder, or as he says it who is so fain to wish that it might be true but dare not believe it, will not let go of the saying but is as an unhappy lover and cannot believe; still less is it said by him, precisely by him who believes in it, he whose repentance was softened into a quiet sorrow which never was transformed into a blessed joy, he therefore who in expressing to God his inexpressible thanks refreshes his soul by repeating, 'It is impossible!' Oh, blessed refreshment, that he who was brought so close to despair because it was impossible now believes it, blissfully believes it, but in the wonderment of his soul continues to say, 'It is impossible!' We all know well what is related of a man who had heard a story at which all laughed, but which nobody laughed at when he told it... because, as we know, he had forgotten the point. But think of an Apostle in these times, an Apostle who of course knew well how to tell the story of the marvellous, think of his grief, or of the grief of the Holy Spirit within him, when he had to say, 'There is no one that wonders; they listen to it as indifferently as though it were of the utmost indifference, as though there were nobody whom it concerns, nobody to whom it is of importance, of immense importance, whether it is possible or not possible, whether it is so or not so, whether it is true or a lie!'

So as an introduction let us wonder at the fact that affliction recruits hope, let the soul be tuned to wonder, let us shout as the Psalmist shouts to his soul, 'Awake psaltery and harp!' And so let us talk about

THE JOY OF IT — THAT AFFLICTION DOES NOT BEREAVE OF HOPE, BUT RECRUITS HOPE

If with one word we were to indicate what is characteristic of child-life and youth-life, one must surely say that it is a dream-life. And so indeed we do speak. How often (to mention only this example) this sad phrase is repeated by an older person: ‘They vanished, these dreams of childhood and youth.’ They vanished — presumably because the dreamer vanished, was lost; for how should there be dreams when there is no dreamer! But what right have we to call it a dream-life, when by that we characterize the child and the youth as sleepers, as sleep-walkers? In another sense the child is awake, in a degree that none of its elders are, its senses are open to every impression, the child being sheer life and movement, alert attention all the day long; and the youth is awake as seldom an older person is, his mind is without rest early and late, he is so stirred by passion that often he hardly can sleep. And yet child-life and youth-life is dream-life, for the innermost thing, that which in the deepest sense is man, slumbers. The child is completely turned outward, its inwardness is extraversion, and to that extent the child is wide awake. But for a man, to be awake means to be eternally turned inward in inwardness, and so the child is dreaming, it dreams itself sensuously at one with everything, almost to the extent of confounding itself with the sense-impression. In comparison with the child, the youth is more turned inward, but in imagination; he dreams, or it is as though everything about him were dreaming. On the other hand, he who in the sense of eternity is turned inward perceives only what is of the spirit, and for the rest he is like a sleeper, an absentee, a dead man, with respect to the perceptions of flesh and blood, of the temporal, of the imaginative — in him the spirit is awake, the lower functions sleep; hence he is awake. Dream-life is so denominated with a view to the nobler part — in the waking man the spirit wakes, whereas there is doubtless something which sleeps, namely, the lower part.

In the child and in the youth it is the spirit that sleeps, the lower part is awake; nevertheless, as it is the determining characteristic of spirit to be awake, this life is called a dream-life.

But he who dreams must be awakened, and the deeper the man is who slumbers, or the deeper he slumbers, the more important it is that he be awakened, and the more powerfully must he be awakened. In case there is nothing that awakens the youth, this dream-life is continued in manhood. The man doubtless thinks that he is dreaming no more, and in a sense he is not; perhaps he scorns and despises the dreams of youth, but precisely this shows that his life is a failure. In a sense he is awake, yet he is not in an eternal sense and in the deepest sense awake. And so his life is something far less significant than that of the youth, and it is his life rather which deserves to be despised; for he has become an unfruitful tree, or like a tree which has died, whereas the life of youth verily is not to be despised. The dream-life of childhood and youth is the time of blossoming. But in the case of a tree which is to bear fruit, the time of blossoming is a time of immaturity. It may indeed seem like retrogression when the tree which once stood naked and then burst into bloom, now casts off its blossoms; but it also may be progress. Fair is the time of blossoms, and fair is the blossoming hope in the child and in the youth; and yet it is immaturity.

Then comes *affliction* to awaken the dreamer, affliction which like a storm tears off the blossoms, affliction *which nevertheless does not bereave of hope, but recruits hope.*

Where then is hope? Is hope in the rushing wind of the storm? Oh, no, not more than God's voice was in the rushing wind, but in the gentle breeze, like a whisper in man's inmost parts, all too easily ignored. But what is it then that affliction would accomplish? It would have that whisper heard in the inmost parts. But does not then affliction counteract itself, must not its tempestuous wind drown out this voice? No, affliction is able to drown out

every earthly voice, that is precisely what it has to do, but the voice of eternity within a man it cannot drown. Or conversely: it is the voice of eternity within which demands to be heard, and to make a hearing for itself it makes use of the loud voice of affliction. Then when by the aid of affliction all irrelevant voices are brought to silence, it can be heard, this voice within.

O thou sufferer, whosoever thou art, if only thou wilt listen! People generally think that it is the world, the environment, external relationships, which stand in one's way, in the way of one's good fortune and peace and joy. And at bottom it is always man himself that stands in his own way, man himself, who is too closely attached to the world, to the environment, to circumstances, to external relationships, so that he is not able to come to himself, come to rest, to have hope, he is constantly too much turned outward, instead of being turned inward, hence everything he says is true only as an illusion of the senses. Man himself maintains communication with the enemy, and the medium of communication is... *the hope of youth.*

But affliction *bereaves* of hope. Yea, that thou hast thyself experienced to the full, even if thou hast not as yet abandoned the league with this ambiguous experience. Thou didst hope that if thou wert not successful the first time, well then another time, and if not then, at least another time; thou didst hope that as compensation for thy many failures a little redress might be due thee the next time; thou didst hope that it still might be possible for an unexpected help to come, as it came to him who for thirty and eight years had lain paralysed, with salvation so near that it was always just one other that stepped down into the pool before him; after having relinquished all other friends thou didst at last set thy hopes upon that Friend — but the affliction endured.

For affliction recruits hope. It does not *bestow* hope, but it *recruits* it. It is man himself who acquires it, this hope of eternity which is deposited in

him, hidden in his inner man; but affliction recruits it. For affliction prevents him mercilessly (yes, in the child's view of it, mercilessly) from obtaining any other help or relief whatsoever; affliction compels him mercilessly (yes, in the youth's view of it, mercilessly) to let go of everything else; affliction schools him mercilessly (yes, in immaturity's view of it, mercilessly), schools him thoroughly, that he may learn to grasp the eternal and to hold on to the eternal. Affliction does not help *directly*, it is not affliction that acquires or purchases hope and makes a present of it to a man; it helps *repellently*, and can do no otherwise, because hope is in man himself. Affliction preaches awakening. For, alas, men are unfortunately only too hardy, so that there is little to be accomplished by the terror of mighty thoughts — affliction knows better how to make itself understood, its eloquence is striking, not only *once* like a witticism, but as one says of a stick, 'There are blows in that; striking is a permanent attribute it possesses.' Man would prefer to have the direct form of communication, by way of assurance and assurance; but this is so comfortable that it avails nothing. Affliction, on the other hand, does not jest. When affliction begins this work of recruiting hope, it seems for an instant as crazy as if one were to assault a beggar, hold a pistol to his heart, and say, 'Your money!' For, ah, the sufferer is just about to despair of hope (the hope of youth that is), which he is more than fain to hold fast, as he says — and then affliction assaults him and demands... his hope (the hope of eternity, that is). Affliction is no congratulatory caller who comes bearing hope in his hand as a present. Affliction is the villain who cruelly (yes, in the child's view, cruelly) says to the sufferer, 'I shall recruit hope for thee all right.' But as it always is in life, that he who has to play the villain is never appreciated, that nobody takes the time to put himself in the villain's place and to recognize how admirably he plays his part and conforms to his role, how admirably, without letting himself be moved by any sighs or tears or

ingratiating prayers — so it is also with affliction, it always has to hear itself spoken ill of. But just as little as it troubles the physician that the sick man in his pain scolds and clamours, or even kicks at him, just so little is affliction put out at this; God be praised, it is not put out — it recruits hope. Just as Christianity, precisely by all that unappreciation and persecution and injustice which the truth must suffer, proves that righteousness must exist (oh, marvellous inference!), so there is in the extremity of affliction, when it presses hardest, this inference, this *ergo: Ergo* there is an eternity to set one's hope upon.

Imagine hidden in a simpler exterior a secret receptacle wherein the most precious treasure is deposited — there is a spring which has to be pressed, but the spring is hidden, and the pressure must have a certain strength, so that an accidental pressure would not be sufficient — so likewise is the hope of eternity hidden in man's inmost parts, and affliction is the pressure. When it presses the hidden spring, and strongly enough, then the contents appear in all their glory.

Imagine a grain of corn deposited in the earth — if it is to grow, what does it need? First of all room, it must have room, and then pressure, there must in addition be pressure — to germinate is precisely to make room through an opposing substance. So likewise is the hope of eternity deposited in man's inward parts. But affliction makes room by making away with all else, all the provisional and temporal which it reduces to despair, so that the pressure of affliction is what elicits the treasure.

Imagine an animal which (as actually is the case) has a weapon for its protection which it uses only in mortal danger — such is the hope of eternity in man's bosom, affliction is the mortal danger!

Imagine a creeping creature which nevertheless has wings which it can use when it is reduced to extremities, but for daily use thinks it not worth while to employ them — such likewise is the hope of eternity in man's

bosom; he has wings, but he must be reduced to extremities before he discovers them, or before he obtains them, or before he employs them!

Imagine a hardened criminal whom justice can neither by craft nor by fair means induce to confess, but out of whom it forces an admission by means of the rack — so likewise is the hope of eternity in man’s bosom. The natural man goes reluctantly, oh, so reluctantly, to confession. In the sense of childhood and youth, he is ready enough to hope. But to hope, in the sense of eternity, is contingent upon a prodigiously painful effort to which the natural man will never be brought by fair means to subject himself; for with pain man is born, but he is reborn to the eternal with perhaps even greater pain — the cry, however, signifies equally little in either case, since it is auxiliary to the act. So affliction must supervene to compel the admission, the admission of hope. Or imagine a stiff-necked witness who will not give testimony (and every man is to be a witness for the eternal and to present evidence for it) — affliction does not let him go because he refuses to give testimony; day after day it imposes upon him heavier and heavier fines for contempt of court, until he gives testimony. Or imagine, as one reads in the poets, an evil woman who knows the word of good counsel but out of malice constantly counsels wrong — when she is brought to the stake the word comes out. Such is the hope of eternity in the natural man’s bosom. But he does not will his own good, therefore he will not come out with the right word, will hardly listen to it when it is said by another, let alone by himself, until affliction saves him by constraining him to it.

Thus it is that affliction recruits hope. — But is affliction then to cease, is the whole thing a painful operation which is then over with? No, it does not have to be over. When once affliction has attained what eternity wants of it, the situation adjusts itself properly; for, though the pressure remains, it constantly makes itself known conversely as hope, converts itself into hope.

This is contained in the thought itself: a pressure may press down, but it may also signify to lift. Thou seest the jet of water, how it rises high in the air, thou dost not see the pressure, or that this is pressure and by pressure. There is a pressure which depresses, but there is also the pressure which uplifts. Him only can affliction depress who will not be helped eternally; him who wills this, affliction presses upward. Him only can affliction bereave of hope who will not have the hope of eternity; for him who will have this hope affliction recruits it.

Thus it is with affliction. In life there is only one danger which decisively brings with it destruction, that is sin; for sin is man’s ruin. Affliction — yea, though it were more terrible than any man ever has experienced — affliction recruits hope.

III. THE JOY OF IT — THAT THE POORER THOU DOST BECOME, THE RICHER THOU CANST MAKE OTHERS

THERE ARE MANY roads to riches. And whether a man succeeds in becoming rich by following one of these roads, or whether he does not succeed, there is always a great deal of talk in the world and ample knowledge about these many roads. But this road to riches — and yet it is verily the highest attainment of riches to be able to make others rich — this road to riches by becoming poor oneself, this road which nevertheless is 'the way' one rarely hears talked about, rarely sees trodden, is rarely recommended; alas, in the world it is almost as if it did not exist, in the world they have no conception at all that riches is precisely this, not to become or to be *rich* oneself, but to be able to make others rich.

And yet this marvellous road to riches does actually exist. But it is understandable when one reads in the tales of the poets how the man who has ventured into the hiding-place of robbers must be fearful of every step he takes lest there should be concealed a secret trap-door through which he may plunge into the abyss; it is understandable when incredulity and apprehensiveness preach their doctrine about the insecurity of life — for people are only too prone to believe in the possibility of ruin. But that life, that existence, is blessedly secured by the help of eternity, that precisely in danger there is concealed a trap-door... to restitution — this is what they do not believe. Precisely when a man is nearest to despair, there he has a place on which to tread (and in despair he is brought as near as possible to treading upon it), and therewith everything is infinitely changed. He follows then the same road, but in the opposite direction. Instead of sighing anxiously at having to walk in the path of poverty, of lowliness, of unappreciation, of persecution, he walks in that same path joyfully; for he

believes, and as a believer he understands that the poorer he becomes, the richer he can make others.

So if no one else will talk about this road to riches, then we will talk about it, about

THE JOY OF IT — THAT THE POORER THOU DOST BECOME, THE RICHER THOU CANST MAKE OTHERS

The difference is the inward one which changes everything infinitely, depending upon whether the sufferer will anxiously keep his gaze fixed upon how poor he has become, how insignificant, how unappreciated, or whether one who is bereaved of all earthly things will look away from this and then see his situation on its beautiful, its blessed side. Oh, if even for the artist it is a matter *of* course that when he has to paint a one-eyed man he depicts the side where he has an eye, should not then a man in bitter suffering look away from the bitterness in order to see the blessedness? In an outward sense there is to be sure no change; the sufferer remains where he was, in the same condition, and yet there is a change, a marvellous change, the miracle of faith. Viewed from the one side it is the poor man who becomes poorer and poorer; viewed from the other side it is the poor man who, the poorer he becomes, the richer he makes others — yet in an outward sense the same man.

Let us now proceed with the discourse as follows: let us first make clear to ourselves the difference between riches and riches — earthly/spiritual — and what consequences this has for the possessor, so as to understand that one must actually be poor in order to make others rich, and that the poorer one becomes, the richer one can make others.

All earthly and worldly goods are in themselves selfish, invidious, the possession of them, being invidious or envious, must of necessity make others poorer: what I have, another cannot have; the more I have, the less

another has. The unrighteous mammon (and this term might well be applied to all earthly goods, including worldly honour, power, etc.) is itself unrighteous, does injustice (irrespective of whether it is unlawfully acquired or possessed), cannot in and for itself be acquired or possessed equally, for if one is to have much, there must necessarily be another who gets only a little, and what the one has, the other cannot possibly have; moreover, all the time and diligence, all the care and anxiety, expended for the acquisition or possession of earthly goods is selfish, invidious, or, the man who is so employed is selfish, in every such instant he has no thought for others, in every such instant he labours selfishly for himself or for some few others, but equally for himself and for every other. Even though a man may be willing to communicate in his earthly goods — yet every instant when he is employed in acquiring them or is dwelling upon the possession of them he is selfish, as that thing is which he possesses or acquires.

It is otherwise with the goods of the spirit. The goods of the spirit are, *according to the very concept*, *communication*, *the possession of them is merciful*, *in and for itself it is communication.* If a man has *faith*, truly he has not thereby deprived others of anything (without even taking into account what he does directly to communicate it to others), he has laboured for all others. The entire race, indeed, and every individual in the race is a sharer in the fact that he has faith. By having faith he expresses the purely human, or that which is the essential possibility of every man. His possession of faith truly does not envy others anything, the rich man's possession of money being a kind of envy which has taken this money from the poor, who perhaps in their turn envy the rich for it; for there is envy in both situations, because earthly riches is itself envy. No, the believer has taken nothing from anybody, in faith he possesses nothing invidious; and no one will envy him that, rather should every one rejoice with him because of it. For the believer possesses only what every man can possess; and just in

proportion as his faith is the greater it is possible to see all the more clearly the gloriousness and blessedness of this possession which in the possibility is common to all men. — If a man has *love* — shall I add, yea, even if he had it beyond all measure? No, it would be amiss to talk so extravagantly. It might seem that in the same high degree in which he has this possession of love, the more obvious must it be that he had deprived others of something; yet exactly the contrary is the case: the higher the degree in which he has love, just so much the farther he is from having deprived others of anything. So then, if a man has love beyond all measure, he has not therefore deprived others of anything, on the contrary, he has thereby been labouring for all — without considering for a moment what he actually has done for others out of love. All the time he was labouring for his own sake to acquire love, he has been labouring for all others. Although for an instant we very scrupulously exclude consideration of the use he makes of love, he has it not merely as a possession for himself, but the whole race and every individual in the race is a sharer in the fact that he has love. — If a man has *hope*, the hope of eternity, beyond all measure, he has not thereby in the very least deprived any one of anything, on the contrary, he has thereby laboured for all. For that one man has hope, or that there is one man who has hope, is for all other men far more joyful news, just because it is far more reassuring, than it is for all the other sailors who are steering for the same goal to learn that another has reached it. For in the case of the sailors, accidental circumstances may decide success for each one, and 'the other' sailors are not by an essential possibility sharers in the good luck of the one sailor. But that there is *one* man that has hope, or whenever there is one man that has hope, the thing is decisive for all, that they could have it. Here the rule is: one is all, and all one.

Thus the goods of the spirit are in and for themselves essentially communication, the possession of them is in and for itself a benefaction to

all. He who strives after or possesses these goods does not therefore do good to himself merely, but bestows a benefaction upon all, labours for all, his effort to acquire these goods does in and for itself enrich others immediately; in him the others behold themselves, just as the spectators at the play behold themselves in the hero of the piece. This is the humanity of spiritual goods, in contrast to the inhumanity of earthly goods. For what is humanity? Human likeness or equality. Even at the moment when it most seems as if in acquiring these goods one is labouring for oneself alone, one is communicating; it is inherent in the goods themselves, in their very nature, that the possession of them is communication. In acquiring hope thou dost not acquire it merely for thyself but in acquiring it (oh, blessed acquisition!) thou art a communicator, for even in an immediate way the hope of eternity is a communication. Thou dost not merely possess hope, but even in the fact that thou dost possess it (oh, blessed possession!) thou art a communicator, thou art bestowing a benefaction upon others.

And how richly does heaven's blessing accompany these goods of the spirit — for 'to repeat the same thing, to me is not grievous', and it seems to me that the thought is so blessed that it cannot be repeated often enough; it would not even then be too often if a man's life were every day a repetition of this thought. Whereas the earthly goods are in themselves invidious, and therefore (oh, what great scope for fortuitous possibilities, what insecurity!) it must depend upon whether at a given instant they are possessed by one who will do good with them, and, alas, whereas they too often tempt the possessor to be just as invidious as are the goods themselves — the goods of the spirit are to such a degree a blessing that the mere possession of them (without talking now in any way of the use the possessor makes of them) is a blessing to others, is communication. As it is impossible to prevent the air from entering in through even the thickest walls, just so impossible it is to possess these goods in a selfish sense. This is inherent — and precisely here

is the eternally reassuring fact — it is inherent, if I may so say, not in the possessor even, it is inherent in the goods themselves, which are communication, although it follows of itself that, if the possessor does not correspond to them, he does not possess at all the goods of the spirit. As the precious perfume diffuses a sweet odour not only when it is poured out, but to such a degree contains odour in itself, is essentially odour, that it penetrates the vessel in which it is contained, and even... in *concealment* diffuses sweet odour — so are the goods of the spirit to such a degree communication that possession is communication, that even to acquire them is to enrich others.

Hence it follows that all the time thou dost employ in acquiring these goods, every instant thou dost rejoice in the possession of them, thou art so far from being selfishly employed with thyself that thou art communicating directly.

Thus it is in truth with the true goods of the spirit, which at the same time have the reassuring quality, the hall-mark of the truth, that they can be possessed only in truth. If any man would possess them selfishly, possess them as his own in a selfish sense, he does not possess them at all. However, in contrast with the merely earthly goods, there are also spiritual goods of a less perfect sort. For example, insight, knowledge, talent, aptitudes, etc., are spiritual goods. But it holds true nevertheless of the less perfect spiritual goods that the decisive thing is the possessor, or what sort of a man the possessor is, whether he is benevolent and communicative, or whether he is selfish; for these goods in themselves are not yet communication. If then he who possesses these less perfect spiritual goods is selfish, it results that with him the goods themselves also become invidious and make others poorer. The possessor then confines himself with these goods of his, all the while he is labouring to acquire them or to possess them he is selfishly confined, has neither time nor opportunity to

trouble himself about others, nor has thought for others. So the shrewd man becomes shrewder and shrewder, but in an invidious sense, in such a sense that for his own advantage he would like to have the others become simpler and simpler in comparison with his increasing shrewdness, would like to have these more simple others... inhumanly in his power. The learned man becomes more and more learned, but in an invidious sense, and at last so learned that no one can understand him, so learned that he cannot communicate himself. In this way, by being possessed in untruth, these less perfect spiritual goods are transformed into worldly and earthly goods, the characteristic of which is that in one way or another the possession of them makes others poorer. But so far as the true goods of the spirit are concerned, it is true that they can only be possessed in truth, that one who does not possess them in truth really does not possess them.

So these then are the facts about riches and riches, and these thoughts must lie at the base of and determine the thought of enriching others. On the one hand are the earthly goods (or the less perfect spiritual goods), the possession of which in itself is envy, the acquisition of which in itself is envy, and hence every hour, every thought which is employed in possessing or acquiring them is invidious; on the other hand are the true goods of the spirit, the acquisition of which is itself communication, and hence every hour, every thought which is employed in possessing or acquiring them is enriching to others.

How then can the one man make the other rich? Well, he who has the earthly goods can communicate them. All right, let us assume that he does so, and let us not forget for an instant that the earthly goods are after all not the true riches. So he communicates and does good with what he has of earthly goods. That can be done very expeditiously, he may do it once a month or one hour every day, and he may be giving away a good deal. But observe that in all the hours and days when he is employed in acquiring, in

amassing, in preserving the earthly goods, he is selfish. Yea, even were he to amass in order to communicate, yet so long as his thought is employed with the earthly goods he is selfish. In a sense this selfishness does not inhere in him, it inheres in the essential nature of the earthly goods. So this is seen to be only a very imperfect way of making others rich, even if we assume that he who possesses earthly goods is not ruined by them but is willing to give and to communicate, and even if for an instant we forget that the earthly goods are not the true riches.

No, the way, the perfect way of making others rich is to communicate the goods of the spirit, being oneself, moreover, solely employed in acquiring and possessing these goods. In such a case a man does truly make others rich, and this is the only thing he does, his sole business, and yet the business of his whole life. These goods are the true riches. At the time he himself is acquiring them he is communicating and directly making others rich. At the time he possesses them he is communicating and directly making others rich. And since he is solely employed with and concerned about these riches, he will surely strive to increase them. But with regard to the true riches, the nature of which is communication, increase is neither more nor less than direct communication and the increase of it; for here it is not as it is meanly in the case of false riches, which verily are not increased by being given away. Then by instruction, by reproof, by encouragement, by comfort, he communicates these goods, directly making others rich.

Let us now reflect upon our theme: how joyful it is that the poorer a man becomes, the richer he can make others. O thou sufferer, whosoever thou art, when life has deprived thee of thy riches, when from competence perhaps thou art reduced to poverty, all right then, if thou wilt let thyself be helped and wilt understand it as kindly meant in thy regard, all right then, thou art thus exempted from wasting thy time and thy day and thy thought upon that with which one can only be selfishly employed; and thou art all

the more prompted to employ thyself solely in acquiring and possessing the goods of the spirit — and, oh, in every such instant thou art making others rich! Or in case life has deprived thee of thy worldly prestige and influence, all right then, if thou wilt let thyself be helped and wilt understand it as kindly meant in thy regard, all right then, thou art thus exempted also from expending time and thought in drawing income and enjoying it, which one can only selfishly be employed about; and thou art all the more prompted to employ thyself solely in acquiring and possessing the goods of the spirit — and, oh, in every such instant thou art making others rich! Or in case thou wast expelled from human society, in case no one seeks thy company, no invitation incommodes thee, all right then, if thou wilt let thyself be helped and wilt understand it as kindly meant in thy regard, all right then, thou art thus exempted also from wasting thy time and thy thought in idle chatter, from being emptily employed in killing time to escape boredom, or in wasting it in foolish pastimes; and thou art all the more prompted to employ thyself solely in acquiring and possessing the goods of the spirit — and, oh, in every such instant thou art making others rich!

Perhaps it seems hard to thee to *become* poor, to become poorer and poorer; for in an outward sense it is a *fait accompli.* Perhaps thy soul still clings to the earthly things, selfishly preoccupied with the loss of them, as he who possesses them is preoccupied with the possession of them? Do not let thyself be pitiably deceived. It seems like such an easy thing to give some moneys to the poor when one is rich oneself, to help another on when one is mighty oneself — do not let thyself be deceived: the man who is employed in acquiring faith, hope and love, precisely he it is that makes others rich.

So become poorer still; for perhaps thou art maintaining with the lost possession a deceitful relationship of wish, perhaps thou dost cherish a hope traitorous to thyself of regaining it; become poorer still, let go entirely of

the lost possession, and strive then solely for the goods of the spirit, that thou mayest make others rich. Rich in blessing be every such hour, every such instant; thou dost not only do good to thyself, but thou dost make others rich, thou art bestowing a benefaction upon others.

And when thou hast become thoroughly poor, thou hast more and more made the goods of the spirit thine own. Then thou shalt also be in a position to make others rich by communicating the goods of the spirit, by communicating what in thyself is communication. The poorer thou dost become, the rarer will be the moments in thy life when thou art selfishly employed with thyself or with what in thyself is selfish, with the earthly which so attracts to it a man's thought that for the time being he does not exist for others. But the rarer such moments become, the more constantly will the hours of thy day be filled with acquiring and possessing the goods of the spirit (ah, forget not, ah, forget not this, that when thou art doing thus thou art making others rich!) or with directly communicating the goods of the spirit, and thereby making others rich.

Think of our Pattern, the Lord Jesus Christ! He was poor, but yet He surely made others rich! And indeed His life never expresses anything accidental, as though accidentally He was poor. No His life is essential truth, and therefore it shows that to make others rich one must himself be poor. This is the thought of the Deity, very dissimilar from the thought which entered into the heart of man — the thought of the rich man who makes others rich. For not only are the earthly goods not true riches, but the rich man, however free-handed he may be in giving of his abundance, cannot avoid having times when he is employed with his riches, and so far forth he is not employed in making others rich. But He was poor so long as He lived here on earth, therefore His business so long as He lived was, every day, every hour, every instant, to make others rich — Himself poor, the only labour He was engaged in was to make others rich, and just by

being Himself poor He was employed in it wholly. He did not descend from heaven to become *poor*, but He descended to make *others rich.* But to make others rich He had to be poor. He *became* poor, not as though this befell Him once in His life, perhaps after being for a time rich. Yet He *became* poor, for this was His own free resolution, His choice. He became poor, and *became* such in every sense and in every way. He lived as expelled from human society, He (oh, what light-mindedness to jest with His reputation, oh, what inexcusable indifference to the judgement of others, oh, what insolence, which indeed must deservedly abase Him deeply, deeply in the eyes of all!), He consorted only with publicans and sinners. Thus He became poor to make others rich. It was not His purpose to become poor, but His purpose was to make others rich, *hence* He became poor. — Think of the Apostle Paul, who himself utters this saying: As poor we make others rich. The Apostle put up tranquilly with being poor, living in poverty, expelled from human society, without even having a wife to whom he belonged or who belonged to him — he put up with it tranquilly, and for what reason unless because he *therein* found *the way* to make others rich?

So then this is the joyful thing, that the poorer thou dost become, the richer thou canst make others. Oh, the fact that the world bereaves thee of everything, or that thou dost lose the whole world, is really of no importance, yea, it even is for the best, if only thou thyself dost count it for the best! Precisely at the moment of despair, when the need is greatest, help is nearest, the change which infinitely alters everything: that thou the poor man art the rich man — for after all the true riches is surely to make others rich. Thus in this instance also the joy is concealed. For (and it is with this we wish to end every one of these discourses, that it may be thoroughly clear not only what we are talking about, but clear that one must talk in an entirely different way about a thing which is eternally different) sin only is man's ruin.

IV. THE JOY OF IT — THAT THE WEAKER THOU DOST BECOME, THE STRONGER DOES GOD BECOME IN THEE

IMAGINE A GROUP of people who have come together for social intercourse; the conversation is in full swing, lively, almost violent, one man can hardly wait to have his say till the other is through with his, and everybody in the company takes part more or less actively in the debate — then in comes a stranger, who thus arrives in the midst of it all. Judging by the behaviour of the company and the loudness of the talk, he infers that the topic of conversation is one of great concern to them, and he courteously infers that it also must be a matter of considerable importance — and so with perfect calmness, since he has not been in the heat of it, he enquires what might be substantially the subject of their conversation. Imagine then that this, as often enough happens, was a mere trifle. The stranger is not in the least to blame for the effect he produces, he has courteously assumed that this was something of importance. But what a surprising effect, to become suddenly aware in this fashion that what for more than an hour perhaps had absorbed the attention of the whole company almost passionately is so unimportant that it hardly can be put in words, that it turns out to be a mere nothing — when a stranger calmly asks what the talk is about.

But a still stranger effect is often produced by godly talk when it is heard incidentally in the midst of the world's talk. Thus in the world there is plenty of talk about strife and strife and strife. There is talk about this man and that living in strife with one another, about that man and that woman, although they are united by the holy ties of matrimony, living in strife with one another, about the learned strife which has now begun between this man

and that, about this one challenging another to a mortal duel, about there being a riot in the city, about the thousands of hostile troops which now are advancing against the country, about a European war which is impending, about the conflict of the elements which rages fearfully. Behold, it is this that is talked of in the world, day in and day out, by thousands and thousands; if in this sense thou hast anything to recount of a strife, thou wilt readily find hearers, and if thou shouldest wish to hear something, thou wilt readily find talkers. But imagine then that one of these talkers about strife took occasion to talk about the strife which every man has to strive... with God — what an astounding effect! Would it not rather appear to most people that it was he who was talking about nothing, whereas all the others were talking about something, or even about something very important? For, travel the world around, form acquaintance with the most various tribes, go about amongst men, enter into conversation with them, visit them in their houses, follow them to their meetings — and listen attentively to what they talk about; take part in the many, many conversations about the many, many countless ways in which a man may get into strife here in the world, take part in these conversations, but constantly in such a way that thou thyself are not the one to bring the subject up — and then tell me if thou hast ever heard anything said about this strife. And yet this strife is the affair of every man; there is no other strife of which it is true in the same degree that it is absolutely the affair of every man. For the strife between man and man — well, after all, there are many who live their lives peaceably without strife with anybody. And the strife between married people — well, after all, there are many happy marriages which this strife therefore does not concern. And after all it is a rare occurrence for a man to be challenged to a mortal duel, so this strife concerns very few. And even during a European war there are many, after all, yea, even if it was the most terrible war, there are still many — if not elsewhere, at least in America —

who live on in peace. But this strife with God is absolutely the affair of every man.

This strife, however, is perhaps regarded as so sacred and solemn that for this reason it is never talked about. As God is not directly present so as to be noticed in the world, where on the other hand the immense multitude of the manifold attracts attention to itself, it is as if God did not exist at all — so this strife is perhaps a secret which every man has, but which is never talked about, whereas all the other things which are talked about attract attention to themselves, as if this strife did not exist. Perhaps it is so, perhaps.

But certain it is that every sufferer has occasion in one way or another to become aware of this strife. And it is to sufferers this discourse addresses itself. So let us talk about this strife, about

THE JOY OF IT — THAT THE WEAKER THOU DOST BECOME, THE STRONGER DOES GOD BECOME IN THEE.

For is it not true, thou sufferer, whosoever thou art, that this is indeed joyful? Still, here, as in all these discourses, everything depends upon how the situation is viewed. If the sufferer, despondent, low-spirited, perhaps in despair, would stare fixedly upon how weak he has become — no, there would be nothing joyful in that. But if he would look away from that, to perceive what it signified that he has become weak, who it is that becomes strong, that this is God — then that is indeed joyful. One sometimes hears a vanquished man say, ‘I was vanquished, I was the weaker one (this is the painful part), but what comforts, yea, delights me, is that after all it was he that conquered.’ Who is ‘he’? Well, it may be one whom the vanquished man loves, esteems very highly. The joy is certainly not complete, he would rather have been the victor; but he compels defeat to yield a joyful aspect, he congratulates the victor upon his victory. But then when He who

triumphs is God — and here again it is merely an error of vision on the part of the sufferer if, fixing his gaze *outwardly*, he concludes that these are his enemies, his jealous rivals who become stronger; for it well may be that they become stronger, and that it is precisely their strength which makes him weak, but with this the sufferer has nothing whatever to do. He becomes weak; *outwardly* understood this means simply and solely that God becomes strong. So then, when He who conquers is God! To congratulate God upon His victory, to comfort oneself that it is 'He' who has conquered, oh, essentially that is to congratulate oneself upon victory! For in relation to God a man can truly conquer only in that God conquers.

First, however, *let us endeavour to make it evident that the fact of a man's being weak signifies* inwardly *that God becomes strong in him.* And this is what we first of all must beg of the sufferer, what we must require of him in order to be able to talk to him, that as promptly as possible he take his eye off the outward aspect, and turns his glance *inward*, lest his glance, and he himself along with it, become riveted upon an outward view of the relation of his sufferings to his surroundings. Then when this first thing has been done, when it has been made evident that God becomes strong in him — *then surely it follows of itself that this is joyful.*

A man who but rarely, and then only cursorily, concerns himself with his relationship to God, hardly thinks or dreams that he has so closely to do with God, or that God is so close to him, that there exists a reciprocal relationship between him and God: the stronger a man is, the weaker God is, the weaker a man is, the stronger God is in him. Every one who assumes that a God exists naturally thinks of Him as the strongest, as He eternally is, being the Almighty who creates out of nothing, and for whom all the creation is as nothing; but such a man hardly thinks of the possibility of a reciprocal relationship.

And yet for God, the infinitely strongest, there is an obstacle; He has posited it Himself, yea, He has lovingly, with incomprehensible love, posited it Himself; for He posited it and posits it every time a man comes into existence, whom He in His love makes to be something, directly in apposition to Himself. Oh, marvellous omnipotence of love! A man cannot bear that his ‘creations’ should be something directly in apposition to himself, and so he speaks of them in a tone of disparagement as his ‘creations’. But God who creates out of nothing, who almightily takes from nothing and says, ‘Be’, lovingly adjoins, ‘Be something even in apposition to me.’ Marvellous love, even His omnipotence is under the sway of love!

Hence the reciprocal relationship. If God were only the Almighty, there would be no reciprocal relationship, inasmuch as for the Almighty the creation is nothing. But for love it is something. Incomprehensible omnipotence of love! For in comparison with this omnipotence it seems as though one could comprehend better the omnipotence which creates out of nothing (which nevertheless one cannot comprehend); but this omnipotence, more marvellous than the genesis of all creation, which constrains itself and lovingly makes of the creature something in apposition to itself — oh, marvellous omnipotence of love! If thou wouldst but strain thy thought a little bit; it is not so very difficult, and it is so blissful. The omnipotence which creates out of nothing is not as incomprehensible as the almighty love which out of this which for omnipotence is nothing is able to make something which exists independently for love.

But just for this reason love requires also something of man. It never occurs to omnipotence that a man is more than nothing — he is nothing for omnipotence. People are inclined to think that it is the almighty God that requires something of men, and so perhaps that it is the loving God that abates the requirement a little. Oh, sorry misunderstanding, which forgets that God’s love must already exist in order that a man may in such wise be

existent for God that there can be any question of requiring anything of him. If the Almighty were to require anything of thee, in that very instant thou art nothing. But the loving God who in incomprehensible love made thee to be something for Him, lovingly requires something of thee. In human relationships it is the might of the mighty which requires something of thee, it is his love which remits. But it is not thus with the relationship to God. There is no earthly mighty man for whom thou art nothing, therefore it is his might which makes demands; but for God thou art nothing, therefore it is His love which, as it made thee to be something, requires something of thee. They speak of the omnipotence of God crushing a man. But it is not so; no man is so considerable that God would need omnipotence to crush him, since for omnipotence he is nothing. It is God's love which manifests itself as love even at the last instant by letting him be something for it. Woe unto him if omnipotence turns against him.

So then, love, which made a man to be something (for omnipotence let him come into existence, but love let him come into existence for God) lovingly requires something of him. Here we have the reciprocal relationship. If a man would selfishly keep for himself this something which love made him to be, and would selfishly be something, then, in a worldly sense, he is strong — but God is weak. And it is almost as if the poor loving God were duped: with incomprehensible love God has gone ahead and made man something — and thereupon man dupes Him and holds on to this as if it were his own. The worldly man confirms himself in the notion that he is strong, he is perhaps confirmed in it by other people's worldly judgement to the same effect, perhaps by his presumed might he transforms the face of the world — but God is weak. On the other hand, if man himself relinquishes this something, the independence, the freedom to act for himself, which love bestowed upon him; if this perfection of his which consists in existing for God he does not abuse by taking it in vain; if God

perhaps helps him in this respect by bitter sufferings, by taking from him his dearest one, by wounding him in the tenderest spot, by denying him his only wish, by depriving him of his last hope — then he is weak. That indeed everybody will say to him, and say of him, he will so be regarded by all, no one will make common cause with him; for it looks in fact as though he had become merely a burden which their compassion must bear. He is weak — but God is strong. He, the weak man, has relinquished entirely this something which love made him to be, he has whole-heartedly consented to it that God took from him everything there was to be taken. God only waits for him to give lovingly and humbly his glad consent, and therewith to relinquish it completely, then he is entirely weak — and then God is strongest. There is only one who can prevent God from being the strongest, who nevertheless is eternally the strongest; this one is man himself. That God is the strongest is evidenced by one sign, that man is entirely weak. For God there is but one obstacle, man's selfishness, which steps in between God and man like the shadow of the earth when it produces the eclipse of the moon. If there is this selfishness, then man is strong, but his strength is God's weakness; if the selfishness is absent, then man is weak, and God strong; the weaker man becomes, the stronger God becomes.

However, if this is so, then in another sense, in the true sense, the relation is inverted; and with this we come to the joyfulness.

For he who is strong without God, precisely he it is who is weak. The strength by which a man stands alone may be strength in comparison with that of a child. But the strength by which a man stands alone without God is weakness. God is in such a degree the strong one that He is all strength, is strength itself. So to be without God is to be without strength. So to be strong without God is to be strong... without strength; it is like being loving without loving God, and so to be loving without love, for God is *love.*

But in him who became entirely weak God became strong. He who worshipping and praising and loving became weaker and weaker, himself of less importance to God than a sparrow, as himself nothing, in him God is stronger and stronger. *And the fact that God is stronger and stronger in him signifies that he is stronger and stronger.* — If thou couldst become entirely weak in perfect obedience, so that loving God thou didst understand that thou art able to do nothing at all, then would all the mighty ones of the earth, if they were to unite against thee, be unable to hurt a hair of thy head — what prodigious strength! But in fact this is not true, and let us not say anything untrue. Indeed they certainly would be able to do this, they would be able even to put thee to death, and the great conjunction of all the mighty ones of the earth is by no means requisite to this end, a far, far inferior power can easily enough do it. But yet if thou wert entirely weak in perfect obedience, then all the mighty ones of the earth in conjunction are not able to hurt a hair of thy head *otherwise* than as God wills. And when it is hurt *thus*, when thou art reviled *thus*, when thou art put to death *thus* — if thou wert entirely weak in perfect obedience — thou wouldst lovingly understand that it does thee no harm, not the very least, that it is for thy true welfare — what prodigious strength!

And even if it were not so that he in whose weakness God is strong is the strongest man — this nevertheless is the joyful thing, that God becomes stronger and stronger, that it is God who becomes stronger and stronger. Let us talk of a relationship between man and man which has, though very imperfectly, something in common with that which in the relationship between man and God is the essence of worship, let us talk about admiration. Admiration is in itself duplex, it can be viewed from two sides. Its first phase is a feeling of weakness, for the admirer stands in relationship to superiority. But admiration is a happy relationship to superiority, and so it is a blissful feeling, perhaps it is more blissful to admire in complete

unanimity with oneself than to be the object of admiration. That the first phase of admiration is a feeling of pain is evidenced by the fact that if one senses superiority and admits it unwillingly, not joyfully, he is very far from being happy; on the contrary he is very unhappy, is in the sharpest pain. On the other hand, so soon as he yields to the superiority (which yet at bottom he admires, but unhappily) and surrenders himself in admiration, the joyfulness of it triumphs in him. The more devoted he is, the more unanimous with himself in admiring, the nearer he comes to being almost superior to superiority; in his admiration he is happily and indescribably liberated from all the oppressive pressure of superiority, he is not overcome by superiority but triumphs in admiration.

Let us forget now the imperfection of the comparison of admiration as exhibited in the relationship of man to man, and worship in the relationship of man to God. God is infinitely the strongest; this every man believes, and, whether he will or no, he feels accordingly God's infinite superiority and his own nothingness, but so long as he only believes that God is the strongest, and (to make mention of the dreadful case) believes it as the devils also believe... and tremble; so long as he only believes it thus, and is loath to make the admission; so long as he only believes it in such wise that he is not glad of it — just so long is the relationship painful, unhappy, his feeling of weakness an agonizing perception. For *defiance* is in relation to worship what envy is in relation to admiration. Defiance is weakness and impotence which makes itself unhappy by not willing to be weakness and impotence, it is the unhappy relationship of weakness and impotence to superiority, just as envy tortures itself because it will not be, what at bottom it is, admiration. What is required of man is already hinted at in relation to admiration (for the admirer loses himself in admiration of the one who is so far greater); it is required that he shall lose himself in God. If he does this with his whole heart, with all his strength, and with his whole mind, then he

is in a happy relationship to God as the strong one, then he is a worshipper — never, never did any lover become so happy, never, never did the parched earth sighing at the drought sense so deliciously the refreshing rain, as the worshipper blissfully senses God's strength. Now these twain, God and the worshipper, are adapted to one another, happily, blissfully, as never were lovers adapted to one another. It is now the only wish of the worshipper to become weaker and weaker, for with that the more worship; the only need worship feels is that God may become stronger and stronger. The worshipper has lost himself, and in such wise that this is the only thing he wishes to be rid of, the only thing he flees from; he has gained God — and so indeed it is directly in his own interest that God becomes stronger and stronger.

The worshipper is the weak man; so he must appear to all the others, and this is the humiliating part. He is entirely weak; he is not able like others to make resolutions for a long life, no, he is entirely weak; he is scarcely able to make a resolution for the morrow without adding, 'If God will'. He is not able to rely defiantly upon his own strength, his talents, his gifts, his influence, he is not able to utter proud words about all he is able to do — for he is able to do nothing at all. This is the humiliating part. But *inwardly* what bliss! For this weakness of his is a love-secret with God, it is worship. The weaker he becomes, the more genuinely he can pray; and the more genuinely he prays, the weaker he becomes — and the more blissful.

Is not this then joyful, that the weaker thou dost become, all the stronger does God become in thee, or, is it not joyful that thou dost become weak? Is there at bottom anything to complain of because a hard lot fell to thee, that perhaps which thou didst most dread and which made thee entirely impotent and weak? The weaker thou dost become, so much the stronger does God become in thee. And that this is joyful thou thyself wilt surely admit! Consider how poor a man would be if he could pass his whole life, proud

and self-satisfied, without ever having admired any one; but how horrible a thing if he could pass his whole life without ever having marvelled at God, without ever having lost himself in worship through marvelling at God! But one can worship only by becoming oneself weak, thy weakness is essentially worship; woe to the presumptuous man who in his presumptive strength would be audacious enough as a strong man to worship God! The true God can be worshipped only in spirit and in truth — but precisely this is the truth, that thou art entirely weak.

So then there is nothing in the world to fear, nothing to fear in that which can bereave thee of all thine own power and make thee entirely weak, which can break all thy confidence in thyself and make thee entirely weak, which can completely sap thy earthly courage and make thee entirely weak — for the weaker thou dost become, all the stronger does God become in thee.

No, so understood, there is nothing in the world to fear — for sin alone is man's ruin.

V. THE JOY OF IT — THAT WHAT THOU DOST LOSE TEMPORALLY THOU DOST GAIN ETERNALLY

THAT THIS IS gain one can readily perceive, and so exorbitant a gain that never did any merchant who made the most profitable bargain ever make one so profitable as this. The difficulty lies in another place, in the place, namely, where the bargain, if I may so call it, has to be closed, in the fact that this place is temporal existence. If one were in eternity, one without doubt would be well able to understand it. But in temporal existence, and at the very instant of the loss, that is, when the temporal makes itself most keenly felt, it may easily seem perhaps that eternity is so infinitely far off, that the prospects are so remote for this indubitably extraordinary gain — and what then is the good of the great profit when there are difficulties like this? A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; a little smaller profit seems preferable to the immense... uncertain gain. Yes, so it seems in temporal existence, which sees everything topsy-turvy. And there is hardly anything more topsy-turvy than the notion that the eternal is the uncertain, and hardly any shrewdness more topsy-turvy than that which lets go of the eternal because it is uncertain, and grasps the temporal... because it is the certain. For if one does not at once get an opportunity to discover that after all eternity was the certain thing — that the temporal is the uncertain one can promptly get an opportunity to perceive. Therefore hardly any talk is more ludicrous than when a man holds the temporal in his hand and says, 'I hold to the certain.' But, as has been said, the difficulty lies in the place where the bargain has to be closed. When death has already cleared things up for one, to make the exchange of time and eternity is easy; but in temporal existence to get the view-point of eternity for bartering time for

eternity, the view-point of eternity for reckoning that what is lost temporally is gained eternally, that indeed is difficult.

The sufferer, however, has by another process become sensible of the difficulty of life, how difficult it is to bear his loss, with all the sorrow of it and the pain — so then, though the joyfulness... of loss which is proposed to him presents difficulties in its turn, this is nevertheless decidedly to be preferred. The difficulty is to get eternity brought a little nearer; when eternity is quite near the joy is quite complete. But this thing of getting eternity brought a little nearer is of decisive importance for every sufferer if he is to be comforted and if his comfort is to become joy. If medical science recognizes a miraculous cure-all, one for all illnesses, I do not know; but spiritually there is one, only one, exceedingly simple cure — eternity. The difficulty merely is to get it quite near. Observe that a child also can perhaps draw after a fashion, and one who is not an artist can also perhaps draw after a fashion, but all that they draw they draw straight up and down on the paper. Ask an artist what the difficulty is, and thou wilt hear him reply: 'The distance of perspective in the drawing'. In relation to eternity the difficulty is the reverse of this: eternity seems so far, the task is to get it as near as possible. For from the view-point of temporal existence it seems to the impatience of the unwise man (and the more temporal existence has to say about it, the less wisdom there is and the more impatience) as if instead of getting the lost thing again eternally he would have to wait an eternity to get it again. But if eternity is quite near to thee, it is true thou dost not yet get the lost object, for that comes about first in eternity, but it is *eternally certain* to thee that thou wilt eternally get it again. If such be the case, eternity is quite near to thee. How near it is may perhaps be elucidated for thee by another situation. A wise man has said, 'Every one who has deserved punishment fears punishment, but every one who fears punishment suffers punishment.' In a sense the guilty man has not yet

suffered his punishment, in another sense it impends over him so near that he suffers it.

So let me try if possible to compel the sufferer for his own good to become joyful, compel him to get eternity as near as possible, while I talk about THE JOY OF IT — THAT WHAT THOU DOST LOSE TEMPORALLY THOU

DOST GAIN ETERNALLY.

For in fact only the temporal can be lost temporally; anything else but the temporal it is impossible for temporal existence to take from thee; when thou knowest that it is temporal existence as such which has taken something from thee, by that same token thou knowest that it must be something temporal it took. In case the dreadful thing occurs that a man in *temporal existence* loses the *eternal*, this is no longer a loss, it is perdition. 'Loss' relates to the temporal. It is assumed, when anything is to be said about loss, about the pain and suffering of loss — if one is to speak for comfort, encouragement and joy, it is assumed that the sufferer himself is not guilty (as mere loss does not imply) of 'forfeiting his soul'. If such a dreadful loss is occasioned by losing the eternal in time, one must talk very differently. So this discourse presupposes that the sufferer to whom it is addressed, however great the pain of his loss may be, has maintained relationship with the eternal, by means of which he is to be comforted. If the loss has acquired such power over the sufferer that 'his heart has sinned in its sorrow', that in desperation he would go to perdition, then one must talk quite differently. In the case of sin one must talk first and foremost with an aim to conversion, even when talking with an aim to comfort and joy; in the case of suffering one can at once talk of comfort and joy, even if the comforting speech is, as it is indeed if it is Christian, 'a hard saying'. And above all let us not forget that not only theft and murder and drunkenness and the like are sins, but that properly sin is: *in time to lose eternity.* One too

often forgets this, yea, even the officially appointed pastors in the cure of souls are sometimes (and hence their failure) too much inclined to want to give comfort at once, without first, as becomes a physician, diagnosing the sufferer's condition. For as severity in the wrong place may be ruinous, so also leniency in the wrong place, leniency where the sufferer feels at bottom that one ought to speak severely, and therefore is disgusted not only with the comfort but with the comforter who shows that he does not recognize the ailment. Figure to thyself a woman, the most lovable of all women — thus we could imagine her. Along with her purity it would be abhorrent to think of what we call the grosser sins — oh, but vanity also, and pride, and envy, and arrogance are strangers to her lovable soul. She has lost her lover. In case she has said in despair, 'Now I care nothing either for God or for eternity', then certainly comfort, in the direct sense, would be the most ruinous thing of all. And though thou thyself wert never so deeply touched and moved at the sight of her pain, yea, if thou wert so full of sympathy that thou wouldst willingly give all, thy very life, in order to comfort her if possible — in case thou wert a pastor in the cure of souls, how terrible if thou hadst not the courage to employ severity! Or what judgement wouldst thou pass upon a physician who, because he himself had a horror for the fevered man's thirst, did not dare to forbid him to drink (yea, utter it only and hear the contradiction) — out of sympathy prescribed for him cold water, that is, out of sympathy slew him!

So then, when the sufferer, whatever he may have lost, is not himself guilty of disturbing dreadfully the divine order of things, only the temporal can be lost temporally. Because man has in him something eternal, therefore he can lose the eternal, but this is not to lose, it is to be lost; if there were nothing eternal in man, he could not be lost.

On the one hand this: only the temporal is lost temporally. On the other hand: *only the eternal can be gained eternally.* In case a man could be so

presumptuous as to wish to gain the eternal temporally, this again is perdition. In case one were to grasp the eternal to have *earthly* profit from it, he is lost; in case one would buy the Holy Ghost with money, he is lost. And why is he lost? Because he *temporally lost the eternal;* for he lost the eternal precisely by wishing to abase it to the temporal. The purpose or the aim is always more important than the means. So if one would gain the eternal for the sake of earthly profit, the earthly profit is then more important to one than the eternal; but if this is so, one has lost the eternal; and when a man has lost the eternal he is lost. The eternal refuses to amalgamate with this talk of loss and loss; so soon as it is the eternal that is lost, everything is altered, even the language, and so this is (not a *pert* but) perdition.

Now let us draw these thoughts together (like a net) to catch joy, or to catch the sufferer for joy. If only the temporal can be lost temporally, and only the eternal can be gained eternally, the gain is indeed evident; in losing the temporal I gain eternity. O thou sufferer, whatsoever thou hast lost, thou hast lost only something temporal, it is impossible to *lose* anything else; and whatsoever thou hast lost, there is something to be gained, the eternal, which thou dost gain eternally. If thou dost not will to be lost (and if this is to be, thou must thyself *will* it), if in the depths of thy soul thou dost shudder at this thought, then both the stern seriousness of this thought and the shudder unite in guaranteeing that thou wilt not shun comfort by willing to be lost — then, however heavy thy loss, it will be made manifest that nevertheless the joyful thing is that what thou dost lose temporally thou dost gain eternally.

But perhaps thou wouldst say, ‘Will eternity give back to me the thing lost just as it was when my soul clung to it?’ Oh, no, certainly not, for then the discourse would not be, as it is, about gain — thou dost get it again eternally. However, there is perhaps a little cunning hidden in this question

of thine. For in losing the object, it was in fact taken from thee, it was no act of thine; and from this it cannot be deduced that thou hast thoroughly willed to let it go. Perhaps (oh, be on thy guard!) thou art not far from willing to have eternity as a means of getting again in eternity the temporal possession just as it was in temporal existence, thine eyes' delight and thy heart's desire — this also is perdition. For, if such be the case, what thou wilt is not to gain the eternal eternally, but thou wouldst gain the eternal in order that it in eternity might give thee the lost temporal possession, that is, thou wouldst lose the eternal in order eternally to gain the temporal, and this means, temporally to lose the eternal, which is perdition. In case it was not earthly goods thou didst lose, in case it was that which smarts more painfully, in case e.g. it was honour thou didst lose, which slander stole from thee; in case thy whole soul clung to it with insatiable passion, so that it was thine only wish, thine only pleasure, to enjoy this satisfaction of vanity and pride, to be held in honour — this indeed eternity cannot give thee again. In case it was thy lover thou didst lose, of whom death bereaved thee, thy lover to whom thou wast attached with the intensity of all earthly passion, with the love of the one and only wish — thy lover whom thou (reflect how cruel it is!) wouldst prevent, if it depended upon thee, from becoming transfigured — no, in this wise eternity cannot give him back to thee! In eternity there is no pomp and splendour of worldly honour, and in eternity they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

But why dost thou ask about some individual thing in time which thou wouldst have again — unless it be because thy soul clings to it temporally? This discourse ventures to go much farther, makes the loss much greater, talks of temporal existence as a whole, of everything temporal — but also about *letting go of* the lost temporal possession. Why dost thou talk of an individual temporal thing — and so passionately? Ah, be on thy guard; it is as though thou wert at the point of willing to lose something temporal in an

eternal manner, to fix a temporal loss eternally fast in thy soul, to remember eternally a temporal loss; this also is perdition. If anything temporal is lost in this manner, it cannot be due to the temporal, for the temporal can only be lost temporally. So it must be due to the loser — that he *wills to* lose eternally something temporal, that is, to lose temporally the eternal, that is, to be lost.

What thou dost lose temporally thou dost gain eternally. Thou dost not get it back in the temporal sense, that is impossible, and it would not be any gain; but thou dost get it back in the sense of eternity — if thou dost lose it temporally, that is, if thou thyself wilt not (ah, by *willing* to be lost!) transform the temporal into something other than it is. If something temporal concerns thee as if it were not the temporal but the eternal, the fault is not in the temporal thing (which according to its concept can only be lost temporally), but in thee. If the loss of the temporal concerns thee so much that in despair thou dost not even care to gain the eternal, this is not due to the temporal thing (which according to its concept can only be lost temporally), but to thee. That is to say, if thou dost not *will* to be lost (and in such case the talk about 'loss' is senseless), it stands fast eternally that what thou hast lost temporally (be it what it may, be it regarded also by all others as the heaviest loss, or only so regarded by thee in thy pain), that thou dost gain eternally.

This stands fast eternally; even though all devils and all hair-splitters were to contest with us, they would not be able to disprove this. If therefore thou dost lose an earthly friend, perhaps thine only one, or the best — in case thou dost not lose him otherwise than as temporal existence bereaves thee of him, that is, in case thou dost lose him temporally (in no other way can *temporal existence* bereave thee of him, unless thou thyself *wilt* be to blame for it, since temporal existence verily is not to blame), then thou dost gain him eternally. Thou losest thus an earthly friend — thou gainest a

transfigured friend. For eternity does not give back to thee the lost temporal object in the temporal sense; no, precisely this is the gain of eternity, which gives back the lost object in the sense of eternity and eternally — unless (ah, consider what a wrong against the loved one!) by being lost thou wilt prevent thyself from receiving him back! In case it was earthly riches thou didst lose — in case thou didst lose them temporally (oh, remember that in no other way is it possible for the temporal to bereave thee of them); in case thou wert not thyself guilty of the dreadful thing of losing them in an entirely different way than the temporal can bereave thee of them, namely, by losing thyself; in case thou wast willing to let go of the temporal because thou didst understand the truth, that it was lost temporally — then thou didst gain the eternal. Thou didst lose the riches of the temporal — thou didst gain the riches of eternity. In case thou didst see thy dearest plan come to wreck in the world, the cause defeated for which thou hadst sacrificed thyself — in case thou didst lose only temporally (and remember that in no other way is it possible for the temporal to bring to naught any plan or any cause); in case thou thyself wast not guilty of the dreadful thing of suffering defeat in an entirely different way than the temporal is able to inflict it upon thee, namely, by losing thyself); in case thou wast willing to let go of the lost temporal thing because thou didst understand the truth, that it was lost temporally — then thou didst gain the eternal. Thou didst suffer defeat of the temporal — thou didst gain the victory of eternity. Dost thou not gain eternally what thou losest temporally? Would a man will to conquer here in time — well, then, the temporal defeat means to him that all is lost. But this is not due to time, it is due to him, on the other hand, if he triumphs over his mind, the loss then becomes what it is, a temporal loss, and he gains eternally.

Perhaps, however, some sufferer will say, ‘Well, but what I gain is not the same as what I lost.’ No, certainly not; this discourse in fact has to do

with gain. And moreover, in case it was the same temporal possession thou didst get again, thou didst not lose it temporally. In so far as that which thou didst lose was compounded of the temporal and the eternal, the temporal took its part, and that thou didst lose; but the eternal it did not take away from that which thou didst lose, and that thou shalt get again in eternity. So then, thou dost get back the lost. Or did thy deceased friend lose anything by the fact that death took from him the temporal, when it was obliged nevertheless to let him keep the eternal? Does a proprietor lose by the fact that his property gains in value? — On the other hand, in so far as that which thou didst lose was something purely temporal, the temporal took it from thee, and thou didst lose the temporal; but in the loss thou didst gain the corresponding eternal good, which thou dost get again in eternity. Thus after all thou dost get *that,* precisely *that, eternally* which thou didst lose *temporally.*

Is not this then joyful, that wherever in temporal existence there is loss and the pain of loss, eternity is then at hand to offer the sufferer more than compensation? The sufferer himself is in fact compounded of the temporal and the eternal. So when temporal existence inflicts upon him the greatest loss it is able to inflict, the question is whether, by an act of treason against himself and against eternity, he will bestow upon the loss of the temporal the power to become something other than it is, a temporal loss, whether he wills to lose the eternal; or whether, true to himself and to the eternal, he does not permit the loss of the temporal to become something other than it is, a temporal loss. If he does this, then the eternal in him has conquered. *To let go of the temporal in such a way that it is lost temporally,* to lose only temporally the lost temporal possession, is *a precise indication of the presence of the eternal in the loser,* is the token that the eternal in him has conquered.

This triumphant joy is entirely non-existent for the sensual man; it entirely escapes his notice that all a man's conflicts here in this life are really waged about something entirely different than is apparent at the first glance. For, understood in a godly sense, it is always perfectly indifferent whether a man strives to make both ends meet in life, or whether he is marching at the head of thousands and thousands accompanied by the cannon's thunder, what the strife is waged for is always to save his own soul — whether he *wills* to lose the eternal temporally, that is, to be lost, — or by losing the temporal temporally to gain the eternal. That this is what is to be looked at entirely escapes the notice of the worldly man. Therefore when in temporal existence he suffers a decisive loss of the temporal, he despairs, that is to say, it then becomes evident that he was in despair. But he who in truth would save his soul looks at that which should be looked at, and precisely by looking at that he discovers at the same time the joy of it that what one loses temporally one gains eternally. Ah, and as the severity of the teacher is sometimes necessary, not to punish inattention, but to punish attention, to compel the pupil to look at that which should be looked at, instead of sitting abstractedly and being lured to look at all sorts of things — so must the fear of perdition help the sufferer to look at that which should be looked at, and thereby help him to discover the joy.

Only by the aid of the eternal is a man able to let go of the lost temporal possession in such a way that he merely loses it temporally. If the eternal does not lend its aid, he loses much more than the temporal. But if temporally to lose the temporal is an indication of the eternal in the loser, then eternity is indeed very close to him. At the outset the only ground for fear we saw was that the prospects of the compensation of eternity are so remote, this being all there was to prevent one from finding the joy in the fact that what one loses temporally one gains eternally. In the eternal certainty that this is so, eternity is as close to a man as is possible, and as

close as is necessary. But when eternity itself lends its aid, if the loser loses only the lost temporal possession, eternity is indeed quite close. And if eternity is so close, so is this joy that what one loses temporally one gains eternally. Thou wilt not have to wait half a century in uncertainty to get back what was lost. Oh, no, that is only the way it appears in temporal existence, if thou hast not the will to let go temporally of the temporal loss. If thou hast the will to do that, then the eternal in thee has conquered, or the eternal has conquered in thee, then the eternal has visited thee, then to thee it is eternally certain that thou dost get it again, and then thou canst easily wait. Therefore never thrust the blame upon the length of time; for an eternal certitude shortens the time to one day, even though it were a century of waiting. Neither thrust the blame upon the temporal; for it took only the temporal from thee, nothing else and no otherwise can it take away. Above all, do not hasten impatiently to thine own destruction, alas, 'as a bird hasteth to the snare'. Seek the fault in thyself; consider seriously and severely how near perdition lies; consider that, as understood in the purely eternal sense, every temporal loss is an instant — if thou dost require a very long time to understand this, it is because the eternal within thee has not yet acquired strength enough. Let then the eternal come quite close to thee, then thou art helped, and then it is joyful to thee.

So then there is really no loss in the world, but sheer gain. For every 'loss' is temporal; but what thou dost lose temporally thou dost gain eternally, the loss of the temporal is the gain of eternity. Only sin is man's ruin. But precisely this is sin: to lose the eternal temporally, or to lose the lost temporal possession otherwise than temporally, which is perdition.

VI. THE JOY OF IT — THAT WHEN I 'GAIN ALL' I

LOSE NOTHING AT ALL

To GAIN ALL' — more than this nobody can demand; and if he gains all, it is clearer than day that he loses nothing at all.

And it is surely easy enough to perceive that this is joyful, every child can understand it *instantly*, yea, even the youth who most is agitated and rendered impatient by the hot aspiration of wishes, even he can *at once* understand it. If only he does not misunderstand it, and thereby misunderstand the whole discourse. For these discourses are not for the young, at least not for immediate use; only when life has furnished the youth with a text can he perhaps find use for them and better understand the theme.

But is it not strange that he who burns most hotly with the aspiration of youthful wishes, and he who in self-denial gave up the most, that these two unite in saying the same thing: 'To gain all', whereas between them there is nevertheless a world-wide difference, and they are as far as possible from talking of one and the same thing? In fact, God's Word by its promises encourages the believer 'to gain all'; and no youth, not even he who is most spoiled by having all his wishes fulfilled, has desired more than 'to gain all'. How strange! Just as in life there is a reversion when a man becomes again as a child, so in the language of thought there is a reversion through which the most different thoughts result, as it seems, in the same expression — and yet it is precisely then that the difference is greatest. There is absolutely no one so different from a child — not the little older, not the somewhat older, not the elderly man, not the aged man (all of this being direct comparison, where *likeness* is the point of departure for estimating the difference) — there is no one so different from the child as the aged man who becomes again a child; for this is inverse comparison, where

everything is inverted, where the *difference* is the point of departure for estimating the likeness. And there is no one so different from a wisher, a hankerer, a desirerer who would gain all — not him who gave up little, not him who gave up somewhat, not him who gave up much (all this being direct comparison, so that he who gave up little, somewhat, much may quite well be a desirer who desires much, somewhat, little) — no, none is so different from a desirerer who would gain all, as he who gave up all — yet of that he does not talk, he talks, strangely enough, about gaining all, and therefore there is none so different from a desirerer who would gain all, as precisely the man who says the same thing.

But it is none the less certain that it is joyful to gain all, and that when I gain all I lose nothing at all. So let us talk of THE JOY OF IT — THAT WHEN I 'GAIN ALL' I LOSE NOTHING AT ALL.

For if the 'all' which I gain is truly all, then that which in another sense is called all, the all which I lose, must be the false all; but when I lose the false all I in fact lose nothing; and when I gain the true all, I lose in fact the false all — so I lose nothing.

Thou knowest perhaps that for an instant it looks as if one might fight this joyful thought through to victory in two ways. One might strive to make it perfectly clear to oneself that the all which one loses is the false all, is nothing. Or one takes another path, aspiring after the full conviction of spiritual certitude that the all which one gains is truly all. The latter procedure is the best, the only way. For in order to acquire the power to understand that the false all is nothing, one must have the aid of the true all, otherwise the false all takes away one's power. Verily it is not by the aid of nothing one can succeed in seeing that the false all is nothing. There is a pretended wisdom whose secret is nothing, and which yet thinks it can see that all is nothing. But this is impossible; it is just as impossible as to see in the dark with a light which is not lit. There is much said in the world about

there being two paths to the truth: that of faith, and that of doubt. But this is quite as strange as if one were to say: there are two paths to heaven, one of which leads to hell. So 'the way' is to aspire after the full conviction of spiritual certitude that thou dost gain all. And what is it to aspire thus? It is to believe. Believe that thou gainest all, then thou dost lose nothing. Wish to gain all, desire to gain all, expect to gain all — and perhaps thou wilt lose all. But believe that thou gainest all, then thou dost lose nothing. For the all to which faith is related is the true all, so then thou dost lose nothing at all.

But as for believing! Oh, this is such a peculiar thing about Christianity: in a certain sense it is so unspeakably easy to understand, and on the other hand it becomes really difficult just at the moment when it has to be believed. I know well enough that a profound topsy-turvy worldly wisdom has inverted the relationship, affirming that it is so easy to believe, so difficult to understand. But only put this to a test. Take what we are here talking about. What is easier to understand than the proposition: When I gain all I lose nothing? And only when it has to be believed the real difficulty emerges. What is easier to understand than that the whole world must appear to a man as Christianity says it is, must appear thus... when he is dead, dead in self-denial. But to *become* dead to the world! This thing of '*when* one is dead to the world'!

Believe that thou gainest all, therewith thou diest unto the world; and when thou art dead thou dost lose nothing by losing that which in the understanding of the living man is all. Lose gold and goods, lose might and power, lose glory and prestige, lose health and strength, lose thy best friend, lose thy well beloved, lose more than did that king who yet spoke of losing all when he said, 'All is lost save honour' — believe that thou gainest all, and then thou dost lose nothing! That when thou gainest all, it is impossible to lose even the least thing — oh, nothing is more certain, only believe then that thou gainest all! This is — I have to admit it — an unequal division of

labour: that the discourse has only the task of saying the same thing over and over again (it is in fact to say the same thing when one says, ‘He who gains all loses nothing,’ for to gain all and to lose nothing is one and the same thing), whereas thou hast the task of grasping faith, and by believing to hold fast to it that thou dost gain all — oh, but then the discourse does not possess thy joy! Poor discourse! In a sense it does not budge from the spot, it says only one and the same thing; in another sense it hovers helplessly between heaven and earth, for if it is not a certainty that there is one man who believes, then the discourse is empty. Therefore it is not the believer that needs the discourse, but rather it is the believer that pityingly comes to the relief of the discourse. For every time a man believes that he gains all, the discourse becomes true, then the empty and meaningless discourse, which is so all too easily understood, becomes so full, so rich, in a favourable sense so difficult — but so true.

Believe that thou gainest all, then thou dost become a dead man. Just as ghosts flee before the dawn, and apparitions collapse when their name is uttered, and enchantment ceases when the magic word is spoken — so to thee does the world and what the world calls ‘all’ become nothing. Then lose the world and every pleasure it possesses, lose its friendship, let it become thine enemy which chases thee out of every refuge, thine enemy which hates thee: believe that thou dost gain all — and thou dost lose nothing! The world must hate a deceased man; there is nothing contemporaries more hardly endure in a contemporary than that he lives like a departed spirit. In a room it is disturbing when a blind man walks about and cannot see what he bumps against; but a believer is likewise a blind man, his eyes are blinded by the splendour of the all which he gains, he cannot see anything of the all wherein the world has its life and its pleasure, he can see nothing of this all because he has seen that it is nothing. Oh, mad inconsiderateness of faith, which out of consideration for the true

all has become blind to all considerations! In a company it is disturbing when a deaf man is present who cannot hear what the others say and nevertheless takes part in the conversation, inasmuch as he is to be heard transforming the talk of the others into nonsense; but a believer is likewise a deaf man, his ears echo with the glory of the all which he gains, he can hear nothing of the all wherein the world has its life and its pleasure. Oh, mad inconsiderateness of faith, which out of consideration for the true all has become deaf to all considerations! But believe that thou dost gain all, and thou dost lose nothing.

Yes, believe that thou gainest all. Behold that expert scientist, he had all his calculations completed, he had perhaps spent many years getting all this studied out and put together, it was all in order — he was waiting only for a point outside the earth, and he would be man enough to hoist the whole earth by means of... the calculations? — yes, or by means of the point. So long as he has not the point, all his calculations, the fruit of many years of diligence, are an impotent nothing — and the discourse about the truth that when one gains all one loses nothing, yea, even though the speaker were a man who had pondered his whole life long only over this thought, or over this only thought, and though of all eloquent speakers he were the most eloquent, and though he had the whole structure of his eloquence complete — it is an impotent nothing, if there is no one who believes that he gains all. And if there is this believer who believes that he gains all — he loses nothing, nothing at all, even if he never chances to hear a word of all this eloquence.

Oh, victorious joy of faith! But can the discourse accomplish nothing because it cannot give thee faith, because in comparison with faith it is not the higher (as a wisdom which is higher only than... madness would make us believe) but is the lower thing? Yes indeed, it can tell thee how blessed it is to believe. For when one believes, he gains all; to gain all is precisely to

believe, to believe that one gains all; and when one gains all one loses nothing. In relation to divers losses in life there is perhaps a special insurance company which provides compensation; but what security against all losses, that with them all one loses nothing! It is indeed like being secured against death by being deceased. If the desirous youth were to gain all, what security has he that he may not lose it? But oh, what security in gaining all, that one gained it by losing all — and yet lost nothing!

And he who lost the true ‘all’, only he truly lost all. But this is perdition; only sin is man’s ruin.

VII. THE JOY OF IT — THAT MISFORTUNE IS GOOD FORTUNE

MISFORTUNE IS GOOD fortune. ‘But this’, I hear some one say, ’is merely a jest, and easy enough to understand, for if only one will look at everything in an inverted way, there is some sense in it: directly understood, misfortune is misfortune; inversely, misfortune is good fortune. Such a thing is only jesting, like propounding riddles, or as when a mountebank says, “Nothing can be easier to do if only a man is accustomed to walk on his head instead of on his legs.”’ Well, yes, but for all that is it then so easy to do? And because to the thought which is untried by the reality of life and experiences no weight, it seems so easy to swing up and down and down and up, both to the right and to the left — is it then so easy when misfortune weighs upon the thought which is to make the swing, is it so easy when the thought has to have power enough to turn him about who is suffering when misfortune persists in maintaining him in the contrary position? That is to say, for the idle and masterless thought, some sort of thought in general, the homeless thought which is no thought, the thought which buffets the air with indeterminate determinants and undefined definitions, ‘here — there,’ ‘right — left,’ ‘direct — inverse’ — for the vagrant thought it is easy enough to perform the trick. But when there is a concrete thought, when it is my thought, or when it is *thy* thought, and... when thou art a sufferer, so that it becomes a serious matter for the thought which easily enough can turn itself to acquire power over thee so as to turn thee about in spite of the much which in manifold ways resists its efforts — is this then so easy? And because it is a jest to be able to walk on one’s head instead of on one’s legs, is it therefore also a jest to look at everything inversely? Oh, far from it, or better, exactly the inverse is true, precisely this is seriousness, the

seriousness of eternity. That which is a jest, a meaningless jest, so long as it is merely some sort of thought in general — when it becomes serious owing to the fact that it is thy thought, the thought which has to turn thee about, that then is precisely the seriousness of eternity. Eternity, which after all is surely the task and the surety of seriousness, says, 'This is the task, for this precisely is my view of life, eternity's view of life, to see everything inversely; and, thou sufferer, whoever thou art, if seriously thou wilt be comforted, comforted in such wise that even gladness triumphs, then thou must let me, eternity, come to thine aid — but then thou must also look at everything inversely!' This is eternity's comfort for the sufferer, the law which eternity prescribes, the condition which eternity makes, to which all the promises are attached. For eternity knows of but one method: to look at everything inversely. So let us then look at the situation inversely, and thereby find THE JOY OF IT — THAT MISFORTUNE IS GOOD FORTUNE.

But let us proceed in such a fashion that we strive first to get the sufferer in the right attitude, so that he may get an eye for this inverted prospect, and that he may be willing to abandon himself to this view and permit it to exercise power over him — then surely the joy follows of itself.

What is good fortune? Good fortune is what helps me to attain my goal, what leads to the goal; and misfortune is what would prevent me from attaining my goal.

But what then is the goal? Hypothetically we have made the one thought fast by defining what good fortune and misfortune are; but when we come to define the other thought (that of the goal) it is easily seen that in case this goal is different, is the opposite, the notion of good fortune and of misfortune must be altered in accordance with it.

We stand here at the beginning. But in another sense we are not standing at the beginning. The discourse addresses itself to a sufferer. But the

sufferer is not beginning his life now; on the contrary, he is in the midst of it, alas, not merely in the midst of life, but in the midst of life's suffering. Such being the case, he must surely know what misfortune is, being himself sufficiently tried by it. Perhaps. But we are agreed that the question whether and how far he knows what misfortune is depends upon whether he knows what the goal is. Only he who has the true notion of what is the goal set before men, only he knows what misfortune is and what is good fortune. He who has the false notion of the goal has also a false notion of good fortune and misfortune, he calls that good fortune which leads him to... the false goal and so prevents him from attaining *the* goal (the true goal). But that which prevents one from attaining the goal is in fact misfortune.

Now there are divers things that can be striven after by men, but essentially there are only two goals: one goal which a man wishes, desires to attain; and another which he ought to attain. The one goal is that of temporal existence, the other is that of eternity; these are contrary the one to the other, but good fortune and misfortune must also be inverted in correspondence with them. If this discourse were addressed to a young man, it would strive to make the distinction of the two goals thoroughly clear to him, so that he might begin his life by choosing the right goal, begin by heading in the right direction. And yet perhaps the discourse might not be successful; for the soul of the youth will be on terms of suspicious intimacy with the temporal goal and with the false notion of good fortune and misfortune. And now for the sufferer, who does not stand at the beginning but is far advanced on the way and knows, alas, only too well what misfortune is; but, as has been said, the question is whether he also knows well what is the goal. The more vehemently he talks of his suffering and of how everything is against him, the clearer it becomes that he has the false notion of the goal. And if he has the false notion of the goal, he cannot talk truly about good fortune and misfortune.

So if he is to be helped, he must be required to reflect what is the goal set before men, lest, deceived by the vain notion that he knows well what the goal is, he continue to complain. For doubtless thou dost suffer misfortune, thou art unable to attain the goal thou didst so ardently wish to attain — but suppose then that this goal is the false one!

What then is required? It is required of the sufferer that he call a halt to his erring thought, that he reflect what the goal is, that is to say, it is required of him that he *turn himself about.* For in relation to sin conversion is required; in relation to the comfort of eternity the same is required, yet in the milder form, that one turn oneself about: for the severity of the law says to the sinner, 'Be converted'; to the sufferer eternity says, Oh, do but turn about.' So it is required that he turn about. Here already eternity shows itself to be the converse of temporal existence. For eternity presupposes that the natural man does not in the least know what the goal is, that on the contrary it is the untrue notion which is presupposed by temporal existence, that every man knows with ease what the goal is, so that the only difference that remains between man and man is whether they succeed or not in attaining it. On the contrary eternity assumes that the difference between man and man is that the one knows what the goal is and steers for it, the other does not know, and steers accordingly, that is, steers amiss. Thou sufferer, whoever thou art, thou findest it only too easy to make people understand thee when thou complainest of thy suffering — even if they have no comfort to give thee, they understand thee none the less — but eternity will not understand thee thus; and yet it is by eternity thou art to be helped.

So turn about! Oh, permit it to be said to thee — good Lord, it is in fact so evident that if a man is to attain the goal, he must know which the goal is and be rightly headed for it; it is so evident that if a man is to be gladdened by the magnificent view, he must turn towards the side where it is to be

seen, not to the opposite side. Be not impatient, say not, ‘I know perfectly what misfortune is,’ make no attempt to terrify us too by the description of thy suffering, so that we too might turn to the wrong side and miss the view. For if thy suffering is so terrible, why then wilt thou fix thy gaze upon it? Or is this precisely the terrible thing, that thou canst not help gazing upon it? Yet it is not impossible. Say not, ‘When one suffers as I suffer, one knows what misfortune is; and only he who suffers as I suffer knows what misfortune is.’ No, say not this; oh, but listen well. In order not to wound thee we do not deny that thou knowest what misfortune is, what we are saying is that thou dost not yet know what the goal is.

And then when thou hast turned about and got an eye for the goal (that of eternity), let the goal become to thee so important, as indeed it is and ought to be, that there is no question about what sort of a path it is, but only whether it leads to the goal, so that thou mayest have courage to understand that whatever the path is, be it the worst of all, the most painful of all, in case it leads thee to the goal, it is good fortune. It is true, is it not, that if there is a place where it is of the utmost importance for thee to arrive because thou art so unspeakably eager to be there, thou wouldst say, ‘Whether I run backwards or forwards, whether I ride, or walk, or crawl — that is perfectly indifferent, if only I can get there.’ First and foremost this is what eternity would have, it would make the goal so important to thee that it acquires complete control over thee, and thou over thyself, to the effect of getting thy thought, thy mind, thine eye diverted from the hardship, the difficulty, from the *how* of getting there, because the only important thing for thee is to get *there.*

So then, in deference for the goal it has now become *indifferent* to thee whether what brings thee to the goal is what ordinarily is called misfortune or what ordinarily is called good fortune: what brings thee to the goal is good fortune. What an alteration! Dost thou think that the sensual man

could be indifferent to this difference? What comfort would it be to him that misfortune led him to *the* goal, when he is only concerned about the goal to which good fortune leads?

But perhaps thou canst not yet forbear to glance back at the distinction ordinarily made between misfortune and good fortune. Thou hast acquired the right attitude but hast not yet come to repose in it. Well, eternity will help thee on farther. For if it is precisely what people ordinarily call misfortune which alone or principally leads to *the* goal, is there then any reason for glancing back? If it were the case, as we may assume, that it was only or most effectively by running backwards thou couldst get to the place where thou art so eager to be, would it then be the correct thing to say, ‘Whether I run backwards or forwards is a matter of indifference to me’? Would it not be more correct to say, ‘So it is well that I had to run backwards’? And so, too, in case it were possible that what is ordinarily called good fortune might more easily lead thee to *the* goal, there would be room for a wish. But now, thou sufferer, there is nothing to tempt thee, for misfortune is leading precisely to *the* goal. And thou surely wilt be true to thy word, that whatever leads to the goal is good fortune. So misfortune is good fortune.

Let us now make it quite clear to ourselves that what they ordinarily call good fortune and misfortune do not equally well lead to *the* goal, but that what ordinarily is called misfortune does alone or at least principally lead to *the* goal. What is it that may prevent a man from attaining *the* goal? Why precisely the temporal. And how does it most seriously prevent him? When good fortune so called leads him to the attainment of the goal of temporal existence. For when by means of good fortune a man attains the goal of temporal existence, he is farthest from attaining *the* goal. Man is to strive for the goal of eternity, but by means of good fortune temporal existence has delayed him. By the fact that good fortune accompanies him he is not

led to the eternal, and so not to *the* goal. If there is anything that does this, it must be exactly the reverse, namely, that the temporal goes against him. But the opposition of the temporal is what one is accustomed to call misfortune. — When it is said, ‘Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God,’ the goal of eternity is thereby posited as that for which man shall strive. If this is to be done, and done according to the letter (and, ah, eternity will not be mocked, nor be deceived!), it is required above all that man seek not *first* something else. But what is this ‘something else’ he seeks? It is the temporal. If then he is to seek first God’s kingdom, he must freely renounce every temporal goal. Oh, what a difficult task! when opportunity perhaps is proffered in abundance, when everything beckons him on, when what they call good fortune is ready promptly to bring him into possession of all the pleasant goods of temporal existence — and then to renounce all this! On the other hand, the sufferer has misfortune, hence he is called a sufferer. And what they call misfortune hinders the sufferer from attaining the temporal goal; misfortune makes it difficult, perhaps impossible. Oh, how hard a thing it is to see difficulties pile up before the wish, how hard that the fulfilment of the wish is thus rendered impossible! Is it not true? That indeed is a question I need not put to thee. But is it not true (ah, would to God it were so) that it is rather thou who wouldst now put to me the question, whether I myself have not now forgotten what the discourse is about. So then do tell us (it was only this I was wishing for), only tell us what the discourse is about, while I listen with joy and hear thee say, ‘If what they call good fortune is what delays, what prevents one from attaining *the* goal, then indeed it is well that what they call misfortune makes it difficult or impossible... to be delayed, then it is misfortune precisely which brings one to *the* goal.’

O thou sufferer, whosoever thou art, break away from the sufferings and from the thoughts which would obtrude upon thee, try to think of life quite impartially. Imagine then a man who is in possession of all the good things

of fortune, favoured in every way — but imagine that this man moreover was serious enough to have fixed his mind upon the goal of eternity. So he understands that all this that has been bestowed upon him he is to renounce. He is also willing to do it; but, behold, there awakens in his soul a despondent concern, an anxious concern about himself, as to whether after all he may be deceiving himself, whether his renunciation is only imaginary, inasmuch as he remains in possession of all these goods. He dare not throw away what has been bestowed upon him, for he understands that this might be an exaggeration of presumption which easily might be his ruin, instead of being for his good; and he has sadly conceived an anxious suspicion of himself, whether he might possibly be deceiving God, and all his renunciation be a sham. Then he might well wish that they were taken away from him altogether, so that it might become a serious affair, this thing of giving up the temporal to grasp the eternal. And if this does not come to pass, there perhaps develops in his inward man a mental disease, an incurable melancholy, which has its ground in the fact that in a profounder sense he became perplexed about himself.

Hast thou thought of this? Yet for thee especially it would be an appropriate point of view, putting thee at the farthest distance from thine own. Contemplate thy situation from this point of view! Thou hast had indeed and hast misfortune in plenty — so thou hast merely the task *of renouncing what is denied thee*, whereas this man has the task *of renouncing what has been bestowed upon him.* In the next place, thou art exempted from anxiety as to whether thou hast given it up in an outward sense; for since thou dost not possess it, the job is easy enough. And in how many other ways thou art helped! That is denied thee which would prevent thee from attaining *the* goal, thou hast not thyself thrown it away and therewith incurred the responsibility which perhaps at a decisive moment would make thy life so very difficult because thou didst find thyself

powerless in the face of a task thou hadst voluntarily undertaken. No, in thy case providence has assumed all the responsibility, that is to say, the providence which denied thee this. Thou hast only to come to the help of providence, of this providence which has helped thee. For misfortune is good fortune, and thou indeed hast misfortune.

So then, misfortune is good fortune. This is perfectly certain, not all the shrewdness of Satan shall be able to put it in doubt. And also thou canst well understand it. On the other hand, thou dost not perhaps believe thoroughly that it is so. But dost thou believe then (for the sake of providing a somewhat weaker diet, in case what the Scripture says about seeking first God's kingdom is too strong), dost thou believe then that the poet whose songs delight mankind, dost thou believe that he could have composed these songs if misfortune and bitter suffering had not been at hand to tune the soul? For it is precisely in misfortune,

When the heart of man is saddest,
The harp's tense strings are gladdest.

Or dost thou believe that he who knows how to comfort others would have been able to do it if misfortune had not been for him the requisite good fortune which helped him to proficiency in this fine art? Perhaps at the beginning he also felt it hard enough, almost cruel, that his soul should be tortured in order that it might become inventive in finding out comfort for others. But at last he learned to understand that without misfortune he could not have become and could not be the man he was; he learned to believe that misfortune is good fortune.

So believe thou too that misfortune is good fortune. To understand it is easy enough — but to believe it is difficult. Be not deceived by the vain wisdom which would make thee imagine that it is easy to believe but difficult to understand. But believe it. So long as thou dost not believe it, just so long does misfortune remain misfortune. It is no help to thee that it is

eternally certain that misfortune is good fortune; so long as thou dost not believe it, it is not true for thee. Think of an older person in relation to a child. The older person knows the expedient for dealing with a nettle: only grasp it firmly, and then it will not sting thee. To the child this must seem the most absurd thing; for, thinks the child, if one is stung merely by touching it, how much more when one grasps it tight. One tells this to the child. But when the child is about to grasp it his courage fails — he grasps it nevertheless, but not firmly enough, and it stings him. So it is with the saying that misfortune is good fortune: if thou art not resolute in faith, thou dost get nothing out of it but misfortune.

Believe then that misfortune is good fortune. This is certain, it is only waiting for thee to believe it. Be not disturbed in thy faith by others, 'the faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God' (Rom. xiv. 22). When the seaman is assured that the wind which now blows is carrying him to the goal — even if all others were to call it a contrary wind — what does he care, he calls it a fair wind. For a fair wind is the wind which carries one to the goal; and good fortune is everything which carries one to the goal; and misfortune carries one to *the* goal — so misfortune is good fortune.

It is not necessary to demonstrate that this is joyful. He who believes that misfortune is good fortune has truly no need of the discourse to explain to him that this is joyful. And for him who does not thoroughly believe, it is of more importance not to waste an instant but to lay hold on faith. So we need not talk about it, or say more than one word. Imagine then a chase, as it were, extending over the whole world, which has driven and collected together all the grounds of comfort which, as I believe, happy people have invented to be rid of the unhappy; and then in comparison think of the comfort of eternity, this concise word of comfort which distress has discovered, as it also has discovered that it takes a person in distress, a sufferer, not a happy person, to comfort others — this concise word of

comfort: misfortune is good fortune! It is true, is it not, that thou wilt regard it as quite just, and in a certain sense well advised, that the human grounds of comfort do not pretend to make the sorrowful joyful, but merely undertake to comfort them after a fashion, which they do badly enough. Eternity, on the contrary, when it comforts, makes a man joyful, its comfort is really joy, is the real joy. In the case of human grounds of comfort it is as when the sick man who already has had many physicians gets a new one who perhaps hits upon something new which for a moment produces a slight change, whereas soon it is the same old thing again. No, when eternity is called in to look after the sick man it not only heals him completely but makes him sounder than all the sound people. In the case of human grounds of comfort it is as when the physician finds a new and perhaps slightly more convenient crutch for him who walks with crutches: to give him sound feet to walk with, and strength in his knees, surpasses the power of the physician. But when eternity is called in, the crutches are thrown away, the man cannot merely walk, oh, no, in another sense it may be said that he no longer walks — so lightly does he go. For eternity gives him feet to walk with. When in misfortune it seems impossible to budge from the spot, when in the impotence of suffering it is as if one could not move a foot — then eternity makes of misfortune good fortune.

In all misfortune there is but one danger: when the sufferer will not believe that misfortune is good fortune. This is perdition, only sin is man's ruin.

PART III

FROM THE JOURNAL

THE FIRST IDEA of the following Discourses.

There should be written several Discourses (about Dec. 28, '47).

Thoughts which wound/attack from behind — to edification.

'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of the Lord' (Ecclesiastes).

[A note in the margin refers to an earlier entry, of about Aug. 16, which reads: Ecclesiastes v. 1, 'Keep thy foot, etc.', could very well be used for a sermon in contrast to the lax way of preaching which is busy only with getting people to come to church. Beware of going thither. It is a grave responsibility if subsequently thou dost not do according to what is preached, and if the sermon is rightly preached, thou mightest perhaps receive an impression which thou canst not later overcome, an impression of what God requires of thee: self-denial, etc. Hence beware!

This shall be the introduction.

Then in the succeeding Discourses the text shall be so chosen that it looks like a gospel, and also is such, but then comes the sting.

No. 1. 'What shall we have who have forsaken all?'

The satirical point for us in this question — for us who have not yet forsaken anything.

No. 2. All things work together for our good — *if* we love God. (Irony.)

No. 3. The resurrection of the dead is at hand, both of the just and of the unjust.

Rejoice, thou hast no need to ask for the 'three proofs' — it is certain enough that thou art immortal — it is perfectly certain — for thou shalt be brought before the Judgment. This is a new argument for immortality.

No. 4. It is blessed — to be mocked for a good cause. (Rejoice when men speak all manner of evil against you.)

So then, rejoice — but perhaps there is no one present to whom this Discourse applies. Thou, my hearer, dost rejoice perhaps at being highly honoured and esteemed and respected. Well then, for thee it is a meal like that of the stork with the raven.

The satirical ‘Woe unto you if all men shall speak well of you.’ Here the ‘falsely’ is not added, for if all men speak well of thee, it must be a lie.

No. 5. ‘Now is our salvation nearer than when we first became believers.’ But art thou sure that thou hast become a believer?

No. 6. He (Christ) was believed on in the world (I Tim. iii. 16).

But this perhaps is only a bit of historical information.

Marginal note: An assault of thoughts.

THOUGHTS WHICH WOUND FROM BEHIND — FOR EDIFICATION CHRISTIAN ADDRESSES BY S. KIERKEGAARD

COPENHAGEN 1848

The Christian cause is in need of no *defense*, it is not served by any *defense* — it is *aggressive*; to defend it is of all misrepresentations the most inexcusable — it is *unconscious crafty treachery.* Christianity is aggressive; in Christendom, as a matter of course, it attacks from behind.

I. KEEP THY FOOT WHEN THOU GOEST TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

HOW QUIET EVERYTHING is in the house of God, what a sense of security. He who enters it feels as if by a single step he had arrived at a remote place, endlessly far away from all noise and outcry and vociferation, from the horrors of existence, from the storms of life, from the spectacle of dreadful events or from the sickly expectation of them. And here within, wherever thy glance is turned, everything gives thee a sense of security and peace. The lofty walls of the venerable edifice stand so fast, are such a reliable defence around this secure place of refuge, under whose mighty vault thou art free from every sense of pressing weight. And the beauty of the environment, its grandeur, is calculated to make upon thee a friendly impression, it is so inviting that it is as if the holy place would ingratiate itself with thee, by recalling also the good and quiet ages which presumably must have favoured these enterprises of peace. Behold, the man who carved these pictures in stone needed a long time for it, and during all this time his life must have been protected and secure, so that no one conflicted with him and nothing happened to him which in any way could render his hand or his thought uncertain. As an artist he needed the profoundest repose of peace — what he produced is therefore a reminder of that repose. Behold, he who wove the velvet with which the pulpit is adorned must have had repose to sit quietly at his work, which flourishes in times of peace and is not needed in time of war. And the woman who sewed the gold upon it must have been allowed to sit undisturbed and diligent at her work, solely employed with it and with sewing every stitch with equal care.

How comforting, how inviting — ah, and how much danger in this security! Wherefore it is verily true that really it is only God in heaven who

in the actuality of life can preach to men with effect; for He has circumstances, has fates, has consternation in His power. And circumstances — and when 'thou' art in them, when they enclose 'thee' as the party properly concerned — yea, their eloquence is piercing and awakening. That thou hast experienced too. In case thou wast the sick man who at the hour of midnight lay sleepless upon the sick-bed, or in case thou wast merely the one that sat at the midnight hour beside the sick man's couch of pain and with alarming distinctness counted every tick of the clock and every sigh of the sick man, but without finding relief in the uniformity or in the mechanical exercise of counting — if then thou didst hear that pious song, 'It was upon the midnight hour our Saviour he was born:' dost thou believe that all orators put together would be able to produce this effect? And why not? Because the sick-bed and the hour preach more mightily than all orators, and understand this secret of speaking to thee in such a fashion that thou dost get an apprehension that it is thou, precisely 'thou', not him that sits beside thee, not him out there, but precisely 'thou' that art spoken to, thou who dost feel thyself alone, alone in the whole world, alone at the midnight hour beside the sick-bed. Or in case a man lies *in extremis*, and fairly and honestly they have not concealed from him that which people desire to conceal from the dying man, the thing most important for him to know, that it is all over — dost thou not believe that the simple comforting word of the most commonplace man will produce an entirely different effect than is produced by all the most famous orators upon him who, sound and healthy, in his own thoughts also spiritually hale, sits secure in the gorgeous temple and hears... and perhaps criticizes the address. And why will that simple word produce an entirely different effect? Because death knows how to make itself understood by the man to whom it applies, knows how to make thee understand that it is 'thou', that thou art the individual in question, that it is not anybody else, not thy

neighbour or thine opposite neighbour, or another man here in the town, but it is thou who art to die.

So it is in the actuality of life when it is God that preaches by means of circumstances to awaken. But in the house of God, in the splendid house of God, when the parson preaches... to tranquillize! Especially if he would satisfy human requirements, or what it is the fashion to call the requirements of the times. For whereas men in these times are becoming more and more apprehensive, more and more afraid for their own part of experiencing the dreadfulness of reality when they are delivered over into the power of circumstances, on the other hand, they are becoming more and more fastidious in their desire for the trumpery of eloquence. They will not seriously listen to the dreadful happenings, they would rather read about this afterwards, very much as when in times of peace the warriors, or rather the non-warriors, play at war; they would artistically require everything that has to do with the beauty of the environment, and artistically require everything of the speaker, but for themselves, with a worldly and ungodly mind they would sit perfectly secure in the house of God, because they well know that no orator has the power which providence has to lay hold of a man, to cast him off into the power of circumstance, to let the desperation and trials and alarms of it preach seriously to him for awakening.

Oh, in the customary course of life there is so much to lull a man to sleep, to teach him to say, ‘Peace and no danger.’ It is for this cause we go into the house of God, to be awakened out of sleep and to be riven away from enchantments. But then again when there is so much in the house of God to lull us! Even that which in itself is arousing, such as thoughts, reflections, ideas, can by custom and monotony lose all their significance, just as a spring can lose the resilience which makes it what it is. So then (to approach nearer to the subject of this discourse), it is right, reasonable, and a plain duty, to invite men, over and over again, to come to the house of the

Lord, to summon them to it. But one may become so accustomed to hearing this’ invitation that one loses all sense of its significance, so that at last one stays away and it ends with the invitation preaching the church empty. Or one may become so accustomed to hearing this invitation that it develops false ideas in those that come, makes us self-important in our own thoughts, that we are not as they who remain away, makes us self-satisfied, secure, because it envelops us in a delusion, as though, since we are so urgently invited, God were in need of us, as though it were not we who in fear and trembling should reflect what He may require of us, as though it were not we who should sincerely thank God that He will have dealings with us, that He will suffer and permit us to approach Him, suffer that we presume to believe that He cares for us, that without being ashamed He will be known as one who is called our God and our Father.

So concerning this matter let us for once talk differently, in talking of these words of the preacher:

KEEP THY FOOT WHEN THOU GOEST TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of the Lord, for thou dost assume an immense responsibility. Remember that here is One who is in heaven — and thou art upon earth. But do not imagine that in His exaltation He is far away: herein lies the seriousness and responsibility of the situation, that He, the infinitely exalted, is quite close to thee, closer than the men who are about thee daily, closer than thy most trusted friend before whom thou dost feel free to show thyself for what thou art. Exaltation and distance seem to correspond one with another, so that he who is exalted is remote from thee; equality and nearness seem to correspond one with another, so that he who is near thee is also thine equal; but when exaltation is quite close to thee, then thou art in a difficult position. It is precisely God,

however, the infinitely exalted, who in the house of the Lord is quite close to thee in His exaltation; for it is not with God as with a man, who essentially becomes less exalted when he comes close to thee, the lowly person, has dealings with thee; no, God can come quite close to the lowliest and is none the less highly exalted. Oh, the seriousness of eternity! Oh, how difficult the position! For it is true doubtless that when it is merely a stranger that is present, thou art somewhat changed, and when the mightiest and most exalted in the land is present, thou art much changed, because he is so exalted, and because he is so rarely seen. But God in heaven is exalted in an entirely different degree, and yet when thou goest up to the house of the Lord, God in His infinite exaltation is quite close to thee, nearer than thou art to thyself, for He understands and discovers even the thought of thine which thou thyself dost not understand. Oh, what an immense weight of responsibility, that He, the infinitely exalted One, before whom thou wouldst prefer to show thyself at thy best, that He, in spite of His exaltation, is quite close to thee, sees thee — and in spite of His exaltation sees thee closely, as not even he sees thee who every day is in thy company! Even if thou, in consideration that thou art presenting thyself before the Most High, wouldst try to show thyself different from what thou art, thou canst not — He is too infinitely exalted for that, and (here it is again) He is too close to thee for that. If a man can lose his self-possession and forget what he was about to say when he is brought face to face with his Royal Majesty — ah, how dreadful to be brought face to face with God! For his Royal Majesty is neither so exalted, nor can he come so close to thee.

Therefore beware when thou goest to the house of the Lord. What wouldst thou do there? Thou wouldst invoke the Lord thy God, extol Him and praise His holy name. But is that then really and in all seriousness thine intention? Language, as thou knowest, has no expression more solemn which can be used to exact sincerity than this which one man employs in

addressing another: ‘Before God is this thy conviction or opinion?’ And in the house of the Lord thou art indeed *before God.* Is then this invocation of thine, which invokes God, sincere in its intention? And what is sincerity before God? It is that thy life expresses that which thou sayest. We men may be content with less, with the fact that the one solemnly protests to the other that this or that is his sincere intention. But God in heaven, He who is infinitely exalted, or (yes, here we have it again) He who is the searcher of hearts, He who is quite close to thee — God is willing to understand only one sort of sincerity, namely, that a man’s life expresses what he says. All other sincerity, all other solemnity, all mere protesting that a man means what he says, is before God an illusion, a falsehood; such an invocation is presumption towards Him. Beware lest thine invocation, instead of being wellpleasing to God, is presumption towards Him. Beware lest, self-deceived, because thou dost not understand thyself, thou dost presume to deceive God, as if in thy heart thou didst have the pious feelings which yet have not the power over thee to change thy life, to make thy life the expression of these feelings. Oh, we men often complain of the lack of words and expressions for our feelings, that language will not come to our aid, that we have to search for words, and generally in vain — before God such considerations need not give thee concern; if only thy life expresses that thou hast these feelings, then thou art indeed sincere before God, and that chatty sincerity is entirely superfluous.

Or perhaps thou goest up to the house of the Lord to pray God for help and assistance. Beware what thou doest. Hast thou rightly and before God comprehended to whom thou art appealing for help, what it means to invoke God’s aid, what obligations it puts thee under? Is it perhaps with regard to childish concerns, insignificant things, thou wouldst invoke His aid — not that He might help thee to forget them, but with the will to be employed about them — with regard to insignificant things which perhaps

tomorrow thou hast forgotten, and with this perhaps hast forgotten the by no means insignificant fact that thou hast invoked the aid of the Most High — then thou hast mocked God... and He forgets not that thou didst invoke His aid. If a physician becomes impatient, and with good reason, when childish parents summon him for every insignificant complaint, so that the whole thing is over when he arrives, and it is almost forgotten for what cause he was summoned — should God Almighty wish to be treated thus? Or darest thou understand thyself to mean that it is God that should serve thee, that He, the Most High, should be punctually at hand to hear thy prayers and fulfil thy wishes? Ah, if thou wouldst have to do with Him, it is thou that art thereby put absolutely under obligation to obey and to serve Him. And if thou dost not understand this, it is presumptuous to have dealings with Him, it is presumptuous to invoke His aid. Yes, certainly He is the Almighty and can do everything He would; it looks almost temptingly as if thou hadst nothing to do but wish. But beware. No rash word so surely involves its own punishment as a rash prayer, and no word involves such obligation as the prayer which cries to God for help; for this puts thee under the obligation to let thyself be helped as He will. Thou canst pray a man to help thee, and have forgotten it when he arrives with the help; thou canst pray a man to help thee, and when he is unwilling to help thee in the way thou wouldst be helped, thou canst say, 'This is not what I prayed for' — but if thou hast prayed to God for help, thou are under obligation, under obligation to accept the help He thinks best. Ah, there is so often heard this cry for help, and this cry that there is no help — verily there is always help enough. But the human heart is so cunning and so untrue to its word; when the help proves to be what one has most shuddered at, one says, 'But this is no help.' And yet if this help is from God, and if thou hast prayed to Him for help, thou art under obligation to accept the help, and with faith and gratitude to call it help.

Or perhaps thou goest up to the house of the Lord to pay thy vows unto God and to pledge thyself to a purpose, a resolution, for the future — beware what thou doest. Hast thou thoroughly comprehended what it means to promise God something, and considered whether what thou dost promise God is something a man can and dare promise God, that it is not something we men might jokingly promise one another, that it is something God will permit thee to promise Him — otherwise it is presumption. And hast thou comprehended how a promise to God binds thee? ‘A promise is a snare,’ they say — but a promise to God, yea, if it is what it ought to be, and results as it ought to result, it is so far from being a snare that it is rather a leading-string to salvation. But if not! If thou dost not comprehend what thou dost promise God, if thou hast not a true notion of what one can and dare promise God, then thou dost lose God, thou dost pamper thy soul to the point of taking God lightly and in vain. And if thou dost not keep thy promise to God, thou dost lose thine own self. Ah, and there is certainly one whom a man cannot escape: himself — and then one more... God in heaven!

Beware therefore when thou goest to the house of the Lord, consider the words of the Preacher: ‘Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest. Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.’

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of the Lord. For perhaps thou mightest learn to know much more than thou dost really wish to know, and perhaps thou wilt there get an impression which later thou wouldst fain seek to be rid of. Beware of the fire: it burns.

It is heard again and again, and it is regarded in the world as a positive fact, that men would gladly know the truth if only they had the talents and the time for it, and if one could make it thoroughly clear to them. Oh, superfluous reason for concern! Oh, cunning evasion! Truly every man has enough talent to know the truth — could God in heaven be so inhuman as to have put any one at such a disadvantage? And every man, even one who is most deeply engaged in affairs, truly has time enough to learn to know the truth, nothing is more certain, for he *shall* have time. That the busy man has just as little time as the idler is no refutation of this! And since every one has talent and time enough, it cannot be so difficult a thing to make it clear, in case man himself *will* have it made clear. But just here lies the difficulty: it is so easy to put the blame upon lack of talent, upon lack of time, and upon the obscurity of the truth, and then on the other hand it makes so fine an impression and is so comfortable to protest that one would so gladly know the truth.

Verily, verily it is not so. He who has but some acquaintance with himself knows well out of his own experience that it is rather true that at the bottom of his heart a man has a secret dread and mistrust of the truth, a fear of getting to know too much. Or dost thou really believe that it is every man's sincere wish to get to know effectually what self-denial is, to get it made so clear that every excuse, every evasion, every palliation, every appeal to the false but favourable opinion of others is cut off from him? Indeed, I do not need to wait for thy reply; for if such were the case, every man would possess self-denial, for this (the understanding of it) is its first form. Oh, but even a man of the better sort, one who has overcome the first shudder at the truth and is not worldly enough to be altogether loath to get to know it — even he, he who also admits sincerely that he knows well from his own experience that one is not so eager to learn to know the truth — even he, or rather he especially, will indubitably admit that over and over

again he has had reason to suspect himself of hiding from the truth, as Adam hid among the trees, that he quietly steals away from something and steals to something, that he sometimes would slip away into obscurity where there is only twilight, rather than that the truth should make things too luminous round about him.

Beware therefore when thou goest up to the house of the Lord; for there thou wilt hear the truth... for edification, yes, that is true, but beware of the edifying, there is nothing so gentle as the edifying, but there is nothing so imperious; the edifying is least of all loose talk, there is nothing so binding. And in the house of God thou dost get to know the truth — not from the parson, whose influence thou canst, and in a certain sense shalt evade, but from God or before God. Precisely this is the seriousness of the truth, in fact is the truth, that it is before God thou dost get to know it; what is of pre-eminent importance is this: 'before God.' In God's house there is One along with thee who knows that thou hast come to know the truth. Beware of this complicity in knowledge; from this thou shalt never again slip back into ignorance, that is to say, thou dost not slip back guiltlessly, nor dost thou slip out of the consciousness that thou art guilty.

Beware therefore of learning to know too much, lest with this thou shouldst learn that the asseveration which, while thy life went on pleasantly in the strength of it, made thee pleasing in thine own eyes and agreeable in the eyes of others, that the asseveration that thou art so fain to learn the truth, that this is a mere fancy, or, even worse, that it is a falsehood. Beware lest in the house of God thou dost get to know — but this indeed thou knowest, thou dost even perhaps exalt thyself for thy much knowledge above the simple orator who would talk about such old-fashioned things which every child knows — but beware lest in the house of God thou dost get to know it in such wise that thou must understand it: that it may be required of thee that in self-denial thou shalt give up all that in which the

natural man has his life, his pleasure, his diversion. Hast thou considered what it is to be weary of life? Weariness with life results when a man is deprived of all the finite while yet he is allowed to hold on to life, when everything around him becomes waste and empty and cheerless, and time so unspeakably long, just as if he were dead — why yes! that is what self-denial calls dying, dying to the world; and the truth teaches that a man has to die to the finite (to its pleasures, its occupations, its pursuits, its diversions), has to pass through this death to life, has to taste (thus they speak of 'tasting' death) and apprehend how empty is that with which business fills up life, how unimportant is that which is the eyes' delight and the fleshly heart's desire — ah, the natural man understands it in exactly the opposite way, he thinks that the eternal is the empty. There is surely no instinct so strong in a man as that by which he clings to life — when death comes we all beg that we may live: but the dying of self-denial is as bitter as death. And in the house of the Lord thou dost learn to know the truth that thou must die to the world; and if (as is unavoidable) God has come to know that thou hast come to know this, then to all eternity no evasion shall avail thee. Therefore beware when thou goest to the house of the Lord.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of the Lord. For even if thou hast come from the most dreadful experience that ever befell a man, fleeing from the horror without into God's house — yet thou dost come to a still more dreadful place. Here in the house of God the subject talked about is a danger the world does not know, a danger in comparison with which all that the world calls danger is child's-play: the danger of sin. Oh, here in God's house what essentially is talked about is a horror which never was encountered before nor will be later, in comparison, with which the most terrible thing that can befall the most unhappy of all men is an insignificance: the horror that the race crucified God.

What wilt thou then in God's house? Is it poverty that brings thee, or illness, or another adversity, in short, any sort of earthly need and misery — about that nothing is said in God's house, at least not first. What first is talked of, and should first be talked of, is sin, of the fact that thou art a sinner, that before God thou art a sinner, and that thou in fear and trembling at this thought shalt forget thy earthly need. Truly, a singular way of comforting! Instead of enquiring sympathetically about thy welfare, instead of giving thee counsel and advice — if for this reason thou hast sought refuge there, thou hast made a mistake, thou hast come in fact to what is even more dreadful. For instead of finding sympathy with thy earthly misery and people busy to relieve it, there is laid upon thee a still heavier weight, thou art made to be a sinner. So this is what is talked about — and truly to edification — that there is salvation for sinners, comfort for the penitent. But perhaps all this does not apply to thee, to thee who in fleeing hither art solely concerned about thy earthly suffering. And yet it does apply to thee, in vain wilt thou say that it does not apply to thee, though thou wouldst go hence, it is in vain: it was said to thee, God knows along with thee that it was said, and that thou didst hear it!

What wilt thou in God's house? Perhaps thou didst suffer injustice, possibly thou art the innocent, the lovable man, and yet perhaps men deceived thee perfidiously; possibly thou art the noble, the good man, possibly thou shalt one day be reckoned among the benefactors of the race, and yet as a reward for this perhaps men thrust thee out of their society, maltreated thee, insulted thee, perhaps sought thy life — and thou didst flee hither to God's house in search of comfort. Whoever thou art, thou art making a mistake — thou hast come here to what is more dreadful! Here in God's house it is not a question, at least not first, of what we men may suffer in this world by way of a little bit of injustice, which in some other way at least we have richly deserved. No, here in God's house it is first and

foremost a question of the horror the like of which was never seen and shall not again be seen in the confusion of the world, about the injustice which cries to heaven, such as never before was committed and never shall be again, more dreadful than the sea at its wildest, an occasion when the human race did not as usual rebel impotently against God, but triumphantly as it were laid hold of Him and crucified Him. So he is after all making a mistake who from the horror without flees into this place — to something still more dreadful! Yet the talk first and foremost must be about this. The figure of Him, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, must be recalled — not as when the artist finds and takes plenty of time to represent it, not in such wise that it is removed from the environment of horror and set apart as an object for tranquil contemplation. No, He is to be remembered as at the moment of danger and horror, when the tranquil contemplator would prefer to remain at home, when to have looked upon Him in adoration or merely lovingly would make one an object of suspicion, when there was nothing to behold except this contemptuous, 'Behold, what a man!' when there was not even time to behold Him, because the horror took away one's eyes from one and riveted them staringly upon itself. And Christ's suffering is not to be remembered as a past event — oh, waste not thy sympathy! No, when this horror is represented it is a present fact, and thou art present, and I, with a present One — and as accomplices.

But thus thou didst go amiss in going to the house of the Lord. Instead of hearing comfort which might console thee for the injustice thou dost suffer, instead of being justified as against the men who do thee injustice, instead of this thou art put in the wrong, thou, precisely thou who art innocently persecuted, insulted, wronged! What thou dost get is guilt, an atrocious guilt laid upon thy conscience, that thou art an accomplice to His innocent suffering and death. Oh, hard words of comfort! Who can bear them? Oh,

stern way of diverting thy sad and gloomy thoughts — that of giving thee something still more dreadful to weep over!

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of the Lord — and why? Just because in the house of the Lord there is offered thee the only, the most blissful saving comfort, the very highest is offered thee, God's friendship, His grace in Christ Jesus. Hence we should not cease to invite men to come at least into the house of the Lord, we should always be ready to pray, in behalf of others as well as for ourselves, that our visit to the house of God may be blessed; but just for this reason, for this very reason, we should not hesitate to cry out to men, 'For God's sake, beware! Above all, take care to use worthily what is there offered thee — just because there is everything to gain, there is everything to lose. Use it believingly.' There is no assurance so heartfelt, so strong, so blissful, as that of faith. But the assurance of faith is not something one is born with, the youthful trustfulness of a joyous mind; still less is faith something one grasps out of the air. Faith is the assurance, the blissful assurance, which is found in fear and trembling. When faith is seen from the one side, the heavenly side, one sees in it only the bright reflection of blessedness; but seen from the other side, the merely human side, one sees sheer fear and trembling. But thus the talk is untrue which never will talk otherwise of the visit to God's house than invitingly, enticingly, winningly; for as seen from the other side it is dreadful. And hence also the talk is untrue which ends at last with scaring men completely away from coming to the house of the Lord, for seen from the other side it is blissful, one day in God's house is better than a thousand elsewhere. Oh, and for this reason it is a difficult thing to steer aright, and hence a man seldom succeeds, and always only in weakness. For it is easy to win men enticingly; it is also easy to scare them away repellently — but if possible with a heartiness which no one could resist to invite them to come, and at the same time, with a fearfulness which would teach even the boldest to

shudder, to cry, ‘Beware!’ — yea, that is difficult. And the same thing applies to the speaker, the very same rule which he applies to the hearers. For it may be said to the speaker, ‘Employ all the talents bestowed upon thee, being ready for every personal sacrifice and compliance in self-abnegation, employ them to win men — but woe unto thee if thou dost so win them as to leave out the dread; employ therefore all the talents bestowed upon thee, being ready for every sacrifice in self-abnegation, employ them to terrify men — but woe unto thee if essentially thou dost not employ them to win men for the truth.

II. BEHOLD, WE HAVE FORSAKEN ALL AND FOLLOWED THEE; WHAT SHALL WE HAVE THEREFORE? (Matt. XIX. 27) AND WHAT SHALL WE HAVE?

THE WORDS HERE quoted are those of the Apostle Peter, uttered in view of Christ's assertion how hard it is to enter into the kingdom of God. And the conclusion of the question concerns us all: what shall we have, what does Christianity promise us? But then as for the beginning of the question, 'we have forsaken all and followed thee,' does that also concern us? Most assuredly. But does it then fit our case? Perhaps. It is possible that various expressions may be fitting to various people. Blessed is he whom these words fit perfectly, that is, blessed is he who can dare to say: I have forsaken all to follow Christ. Yet in another way also these words might fit perfectly — as a mockery of those who think and say that they are Christians, and yet cling with their whole soul to the worldly interests. One might seek to show by a more ample presentation of the subject that such Christianity is a vain imagination, is a deceit; but one can state the case more briefly, and yet in a way which would be less likely to fail of its effect, by merely adducing these words of Peter, 'Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee' — they fit perfectly!

People often talk of how glorious it is to be a Christian, of the great advantage of being a Christian, of what he who is a Christian possesses and one day shall receive in fuller measure, of what good things are promised a man in Christ Jesus; and these good things are then extolled in the loftiest and strongest terms. And this is also a matter of course, it is right and reasonable, it is a plain duty to do so. But one can say the same thing, the very same thing, in another and perhaps a more arousing way. Oh, and

which of the two speakers really speaks most truly of this good: he who describes it in the most glorious terms; or he who says, ‘Behold, I have forsaken all for the sake of this good’? Thus he does not say anything about how glorious the good is, to this end he does not employ or waste a single word, he thinks that this speaks more effectively: ‘Behold, I have forsaken all, look, examine my life, its outward condition, my soul’s inward state, its wishes and longings and desires, and thou wilt perceive that I have forsaken all.’ Or is this not also a very suspicious self-contradiction, that a man should be perfectly convinced of the glory of that good which yet did not have so much power over him that for its sake he forsook the least of all that which is in strife with or cannot be possessed together with this good? Is not this a capital way of proving how glorious this good is to one, that one shows how much one has forsaken for the sake of it? In case there was a lover who with the most beautiful and glowing expressions extolled his lady’s perfection and superiority, and there was another lover who said not a single word about this, but only, ‘Behold, for her sake I have forsaken all’ — which of these two spoke most gloriously in her praise? For nothing runs so fast as the tongue, and nothing is easier than to let the tongue run, and only this is equally easy: by the help of the tongue to run away from oneself, in what one says to be many, many thousand miles ahead of oneself. If therefore thou wouldst extol Christianity — oh, do not wish for thyself the tongues of angels, nor the art of all the poets, nor the eloquence of all orators: in the same degree that thy life shows how much thou hast forsaken for the sake of it, in that same degree dost thou extol Christianity. And if we would give proof of our Christian conviction, supposing that we are really assured and convinced of the glory of this good which Christianity promises, let us not seek in one or another orator a happy presentation which we are entirely in agreement with and make our own, nor, if we are orators, attempt for ourselves to extol in word and speech the

glory of this good. But let us turn our glance within, and while we sincerely test our life, listen to these words of Peter as said of us, ‘Behold, we have forsaken all’ — and thereupon utter for ourselves the last words: What shall we have?

‘*Behold*, *we have forsaken all and followed thee.*’ In these words the Apostle does not represent himself as a man who has had a great loss in the world, a man from whom perhaps God has taken away everything — he is not a Job who says, ‘The Lord hath taken away.’ No, the Apostle uses a different expression; he says, we have ‘forsaken’ all. This Job did not do, Job had not forsaken the least thing; on the other hand, the Lord took from him everything, even unto the least. Job’s piety appears in this, that when the Lord had taken all, he said, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord,’ that therefore humbly and in faith he thankfully consented to put up with the loss, or to regard it as for his good. Otherwise with the Apostle, he has forsaken all, and so he has voluntarily given up all; no might was employed against him to take away from him even the least thing, no, but he voluntarily gave it all up. This is Christianity. For that a man puts up with the unavoidable loss is also to be seen in paganism. That a man puts up with an unavoidable loss in such a way that he not merely does not lose faith in God but believingly adores and extols His glory, that is Jewish piety. But *voluntarily* to give up all is Christianity.

Oh, there often is heard false talk which would make men believe that to give up voluntarily the earthly goods would be to tempt God, that to venture voluntarily to encounter a danger which one could avoid would be to tempt God. They think that this is tempting God, and so they say in condemnation of one who thus gets into danger, ‘He is himself to blame for it.’ Yes, quite certainly — he is himself to blame for it, and this precisely is a eulogy upon him. If he had shrewdly held back, and for fear of tempting God had allowed himself to make a fool of God, he would presumably have

remained out of danger, in the secure possession of all he possessed. But the Apostle says, 'Behold, we have forsaken all,' and so far from thinking of reproaching himself for this, he evidently accounts it to his credit, as something that must please God. But that goes without saying when he adds, 'and followed thee' (Christ); it is a matter of course that if one gives up all and forsakes everything to follow his own nose, he is tempting God.

On the other hand, it is actually true that Christianity requires the Christian to give up and forsake all things. This was not required in Old Testament times, God did not require Job to give up anything, and of Abraham he required expressly, as a test, only that he give up Isaac. But in fact Christianity is also the religion of freedom, it is precisely the voluntary which is the Christian. Voluntarily to give up all is to be convinced of the glory of the good which Christianity promises. In a cowardly and apprehensive spirit not to dare to venture this for fear of tempting God implies a spirit of slavery; cunningly to pretend that it is because one is afraid of tempting God is to make a fool of God. There is one thing God cannot take away from a man, namely, the voluntary — and it is precisely this which Christianity requires of man. God is able to take away from a man everything; but He has left it to man to give up everything voluntarily, and precisely this is what Christianity requires. In a human sense it can be said of all the glorious ones who gave up all to follow Christ, that it was their own fault that they got into all these troubles and adversities, were exposed to all sorts of scoffing and persecution, it was their own fault that they suffered death. Once (yes, this is to be said in the ears of the world in disparagement of them, in God's ears to their honour) it was in their power to hold back, to avoid all these dangers; but voluntarily they forsook all. This is Christianity — and hence it is an offence. For at the most the world can comprehend that one may be able to hit upon some small comfort for them that suffer the unavoidable loss. But that one should voluntarily

expose oneself to loss and danger, in the eyes of the world that is madness — and precisely that is Christianity.

This thing of voluntarily forsaking all to follow Christ, which the world neither can nor will hear without being offended, is also the thing which so-called Christendom would rather have suppressed, or if it is uttered would so much prefer to ignore, in any case would hear in such wise as to get something different out of it. Hence it is not impossible that even a discourse which had the intent of terrifying might have a lulling effect. Thus one could represent it as so terrible, as indeed it is, when in those remote ages of Christendom, the ages of persecution, a man perhaps ventured out and would be a martyr, and then, possibly after having suffered in manifold ways and for a long while, at last, at the moment of mortal danger, in sight of the painful death, he lost courage, gave up — he abjures Christianity. So this ought to be terrifying, as indeed it is. But where then is the possibility of the lulling effect? The lulling effect is or would be produced by the wrong application, if it were added, or if it were tacitly left to the hearer to add for himself: We have not thus denied Christ — we, we who perhaps with cowardly shrewdness know well how to keep out of every danger in which our Christianity might be tested. Ah, and which sort of denial is the worst? Surely it is precisely this latter sort, the cowardly, shrewd and calculating denial, continued from year to year, protracted throughout a whole life, steadily, daily (oh, how terrible to comply thus with Christ's requirement of daily self-denial!), the daily denial of Christ. Well, of course, this denial is not conspicuous (at least not in a theatrical sense — to the searcher of hearts, the ever-present, it is surely just as conspicuous) as when such a luckless wight at the decisive instant of the painful death denies Christ. But there can be no doubt which is the worst. There still is, and always will be, salvation and hope for every man whose sin became notorious, salvation is all the nearer, the more terrible the form in which his

sin must be visible to him. But for this cunning game of shrewdness there is no salvation: its secret consists precisely in maintaining that one has not denied Christ. That there is some distinction between sin and sin, everybody knows; but there is a distinction which people do not always seem to be sufficiently aware of, that namely between the sin of the instant, or sin at the instant, and the continuous daily sin, of a life which consciously and with a full view of the situation has adjusted itself to sin, providing itself moreover with the hypocrisy requisite for preserving the appearance of goodness. The proverb says, 'To sin is human, but to continue in sin is devilish,' and yet this about which we are speaking is even more terrible, this thing of consciously adjusting oneself shrewdly to sin, or if not with complete consciousness of it, at least with the consciousness that one conserves in the soul an obscurity about that which for good reasons one does not want clarity. — That there is some distinction between sin and sin, everybody knows; but there is a distinction which people do not always seem sufficiently aware of: between the sin which the world regards as abhorrent, and that which the world regards as the Good, or for which at least it has mitigating and extenuating names. The latter sin is obviously the worst; for it is impossible that the sin which the world regards as sin can be the worst — in that case the world itself must be good. All sin is of the evil, but the sin for which the world has in readiness the mitigating name is even in a stricter sense from the evil, is sin in the second potency, having support and countenance in the evil which is the sin of the world. There is therefore no sin so heinous in God's eyes as the sin of shrewdness, precisely because it has the countenance of the world. Or, to stick to the example which was adduced, what is it, if the world were to be sincere, what is it the world condemns in such a luckless wight who at the decisive moment denies the faith, what is it really but just this, that he was so lacking in shrewdness as to venture so far out that his denial could in such a decisive way become

notorious? So it is his first act, the beginning, that is condemned; but it is precisely the beginning that was good; he who does not begin thus never reaches the glorious end of proving himself true to his conviction by a painful death. It is the sin of shrewdness to sin in such a way that one knows cunningly how to avoid punishment, yea, knows cunningly how to give this the appearance of the Good; the sin of shrewdness is cunning enough to avoid every decisive act, and thereby to win the distinction of never having denied — this the world regards as something far above the ordinary. For verily the world does not hate the evil, on the contrary it abhors and hates the man who lacks shrewdness, that is to say, it loves the evil. 'Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee' — and we, what shall we have?

'*Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee*.' The Apostle Peter is no stripling who somehow at the beginning of his life talks in an enthusiastic fashion about this thing of forsaking all things. He himself knew perfectly well what he understood by it, and we know how true it was at the time he said it, and how true it remained in his subsequent life, how true it is that the Apostle had forsaken all.

He forsook his customary occupation, the quiet, homely life which, content with a modest competence, was passed in security; he forsook the tranquillizing reliance upon the probable, within which a man for the most part passes his life, untried in anything but in that which for the most part turns out all right in the end — he forsook the certain and chose the uncertain. For Christ, on whose account and in order to follow Him he forsook all, was no man of means who could give His disciple something certain as a yearly stipend, or could secure for him an assured position and a living — He, the poorest of all, He who so far as his own life was concerned was sure of only one thing: that He would be sacrificed! But as soon as Christ called him, he forsook all this, as we read in Matt. iv. 20.

This was a magnanimous resolution, and we must not think of Peter, a man like us, as one for whom there was never an instant when the lower nature was ready to suggest misgivings and anxieties; for the truly great man is not thus, he is not without anxieties and misgivings, but he is what he is precisely by overcoming them. Nevertheless, he formed this magnanimous resolution to forsake all things. But the difficulty for the magnanimous man is always a double one: first, to triumph within himself over the lower and earthly; then, when this is done, there comes the next difficulty, that in every age the contemporaries find the magnanimous act so silly and foolish. For that a man chooses a life whereby he gains many advantages (a thing by no means magnanimous) the world admires; but that a man gives up all advantages, even that of being honoured by the world (which precisely is magnanimity), the world finds ludicrous. — Peter forsook all the certain things and chose the uncertain, to be a disciple of Christ, a disciple of Him who Himself had not whereon to lay His head. Peter chose the uncertain — and yet, no, he did not choose the uncertain. He to whom he attached himself was no adventurer who kept the possibilities equally open: the possibility of becoming something great in the world, and the possibility of losing everything. Christ did not leave the disciples in uncertainty about what awaited them and Him — certain destruction. So then Peter chose certain destruction.

He forsook family and friends and comrades, *even the very conceptions and ideas in which they had their life*, *he became to them more of a stranger than one who speaks a strange tongue.* For there is a still higher and more endless difference between two persons, one of whom thinks and speaks only of the heavenly, of the kingdom of God and of His righteousness, the other only of sustenance and livelihood and wife and children, and what news there is in the town, and about coming to something in the world. He forsook all this, notwithstanding that at the beginning his family and friends

found it in their language queer and eccentric of him, therefore transformed themselves into enemies who mocked him, and later, when they saw how perilous his life was, they went about busily saying, ‘It was his own fault.’

He forsook his father’s faith, so that he had to hate father and mother. For this indeed is the meaning of Christ’s saying, that he who for His sake does not hate father and mother is not worthy of Him — and Peter was worthy of Him. When there is a difference of religion, and thus an eternal difference of eternity between father and son, and the son sincerely believes with all his heart and with all his strength and with all his soul that only in this religion is there blessedness — then he hates the father, that is, he loves something else so highly that his love for his father is like hate. When one has a legitimate, a sacred claim, has the prior claim upon thy love, then to love another, even if this means only to become indifferent to that first object, is as if thou didst hate him, just because he has a claim upon thy love. But to love something so highly that one believes that therein alone salvation is to be found and blessedness, and apart from that only perdition — when the father then to whom thou art attached by the most heartfelt ties does not believe the same thing, when consequently the believer, the more sincerely he holds fast to the one thing in which there is salvation, is compelled (oh, horror, as though it were laying violent hands upon his father!), is compelled to conclude, and must (oh, horror, as though it were denying his father the necessities of life!), must compel his heart to conclude that his father is lost — this indeed is to hate the father. Is not this to hate another, to believe that he is lost? And is it any the less so because it seems unspeakably hard to one? So then, this is to hate the father, or more correctly, it is to hate him and yet to love him! Oh, abomination without equal, to hate the loved one, so that one’s love is turned to hate; ah, of all soul-sufferings the bitterest, the most agonizing, to hate the loved one and yet love him! To want to do everything for him, to wish to offer one’s life

for him — but to be bound, bound, yea, or nailed, or crucified upon the stipulation over which one has no control, the stipulation which attaches blessedness to one condition, so that apart from this there is no blessedness, so that the choice is, either to give up one's own blessedness in order to live hapless with the loved one; or to believe for oneself unto salvation — ah, and thus with hate to let go of the loved one!

He forsook the faith of the fathers, *and therewith the nation and people he belonged to*, *and the fatherland*, *the love of which binds with the strongest bonds.* For he belonged no more to any nation or people, he belonged only to the Lord Jesus Christ. As a believer he had to understand that this elect people of God to which he belonged by birth was cast off, that there no longer existed an elect people; as a believer he had to understand that what doubtless had once been his proudest thought, to belong to God's elect people, that this thought from now on was obduracy and perdition for every man who continued to hold to this thought.

Thus it was the Apostle forsook all, broke with everything which binds a man to the earth, and with everything which holds one a prisoner to the earth. He forsook out of love for Christ, or out of hatred for the world, he forsook all things, his position in life, livelihood, family, friends, the human language, love to father and mother, love for the fatherland, the faith of the fathers, he forsook the God he had hitherto worshipped. He forsook this *otherwise* than does he who by the ocean is separated from the land of his birth; *more inwardly* than he who leaves father and mother to cling to his wife, *more heartily* than a woman who leaves the paternal home — he did not even turn to look back, nor demand time to bury the dead. He forsook it all, yes, and in the most decisive way; for he remained on the spot, surrounded by all that he forsook: the daily difficulties of his life were the formal attestation that he forsook this. He remained amongst those whom he forsook: that they hated and persecuted him was the expression of the fact

that he had forsaken all. He did not in fact journey away from it all, no, he remained to bear witness that he had forsaken it, exposing himself to all the consequences thereof, which in turn were the evidence that he had forsaken all.

'*Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* The Apostle had forsaken all — and, as has been shown, it is to be taken seriously in the strictest sense that he forsook all things; it was not as with us who, without altering anything in outward respects, protest that we are willing to forsake all things, if it is required of us. Then the Apostle asks, 'What shall we have?' — and I ask, or better, thou, my hearer, dost ask of thyself (for this is both more meet and more profitable), thou dost ask, What shall we have?

Oh, there is nothing so deceitful and cunning as the human heart, so inventive in seeking evasions and in finding excuses; nothing is so difficult and so rare as true sincerity before God. Verily we should beware of delivering ranting sermons of censure, and especially of being the one to exact of others as it were the payment of outstanding debts to God. For it is true enough that God can demand sincerity of every man, and so also of 'me' , but this by no means implies that I am commissioned on behalf of God to exact it of others. If I were to give myself out as having such a commission, I myself would be guilty of insincerity towards God. No, we would not appal men in such a way. But the appalling thing of being insincere towards God has another side. There is only one help for a man in heaven or on earth, whether all other help is at his disposition, or it is all shattered, there is only this help, that God helps him. Perhaps a man *often* thinks that God is slow in helping, or that by reason of the infinitely many complications in the government of the world, help becomes so slowly available. Far from it! God is a present help, swifter than thought, and for

God there is no complication. But man is insincere towards God in desiring His help, or in any case very slow in becoming sincere.

When a man protests that he is willing to forsake all things for Christ's sake, if it is required of him — well, how could I dare to say that this is insincere? But in those ages when they were actually serious about forsaking all things, were there then to be found so many who were willing, and the few who were to be found, were they not found among the poor and the lowly? But now, now that it is not so easy to take seriously the obligation of forsaking all things, now we are all willing... if it is required of us. Let us not deceive ourselves, nor deceive God. It does not do to have so high an opinion of oneself: to remain in possession of all, and be such a hero too. If God does not require us to forsake all, He does nevertheless require of us sincerity. Instead of impatiently and hot-headedly urging another to try his hand impatiently and hot-headedly at forsaking all things, which God perhaps does not require, or does not require of him, we on the contrary would extol sincerity, which God requires of every one; but surely it is preposterous to treat this as a mere phrase, or as a mere form of speech to ascribe to us all that which at a time when it was really taken seriously was fully carried out by one among thousands and thousands. — Perhaps God does not require it of him, that is to say, it is required of every one but not *unconditionally* required of every one, i.e.. it is left to freedom. He who does this believingly, and therefore humbly, acts Christianly; but he who humbly has an understanding with himself in not doing it, who has a lowly opinion of himself, also acts Christianly. Perhaps God does not require it, that is, God does not require it in the same way of us who live in Christendom. And the voluntary act, the voluntary forsaking of all things, is only then Christian when, as was shown, it is for the sake of following Christ, and is thus in correspondence with God's requirement; and the voluntary act is in Christendom only then deserving of praise when before

God it has an understanding of the essential distinction that the Apostles and the early Christians did what they did when they were surrounded by Jews and pagans, that is, by non-Christians. For him who lives in Christendom — one thing there is in any case he is not to forsake, as the Apostles did, the faith of the fathers; and after all there is and remains the difficulty of being persecuted, being executed, not by Jews, not by pagans, but by Christians... in the name of Christianity.

There was a time in Christendom when people thought they could do penance by actually forsaking all things, by fleeing to the solitude of the desert, or seeking to be persecuted in the swarming city. There is another way of doing penance, that of being thoroughly sincere towards God. I do not know — and in case I knew differently, I trust to God that I would make bold to talk differently — I do not know that anywhere it is unconditionally required of a man in Christendom that to be a Christian and to become blessed he must in a literal sense forsake everything, or even sacrifice his life, be executed, for the sake of Christianity. But this I know, that with an insincere man God can have nothing to do. It is therefore, according to my conception, a theme for a penitential sermon, this which we have chosen, these words of Peter, 'Behold, we have left all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?' — that is to say, when thou art prompted by this question to ask thyself, What shall we have? No man, however, can become blessed except by grace, the Apostles also were accepted only by grace. But there is one sin which makes grace impossible, that is, insincerity; and there is one thing which God must unconditionally require, that is, sincerity. If on the contrary a man holds God at arm's length by insincerity, such a man can *neither* learn to understand whether God would require him in the strictest sense to forsake all things, *nor* learn to understand himself in the humble admission that he had not indeed forsaken all things, but nevertheless confides in God's grace.

Oh, different as these situations are in the human understanding of it, when the Apostle says, ‘Behold we have left all and followed thee, what shall we have?’ — and when a man, humbly confessing that he was not put to such a test, sincerely admitting before God that he could not in any way venture to believe that he was capable of it, says, ‘What shall we have?’ — by God’s grace they both of them get one and the same thing.

III. ALL THINGS MUST WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR GOOD — IF WE LOVE GOD

IF A MAN were to protest in the most solemn and emphatic terms that he loved God, that God, and God alone, was the object of his love, the first and only love — and this man, if he were asked the reason why, were to respond, 'Because God is the highest, the holiest, the most perfect being', and if this man, when some one asked him whether he had never loved God for any other reason, were to reply, 'No' — then one might well suspect him of being a fanatic, might well warn him in all seriousness to have a care lest this fanatic mood might end in presumption. The simple and humble thing is to love God because one needs Him. It may seem so natural that in order to love God one must raise oneself to heaven where God dwells: the best and surest way, however, to love God is to remain on the earth. It may seem so lofty a thing to love God because He is so perfect, it may seem so selfish to love Him because one needs Him: yet the latter way is the only way in which a man can in truth love God. Woe to the presumptuous man who would make bold to love God without needing Him! In the relationship between man and man there may perhaps be the possibility of such an enthusiastic love which loves a man merely for his perfection, but the prime condition at the basis of a man's love for God is to understand effectually that one needs God, to love Him simply because one needs Him. The man who most deeply recognizes his need of God loves Him most truly. Thou shalt not presume to love God for God's sake; thou shalt eternally understand that thy life's welfare eternally depends upon this, and for this reason thou shalt love Him.

So let every one ask himself, for the sake of his own welfare, whether he loves God. This in the deepest sense is the enquiry about one's welfare: Do

I love God? If the answer is, Yes, then thy welfare is assured also eternally, for ‘all things must work together for good to them that love God’. Oh, how often this text has been quoted, repeated and repeated again, explained, interpreted for edification, for comfort, for consolation. They have shown how experience has confirmed the truth of it, how all things have actually worked together for good to them that love God. They have combated all doubts, have made it so clear that this is so — that however different things may appear in a time or times of suffering, of trial, of temptation, all things must in the end work together for good to them that love God, that there is no repose for thought, that there is no doubt that can resist this assurance, but in the end it must acknowledge its defeat and submit.

But what of that? Because it is eternally certain that all things work together for good to them that love God, does it follow that ‘I’ love God? And this precisely is the decisive question. The more one combats impersonally all the objections of doubt, and then, after having refuted all these objections, assumes that the whole matter is decided, all the more is attention diverted from the question which is really decisive. Yes, men are *often* strangely busy in the wrong place. They contend and contend, ponder and ponder, to prove the truth of Christianity — then they are tranquillized, then they think that everything is all right. This is to betake oneself to rest at the beginning, as one should not do till the end — which is strange especially in these times when people are so busy about going farther! Oh, the man who has but a little understanding of the matter easily perceives that everything else is only preliminary work, an introduction to the main matter: Is it thus WITH ME? But they have turned the whole thing around, and therefore have on their hands a job which Christianity never dreamt of. Christianity was proclaimed with divine authority; its thought was that not a single instant ought to be wasted in proving it true, but that each man severally should turn to himself and say, ‘What relation hast thou to

Christianity?’ This personal concern, this fear and trembling, as to whether a man is himself a believer, is the best remedy against all doubt about the truth of the doctrine; for in his personal concern a man sets to work with all the powers of his soul at a totally different place. But because they have entirely done away with this personal concern, they have also got on their hands a kind of doubt which Satan himself could not contend against — though he might well invent it — a kind of doubt against which it is impossible to contend because it actually is required that to contend against it one must pass over to its side, and so to vanquish it must betray Christianity. Christianly understood, the only weapon against doubt is, ‘Keep still!’ or in Luther’s phrase, ‘Keep your mouth shut!’ Doubt, on the other hand, says, ‘Be so kind as to fight with my own weapons.’ How unreasonable, and how impossible! If a liar were to say, ‘Be so kind as to fight with my own weapons’, could truth be served by that proposal, or by winning such a victory?

So then, because such is the situation, and because it is so general, it is doubtless advantageous to turn the thing around again, to put back again the main-spring of personal concern which they have managed to take out of Christianity. So in this discourse, instead of proving the truth of the proposition that all things work together for good to them that love God, we would, as is meet and right, assume this quite simply as eternally certain, as the most certain thing in the world, and on the other hand talk about the statement that

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR GOOD — *IF* WE LOVE GOD.

SO the Discourse really revolves about the word ‘if’. It is a little word, but it has immense significance; it is a little word, about which nevertheless a world revolves, the world of personality. Thou knowest that people which was notorious for its brief, laconic expressions, and presumably thou

knowest that laconic answer, ‘If’. This was proudly said by the superior power, talking about what his countless hosts would do if they conquered all; and it was a brief answer: ‘If’. And the case is somewhat similar with all this proving and proving and refuting which talks with proud words of what it is able to accomplish — seeing that it is not able to accomplish the least thing, if it does not itself believe, seeing that it has not itself the least profit from this proving, if it does not itself believe, seeing that it does not profit thee in the least,, thou dost not believe, cannot in the very least help thee to believe, and on the other hand it may be a thing totally indifferent to thee, if thou dost believe. Yea, it is a little word, this if! If God is love, then it follows as a matter of course that all things must work together for good to them that love God; but from the fact that God is love it by no means follows that thou dost believe that God is love, or that thou dost love Him. If on the other hand ‘thou’ dost believe, it follows as a matter of course that all things work together for good to ‘thee’, for this is implied in what thou believest of God. In the one case man puts himself as it were inside God and proves something about Him, proves that He is love and what follows from this; in the other case man understands humbly that the question is whether *he* believes that God is love, for if he believes this, then all the rest follows as a matter of course, without proof — from the proof nothing ensues *for me*, from faith everything ensues *for me.*

So the discourse is about this if, and therewith about faith, which of all goods is the highest and the only true good. For of all other goods it may be said that there is always a ‘but’ attached to them, that they have a side from which it seems doubtful whether this good is a good, whether it might not have been better that a man did not get this good. But faith is the good which is of such a nature that if thou believest, in case thou believest, when thou believest, inasmuch as thou believest — even though there were to befall thee that which thou most hast feared — thou wilt believingly

understand that for thee it must be for the best, and therefore a good. Whereas doubt has power over everything we commonly call goods, power to make them doubtful, faith too has power over all the good and all the evil that can befall thee, power to put beyond all doubt that it is a good.

All things must work together for our good — IF *we love God.*

Imagine a man in possession of all the goods of fortune, untouched by affliction and adversity, unacquainted with any suffering or danger, envied by the narrow-hearted, counted fortunate by the young — dare he count himself fortunate? Yes — *if* he believes that God is love; for then all these things work together for his good. 'If' — it is a naughty little word, this 'if'! Yea, woe to the man who ventures to cast doubt of God into another man's heart, for all this doubt is sinful, and to awaken this doubt in another is seduction. But honour be to the man, praise and thanksgiving to him who is so serious that he does not fear to awaken in another the doubt which teaches a man to doubt himself, the doubt which is the origin of personal concern. So then, we say 'if'. This 'if' is a revivalist, a penitential preacher. Thou perhaps art inclined to suppose that the penitential preacher is like a great strong wind which produces physical terror. No, the true preacher is heard, as God's voice was heard, in the gentle breeze — yet for that reason not lenient but stern, stern as the seriousness of eternity. The true preacher aims only at one thing, to come to such close quarters with thee or with me, with the individual, to wound one in such a way that he thereupon becomes his own penitential preacher. Beware of this 'if' — in another sense, take care to love this 'if' — in case it has scored a hit upon thee, it may take thee a year and a day to be done with it, or rather, in case it has stabbed thee deeply, thou wilt never be done with this 'if' — that thou wilt not. This 'if' remains like an arrow in thy heart; it will remain there till the last. Be not therefore afraid of the penitential preacher, who perhaps has terror in his

appearance and wrath in his voice, who chides and rebukes and thunders. A thing like that is only play and produces only a sort of shuddering pleasure. No, in the inmost depths of every man's heart there dwells his penitential preacher. When he has a chance to speak, he does not preach to others, he does not make a penitential preacher of thee, he preaches before thee alone; he does not preach in any church before an assembled multitude, he preaches in the secret chamber of the heart — and before thee, whether thou wilt hear him or not; he has nothing else whatever to attend to but to attend to thee, and he takes good care to be heard when all about thee is still, when the stillness makes thee lonely.

Thou fortunate man whom so many envy and so many count fortunate — in case thou art wounded by this 'if' or hast wounded thyself, thou wilt not seek to find comfort in the assurance of any other man that thou art fortunate, yea, though all men were united in assuring thee of this, it will not give thee the least certitude. It is with thyself thou hast now to deal, with the preacher in thine inward man. He does not employ many words, he is too well informed for that, he says merely, 'If'. And whether thou wouldst deliver to him a long discourse, or propose to him a brief question, he says merely, 'If'. In consideration of thy wealth, with the thought that it is placed in thy power to make thy life as comfortable as possible, as rich in pleasure, or with the thought which is still more glorious, that it is placed in thy power to do good to so many, if in consideration of this thou wouldst count thyself fortunate — then says the preacher, 'Yes — if thou dost believe that God is love, if thou dost love God, for then all these things work together for thy good.' This reply is a bit disturbing, it is in a sense so cold, so calm in its ambiguity, it is neither yea nor nay. If thou wouldst ask him, 'Do I then love God?', he replies, Of that I know nothing, I declare merely how the case stands: if thou dost love God, then...' Wouldst thou beg and conjure him to answer finally *yes,* thou dost move him no whit more,

thou canst not win him with flattery nor with prayers, thou canst not put him to death except in a very figurative sense, and in any case he does not fear death. But so long as he lives, so long as thou dost still hear his voice, he repeats this 'if'. In case thou wouldst say to him, 'I give half of my wealth to the poor, if only I may thus attain the certitude that the remainder truly redounds to my good', and he made thee no answer, because he cannot make answer to such a speech, or he replied, 'Yes — if' — in case thou, being then brought to extremities by sensing what power there is in this 'if' as uttered by him to thee, wouldst say, 'I give the whole of my wealth to the poor, if only I may thus attain the certitude that poverty truly redounds to my good'; then he makes answer, 'Yes — if thou dost love God.'

If thou lovest God, or if thou believest that God is love — for if thou believest that God is love, thou dost love Him also — then all things work together for thy good. But make no mistake, do not rush ahead and love God with an exuberant sense of thy good fortune, as though thou wert not really in need of Him because thou art fortunate enough. No, thou must learn to need God, to love Him because thou hast need of Him, thou, the most fortunate of men. Thy welfare is by no means, oh, by no means decided by thy good fortune, it is only then decided, but then also it is eternally decided, when thou dost believe that God is love, O thou fortunate man — *if* thou believest it. Hail to thy good fortune! Then all these things work together for thy good: thy riches, thy good health, thy splendid intellectual gifts, thy joy at the side of thy beloved, thy honour, thy prestige among men, the blissful diversion of thy children: these things work together for thy good — if thou dost love God; and then thou art really fortunate. We say of a man that, however fortunate he may be, he lacks one thing if he has not the consciousness of his good fortune. But the true consciousness of his good fortune (without which, as has been said, the good fortune is not good fortune) is contained in, framed in, the

consciousness that God is love. Knowledge about God being love is not yet the consciousness of it. For to have consciousness, a personal consciousness, it is requisite that in my knowing I have at the same time knowledge of myself and of my relationship to my knowing. This is to believe that God is love, it is to love Him.

Surely thou hast often heard people talk about the power of words, of what the man is capable of who has words thoroughly at his command — and yet this little word 'if' has infinitely more power when it is the preacher in one's inward parts who utters it to 'this man'. The power of words has cast down thrones, changed the face of the world, but this little 'if' has a still greater power, it is a still greater change when a man is eternally changed by this 'if'. It is an eternal change, more remarkable than the most remarkable occurrence in the world, when a man comes to love God. Whether that happens, when that happens, no one can tell the man. The preacher in his inmost parts can help him to become attentive, help him to seek with personal concern the certitude of the Spirit, when God's Spirit witnesseth with this man's spirit that *he* loves God. But God alone can give him this certitude. What the penitential preacher can do is to keep him awake in uncertainty: he says, 'All things work together for thy good — *if* thou dost love God.' With this word he challenges the youth in the morning of life, with this word he calls out to the man, at sundry times and in divers manners, in the busy days of life, with this word he prevents the aged man from becoming torpid and drowsy. He adds not one syllable more, he takes not one syllable away, he alters not his voice, nor does he vary the emphasis upon the word; unchangeable as a dead man, calm as eternity, he reiterates, 'If.'

All things must work together for our good — IF *we love God.*

Imagine a man, the most miserable of all — human sympathy has already long ago given him up and forsaken him, for its own sake alas, dare not come near him, wishes — for its own sake, alas — that it might remain unaware of his misery, if only thereby it could be unaware that such misery can befall a man — might this miserable man say, ‘Nothing but evil befalls me, and out of that comes constantly more evil’? By no means — but, yes, if he does not love God, he might be right in that; only the question then is something quite different from what he was talking about. For, in the divine understanding of it, not to love God is man’s decided and conclusive misery, whether in other respects he be fortunate or unfortunate. That which human speech, on the other hand, calls need, adversity, suffering, sheer misery — that still can work together for a man’s good... if he loves God.

Why what a strangely compounded double nature this ‘if’ has! Yes, and that’s as it should be; for it is true, is it not, that the penitential preacher, if he is the true one, is also always the comforter, who knows how to give comfort and to hold out long after human help has proved vain and has given up the sufferer. Therefore he is loved just as much as he is feared. In the dark night of despair, when every light is extinguished for the sufferer, there is still one place where the light is still lit, namely, upon the path the desperate man has to take, the short-cut: ‘if’ thou dost love God. At the moment of terrible despondency, when no longer there is any question or thought of any illative clause, but humanly speaking the meaning has petered out — there still is one clause left, a courageous clause of comfort which dauntlessly makes its way into the most dreadful situations and creates new meaning: ‘if’ thou dost love God. In the terrible moment of decision, when humanly speaking no turning is any longer possible, when there is only misery on all sides, wherever thou dost turn, and however thou dost turn — there is yet one turn possible which shall-marvellously turn for thee everything into good: ‘if’ thou dost love God.

‘But where is it then?’ says a man, ‘where is this?’ Ah, in the deepest depths of every man there dwells a comfort which also is found in the depths where the penitential preacher dwells. Thou art helped but little if another man would preach to thee penitence; he cannot do it, it remains an empty play, the utmost he can do is to help thee to become thine own penitential preacher. And thou art helped but little if another man would comfort thee. In case thou art tried in difficult decisions, the comfort of another man will not understand thee and therefore cannot help thee; and in case thou hast become thoroughly miserable, thou canst not reasonably demand that another man’s sympathy should venture to put itself in thy situation. But most deeply within thee, where the penitential preacher dwells, comfort also dwells, this ‘if’. And just as this word cannot be corrupted by the flatteries and prayers of the fortunate man and mocks at his menaces, so, God be praised, it is also undismayed in the day of need. In case thou art inclined to suppose that the most diseased and the most troubled imagination is capable of inventing a horror which would bring this word to silence, thou art in error. Relate to this comforter what thou wilt, confide to him what is on the point of gaining the mastery over thee, that however thou dost shudder at it thou hast this upon thy tongue, that in spite of the opposition of thy heart thou art about to conclude that God is not love — he is not affrighted, he merely repeats, ‘*if* thou dost love God, then shall all these things work together for thy good’.

Oh, final comfort, oh, blessed comfort; oh, comfort beyond all measure! For, as was said, when human sympathy gives up, when the one man does not dare to go in to the other — most deeply within a man there is a comfort. The Scripture says, ‘Have salt in yourselves’, and it is true also that deepest within every man there is comfort. But this comforter has by no means disavowed his role as penitential preacher. For if by all thy misery, by thy cry of pain in suffering, or thy cry of dread in anticipation of the

suffering thou fearest, thou wouldst seek to move him to give thee a certitude that thou dost love God — he would reply, '*if* thou dost love God'. Do not fancy that it is out of sympathy for all thy misery he utters and repeats this word of comfort. No, it is because the fears that in desperation thou mightest cast thyself into that which in the divine understanding of it is man's misery, into the misery of not loving God. He is not employed in wanting to do away with thy misery, nor does he give thee what he is unable to give, certitude that thou dost love God. But while misery preaches penitence to thee, he preaches comfort, not human but divine comfort; and in divine comfort penitence is always included and required.

O thou sufferer, if thou dost believe that God is love, or (what is the same thing) if thou dost love God (for if thou believest that God is love, then thou dost love Him also) — then all this works together for thy good. Say not that thou canst not understand how all this misery should work together for thy good, yield not to the error of doubt, so as to begin with the question whether God is love — be fearful of thyself, but find also comfort within thyself, attend to this word which rings in thine inmost parts: *if* thou dost love God. The certitude that thou dost love God, this word cannot give thee, that only God can give thee when His Spirit beareth witness with thy spirit that thou lovest Him, when thou dost know with Him that thou believest that He is love. But that word can help thee to seek this certitude. When despair would close around thee, this word still provides a prospect of salvation; when thou art about to collapse in weariness and to give up, that word still holds open a possibility of help, *if* thou dost love God.

All things must work together for good — IF *we love God.*

Imagine a man equipped if possible in more than an extraordinary measure with intellectual gifts, with a profundity in pondering, a keenness in comprehending, a clarity in presentation, a thinker the like of whom was

never seen and never shall be seen; he has pondered upon the nature of God, upon the fact that God is love, upon what follows from this as a consequence, that the world also must be the best, and all things must work together for good. And what he has fathomed he has elucidated in a book which is regarded as the possession of the whole race and the object of its pride; it is translated into all languages, referred to on all occasions of scientific discussion, and from this book the parsons fetch their proofs. This thinker has lived hitherto unacquainted with the world, protected by favourable conditions, which indeed are required for scientific research. Then it befalls him to come to grief in consequence of an important decision; he must act in a difficult situation and at a critical moment. And this action entails a consequence which he had not in the least anticipated, a consequence which plunges him and many others into misery. This is a consequence of his act — and yet he is convinced that he could not have acted otherwise than he did act after the most honest reflection. So here it is not a question of misfortune merely, but of blame which attaches to him, however blameless he knows himself to be. Now he is wounded; there awakens in his soul a doubt whether this also can work together for his good. And in him, the thinker, this doubt at once takes the direction of thought: whether after all God is love — for in the believer doubt takes another direction, that of concern about himself. Over this man the objective concern acquires more and more power, so that at last he hardly knows where he is. In this situation he has recourse to a parson who is not personally acquainted with him. He opens his mind to him and seeks comfort. The clergyman, who is abreast of the times and is a thinker of sorts, would now prove to him that this also must be for the best and work for his good, since God is love; but he soon ascertains that he is not the man to maintain his side in a conflict of thought with this unknown individual. After several vain attempts, the clergyman says: ‘Well I have only one

counsel left to give you; there is a book about the love of God by so and so, read it, study it, if that does not help you, no man can help you.' The unknown man replies, 'I myself am the author of this book.'

Observe now that what the author had set down in that book was excellent — how could I venture to doubt it! What the thinker had understood about God was also doubtless true and profound. But this thinker had not understood himself, he had hitherto been living under the delusion that when it is proved that God is love, it must follow somehow as a matter of course that we — thou and I — believe it. He has perhaps as a thinker thought very meanly of faith, until... as a man he learned to think more meanly than before of thought, especially of the 'pure' sort. The course of his thought became inverted, his thought-process became different. He did not say: God is love, *ergo* all things work together for a man's good; but he said: '*If* I believe that God is love, then all things work together for *my* good.' Now the thinker is matured for life as a man; for hitherto there had been something rather inhuman about him. What it means for a little child to get the name by which it will be known its whole life long, is substantially what it means once in a man's life, decisively, eternally, to wound himself with this 'if' and thereby come to love God, although subsequently this 'if' is always at hand to preserve this love with which one loves God, is eternally young, as God is eternal, eternally young in the first tension of passion, but ever more and more heartfelt.

All things work together for our good — IF *we love God.*

Now, whether this is so, whether it is true as a matter of fact, whether I can prove it? Oh, if thou dost believe it, in case thou dost believe it, thou wilt blissfully ascertain that not only, as sometimes occurs, is that which thou seekest here, so that there is no need to go out to seek it, but thou hast found it, thou hast it. In case thou dost believe it, thou wilt easily

understand that all proving leads thee away from what thou hast, whereas this proving deceitfully assumes the appearance of leading thee to it.

Let us understand one another. Thou art surely acquainted (as who is not?) with that happy expression, that heartfelt word of a noble poet who lets the unfortunate girl speak to this effect: ‘I desire nothing more, I have lived and I have loved,’ or what to her thinking would have been precisely the same thing: I have loved — and lived. And why the same thing? Because she humanly regards love for man as the highest good, hence to her thinking these two ideas are completely synonymous: to live and to love. If she is bereaved of her lover, life is over — but she has loved. We will not contend with this lovable girl — and besides she is in fact the stronger. She is stronger than our understanding — for she *believes* in love. She is stronger than all earthly power, in a sense she has overcome death, does not fear it, for already she is bereaved of life, life indeed was her love — and, alas, she *has* loved.

But now for this thing of loving God! This after all is surely the highest good; to this therefore we can apply with the truth of eternity what the girl, vainly deceived by her heart, applied to earthly love: to love God is to live. ‘To live’! When one uses this word thus with special emphasis, one signifies thereby the full, rich life which is in possession of all the requisites for living, one signifies thereby a life which is truly worth living, a life which expands as it were with the blissful feeling of vitality. Only when one possesses the highest good does one live thus; but the highest good is to love God. But accordingly he possesses the highest good who, whatever may befall him, loves God; for to love God is the highest good. Ah, surely this is true! For the sake of a God-fearing jest, to make sport for once of this conceit of proving things, permit me to adjoin: *quod est demonstrandum!*

And the same thing applies when we talk of loss. In speaking of loss, or of what a man can lose in the world, one is prone to forget that the highest

good is to love God. Though a man were to lose everything in the world — if he does not lose faith in God's love, he does not in fact lose the highest good. Or imagine two men, both of whom have lost everything, but one of whom has at the same time lost faith in God's love: what is the difference between these two? Should we make the miserable reply that after all the one was somewhat better off than the other? No, let us tell the truth. The difference is that one actually lost everything, the other really lost nothing, since he retained the highest good.

IF *we love God!* O my hearer, thou who perhaps art accustomed to require everything of the speaker, here thou canst see that it all lies in the hearer. Wilt thou deny that the speaker speaks truly who says, 'All things work together for thy good — *if* thou dost love God'? That thou surely wilt not deny. Very well, but then thou wouldst require of him the impossible, if thou wert to require that he produce a definite effect: either to tranquillize, or to terrify. For what effect this true discourse will produce depends solely upon who the hearer is. There may perhaps have been one in whom this discourse inspires such a dread as he never before has known; but this is not the fault of the discourse, it lies in the hearer. There was perhaps one who in entire agreement said yea and amen to it, listened to it with the most blissful tranquillity; but this is not the merit of the discourse, it lies in the hearer. It is not the discourse which has terrified the one, and it is not the discourse which has tranquillized the other; it is the one and the other who in this discourse have understood themselves.

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IS AT HAND... OF THE JUST AND OF THE UNJUST

MY HEARER, THOU thyself perhaps hast been in the following situation, or at least thou art aware that such is the situation of many. At various seasons in his life a person has wished that some one might prove to him the immortality of the soul. He does not require that the proofs should make all effort on his part superfluous. He is willing to co-operate by thinking the thing out on his own account. He has procured one or another of the works which deal with this subject, and he has read it tranquilly, or he has heard and followed an oral lecture which undertook to prove the immortality of the soul. What is this man's whole situation? How might I describe it? In civil life we talk about the security there is in the city: public security is assured, one goes home tranquilly even late at night without fearing any danger; theft is seldom heard of, and that only in a small way just to keep in practice; as for assault, it never occurs. Hence one is safe, lives in safety. So it is with safety in a spiritual sense: thoughts come and go, even the most decisively important thoughts merely graze the soul, in dealing with the most terrifying thoughts one thinks a little about them, then a little more, but inwardly there is safety, it is assured that one is safe, or, as it would be preferable to say in this instance, one is secure.

On the other hand, this discourse on immortality has plainly the intent of committing a breach of public safety, or here it is more properly a question of private safety, it has the intent of disturbing security — it is like an assault, as bold as an assault in full daylight, as terrifying as an assault by night. Before it proves anything — but no, let us not keep the mind in vain expectancy, it will not *prove* anything whatsoever. It makes a classification of men as the just and the unjust, and therewith it asks thee whether thou

dost reckon thyself among the just or the unjust. It brings this question into the closest relationship with immortality; in fact it is not about immortality it speaks but rather about this difference. Is not this like an assault? Certainly it has never occurred to any of the provers to make this classification or to put this question — that would be the rudeness of treading too close on a man's heels, and one is afraid of presuming to come too close to the hearer or the reader, it would be unscientific and uncultured. How very odd. One is afraid of treading up too close to the hearer or reader — whereas one is engaged in proving to him the very thing which concerns him most closely — indeed there is nothing that more closely concerns a man than his immortality. However, one might prove this to the hearer without approaching him too closely, and presumably the hearer himself on the strength of this proof will espouse in a way *his* immortality without *himself* approaching it too rudely or too closely. In that way the proving of immortality becomes a sort of game. And when this game is long continued and becomes very popular, it is like an assault when a discourse, assuming immortality as a thing most certain, comes as close as possible to one, when instead of proving it (for that is to put it at a distance from one and hold it there), it comes out bluntly with the consequences which follow from it. Instead of beseeching thee to lend it thine attention and to listen tranquilly while it proves immortality, it assaults thee somewhat in this fashion: 'Nothing is more certain than immortality; thou shalt not be concerned about it, not waste thy time upon it, nor seek evasions by wanting to prove it, or wishing it proved — fear it, it is all-too-certain, do not doubt whether thou art immortal, but tremble, for thou art immortal.' The words of the text are uttered by Paul, and presumably both Pharisees and Sadducees were equally wroth with him. The Scripture relates expressly that the Sadducees, who did not accept immortality, were enraged when Paul talked of immortality. But may it not have been due to the way he talked about

immortality that the Pharisees were equally exasperated? This would have been the most favourable opportunity for Paul, yea the situation was like a challenge to him, it was as if this was what the age demanded of him — to propound some proofs of the immortality of the soul. If he had done that, being invited to a meeting where he proposed to give some proofs of the immortality of the soul — well, in that case not even the Sadducees would have made any objection. As men of scientific culture they were presumably free-minded enough to think thus: 'Notwithstanding we deny the immortality of the soul, this man may be able to say something for the other side, we may as well listen to him.' But for a man to attack one, to pounce upon him with this question about just and unjust, to forsake the scientific attitude and become personal — who indeed can wonder that people were enraged at such behaviour? People come together as men of culture, a group of serious persons who would hear something about immortality, whether there is an immortality, whether there really is an immortality, a personal immortality, whether people will really recognize one another again, about what ways there may be of passing one's time in eternity, whether yonder in the high-vaulted halls one will find oneself again in his self-same person, embroidered in the tapestry of remembrance at his happiest moments, the day of one's marriage, the day when one enchanted everybody in the festive circle — instead of all this, instead of passing an agreeable hour and like serious persons being able to say later, 'After all it is a very serious question, this of immortality' — instead of this, to have the thing so thoroughly decided that one becomes anxious and alarmed!

Well, yes — he who never had his immortality so thoroughly decided that he became anxious and alarmed has never believed in his immortality. This is what people have entirely forgotten in these times which, quite consistently, are so busy about proving immortality, in these times when

they are about ready to leave it impudently to every one's good pleasure whether he will or will not, whether he pretty much, pretty nearly, just about, up to a certain point, or in a sort of a way, wants to believe in immortality. For immortality is by way of becoming a sort of luxury, a matter of taste. And for this reason, for this reason precisely, so many books are written to *prove* after a sort the immortality of the soul — and precisely for this reason it is needful to give the thing a different turn. So we will speak on these words:

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IS AT HAND, OF THE JUST...AND OF THE UNJUST, OR ABOUT THE PROOF OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL WHICH RUNS THUS: IT IS ONLY TOO CERTAIN — FEAR IT!

For immortality is the Judgement. Immortality is not a life indefinitely prolonged, nor even a life somehow prolonged into eternity, but immortality is the eternal separation between the just and the unjust. Immortality is not a continuation which follows as a matter of course, but it is a separation which follows as a consequence of the past.

What has given occasion to all this error about immortality is the fact that people have completely confused the statement of the case, have made a question out of immortality, out of a task have made a question, out of a task for action, a question for thought. Would not that be the most depraved age which completely transformed its 'duties' into problems for thought? For what is duty? Duty is what one *must do.* There must be no question about duty, but the question must be whether I do my duty. There must be no question about immortality, as to whether it is; but the question must be whether I live as my immortality requires me to live. There must be no talk about immortality, as to whether it is, but about what my immortality requires of me, about my immense responsibility in being immortal.

That is to say, immortality and the Judgement are one and the same thing. We can speak rightly about immortality only when we speak of the Judgement; and naturally when we speak of the Judgement we speak of immortality. Hence Felix was afraid when he heard Paul's discourse about immortality; for Paul would not speak of it except in speaking of the Judgement, of the separation between the just and the unjust. If Paul had been willing to speak differently, to follow the new fashion of separating the Judgement and immortality from one another, if he had talked (or twaddled) about immortality without interjecting a word about the Judgement, talked about immortality and let it be assumed that there is no Judgement — then doubtless Felix would not have been afraid, he surely would have listened with attention to a cultured man and remarked afterwards, 'It is quite entertaining to hear the man, but it is kind of fanaticism which is capable, all the same, of delighting a person as long as he listens to it; it has something in common with a display of fireworks.'

Immortality is the Judgement. There is not a word more to be said about immortality. He who says one word more, or a word which has another slant, let him beware of the Judgement. People have transformed immortality into something entirely different and hence have sapped it. They have abstracted from it all its power, have tricked it out of its authority — by wanting to *prove* it, and so have left it to be accepted by anybody who will, whereas in fact it is exactly the contrary of this: either thou wilt or thou wilt not, about this there is no question raised, thou art immortal — only beware! In case an officer with authority commands that something be done — and then several persons, wishing presumably to assist him by proving that he is a very clever man etc., would persuade the subordinates to yield obedience to this officer — what then? Why, then these eloquent men have cheated him out of his authority; for he ought not to be obeyed because he is clever, ought not to be obeyed for this reason and that, but simply

because he has authority. When duty, instead of being the commanding instance, is relegated to the position of a problem — then, even if men were to do *what* duty bids, they would not be doing *their duty*; for duty desires to be done because it *must* be done. So also in case a man by the aid of all sorts of proofs were to reach the point of assuming the notion of his immortality, he does not for all this *believe* in his immortality. For thou art under no obligation to carry the thing to the point of making it appear more than plausible that thou art immortal. No, God has entirely exempted thee from this bother; thou art immortal, and thou shalt give account to God of how thou hast lived, O thou immortal! Precisely because thou art immortal thou shalt not be able to slip out of God's hand, hide thyself in a grave and pretend that it doesn't matter; and the scale according to which thou shalt be judged is that thou art immortal.

Immortality is the Judgement or the separation between the just and the unjust. Thus it is Paul conjoins these two things. He does not waste a word in talking about immortality, as to whether it actually *is*; he states what it is, that it is the separation between the just and the unjust. The imperfection of this early life, its earthliness, consists precisely in the fact that it cannot make manifest this difference between the just and the unjust. Here in this earthly life there is the confusion that the unjust can assume the appearance of being the just, that the just must suffer as if he were the unjust, that there lies an impenetrable darkness over the question who is the just and who the unjust, that justice seems to be man's own invention, so that the right thing is that which the majority regards as such, so that righteousness seems to have the same quality as everything else that is earthly, of being right only up to a certain point, that just as it is required for beauty that one be neither too big nor too little, so righteousness is a kind of *via media*, it must not be pursued immoderately, therefore it is a righteous dispensation when (as a consequence of man's mediocrity) suffering and human opposition are the

lot of one who wills righteousness only, who loves righteousness more dearly than his life. But the truth and perfection of eternal life is to exhibit eternally the difference between right and wrong with the severity appropriate to eternity, precise as only eternity is, with a sublimity which to the earthly-minded might seem petty and odd. In eternity therefore it will be easy enough to distinguish between right and wrong; but the point is that it is not in eternity thou art for the first time to make this distinction, in eternity thou shalt be judged as to whether in the earthly life thou hast made it as eternity would have it made. For what is eternity? It is the distinction between right and wrong. Everything else is transitory: heaven and earth shall pass away; every other distinction is evanescent, all distinction between man and man belongs to the interlude of human life and therefore is to cease. But the difference between right and wrong remains eternally, as does He, the Eternal, who fixed this difference *from eternity* (not like the difference which *in the beginning* He fixed between heaven and earth), and it remains *unto eternity*, as He, the Eternal, remains, He who rolls up the heavens like a garment, changes everything, but never Himself — and hence never this difference which belongs to eternity. Eternity is the distinction between right and wrong, hence immortality is the separation between the just and the unjust. Immortality is not a continuation, it is not so related to the present life that this is continued, but it is separation, so that life indeed is continued, but in separation. It is an idle, indolent, effeminate thought to wish for a life after death in the sense of a long life. Eternity's thought is that in this earthly life men differ, in eternity occurs the separation.

But how can eternity be a distinction? To be a distinction — is not that far too imperfect a mode of being to be the eternal? Well, is isn't that eternity is the distinction, eternity is righteousness. But the nature of righteousness possesses this perfection, that it has within itself a

duplication; this duplication which it has within itself is the distinction between right and wrong. A being which has no distinction within itself is a very imperfect being, it may be an imaginary being, such as the being of a mathematical point. A being which has the difference outside itself is an evanescent being; such is the case with the distinctions of this early life, which therefore vanish. Eternity, righteousness, has the distinction within itself, the distinction between right and wrong. But if instead of habituating oneself to believe that there is an eternal distinction between right and wrong, instead of exercising oneself in it so that one might have one's life in it (which costs much time and effort, whereto all this earthly life is devised) — if instead one turns away from it, habituates oneself to think that there is surely some sort of distinction between right and wrong, but that after all one must not be pedantic, that it is well enough to make the distinction once in a while, but it would spoil all to do it for daily use — in that case it seems difficult to conceive, although in the very conception it is implied, that in eternity there should be an eternal distinction between right and wrong. For there is an eternal distinction between right and wrong (which ought to be seen already in this life; but, alas, it is not seen) — and how then might it not be in eternity! Take any earthly distinction to illustrate the fact that a distinction is naturally best seen where it has its stronghold. Take the distinction between noble and bourgeois. When the nobleman lives in a town where he is the only nobleman and all the others bourgeois, he cannot maintain his distinction, the bourgeois overpower him, but when he comes to his own sort and is fortified by being conjoined with them, you perceive the distinction. So it is with the eternal distinction between right and wrong. Hence in the earthly life it is overwhelmed as it were, it cannot well maintain itself, it is abased; but when it comes home in eternity it is then in its full strength. Whether men believe or no that there is this distinction in eternity, in eternity it is. But the situation in eternity is

not, as it often is with the strong man, the sagacious man, the thinker, the teacher, that at last, overwhelmed by the crowd, he has to yield. Precisely the contrary! In temporal existence it rather looks as if eternity had already yielded; but it does not yield *at last*, no, *at last* comes the dreadful thing. It puts men to the proof here in the earthly life, it sometimes lets itself be mocked here in the earthly life, but at last, at last it judges; for immortality is the Judgement.

Immortality is the Judgement; and this applies to 'ME'; *in* 'MY' *thoughts it applies to* 'ME' *most of all, just as in* 'THY' *thoughts it applies to* 'THEE' *most of all.* In no other way have I been able to understand this matter. But that perhaps is due to my narrow capacity. For (inconceivable as it is in my thought) there are men who present the matter to themselves quite differently. They are confident enough in regard to what will happen to them in that discrimination of eternity, confident enough so far as concerns their own blessedness, that they are righteous, or confident enough that they are believers — and now they raise the query whether others can become blessed. To me this matter has never presented itself thus, nothing else has ever occurred to me but that every other man surely will become blessed, only about 'me' was it doubtful in 'my' thoughts. Yea, if I had caught myself doubting about the blessedness of any other single man, it would have been enough for me to despair of mine.

But the matter must be presented in one of two ways; one cannot be in two places at once, nor work with his thoughts in two places at once. *Either* one works unceasingly with every effort of his soul in fear and trembling upon the thought of self-concern, 'whether one shall himself become blessed'; and then verily one has no time or thought to doubt about others, nor is he in the least disposed to do so. *Or* one has become quite confident on his own account — and so he has time to think about others, time to

strike attitudes and make gestures indicative of grief, time to practise the art of seeming to shudder, whereas he shudders on another person's account.

He, however, who has become so perfectly sure, so sure of hand that he presumes to handle this eternally decisive question (a boldness more to be wondered at than the sureness of the surgeon in using the knife, for in this instance it is impossible to cut another without cutting oneself), this man, however, has not always been so sure. Hence in the course of time he has changed. And that is natural, a person does indeed change in the course of time. It is evident that when a person becomes older there occurs a change in respect to his body: the smooth velvet of the skin becomes wrinkled, the soft connexions of the joints become stiff, the sinews harden, the bones petrify — is this change, this consolidation, a change for the better? The young girl who blushed if merely she heard 'his' name mentioned, blushed when in private she uttered it aloud; the young girl whose heart beat audibly every time the clock struck the hour when 'he' should come; the young girl who once shuddered at having displeased him by the very least insignificant act, or by the mere thought of it; the young girl who once became cold as death for fear that for an instant he had been less loving to her than usual — this young girl has now been married to him many years. Now she has become sure, sure that she is certainly good enough to him; she is aware of none of those virginal feelings, she is quite sure for her part; she is well-pleasing unto herself — even if she be not pleasing to... I was about to say 'the loved one', but of that there is no more any question, she has no loved one, though she has him for a husband; she is merely occupied with judging other women; she is quite well pleased with herself, even in her changed condition, she is not even like that old man who walked with his back bent low and his beard almost touching his knees, who when he was asked why he was so downcast, replied, lifting up his hands, 'I have lost my youth on the ground, and now I am seeking it everywhere' — she seeks nothing, she

who once sought, ah, with all the sincerity of love sought to please, she is well-pleasing unto herself, she is quite sure. Is this assurance a change for the better?

No, away from me, dreadful assurance; save me, O God, from ever becoming quite sure, preserve me until the last in insecurity, so that then, if I attain blessedness, I might be quite sure that I receive it of grace! For this is a hollow sham, to protest that one believes it to be of grace — and yet to be quite sure. The true, the essential expression of the fact that it is grace is precisely the fear and trembling of insecurity. There it is faith lies, just as far, exactly as far from despair as from security. He who fools away his life without thinking of immortality can perhaps not be said to despise the highest good; but he who became quite sure is the one who despises it. He who flirted away his life can well be said to have forfeited his life; but he who became quite sure forfeited it in a more horrible way. Eternal God, keep therefore my deepest concern silent in my most inward parts, understood only by Thee, that I may never talk of it directly to any man. For otherwise I should get to the point of becoming just as sure as various others, more sure than several others — and quite sure. Preserve me from men, and preserve me from deceiving any other man; for this deceit lies all too near when one treats the relationship with God as if it were a direct relationship to other men, so that one falls into the way of comparison and human assurance. If there were a person accounted by many a man of rare nobility and uprightness, and he continues nevertheless to labour for his salvation, the others would be angry with him. For they would like to have his assurance as a specious pretext for their sense of security, and they would that their security should be his assurance. But, O my God and Father, the question of my blessedness concerns no one else but me and Thee.

Should there not then remain insecurity in fear and trembling until the last, I being what I am and Thou what Thou art, I upon earth, Thou in heaven — ah, a difference infinitely great! — I a sinner, Thou the Holy One! Should there not then, ought there not, must there not remain fear and trembling until the last? Or was not this the fault of the foolish virgins, that they became sure and went to sleep, whereas on the contrary the wise virgins kept awake? But what is it to keep awake? It is uncertainty in fear and trembling. And what indeed is faith but an empty imagination, if it is not awake? And when faith is not awake, what else is it but this dreadful security.

So this concerns *me* in *my* thoughts most of all, and I can understand that in *thy* thoughts likewise it concerns *thee* most of all. In no other way can I understand thee, in no other way am I willing to understand thee, and in no other way would I be understood by thee. I know nothing with regard to my blessedness; for what I know, I know only with God in fear and trembling, so that I cannot talk. When in the Council of State something indeed has been talked about but nothing as yet determined, would it not be a crime to divulge it in the city? And my blessedness is not yet determined. And I know nothing with regard to thy blessedness; thou only canst know of that with God. But this I believe, that the resurrection of the dead is at hand, of the just and of... the unjust.

My hearer, is not this discourse reassuring after all? One cannot well talk more reassuringly than as in this instance, when to one who so eagerly desired to believe in immortality, so eagerly desired to see it proved, the discourse says: ‘As for that matter, be quite assured, thou art immortal, whether thou wilt or no.’ More reassuringly one cannot talk — unless it is precisely this affirmation which disquiets a man. But if it is disquieting, there must have been deceit in the mouth or in the heart of him who desired so eagerly, oh, so eagerly desired, etc. And if he is deceitful, his disquietude

is not my fault, who, if what he said was true, might have talked to him reassuringly. If there was deceit in him, he was accordingly just the contrary of what he said he was, he was afraid of immortality — hence he so eagerly desired to have it *proved*, because he obscurely understood that immortality, by becoming an object of proof, is cast down from the throne, deposed, a poor impotent figure which men can jeer at, as the Philistines jeered at Samson their prisoner. There is in the human race, in our race, a cunning which is slyer than the cunningest of shrewd politicians. And it is precisely this cunning of the race which has got the question of immortality inverted. The individuals do not by any means always understand how sly the whole thing is, and hence what they say is almost in the air they breathe, since it is in the race. It is the race that has willed to rebel against God, it is the race that has willed to do away with immortality and has attained the end of having it treated as a problem. For given immortality (and with that the immortality of the individual which is implied), then God is Lord and Sovereign, and the 'individual' stands in relationship to Him. But when immortality becomes a problem, God is done away with, and the race is God. The individuals perhaps do not notice how they are in the power of the race, how through them it is the race that speaks. They think therefore that he who calls upon them and calls them '*individuals*' is a *rebel* — and that he is too, in God's name he rebels against making the race God and immortality a problem. In God's name he rebels, and he appeals to God's Word, that the resurrection of the dead is at hand, of the just... and of the unjust!

V. NOW ARE WE NEARER OUR SALVATION... THAN WHEN WE BECAME BELIEVERS

GREAT GOD, WHERE are we!' So the navigator cries when in the dark night the ship will not obey the helm, and no star is visible, when all is darkness and gloom, while storms rave, and when it is not possible to observe the position— 'Great God, where are we!' But he too in these days who has to preach Christianity, must he not say, 'Where are we?' We are in Christendom — yes, that is true. *There* so and so many Christians are born every year, so many are baptized, so many confirmed, we are so and so many Christians, just about as many as there are inhabitants in the land. But what does that signify? Does that determine our position? Or is he who preaches Christianity to keep the whole thing at a distance from reality, so as not to come embarrassingly near? Is he to talk about Christianity but leave it undetermined whom he is talking to? Is he to talk about our salvation being nearer than when we believed, but leave it entirely vague who these 'we' are, whether it is they who lived a hundred or several hundred years ago — is he to talk thus and therefore punch the air, so that the preaching of Christianity is no more than punching the air? Where are we? He who has to talk about Christianity in Christendom, is he a missionary who has to spread Christianity, so that all this notion of Christendom is a vain conceit, or is he to assume that we are all Christians, or shall he make a distinction, and, if so, how is he to make a distinction — where are we?

In these times people seem to be less observant of this difficulty. They regard Christianity as a sum of doctrinal statements, they lecture upon them, just as they do upon ancient philosophy, the Hebrew language, or any other scientific discipline, treating the relation to them of the hearers or learners

as entirely indifferent. Substantially this is paganism. The Christian position clearly is that the personal relationship to Christianity is the decisive thing. One may be thoroughly informed about Christianity as a whole, may know how to explain it, to present it and to expound it — but if with all this he thinks that his own relationship to Christianity is a matter of indifference, he is a pagan. However, as men have cast down all regimes, so also they have deposed Christianity from its sovereignty. Instead of allowing it to rule over men, to change their lives (not only on Sunday but every day), and to intervene decisively in every relationship of life, they keep it at a scientific distance as a mere doctrine, they point out the correspondence between various doctrinal statements — but the correspondence or non-correspondence of my life or thine with this teaching is a matter of indifference.

Hence we have chosen these words to talk about. For if this discourse is not to be entirely meaningless, we must in one way or another come closer to men, or rather prompt them to come closer to themselves. And this is what we would do. Our aim is not in the least to condemn Christendom or any single person in Christendom; we do our best to come as close to ourselves as possible, which is the best way of preventing us from coming condemningly too close to others. But it is indeed our aim to prompt the hearer to test his life, his Christianity, to be observant of where he is. And to talk on these words, 'Now is our salvation etc.', without defining who 'we' are would be as inane as to travel from Copenhagen to Jerusalem on the map. To talk on these words without defining this 'now' and this 'when' is just as fatuous as to travel in imagination from one planet to another.

NOW IS *OUR* SALVATION NEARER... THAN WHEN WE BECAME BELIEVERS.

Two points are required for every determination of place. To say of a city that it is situated 'there', of a road that it leads 'there', of a man that he

dwells ‘there’, is to make a fool of him with whom we talk, or to make a fool of oneself, if one had not the purpose of jeering at the other but meant to talk seriously. If there is to be any sense and seriousness in this discourse, and if he to whom it is addressed is to derive profit therefrom, he must be given one point the position of which he knows, in relation to which he can determine the ‘there’. The reason why a stranger goes astray in the desert, and the reason why a person becomes dizzy at sea, is that he has no ‘there’ in relation to which he can determine where he is, or because he has no point of reference for determining the ‘there’.

The same thing is true of the determination of time. If I am to determine where I am ‘now’, I must have another point in time well determined in relation to which I define this ‘now’. Hence the words chosen as the subject of this discourse contain quite properly another determination by means of which the speaker defines this ‘now’: ‘now’ we are nearer salvation than ‘when’ we became believers. This makes excellent sense. When a man says, ‘I am now farther along with this or that work than when I began it,’ there is sense in this determination of the time. In the fact that he began he has one fixed point of time, and he measures the distance from the beginning in order to see where he is now. But in case this man had never begun this work — why, then his talk is senseless: it is senseless to say, one is ‘now’ nearer than ‘when’ one began, if one never began. And in case a person who never had begun to believe were to imitate this and say thoughtlessly, ‘now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,’ that is senseless.

Recite these words in order to test thine own life by means of them, so as to learn to know where thou ‘now’ art. If thou art to learn to know this, thou must accordingly make sure first that thou knowest with precision ‘when’ that time was when thou didst become a believer, or when occurred in thy life the decision to believe. Art thou well aware of this difficulty which attacks one as it were from behind? For the question is not whether thou

hast gone backward since that time when thou didst become a believer, whether thou hast abandoned faith. For one might argue thus: It goes without saying that salvation is ‘now’ nearer than ‘when’ I believed; for the ‘now’ is a later instant than the ‘when’, so it is a matter of course — unless, as was said, thou hast since that time abandoned faith. But on the other hand nothing follows as a matter of course if it is not certain that thou didst once become a believer, that thou didst experience the instant when thou didst become a believer.

When didst thou become a believer? It is of immense importance to make this definite if thou art to be able to define where thou art ‘now’. And in case the situation is of such a sort that it must contribute to leave gloaming in indefiniteness the question whether thou didst actually become a believer, in that case thou canst well perceive how near to thee is absurdity, how it encompasses thee as it were, how easy it would be to pass thy whole life in absurdity — and therefore how important it is for thee to tear thyself free from all illusion which would prevent thee from learning to know whether thou wast ever a believer, all illusion which would make it possible for thee even to hear a sermon on these words, ‘now is salvation nearer than when we believed,’ without discovering that these words were a mockery of thee, who didst remain nevertheless quite undisturbed in the absurd assurance that ‘now’ thou art nearer thy salvation than ‘when’ thou didst become a believer — thou who never didst become a believer. For perhaps the sermon prompted thee to test thy life as to whether thou hadst later renounced faith. In this respect, however, thou wast not conscious of any fault, thou didst search thy life and didst find that it was possible to say boldly that thou didst never deny the faith or publicly renounce it. So thou mightest ‘now’ be nearer to salvation than ‘when’ thou didst become a believer. Alas it was hid from thee that the misfortune precisely was that

thou never didst become a believer — so that only in this sense is the affirmation quite correct that thou didst not later... renounce faith.

When didst thou become a believer; or, what is the same thing, art thou essentially conscious of having experienced this decision to become a believer? For the important thing is not that it was midday at 12 o'clock or the like. No, the whole thing is a spiritual affair and therefore has the true seriousness which is not inclined to ask about the hour or the stroke of the clock. But on the other hand it is perfectly evident that it would be a game like that called 'passing the house' if a man, being asked in his old age when he became a believer, were to reply, 'Well, it was a long time ago'; being asked if it was in his manhood, were to say, 'No, it was a longer time ago'; being asked if it was in his youth, were to say, 'It was even longer ago, in short, it was so long ago that I can't remember when.' It is evident that this would be a game, and that it is senseless for a man to say where he 'now' is in relation to salvation if the decision by which he became a believer recedes into the fabulous dimness of the nursery-tale.

When didst thou become a believer? Didst thou become a believer? It is not now as in those... difficult ages when a Jew or a pagan became a Christian in ripe years; for then surely he knew definitely *when*... and *that* he became a believer. We now live in more... favourable times, in Christendom; it is now far easier to become a Christian — in any case far easier to fool oneself into passing one's whole life in a vain conceit. Thou wast baptized as a child, instructed in the Christian religion, confirmed, everybody regards thee as a Christian, thou callest thyself such when there is any occasion to give thy name, thy position in life, and the religion thou dost profess. About whether thou art to be a merchant, a scholar, an artist, a soldier, etc., etc., about whether thou shalt marry this one or the other, where thou shalt dwell, in the town or in the country — all such questions thou hast had occasion at one time or another in thy life to propose and to

answer, so thou wilt be able to say ‘when’, and also be able to determine in all these respects where thou ‘now’ art. But the question whether thou art a believer has perhaps never arisen for thee; as long back as thy memory extends it has been assumed that thou art a Christian, and at one time must have become such — God knows when.

And where art thou ‘now’; art thou ‘now’ nearer thy salvation? Thou hast surely heard of that simple wise man of ancient times who knew how to question so craftily. This question may easily sound like one of his, like a question which has the purpose of putting a man in embarrassment, of making evident the confusion on the part of the inquirer. Now I neither will nor can interrogate thee; but imagine that it is he, the simple wise man, who interrogates thee. Thou knowest that even in Christendom the catechetical art is modelled after him, but never has any catechist been capable of interrogating as he did. Think of this simple wise man, the determined hater of evasion and excuse and unclearness and misstatement, who moreover was cunning, sly, clever and bold in ferreting such things out; he who had no teaching which he would aloofly deliver to men in a lecture, but precisely in the rôle of a teacher pierced through men with his penetrating glance, so that the man who conversed with him seemed to be conversing with himself, so that his most inward thoughts were revealed to this teacher; he who not only fetched down wisdom from heaven, but knew how to penetrate with it ‘the individual’. Think that it is this simple wise man that questions thee; think how he could persist in teasing a man with this question, whether he is ‘now’ nearer to his salvation; think how he could turn and twist this question in innumerable ways, but always banteringly, always with that smile upon his face which was so characteristic of him when he had a suspicion that he with whom he conversed did not know definitely for his part which was which, did not know whether he really understood or whether he did not understand, whether he had become a

believer or whether he had not become a believer; think of his perseverance until he, the simple man, had got the questioner trapped and made it manifest that he had been under an illusion. ‘Art thou “now” nearer to it (to salvation)?’

‘Yes. But nearer than...?’ This perhaps produces a pause, and when this pause occurs it has the power of transforming the whole discourse into confusion. So thou art now ‘nearer’; this ‘nearer’ is comparative, but with what then dost thou compare? Can it properly be said that one man is bigger than another, if the other doesn’t exist? There is something tempting, something persuasive in this ‘more’ of comparison, it allures one, as if in a way it were a matter of course, as if one ought not to be distrustful, for after all it is an advance. But if it is not certain that the beginning is given, all this allurement is only allurement into absurdity. No more than the man who is on board a ship ever gets farther than the ship, however many hours he may continue to travel on it, and however many miles he may journey — no more than that does he come in any sense nearer who never started upon the course which leads nearer and nearer. But the way to salvation is faith; and only then can there be any question of being ‘now’ nearer, when it is definitely settled that one became a believer.

Where art thou now; is thy salvation *now nearer*? Thy salvation! The question is about thy salvation, about coming nearer to thy salvation. And if this is what the question is about, the same question is about something else, about being lost. Thy perdition! Suppose thou hast made a mistake in life and become a merchant when really thou shouldest have been an artist. Well, good Lord, that may be pretty hard, but even that misfortune can be lived down. Suppose thou didst make a mistake in life and married the girl — but her sister would have suited thee better. Well, good Lord, one can put up with being out of luck. But if a man is out of luck with his salvation! Suppose that in the most vigorous moment of thy youth thou didst conceive

the plan of a Herculean work which thou wouldst perform and which was to be thy life-work; but thou wast delayed on the way and hindered by various things, it was discovered that thou hadst not the strength for it, in short, at thy life's end thou wast not perceptibly nearer to it than at the beginning. Well, good Lord, there is consolation for this sorrow too. But if at thy life's end thou hast not come nearer to thy salvation! Is there anything more dreadful than to be far from one's salvation? And to be in this situation, far from one's salvation, means in fact to be receding farther and farther. Salvation is correlative to danger; one who is not in danger cannot be saved. So if thou art in danger, and thy salvation is not nearer, thou art sinking deeper and deeper into danger. Ah, like the shipwrecked man who has saved himself by a plank, and thus, tossed by the waves, hovering over the abyss, between life and death, gazes fixedly at the land — so should a man be concerned for his salvation. But can a man be farther away from his salvation than when he does not even know definitely whether he has begun to will to be saved?

Test thyself therefore by means of this saying. It is a blessed comfort to dare to know that one's salvation is nearer than when one became a believer — but surely it is true that one must be certain one has become a believer. This saying therefore may serve to comfort, but also it may as it were come upon one from behind. If it happen that thereby a man is prompted to take notice, it is indeed terrifying — oh, but even in this terror, in this salutary terror, there is some comfort. There is some comfort; for after all when a man has taken notice of the fact that he has not even begun, he is always somewhat nearer his salvation than he was so long as he was living on confidently in an illusion and a vain conceit.

One thing more, however: let us not forget that the expression used by the Apostle is different from the way we have interpreted this saying. He says, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we became believers.' The

words as we have used them concentrate the whole thought upon our own activity in the matter, and they are so used for the sake of making people take notice. The Apostolic words lay stress at the same time upon the fact that our salvation is from God. The Apostle does not say *that we come nearer to our salvation*, but *that salvation comes nearer to us.* And about this too it might be necessary to talk, so as to remind the *believer* that he is not to be in a hurry, not to think that he is to acquire what essentially is bestowed. It might well be necessary to talk about this — if only it always were clear where we are. But in order to become aware of this we must first know whether we have become believers.

VI. IT IS BLESSED NEVERTHELESS... TO SUFFER DERISION IN A GOOD CAUSE

AFTER ALL, 'BLESSEDNESS' is surely the highest good; so of this good that must be true which is true of the lesser goods. For if an orator or a poet were to describe the glory of some earthly good or another, he would surely make people desire it, so that they hardly would be able to keep still during the discourse, but would be impatient to be off and away in order to grasp it. And how much reason they would have to be angry with this orator for deluding them with this desirable prospect when the speech concluded with the warning that it is fortune which distributes these goods! If such were not the case, they must indeed feel that they never could sufficiently thank the orator who knew how to describe so invitingly and so fascinatingly the goods which every one could possess. But 'blessedness' is the highest good, and every man can get possession of this good. Accordingly it might be expected that people could hardly resolve to hear this discourse to the end for the impatience they must feel to acquire this good, the highest good, which nevertheless every man can acquire. It might be expected that they would feel concerned lest the moment employed in listening to this discourse might be a moment wasted, since it was not in the strictest sense employed in attaining.

And such a discourse on 'blessedness' we have from an age now long gone by. It was delivered upon a mountain which after it was called the Mount of the Beatitudes — for blessedness, in comparison with all earthly goods, stands fast and immovable like the mountain, and again, blessedness, in comparison with all earthly goods, is like a mountain lifted up above the low plains. This discourse was delivered by Him, the only one who at first hand could talk of blessedness, since this is associated with His name, the

only one in whom is blessedness. In this discourse it is said: ‘Blessed are they who have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.’

These words we shall lay at the foundation of the following discourse on the theme:

IT IS BLESSED NEVERTHELESS... TO SUFFER DERISION IN A GOOD CAUSE.

— in order that we for our edification may become aware of the comfort, or rather of the joy which Christianity proclaims; for these discourses are indeed ‘for edification’, in spite of the fact that they ‘wound from behind’.

But lest in any way this joy might be taken in vain, let us first recite expressly the conditions upon which this experience can in any sense be said to be blessed. It must be for a good cause one is derided, or, as Christ says, ‘for righteousness’ sake’. And what derision says must be false, for Christ says, ‘when all men speak all manner of evil against you falsely’. But given these factors, everything else follows; yea, then it is blessed... to suffer derision.

So then comfort thyself, thou derided man, or rather rejoice! — What is the only thing that can deprive one of joy at having done a good deed? It is to get a reward for it. But if thou art rewarded by derision! Every other requital diminishes the good one has done; the requital of derision increases it. It is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause! — What is the only case in which a man can have real merit? When he suffers because he does right. For if he does right and is rewarded, he is an unprofitable servant. It is

blessed therefore to suffer derision in a good cause! — What is required for mutual understanding? Only like understands like. What is requisite for a covenant? Initiation: only the initiate is in covenant with the initiates. That glorious One whom the race cast out, mocked, derided, persecuted and slew — He exists indeed for all men, many perhaps could give an account of His life and describe it. But this understanding is that of the uninitiated, for whom in a deeper sense He does not exist, since they are not understood by Him any more than they understand Him. Only he understood Him and was understood by Him, only he was initiated into a covenant with Him, who himself suffered the like. Blessed it is to be derided in a good cause! — What is it a man inquires about who for a considerable time must change his residence, moving from the town into the country, or from the country to town? He inquires about the society. But the man who suffers derision, when once he must change his residence and wander away, when he leaves the society in which he lived derided — then, precisely for the fact that he suffered derision, he has assured himself for an eternity of the society of that glorious One in daily confidential intercourse, in hearty understanding and in loving converse. It is blessed therefore to suffer derision in a good cause! — What is the only distinction God makes? That between right and wrong. And what distinction does He make? That He is wrath and a curse upon him who does wrong. And in making this distinction He makes still another distinction: between him who does right and is rewarded for it, and him who does right and suffers for it. But the more distinction He makes, so much the nearer to Him is the man who is related to Him by this distinction. Blessed therefore is he who suffers derision in a good cause! — Why is it that God never leaves Himself without a witness? Because in being the Good He is *unchangeably* the same, the same unchanged God; when today all creatures, as a thousand years before, look up to Him and ask for food and clothing, He opens His bountiful hand and satisfies every living thing

with blessing. But when he who suffers innocently for a good cause lifts up his glance prayerfully to God, this glance *moves* Him, this glance which is able to accomplish nothing, nothing whatever here on earth, *moves* God, it requires Him to give an even stronger witness. Blessed therefore is he who suffers derision in a good cause! What bond of communion between man and man is the most heartfelt? It is suffering. What is man's most blessed communion? That with God. It is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause! — Who possesses most? Is it he who possesses God and at the same time much else, or he who being deprived of all else possesses God alone? Surely it is the latter, for all else 'is loss'. But who is deprived of most? He who did not get his deserts but was rewarded with derision; for the only thing a man essentially owns is his deserts, everything else he owns he owns only accidentally, so that it is not properly his possession. The derided man is deprived of everything; excluded from human society, he has only God — who is the richest of all. He has only God — ah, how blessed to be alone so as to have God; blessed be all the persecution, the scorn, the mockery which taught him, which constrained him, to be alone with God, to have God as his only possession. It is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause! — Where is Christ present? Wherever His name is called upon, though but two or three are gathered together in His name, He is present. Yea, and when one suffers innocently for righteousness sake and calls upon His name, there *is there*, besides the voice which calls upon Him, something which calls upon Him more mightily, and hence *there is* the communion of His suffering and the power of His resurrection. It is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause! — What is it a man desires as the highest reward? To have his name inscribed on the page of history. But think of it, that the man who is derided, precisely by suffering derision gets the highest reward, gets his name written in the Book of Life! For sure enough we are all immortal, even they who do wrong, also the most ungodly of all the

ungodly. But to have one's name written in the Book of Life! Blessed it is to suffer derision in a good cause! Yea, blessed, blessed comfort, blessed But to whom does this discourse address itself? where is it? has it entirely forgotten itself? Perhaps in this distinguished assembly there is not a single man who suffers derision — but no, it is not 'perhaps', it is an impossibility that any derided man might venture into this distinguished assembly! One cannot at the same time be derided and also be here in a company where the honoured and esteemed are assembled. A derided man is like a leper, his place is appointed among the graves, he is shunned by everybody. 'Yes, but it is for a good cause he is derided.' By whom then is he derided? It cannot well be by those who themselves are derided, for that would put him among the persons highly regarded. Nor can the derided man be at once derided, and at the same time, by the very persons who deride him, be held in honour because he is derided in a good cause. Even in a comedy the same man could not be used at the same time in two places — to be derided, and also to be honoured because he was derided in a good cause.

A strange difficulty! And it is strange that this difficulty does not emerge at all when one contemplates history. Contemplate that witness for the truth; it is now several centuries since he lived, but when he lived he was derided and persecuted. In the service of the truth he had got far too long a start for limping justice to catch up with him as long as he lived, more especially because, without dawdling an instant to await limping justice, he made giant strides ahead. Then he died and lay still in the grave — then limping justice caught up with him: his name was honoured and extolled in history; we are now so accustomed to honour and extol him that finally some fall into the error of thinking that he was honoured and esteemed while he lived. For time exercises a foreshortening spell. His name lives now honoured and extolled for three centuries — and as for him, well, he lived the usual human span of sixty or seventy years, so one can almost say that he has

been constantly honoured and esteemed. Oh, yes, quite so, if one wants to talk nebulously — otherwise, no. He never lived honoured and esteemed — he lived despised, persecuted, mocked, as long as he lived. And at the time he lived it must have been the honoured and esteemed people that despised him — just as now it is the honoured and esteemed people that extol his name. But the witness for the truth triumphed, and as in other respects he altered the shape of the world, so too he altered the concept of honour: after his death he became the honoured one, and they who lived contemporary with him, the honoured and esteemed people, appear now in another light. So long as he lived this was not the case, for he had to comfort himself with the teaching of Christianity that it is blessed to suffer for righteousness sake. He both felt and understood these words. For whereas many, looking at history backwards, only get confusion out of it, Christianity, on the contrary, addresses itself undeviatingly to the living man and proclaims to him that it is blessed... to suffer derision in a good cause.

That is to say, Christianity has, generally speaking, a suspicion of the honour and esteem paid to man in his lifetime. Far from Christianity be the foolishness of saying that every one who was derided while he lived was therefore on the right path. It says merely: among those who while they lived were derided the true Christian is ordinarily to be found. For this is what Christianity thinks: the eternal, the true, cannot possibly win the applause of the instant, must necessarily win its disapprobation. By being among the honoured and esteemed, Christianity does not precisely mean being in the highest positions and offices — a remark which it is especially important to emphasize, and inexcusable to pass over in silence, in view of the claim of this age which contends obstinately against all government that this contentiousness is Christianity. It is also certain that such a life in high place and in power is often characterized by true renunciation of what is properly meant by being honoured and esteemed. No, Christianly

understood, to be honoured and esteemed means: forgetful of the eternal, to serve idolatrously, to serve only, and to take sides with nothing else but what has power in the instant, to 'seek first' the instant, and thereby to reap its applause, that means, to be in the 'world' (and for the world Christianity has no liking), that is, to be on top, that is, as a certain sort of culture claims, 'to be abreast of the world,' in short, it is worldliness. Christianity, on the other hand, requires self-denial with respect to honour and esteem even more definitely than in relation to money. For money is something purely external, but honour is a concept of the mind. Wherefore the Christian is required to ward off from him this sort of honour and esteem. For to be a Christian is a point of honour, and therefore every Christian, for the sake of his own honour and that of Christianity, is obliged to be on his guard to defend the true concept of honour, lest by accepting worldly honour and esteem he become an accomplice in the dissemination of the false concept.

But to whom does this discourse address itself? Does it not, instead of making due use of the place and of the moment, disappoint every reasonable expectation which might expect that *here* it should be made clear how great a good is honour and esteem, how glorious it is to be honoured and esteemed, and by what means one acquires a good so momentous; for, as the proverb says, 'He who loses honour cuts off his right hand,' so that he is not able to accomplish anything — as is to be seen in the example of the Apostles and the witnesses for the truth, for they were not able to accomplish anything. Yes, certainly, the discourse disappoints this expectation; but on the other hand it does not disappoint him who expected that it would preach Christianity.

'But is it not a great good to be honoured and esteemed?' About that the discourse knows nothing, it knows only that it is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause, and that this is Christianity. 'But did not this apply only in the first ages of Christianity when a man had to contend with Jews and

pagans? Should the case be the same in Christendom, in the triumphant Church?' Well, yes, it goes without saying, that if a man were to imagine himself in a place where there lived only genuine Christians, it might then, as a matter of course, be taken as proof that a man was a genuine Christian if he had the applause of such people, was honoured and esteemed by those who themselves willed the true and had a true conception of it, were zealous for knowledge of the truth. But is so-called Christendom such a place? If so, then the consummation would have been reached — and then one might suppose that Christ was deeply absorbed in thought, had forgotten Himself, forgotten to come again; for His coming again corresponds to the consummation. But Christ has not yet come again — and if He were to come again, were to come 'to His own' in a still stricter sense than before, what would His reception be in Christendom? There is much which astonishes me, much which I find strange and inexplicable. When I hear a man say the correct thing — but it never occurs to him to make anything out of it... that astonishes me, I cannot understand him. But this is true of the exceedingly common witticism which I have so often heard and read, which is uttered by all sorts of people, but constantly given out as current coin which no one examines more closely, as one only does with rare, unknown, or foreign coins, since this is sufficiently well known as legal tender, which once a witty man uttered, and clever people seize upon and repeat: that if Christ were now to come again to the world, He would again be crucified... unless in that age the death-penalty had been abolished. And this a man says as carelessly as he would say 'Good day', only he utters it very impressively; and one finds it well said and strikingly apt — and it does not occur, not in the remotest way, to him who says it to ask himself if he is a Christian; and it does not occur to him who hears it to take notice of the blinding illusion of Christendom. Truly, to me this is incomprehensible. It has almost become a by-word in Christendom that if Christ were to come

again He would encounter the same fate as before when He came to non-Christians — and yet Christendom is taken to be the triumphant Church, which, if things reached that point, is assumed to be ready to add to its triumphs the new one of crucifying Christ. Well, it's true enough, the 'triumphant Church' has outwardly triumphed over the world, that is to say, it can boast of a worldly triumph over the world (for only inwardly is a godly triumph over the world possible) — so, like all conquerors, it has only one triumph left, that of triumphing over oneself, of becoming a Christian. The concept of Christendom, so long as one does not take notice and scrutinize it, is of all illusions the most dangerous. In Christendom, in fact, Christianity is still militant. Just as little as one who has purchased and had elegantly bound the books he needs to use for his examination can truly be said to have taken his examination, just so little is Christendom in a Christian sense the triumphant Church. In Christendom there are perhaps not a few genuine Christians, but every such Christian is also militant.

'But is it really the intention of Christianity to extol the suffering of derision, however good the cause may be? It is quite another thing to have comfort in readiness for him who was unfortunate enough to come to grief in this way.' Yes, certainly, it is another thing; but this other is not the Christian alternative. There is no excuse for mistaking how this is to be understood. The words in Matthew read: 'Blessed are ye when all men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' The corresponding passage in Luke (v. 26) reads: 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! For in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets.' Woe unto you when all men speak well of you! Here the word 'falsely' is not added; presumably it was not needed, it is assumed that when all men speak well of one it is a lie, and that one's life is a lie. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!

For this is what Christianity means (and if this is not its meaning, there is no meaning in Christianity), that a man should live his life in such a decisive way, should so definitely and openly maintain what he wills, what he believes and hopes, that it is impossible all might speak well of him. It may be difficult enough to attain this aim, this dreadful aim of having all speak well of one; but, if one is to succeed, it can only be by a shrewd and cowardly effeminacy which Christianity abhors and condemns. If a man is to succeed, he must be like a reed before the wind, for even the least bush can put up at least a little bit of resistance; he must be without any deeper conviction, hollow within, so that, if one would liken time to the wind, he easily can be wafted by every breath of air, and, if one would liken time to a stream, he can as easily float upon the surface; he must be silent when he should speak, speak when he should be silent, say yes when he should say no, and no when he should say yes, answer evasively when he should answer decisively, answer decisively even though it were unto blood, sleep when he should be vigilant, yea, do his part to make others sleep, flee every danger in which forsaken truth can find a stay, and take part in every popular folly; he must entirely forget God and the seriousness of eternity and everything that is high and holy: thus perhaps he may succeed — woe unto him! This, as one sees in Christ's saying, is not only the most paltry inheritance of renown a man can leave behind him, that all men spoke well of him, but it is judgement: woe unto him that he succeeded! It must have been either a base inhuman man, or it must have been a false prophet.

It is blessed nevertheless... to suffer derision in a good cause: woe unto you when all men speak well of you. There is no excuse for mistaking how this saying is to be understood. It is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause, and this is Christianity.

Is this difficult to understand? By no means. Is it difficult to say? By no means — least of all when it is left quite indefinite to whom this is spoken.

But is it possible for a discourse to produce a definite effect? No, the effect a discourse is to produce depends upon who the hearer is. The difficulty with Christianity emerges whenever it is to be made present and actual, whenever it is uttered as it is, and uttered now, at this instant, and to them, precisely to them who are now living. Hence it is that people are so eager to keep Christianity at some little distance. Either they will not express it exactly as it is (that is one way of keeping it at a distance), or they will let it remain indefinite whether it is addressed quite to those who now are living. So the orator fights the air and says, 'Thus it was, as bad as all that, eighteen hundred years ago, and seventeen hundred years ago, and a thousand years ago, and three hundred years ago, and a hundred years ago, and fifty years ago, and thirty-three years ago; but it is not so now.' Strange! And when one looks hard at the asseverating orator, to see if he is quite confident of what he says, he becomes a bit disquieted at this glance which comes so unexpectedly, and with a gesture of irresolution he forsakes for an instant his manuscript and adds extemporaneously: 'Well — I would not say that this world has become perfect, but yet it is not quite like that now, especially in the most recent times.' Strange! For so much is certain, that when one goes backward in time a certain distance, it was formerly just as it is now: seventeen hundred years ago they said, 'So it was a hundred years ago; but it is not so now — well, at all events it is not quite so now, especially in the most recent times'; and three hundred years ago they said, 'So it was fifteen hundred years ago, and a thousand years ago, and three hundred years ago; but it is not so now — well, well, at all events, not in the most recent times.' There must be something lurking at the bottom of this expression, 'the most recent times.' Yes, undoubtedly. One comes as close as possible without actually speaking to the living — and in fact the living generation represents 'the most recent times'. If the address was made to a gathering of young people, one would doubtless say, 'the very most recent

times', for then the old folks and elders would not be present, so one might well chastise them — but always preferably the dead, one chastises them at a convenient distance, unmindful of the fine rule of speaking only good of the dead.

So it stands then with respect to Christianity's teaching that it is blessed to suffer derision. If this is to be uttered at an instant of actuality, the discourse must be addressed to an assembly of persons who are honoured and esteemed in the instant. If to such an assembly the discourse is addressed, the blessed comfort and joy of Christianity will sound like the profoundest mockery. This is not due to the discourse. But it would surely be difficult for a poet to invent a profounder mockery than this: Christianity's teaching on blessedness delivered before an assembly of... Christians who live their lives in categories entirely foreign to Christianity, and who therefore, in spite of the fact that they call themselves Christians, would prefer to decline with thanks this kind of comfort, and presumably would think it enough to drive one mad that this should be accounted a comfort which more than all else they shudder at. Imagine an assembly of worldly-minded, timorous people, whose highest law in everything was a servile regard for what others, what 'one', would think and judge, whose only concern was the unchristian concern that 'one' might everywhere 'speak well of them', whose loftiest aim was to be just like the others, whose only enthusiasm and only fear-inspiring idea was the majority, the crowd, its applause... its disapprobation — imagine such an assembly of the adorers and worshippers of the fear of man, hence an assembly of the honoured and esteemed (for how could such people not honour and esteem one another? To honour the other is in fact to flatter oneself) — and imagine that this assembly (yes, it's like a comedy), that this assembly is to be regarded as Christian. Before this assembly the sermon is preached on the words, 'It is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause!'

But it is blessed to suffer derision in a good cause!

VII. HE WAS BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD

I Tim. iii. 16. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

MY hearer, without doubt thou dost know this passage in the Bible, hast known it from thy earliest childhood, knowest it by heart, thou hast often and often heard it recited, perhaps recited it thyself; when any one alludes to the beginning of this passage, thou art able from memory to supply the rest; if one were to begin with any single clause, thou dost at once recall the others. Thus for memory the passage has become a rounded whole, so that almost involuntarily one pieces together what properly belongs together. Thou canst begin backwards or forwards or in the middle, but wherever the beginning is made, thy memory will be able to collect all the parts and recite the passage as a whole.

However — but perhaps this has escaped thine *attention*, for it is not a matter of *memory* — there is a very notable difference between the several statements. Or rather there is one among them — in case thou dost cast an eye upon it, or it, as it were, casts an eye upon thee — one statement which alters everything, which in a curious way takes possession of thee, so that it does not occur to thy memory to want to add the rest, because this clause acquires over thee such dominance that it seems, for the moment at least, as though the rest were forgotten. For observe: 'God was manifested in the flesh,' this has no reference to thee, it refers to Him; 'He was justified in the spirit,' this has no reference to thee, it was He that was justified in the spirit, neither was it thou that wast 'seen of angels', it was He, and it was He that was 'preached among the nations', and He that was 'received up in glory'.

But this: ‘He was believed on in the world!’ — this surely has reference to thee. Be careful at this point, give due heed — then it will be seen that it refers to thee alone, or is as if it referred to thee alone in the whole world.

It is of this we would speak:

HE WAS BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD.

So then, it looks as if the Apostle were saying something merely historical about Christ; and indeed he is saying something historical. But in the midst of this history he has introduced a little word which refers to thee. ‘He was believed on in the world’ — that is to say, Hast thou believed on Him? There is perhaps no way of asking a question which is so forcible, so impressive, as just this. If one would put to a man a question of conscience, but would do it precisely in such a way that it really becomes a question of conscience, in such a way therefore that there is not anything which obliges him to say yes or no in reply to the questioner (for by this the relationship to conscience is already somewhat disturbed), but in such a way that he is obliged to answer the question to himself, with the consequence that this question establishes itself in his inward man and suffers him no repose until before God he has answered it to himself — to accomplish this end one should do as follows. One recounts to him a history. This puts him entirely at his ease; for he understands very well that, since it is a history, it is not talking about him. In this history there is introduced a word which perhaps does not at first produce its effect, but some time later it transforms itself suddenly into the question of conscience. Thereby the thing becomes all the more heartfelt. Paul does not come to thee and ask thee pointedly whether thou hast believed, demanding to hear thy ‘yes’ or ‘no’; but he says, ‘He was believed on in the world’ — and now it is left to thee, to thy conscience, to make answer to thyself. This one may call asking of one ‘upon his conscience’; and of him upon whom it has such an effect one may say that he understands he is interrogated. Strangely enough, in the course

of centuries there have been written innumerable interpretations of this passage, raising difficulties and removing difficulties, subjecting every phrase to a detailed and copious commentary — the only clause, so far as I know, which has not been made the subject of learned exposition (and that of course because one found it so easy to understand that every child can understand it) is just this: 'He was believed on in the world.' This indeed is very easy to understand; but take heed, this clause is the question addressed to 'thee'!

For, true enough, thou art living in the world. So when it is said, 'He was believed on in the world,' this brings as near as possible to thee the opportunity to question thyself, Have I then believed on Him? But who is it that asks? No one, nobody at all! But thou art well aware that the most dreadful, the most serious question is that of which it can be said that there is nobody who puts the question, and yet it is a question — and a question to thee *personally.* For when such is the case, it is conscience which questions. Also, thou hast surely heard speak of that crafty one who thought it impossible for 'anybody' to outwit him with a question which he could not answer in such a way that the questioner would become the dupe; thou hast heard that the only thing he feared (convinced that he would be worsted) was that 'nobody' might put a question to him. Thou thyself hast surely been sensible of the solemnity when one is entirely alone in the stillness of the night, when everything is asleep; that is to say, when there is 'nobody'; as soon as there is 'somebody' the solemnity is less. Where there is 'nobody' who questions thee, and where nevertheless there is a personal question, *there* an invisible questioner is present, there thou hast in the deepest sense thyself to deal with, and this is the conscience-relationship. Hence this question has such a frightful power; for when somebody questions thee, thou canst manage to deceive him if it does not please thee to answer, or thou canst be wroth with him and ask him angrily who he is

that he ventures to question thee, and what right he has to do it. But here — here there is... nobody!

He was believed on in the world. Yes, that is quite certain; thou knowest how many thousands have believed on Him, have lived in this faith, and died in this faith. And yet, no, this is not so. In case thou thyself dost not believe, thou canst not know whether any single soul has believed on Him; and in case thou thyself dost believe, thou knowest that He is believed on in the world, that there is one who has believed on Him. The one man cannot peer into the other man's heart where faith has its dwelling, or rather where one might descry whether faith is there or no; only the individual knows within himself before God and in his own case whether he believes in God or no. Every one else must be content with *protestations.* So then, thou canst not know that so and so many thousands have believed, thou knowest only (for what thou *canst not know* thou surely wilt not claim to know or make pretence of knowing) that so and so many have asserted that they believed, that so and so many have died for this faith — but what am I saying! this thou knowest not, thou knowest only that they were put to death for this faith (by men who... could not know, however, that they had this faith), and that they asserted they died for this faith. More thou dost not know. This is not due to the special limitations of thy knowledge, but to the limitation of all human knowledge, to the fact that it is not the omniscience of the Searcher of Hearts. This is not due to the fact that thou art intimately acquainted with so few men; on the contrary, the more men thou dost think of, so much the less could there of course be any question of piercing into their inward hearts, and all the more necessary it is to rest content with assertions. But even if thou wert to single out an individual as the object of thy special attention — whether he is a believer thou canst not know, thou canst know only that he asserts it. In case thou thyself hast never been in love, thou dost not know whether any one has ever been loved in the world,

thou knowest how many have asserted that they loved, asserted that they have sacrificed their lives for love. But whether they really have loved, thou canst not know; and if thou thyself hast loved, thou knowest that thou hast loved. The blind man cannot know the difference of colours, he must be content that others have assured him that it exists and that it is so and so.

Say not that this is stretching thought too taut, that it is too high strung. Oh, far from it, this is simply seriousness. For what is more serious than the question whether ‘thou’ hast believed or no? Note that for this cause it is essential to faith that it ward off all curiosity in order to concentrate the whole mind upon seriousness, it is essential to faith that it defend itself above all from this error, that a man can somehow have faith at second hand. And hence it is serviceable for thee to understand that thou really canst not know whether another man has believed, it is serviceable for thee in order that all the power of thy mind and attention (which in distraction might be squandered in busyness and curiousness about another man’s faith) may be concentrated in the service of seriousness, so that thou, instead of running lightmindedly with the pack... and losing faith, mayest come to feel the whole weight of the fact that it is thou who art in question, that thou art referred to thyself alone, having nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with others, but all the more, or rather alone, to do with thyself, that really, so far as faith is concerned, thou canst know nothing about others. For it is a *historical* question how many have believed, that is the question history asks; but surely faith is not history. On the other hand, the question of faith is addressed to ‘thee’: Hast ‘thou’ believed? This question has to do with faith, the other with history. Faith is related to personality; but, personally understood, if ‘I’ have believed, it is a matter of indifference how many and how many have believed; and if T’ have not believed, it is a matter of indifference how many and how many have or have not believed.

It is a historical question how many have believed. ‘And if so many and so many, such an innumerable number, have believed, there is no need of making much ado as to whether I have faith or no; I must surely have it after all, since so many have it. No, if faith were something one were alone with — well, then it would be rather different.’ But that is just it, thou art alone with faith, — in case thou hast it; in case thou art not alone with it, thou hast it not. Is this insane vanity, is it a proud madness which can only lead to the loss of one’s reason? No, it is seriousness, it is the only thing which, if thou hast not faith, can lead thee to it. Is it also perhaps crazy vanity, is it also a proud madness, that thou, when death bereaves thee of thy beloved, wilt not understand, wilt not endure to hear, wilt only be disgusted as at an abomination, when they talk about this terrestrial globe being inhabited by several thousand millions of men, who die at the rate of many thousands every day, and every day there are presumably among the dead many lovers? I should rather think that it was madness, a proof of such a weakening of the mind that there could be no question of seriousness, if any one were to patter year in and year out this Biblical test, ‘He was believed on in the world, He was believed on in the world,’ without chancing to ask, Have ‘I’ believed on Him?

He was believed on in the world. So then he who understood Paul must understand that here there is a question. But now in case he who understood it were to answer, ‘Yes, it is quite certain that He was believed on in the world, with every passing century one can say it with more and more reason; the believers become continually more and more numerous, Christianity has extended everywhere, especially since the discovery of America’ — in this case would not Paul feel, alas, as one does when talking to a lunatic? For it is lunacy indeed for that chatty man to talk continually about himself and his bit of a journey; but it is also lunacy when one is asked about faith and then talks about the whole world — except himself.

But he who understood the question and answered, ‘I have believed on Him,’ understood himself. And if he answered, ‘I have not believed on him,’ he too understood himself. Instead of the historical, ‘He was believed on in the world,’ we have the personal when the individual says, I have believed on Him.

‘I have believed much in the world which trustworthy men related to me about things which I myself have neither heard nor seen, I have believed the testimony of history; in such manifold ways I have in daily life believed others. Among the things I have thus believed there is much that is unimportant and is forgotten the next day, much that has engaged my attention for a considerable time, much that I have transformed into my soul’s possession and accepted as my necessary task — but yet, supposing that the whole sum of this were untrue, it is a loss I could put up with. But I have believed on Him — if in this too I am deceived, I am of all men most miserable, but then my life is nullified in its deepest root, so that nothing can either help or hurt me any more. For I have not held time at arm’s length year after year, waiting for new and ever new security in order to dare to believe; no, by an eternal decision I have secured my life by believing on Him — if He is a delusion, my life is lost. But this is not so, for I *believe.* I have already encountered, therefore, and sustained the temptation involved in staking all upon uncertainty, which is what faith is. But faith has conquered, I believe on Him. Will any one say to me, ‘But *if!*’, that is something I no longer understand. I understood it once at the instant of decision, now I understand it no more. Will any one be anxious and fearful on my account, that because of an ‘if’ or in spite of an ‘if’ I risked my life so far out — let him not bewail me but rather himself. I do not live by any ‘if’, I am stoutly against an ‘if’, in dread of this ‘if’. I ventured out so far (that is what venturing properly means), now I believe. But that word

‘if’, which must be understood in the first instance when one is grasping faith, is in turn the word and the thing which faith understands least of all.’

So might the individual speak. And I allow him to speak on, so that he may interpret this clause in that Scriptural passage which otherwise is never interpreted. It is evidently no particular individual who is speaking here, neither thou nor I, so it is a *poetical* experiment. Only this would the discourse effect, it would make manifest how one talks as an individual.

‘I have admired whatever of the noble and great and glorious has been produced among men. I do not mean that I am acquainted with it as a whole, but I know that in relation to what I am acquainted with my soul is not unacquainted with the pleasure of admiration, its blissful joy, a joy at once depressing and exalting, so I know what it is to admire. Perhaps it is only a little of the great I have been acquainted with, but that is of no consequence here; yea, if it were so, it would in this connexion (where it is not a question of the much one has admired, but of how much one has admired what one has admired) it would count rather for than against, if it were so that with entire devotion, gladly and enthusiastically, I have admired the little I was acquainted with. To take an example which, humanly speaking, stands absolutely alone, and which people are wont to bring into the closest connexion with Christianity, I have admired that noble, simple wise man of ancient times, my heart too has beat violently as did that of the young man when he conversed with him; the thought of him has been the enthusiasm of my youth and filled my soul to overflowing; I have longed for conversation with him as I never longed to talk with any man with whom I ever have talked; in the society of those who have comprehended everything and know how to talk about every possible subject I have many, many times sighed for his ignorance and to hear him who always said the same— ‘about the same things.’ I have admired his wisdom, that he in wisdom remained simple! That he in wisdom remained

simple so that he could catch the shrewd! That he in wisdom remained simple so that without having many thoughts or employing many words he could sacrifice his life in the service of the truth — oh, touching simplicity! That he with death before his eyes talked about himself, already condemned to die, just as simply as ever he talked in the market-place with a passer-by on the most commonplace topic; that he with the goblet of poison in his hand preserved the fine tone of festivity and talked as simply as ever he did at the banquet — oh, sublime simplicity! — But I have never believed on him, that never occurred to me. I count it also neither wise nor profound to institute a comparison between him, the simple wise man, and Him on whom I believe — that I count blasphemy. As soon as I reflect upon the matter of my salvation, then is he, the simple wise man, a person highly indifferent to me, an insignificance, a naught. I could not in any way, could not possibly get it into my head, or into my heart, or in any way across my lips, to make answer to the... blasphemous question, to which of these two I owe most: the simple wise man, or Him on whom I believe. But on the other hand I truly can make answer to the question, to whom I owe most — I surely should know to whom I owe most, most of all, most beyond all comparison. Him, namely, on whom I have believed, Him who staked His life for me also, staked His life, not as one man can do that for another to preserve the other's life, no, to give me life. For without Him it is indifferent whether I live or die, it is an empty phrase to say that one has saved my life when this life he saved for me means after all to be dead. But He is the Life, life eternally understood I owe to Him, to Him on whom I believe.

'With the very feeling by which I am conscious by being myself I cling in filial devotion to the man to whom I owe life — but I crave to dispense from answering the question, to which of these I owe most, to him, my father, or to Him on whom I have believed. In case it were required of me,

that is to say, in case he were to require it of me, I would not hesitate to wound myself more feelingly than any man could wound me, to let the son's love go — for love of Him on whom I believe. I love my wife as mine own self; if it were possible that she could be unfaithful to me, I would in this respect sorrow for her who had lost all that she had, for I could only love one; when death bereaves me of her I will affirm, and at the moment of mine own death I will again affirm what I have always said, that she was my only love. But if He on whom I believe, if it were possible that He might require it of me, this love I let go — for love of Him on whom I believe. I bear patiently mine own loss, and bear her wrath and misunderstanding, because she cannot understand me, until she shall understand me in eternity — that He will see to on whom I believe. I love my children, I would do for them everything that lies in a man's power, I should not know how to thank sufficiently him who by word and deed might truly have aided me in benefiting them, I am ready to lay down my life for them. But if He on whom I believe, if it were possible that He could require it of me, I am ready to let this love go — for love of Him on whom I believe. I take upon myself the pain of suffering and the burden of responsibility, bear patiently every harsh judgement upon me, even that of the loved ones, until in eternity they shall understand me — that He will see too on whom I believe. — And so likewise there is much that I love, in various ways, in various degrees; but if He on whom I believe require it of me, I let all this go — for love of Him on whom I believe.

'And if any one were to say to me, "That, however, would be an appalling 'if'. How is it possible to bear with life under such an 'if', which must kill all joy of living, with such an 'if' hovering over thy head in the spider-web of possibility? And is it not, moreover, a kind of faithlessness, to live in all these relationships of life, in the most tender relation to other people — and then to have to think of such an 'if'!" Then I would reply,

Yes, certainly, this ‘if’ is appalling, fear-inspiring, this I have experienced at the moment of decision when I became a believer. In this terror consists the hazard of faith. But verily one can live under this ‘if’, and I do not feel it as a weight of anxiety but as a benediction upon me. For the fact that this ‘if’ has existed for me is a factor in my covenant with Him, and through it He blesses my relationship with whatever it is profitable for me to love. Without this ‘if’ it is impossible to be a believer, for the obedience of faith must go as far as this. But it does not follow that He requires this of me. And I believe that it is His will that the son shall love his father, the husband his wife, the father his children, and so on — I believe that this is His will, if there be not a difference of faith between them. So it is not faithlessness on my part that I recognize such an ‘if’ — it is faithlessness only towards them that do not know Him and will not know Him, faithlessness towards them that have not and will not have faith. Accordingly it is impossible that because of this ‘if’ (which is my soul’s fear and trembling, but also my love, my only love, for in it I love Him in whom I believe) I should feel myself a stranger in the circle of those I love, with whom I have in common the same faith. But it is true that I feel myself a stranger in Christendom, in so far as the whole of Christendom is supposed to consist of nothing but believers; I am more of a stranger than if I lived amongst the heathen. For a man cannot feel so strange for the fact that a people who have another faith, another God, are indifferent to his faith, as he does for the fact that — they who say they have the same faith are indifferent... to — the same. It is one thing for a man to be indifferent to what I am engaged in when he is engaged in a different pursuit, and it is another thing when two men are engaged in the same pursuit, and the one is so indifferent, and the other so hearty in his pursuit... while it is the same pursuit they are both engaged in! I feel myself a stranger in Christendom, for the fact that what engages me early and late, people in Christendom

think nobody can be so engaged in unless it is his livelihood, but that otherwise it would be queer and eccentric for any one to be so engaged in it. I draw from this no conclusion as to how many of all who live in Christendom are really Christians; with regard to other people's faith I know absolutely nothing. But this I know, 'He was believed on in the world,' and this I know quite simply for the fact that I have believed and do believe on Him.'

My hearer, this after all is a 'confession of faith', or at least the confession of one's faith. If a man is to be a Christian, it is doubtless requisite for him to believe something definite; but it is just as certainly requisite for him to be *quite definite* that 'he' believes. In the same degree that thou dost direct attention exclusively to the definite things a man must believe, in that same degree dost thou get away from faith. God does not let a particular species of fish inhabit a sea lacking the plant which is its nutriment. So one may argue in two ways: this plant grows here, *ergo* the fish is also to be found here; or, more securely, this fish is found here, *ergo* this plant grows here. But verily, as little as God lets a species of fish remain in a particular sea unless the plant also grows there which is its nutriment, just so little shall God leave in ignorance of what he must believe the man who was truly concerned. That is to say, the need brings with it the nutriment, the thing sought is in the seeking which seeks it; faith, in the concern at not having faith; love, in the concern at not loving. The need brings with it the nutriment, not *by itself,* as though it produced the nutriment, but by virtue of God's ordinance which joins together the need and nutriment, so that when one says that this is so, he must add, 'as certainly as God exists'; for if God did not exist, it would not be so. Be not deceived by appearance. The every-day speech between man and man contains many a delusion. So, for example, when one says, 'I had fully decided to venture this or that for one cause or another, but then there was

one person and another who got me away from my resolution' — this sounds plausible. But one who knows the human heart sees very clearly the situation: the man has not in the deepest sense been resolved; for then he would not have applied to this person and that, but would have acted. He who is not made silent by being in love, is not in love, and so it is with true resolution. So likewise one who lives in Christendom says he is so eager to believe if only he could get it definitely established what he is to believe. That seems very plausible, and yet there is deceit in it; he is unwilling to venture out into the dangers and decisions where faith comes into existence, he would not be alone, alone in the danger of spiritual death, hence he talks of this in a different way. For in fact He who is the object of faith is considerably nearer to a man than the distance of eighteen hundred years suggests, mediated by the traditions which are like the precarious connexions of the diver, or, if there were the least doubt, through the obstacles and possible misunderstandings of eighteen hundred years. The nearest way is that of mortal danger; the most comfortable way (which, however, does not lead to faith) is being busy about the difficulty that one cannot get it historically established what one must believe. The most reliable intelligence is to be had in mortal danger, when one hears (what at bottom he knows) with a distinctness which only mortal danger supplies; for in mortal danger one becomes infinitely sharp of hearing, and what one must hear is infinitely near. Everybody living in Christendom has ordinarily (the Government sees to that) got more than enough information about Christianity; many have got much too much. What is lacking is surely something quite different, it is the inward transformation of the whole mind, whereby a man in danger of spiritual death comes to the point of believing at least something... of the much he knows. Everybody living in Christendom has absolutely enough information about Christianity to be able to invoke and supplicate, to be able to turn prayerfully to Christ. If he

does that with a sense of inward need, in honesty of heart, he will yet become a believer. If only it is quite definite before God that this man feels the need of believing, he will in due time get to know quite definitely what he is to believe. The opposite case is: without need of believing, inquiringly, ponderingly, meditatively, more and more pettily willing to waste year after year of his life, and finally his blessedness, in order to get it quite, quite definite, even to the dot over a letter, what one is to believe. This opposite case is hollow sham, which merely makes itself more and more important, or it is a scientifically learned nature in the wrong place, and hence a scientifically learned un-nature, or it is a cowardly, unmanly, and so far forth also an ungodly fearfulness.

PART IV

FROM THE JOURNAL

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN the third part and the fourth is as sharp as possible and as searching: the one is like a commemoration of the Cleansing of the Temple — and then the quiet and most heartfelt of all acts of worship: a communion on Fridays.

DISCOURSES AT THE COMMUNION ON FRIDAYS

CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES

by S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen

1848

PREFACE

Among these discourses (which lack the essential requisite for being, and so are not called, sermons) there are two, the second and third, which were delivered in the Church of our Lady. Though he were not told it, the expert himself would know from the form and treatment that these two are ‘delivered discourses’, written to be delivered, or written as they were delivered.

S. K.

February 1848.

PRAYER

FATHER IN HEAVEN, well we know that it is Thou that givest both to will and to do, that also longing when it leads us to renew the fellowship with our Saviour and Redeemer is from Thee. But when longing lays hold of us, oh, that we might lay hold of the longing; when it would carry us away, that we also might give ourselves up; when Thou art near to summon us, that we also might keep near to Thee in supplication; when Thou in the longing dost offer us the highest good, that we might buy the opportune moment, might hold it fast, sanctify it in a quiet hour with serious thoughts, with pious resolutions, so that it might become the strong but also well-tested longing which is required of them that would worthily partake of the Holy Communion! Father in heaven, longing is Thy gift; no one can bestow it upon himself, when it is not given no one can buy it though he were willing to sell all — but when Thou givest it, then one can sell all to buy it. So we pray for them that are assembled here, that with hearty longing they may today approach the Lord's Table, and that when they go hence they may go with increased longing for Him, our Saviour and Redeemer.

Luke xxii. 15. I HAVE HEARTILY LONGED TO EAT THIS PASSOVER WITH YOU BEFORE I SUFFER.

The sacred words now read, which are Christ's own words, though they are not a part of the institution of the Lord's Supper, yet in the narrative they stand in the closest connexion with it. Immediately after these words follow the words of institution. It was in the night in which He was betrayed, or rather He already was betrayed, Judas was already bought to sell him, the betrayer was now merely seeking the 'opportune moment' to betray Him to

the chief priests ‘without making an uproar’ (Luke xxii. 6). To do this, he chose the stillness of the night in which Christ, now for the last time, was assembled with His disciples. ‘And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, I have heartily longed to eat this passover with you before I suffer.’ — That this was the last time He did not learn after the event; He knew beforehand that it was the last time. Yet He was not disposed to initiate the Apostles completely into the knowledge that it was the last time, how near the danger is, that it is this very night, nor what the danger is, that it is the most ignominious death, nor how inevitable it is. He who alone bare the sin of the world, bears also here alone the terrible knowledge of what is to occur; He who strove alone in Gethsemane, alone because the disciples slept, is also alone here, although He sits at table with His only confidants. So what will come to pass that night, how it will come to pass, through whom it will come to pass, only one in that little circle knows, He who was betrayed — yes, and one more, the betrayer, who also was present. So Christ seats Himself at the table with the Apostles, and as He takes His seat He says, I have heartily longed for this supper.

Does it not seem to thee, my hearer, that in a deeper sense this belongs both inwardly and figuratively to the Lord’s Supper, and not merely as belonging historically to the sacred text which reports it? For surely hearty longing is essentially in place at the Holy Supper. Would it not stand in the most strident contradiction to the sacred account of how heartily the Institutor longed for this supper, would it not be the most terrible contradiction if it were possible that any one out of habit, or because it was use and wont, or perhaps impelled by circumstances quite accidental, in short, if any one were to come to the Holy Communion without a hearty longing? So then, the sacred words which have been read are, if I may say so, the introduction to the institution of the Lord’s Supper, and this again is

for every individual the true and godly introduction or entrance: to come with a hearty longing.

Let us then employ the prescribed moment before the Communion in speaking of

THE HEARTY LONGING FOR THE HOLY SUPPER OF THE LORD.

It is nothing new we would teach thee, least of all, in leading thee forth into the presence of faith, would we lead thee into difficult investigations; we would strive only to explain what was moving within thee when thou didst become aware of the longing to go to the altar, the hearty longing with which art come hither today.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou art sensible of its sighing, but no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So also it is with longing, longing for God and eternity, longing for our Saviour and Redeemer. To grasp it is not in thy power, and that thou shalt not do, yea, thou shalt not even attempt it — but thou shalt employ the longing. Would a merchant be serious if he did not employ the opportune moment? would a seaman be serious if he did not employ the favourable wind? — and how much more the man who does not employ the opportunity of longing when it is presented! Oh, people talk piously about not wasting God's gifts; but what more properly and in a deeper sense can be called God's gifts than every prompting of the Spirit, every upward tug of the soul, every sincere motion of the heart, every holy feeling, every godly longing, which after all, in a much deeper sense than food and clothing, are God's gifts, because it is not merely that God gives them, but that God gives Himself in these gifts. And yet how often do men waste these gifts of God! Ah, if thou couldst peer into men's hearts, and peer right deeply into thine own, thou wouldst certainly discover with dismay how God, who never leaves Himself without a witness, doth lavish His best gifts upon every man, and, on the other hand,

how man wastes these gifts, more or less, perhaps wastes them entirely. A dreadful responsibility, when one day, in eternity if not before, the memories arise in accusation against a man, memories of the many times and divers manners God spoke to him in his inward man, and spoke in vain. Memories, yea, for even if a man has long ago forgotten what he wasted, so that he does not remember it — God and eternity have not forgotten, it is recalled to him and becomes his remembrance in eternity. Such is the case with longing. A man can ignore his call, he can regard it as a momentary impulse, a whim, which vanishes the next moment without a trace, he can resist it, can prevent it from attaining within him a deeper hold, can let it die away like an unfruitful mood. But if thou dost receive it gratefully as a gift from God, it will become a blessing also unto thee. Never therefore let the holy longing depart in vain when it would visit thee. Even though it seems to thee that thou dost follow it in vain — do not believe that, it is not so, it is impossible that it might be so, it yet must become a blessing to thee.

So then longing awakened in thy soul. Even though it was inexplicable, inasmuch as it comes indeed from God who by it draws thee; even though it was inexplicable, inasmuch as it is from Him who 'lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Himself' (John xii. 32); even though it was inexplicable, inasmuch as it is the effect of the Spirit in thee — yet thou didst understand what was required of thee. For, verily, though God gives all, He also requires all, requires that a man shall do all in order rightly to employ what God gives. Ah, in the usual occupations of daily life how easy it is, spiritually understood, to slumber! In the habitual course of routine how difficult it is to find a place to break away! In this situation God helped thee by the longing which awakened in thy soul. Surely then thou didst promise thyself and God that now thou also wouldst thankfully employ it. Thou didst say to thyself, 'Since now the longing has wrenched me loose from that which so easily entangles a man in base enchantment, I will also

for my part come to its assistance with serious thoughts, in order to wrench myself completely loose from that which still holds me back, and with holy resolutions I will hold fast to what the serious thoughts help me to understand; for resolutions serve to hold a man fast to what he has understood.

‘How vain after all is the earthly and the temporal! And even if my life hitherto has been so fortunate, so completely care-free, so completely without knowledge through experience of the dreadful or even of the sad, yet I will summon serious thoughts, in alliance with the longing for eternity, and with the Holy Communion before my eyes, to which none may come without due preparation, I will not be afraid of being serious. For after all Christianity is not a melancholy thing, on the contrary it is so glad a thing that it is glad tidings to all melancholy men; only the frivolous and the defiant can it make gloomy. — Behold, everything, everything I see, so long as it exists, is subject to vanity and change, and in the end it is a prey to corruption. Therefore, like that pious man, when the moon rises in its splendour, I will say to the star, I care not for thee, thou now art darkened; and when the sun rises in all its grandeur, I will say to the moon, I care not for thee, thou now art darkened; and when the sun goes down, I will say, I knew it full well, for all is vanity. And when I behold the bustle of the running water, I will say, Only keep on running, thou wilt never fill the sea; and to the wind I will say, yea, even if it were to tear up the trees by the roots, I will say to it, Blow on, in thee, however, there is neither meaning nor thought, thou symbol of inconstancy. And though the beauty of the field which captivates the eye by its enchantment, and though the melody of the birds’ song which falls blissfully upon the ear, and though the peace of the forest which invitingly refreshes the heart, were to employ all their eloquence, I will not let myself be prevailed upon, will not let myself be infatuated, I will remind myself that it is all illusion. And though the stars

for thousands of years have sat so securely without altering their position in the heavens, yet will I not let myself be deceived by this stability, I will remind myself that one day they are to fall. — Thus I will remind myself how uncertain everything is; that at birth a man is cast out into the world and from that moment lies with a depth beneath him of a thousand fathoms, and the future before him every instant, yea, every instant, is as the darkest night. I will remember that never has any one been so fortunate that he might not become unfortunate, nor ever any one so unfortunate that he might not become more unfortunate! That even were I to succeed in having all my wishes fulfilled, so that they resulted in one lofty structure — yet no one, no one will be able to vouch to me for it that the whole structure will not come toppling down about my ears. And if I were to succeed (in case this can be called success) in saving a wretched remnant of my former good fortune from this destruction, and if I admonished my soul to rest content with this — that yet no one, no one will be able to vouch to me for it that also this remainder will not be taken from me the next instant! And if there were one misfortune or another, one horror or another, whether a short-lasting or a long-drawn-out torture, which I especially dreaded, and if I had already become an old man — that no one, no one will be able to vouch that it might not yet overtake me at the last instant! — So I will remember that, as the uncertainty of every instant is like the dark night, so too the explanation of every individual occurrence or event is like a conundrum which no man has guessed. That no one who would speak truth in an eternal sense can tell me which is which, whether it would really be more advantageous to me that all my wishes were fulfilled, or that they were all denied me. And though I were to save myself upon a plank from certain death, and though friends gladly helped me to the shore, marvelling at my salvation — that nevertheless the wise man will be able to stand by and say, 'Perhaps, perhaps it would have been better for thee to perish in the waves',

and that perhaps, perhaps he speaks exactly the truth! I will remind myself that the wisest man that ever lived, and the most shallow that ever lived, would get equally near to the truth when it is a question of vouching for the next instant, and when it is a question of explaining the least occurrence, get equally near to a perhaps, and that the more passionately a man raves against this perhaps, the nearer he comes only to losing his mind. For no mortal ever broke through, ever penetrated — yea, not even the prisoner confined within walls seven yards thick, bound hand and foot, and nailed to the floor, is so bound as every mortal is by these bonds constructed of nothing, by this perhaps. I will remind myself that even if I had in my soul one only wish, and were attached to it so desperately that I would be willing to throw away the blessedness of heaven to see this wish fulfilled — that yet no one can definitely tell me beforehand whether this wish, when it was fulfilled, might not seem to me empty and trivial. And what then would be the most miserable outcome? That the wish was not fulfilled, and I still retained the sorrow and pain conceived for the... good fortune I had missed? or that it was fulfilled, and I beheld it, embittered by the knowledge of how empty it was? — So I will reflect that death is the only certain thing, that death, mocking me and all the uncertainty of human life, which every instant is equally uncertain, is equally certain every instant; that death is not more certain for the old man than for the child born yesterday; that whether I abound in health or lie upon the sick-bed, death is every instant equally certain — a fact which only earthly dullness can contrive to ignore. I will recall that no covenant between man and man is entered into, not the tenderest, not the most heartfelt, without at the same time death entering into it, in the official capacity by virtue of which it has part in everything. — And I will remember that every man after all is solitary, solitary in the interminable world. True, in good days, when there is fair weather, when fortune smiles, it seems no doubt as if we were living in society with one

another; but I will remind myself that no one can know when tidings might reach me, tidings of misfortune, misery, horror, which along with the terror would also make me solitary, or reveal how solitary I am, as every man is — would make me solitary, forsaken by my nearest kin, misunderstood by my best friend, an object of dread from which all flee. I will remember the horrors which yet no scream of dread, no tears, no prayers warded off, which have separated the lover from his beloved, the friend from his friend, the parents from their children; and I will remember how a little misunderstanding, when it so lucklessly came between them, was sometimes enough to divide them horribly. I will remember that, *humanly* speaking, there is no one, absolutely no one to be relied on, not even God in heaven. For in case I were to hold fast to Him so that I became His friend, — oh, who has suffered more, who has been more tried in all sufferings than the pious man who was God's friend?'

So didst thou talk with thyself; and the more thou didst abandon thyself to these thoughts, so much the more did longing for the eternal triumph in thee, a longing for fellowship with God through thy Saviour, and thou didst say, 'Heartily I long for this Supper. Oh, there is after all but one friend, one faithful friend in heaven and on earth, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, and how many words a man employs, and how many times he will go to get another man to do him a favour, and if this other does him the favour with some little sacrifice to himself, he who has become acquainted with man and knows how seldom favours are shown to one who can make no return, oh, how tight does this man cling to such a benefactor! But He who also for me (for that He did the same for all others ought not to diminish my gratitude for what in fact He did for me), He who for me entered into death — should I not long for fellowship with Him? No friend ever was able to do more than to be faithful *unto* death, but it was precisely *in* death that He was faithful — His death was my salvation. And at the very most, no friend can

do more than *save* another's life, but He *gave* me life by His death; it was I that was dead, and His death gave me life.

'Yet, after all, the ruin of the nations and of every individual man is *sin*; how then can I think seriously about life without duly reflecting upon what Christianity teaches me, that the world lieth in the evil? And even though my life has gone on hitherto so quietly, so peacefully, so undisturbed by the attacks and persecutions of the evil world, and even though it seems to me that the few people I am acquainted with are good and loving and benevolent — then I will reflect that this may well be due to the fact that neither they nor I have been led forth into such decisive situations of mortal spiritual danger in which the magnitude of the event reveals on an enormous scale what there is of good or evil in a man. So it well may be, and hence it may be necessary for revelation to teach what man himself cannot know — how deep humanity has sunk.

'Then I will recall what I have heard about all the abominable acts men have committed against men, enemies against their enemies, ah, and friend against friend, I will think about all the violence and murder and bloodthirstiness and beastly cruelty, about all the innocent blood which yet was so cruelly shed and crieth unto heaven, about guile and craft and deceit and faithlessness, about all those innocent ones, whose blood indeed was not shed, though they were horribly tortured and put to death. Above all I will remind myself how it fared with the Holy One when He wandered here upon earth, what opposition He suffered from sinners, how His whole life was nothing but suffering of soul on account of belonging to the fallen race which He would save and which would not be saved, that the living man who is cruelly chained to a corpse can suffer no more torture than He suffered in soul at being incorporated as man in the race! I will reflect how He was mocked, and how every man who invented a new mockery was hailed with applause, how there no longer was the least consideration of His

innocence, not a thought even of His holiness, how the only extenuating word then uttered was the contemptuous pity of the saying, “Behold, what a man!” — Suppose I had lived as a contemporary of this dreadful scene, suppose I had been present among the “multitude” which mocked Him and spat upon Him! Suppose I had been present in this crowd — for I dare not presume that out of the whole race I might have been one of the Twelve — suppose I had been present! Well, but I cannot believe of myself that I might have been present *for the sake of* taking part in the scoffing. But suppose now that the people around me observed that I took no part — oh, already I see those fierce glances, I see the attack instantly turned against me, already I hear the cry, “He too is a Galilean, an adherent, put him to death, or let him take part in the mockery, in the people’s cause!” Gracious God! After all, how many are there in any generation who have the courage to stand up for a conviction when they are in danger or mockery, when it is a question of life and death, and when moreover the challenge of danger unexpectedly overwhelms one so dreadfully! And I who was not a believer, not an adherent, how should I have the strength to venture, or how should it be possible that I in the instant of danger might become a believer, the challenge of decision helping me just as marvellously, though not quite in the same way, as it helped the thief on the cross; and in case I was not sincerely changed, how might I get the courage to venture this for one who to me was a stranger? Gracious God! Why then I would have taken part in the mocking... to save my life; yes, that is true, it was to save my own life! Yes, I know well that the parson talks in a different way; when he talks he describes the terrible blindness of these contemporaries — but we who are present to hear him are not men like that. Perhaps the parson has not the heart to talk severely to us — yea, and if I were the parson, I would not talk differently, I would not dare to say to any man that he would act thus; there are things one man cannot say to another. Oh, but to myself I dare say it,

and unfortunately I must say it: with me it would have fared no better than with the multitude!'

Thus then didst thou talk with thyself. And the more thou didst abandon thyself to these thoughts, so much the more did the longing triumph in thee, longing for fellowship with Him the Holy One, and thou didst say to thyself, 'I heartily long for this Supper. I will away from this evil world where sin exercises dominion, and I will long for fellowship with Him! Away from it? That, however, is not so easy. Yet I can wish myself away from the vanity and corruption of the world, and even if the wish does not avail, the hearty longing for the eternal avails to carry me away; for in the longing itself the eternal *is,* just as God *is* in the sorrow which is sorrow *unto* God. But sin has a singular power of holding out, it has an outstanding debt to exact, a guilt it would have the sinner pay before he escapes. And sin knows how to stand up for its rights, verily it does not let itself be beguiled by vague words, even if men were to abolish entirely the word "sin" and put "weakness" in its place, even if in the strictest sense of the word it was only weakness of which a man was guilty. But for this reason I long the more heartily to renew my fellowship with Him who also has made satisfaction for my sin, made satisfaction for every least actual sin of mine, but also for that sin which perhaps lurks deepest in my soul without my being conscious of it, and which possibly might break out when I am led into terrible decisions. For were those Jews greater criminals than other men? Oh, no, but that they were contemporary with the Holy One made their crime infinitely more terrible.'

I heartily long for this Supper, for this Supper which is in remembrance of Him. But then when a man with hearty longing has partaken of the communion, is the longing quenched, shall the longing diminish as he goes away? If one dear to thee is dead, it will come to pass time after time that the longing to have him in remembrance will awaken in thee. So perhaps

thou dost go to his grave, and as he lies now sunk in the bosom of the earth, so does thy soul sink deep in remembrance of him. Thereby thy longing is satisfied, as it were. Life again exercises its power-over thee, and even if thou dost continue faithfully to remember the deceased and dost often long for him, yet this cannot mean that thou shouldst more and more be weaned from life and live in the grave with the dead one, so that longing would increase with every visit to the grave. Thou wilt surely admit that however much we might honour his faithfulness to the dead there is something morbid in such sorrow. No, thou dost understand that your paths are essentially divided, that it is to life thou dost belong, and to the demands life makes upon thee; thou dost understand that longing should not increase with the years so as to make thee more and more a companion of the grave. Oh, but longing for fellowship with thy Saviour and Redeemer, that precisely is the thing which should increase with every occasion of remembering Him. He is not dead but living, yea, thou shalt live thyself into and together with Him, He indeed is to be and to become thy life, so that thou dost not live thyself, no longer dost live thyself but Christ liveth in thee. And therefore as hearty longing belongs to a worthy remembrance of Him, so again it belongs to a hearty longing that it increases with remembrance, so that only he came worthily to the altar who went away with hearty longing, oh, went away with an even more hearty longing.

PRAYER

FATHER IN HEAVEN! As on other occasions the intercession of the congregation is that Thou wouldst comfort all them that are sick and sorrowful, so now at this hour its intercession is that to them that labour and are heavy laden Thou wouldst give rest for their souls. Oh, and yet this is hardly an intercession. Who might count himself so sound that he need only pray for others? Ah, no, every one prays on his own account that Thou wouldst give him rest for his soul. O God, to each one severally whom Thou beholdest labouring and heavy laden with the consciousness of sin, do Thou give rest for his soul.

Matt. xi. 28. COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT TRAVAIL AND ARE HEAVV LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

'*Come hither*, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden.*' A strange invitation. For commonly when men assemble for joy or for united labour they say, it is true, to the strong and the joyful, 'Come hither, take part with us, unite your strength with ours.' But of the afflicted person they say, 'No, we will not have him with us, he only spoils the joy and retards the work.' Oh, yes, the afflicted man understands this well enough without need of hearing it told to him; and so perhaps many an afflicted person goes off by himself alone, will not take part with others lest he spoil their joy or retard their labour. But then this invitation, however, to *all* them that labour and are heavy laden must apply to him, since it applies to all the afflicted; how could any afflicted person say in this instance, 'No, this invitation does not apply to me'?

‘*All they that labour and are heavy laden*’*,* all of them, none is excepted, not one. Ah, what manifold diversities are suggested by these words. They that *labour!* For not only that man labours who in the sweat of his brow labours for his daily bread, nor he only who in lowly station bears the burden and heat of the day; ah, he also labours who struggles with sad thoughts, he too labours who is concerned by the care of one or many, he too labours who contends with doubt, labouring in that sea as a swimmer is said to labour. They that are *heavy laden!* For not only is that man heavy laden who visibly bears the heavy burden, who is visibly situated in difficulties, but he too is heavy laden whose burden no one has seen, who perhaps even labours to hide it; and not only is he heavy laden before whom there lies a long life of trial saddened by recollection, but he too for whom, alas, there seems to be no future.

But how could this discourse ever reach an end if it were to enumerate all the diversities; and were it even to attempt to do so, the effort would perhaps guide astray instead of guiding aright, would distract attention to the diversities instead of concentrating the mind upon the one thing needful. For however many are the diversities, can it possibly be the meaning of the Gospel that there would be left over a little number of men or a great number who might be called fortunate as exempted from labour and care? Is it the meaning of the Gospel when it invites all them that labour and are heavy laden, that there are some, however, to whom this invitation does not apply because they are whole and have no need of a physician? So it is doubtless we do commonly talk. For if thou art watching a happy group of children, and to one child who is sick a kind man says, ‘Come unto me, child, and we will play together’, with that he does indeed imply that the child is sick, but at the same time he implies that the others are in sound health. Should then the Gospel talk in the same way, or should we talk so foolishly about the Gospel? For if this were so, then the Gospel does not

apply to all, then it does not preach the equality of all men, but on the contrary it makes a distinction, excluding the joyful, just as the human invitation excludes the afflicted. We see then that the Gospel must be understood differently, it invites all, the Gospel is unwilling to be a by-path, offering comfort and consolation to certain persons in affliction; no, it addresses itself to all, and it *requires* that every man shall know what it is to labour and be heavy laden. Accordingly, even if thou wast the most fortunate of men, so fortunate, alas, that thou art envied by many, the Gospel addresses itself no less certainly to thee, requiring thee to labour and be heavy laden. Or if, without being the most fortunate man, a man especially favoured, thou art living in happy contentment, with thy dearest wishes fulfilled, and without want, the Gospel addresses itself no less certainly to thee with the requirement of the invitation. Or, on the contrary, if thou wast sitting in earthly want and need, this does not indicate thee as the one to whom the Gospel speaks. Yea, if thou wert so wretched that thou wert become a proverb, yet this does not indicate thee as the one to whom the Gospel speaks.

So the invitation is unwilling to be taken in vain, and hence it contains a requirement, it requires that the invited guest shall in a deeper sense labour and be heavy laden. For there is a sorrow unto God; it has to do with nothing earthly and temporal, not with thy outward circumstances, not with thy future, it is unto God. He who bears this sorrow quietly and humbly in his heart, he it is that labours. And there is a heavy burden; no worldly power can lay it upon thy shoulders, but neither can any man, any more than thou thyself, take it off. It is guilt and the consciousness of guilt, or still heavier, it is sin and the consciousness of sin. He who bears this burden, alas, he is laden, and heavy laden, but yet precisely so laden as the Gospel requires. And there is an affliction, a deep, an eternal affliction; it has not to do with thy outward circumstances, with thy lot in life, either past or to

come, it has to do with thine actions, and, alas, it has to do precisely with those actions which a man would prefer to have forgotten, for it has to do with the actions whereby thou didst offend against God or against other men, whether they be hidden or manifest. This affliction is penitence. He who sighs penitently, yea, it is he that labours and is heavy laden. No one else labours so heavily, yet it is this precisely which the invitation of the Gospel requires.

But the invitation of the Gospel not only implies a demand, it also announces a promise: ‘I will give you rest for your souls.’ Rest! That is what the exhausted labourer and the weary wanderer desire; and the sailor tossed upon the sea seeks rest; and the old man tired out longs for rest; and the sick man who lies restlessly on the bed and finds no position of repose, he too craves rest; and the doubter who finds no secure footing on the sea of thought desires rest. Oh, but only the penitent thoroughly understands what it is to pray that he may have rest for his soul, that he may have rest in the only thought in which rest is to be found for a penitent, that there is forgiveness; rest in the only word that can reassure a penitent, that he is forgiven; rest on the only ground that can sustain a penitent, that satisfaction has been made.

But this is also what the Gospel promises, that he shall find rest for his soul. And it is in response to this invitation ye, my hearers, have come hither at this hour. And even if rest cannot be given in such a way that by this one time it is for ever decided, so that thou shouldst have no need of coming often to this holy place in search of rest — none the less is it peace for the soul. Thou art a wayfarer, and God’s house is the baiting-place along the road where thou seekest rest for thy soul. But even though thou wilt need again to seek this rest, yet it is certain that this is the same rest in which one day when thy last hour is come thou wilt for the last time seek rest for thy soul. For whether it be as a youth thou art come today or in

advanced years — oh, when the last time has arrived, and in the hour of death thou art lonesome and forsaken, thou wilt desire, as the very last thing in the world of which thou no longer art a part, thou wilt desire what today thou dost desire.

This was the promise of the invitation. But who then is the *inviter*? For it would be a terribly confusing thing if there were to be heard in the world the invitation, 'Come hither', but no indication was given whither one was to go. Therefore, if there were no inviter, or if forgetfulness and doubt had made away with the inviter, what then would it profit that the word of invitation continued to be heard, when it would be impossible to find the place? But thou, my hearer, dost know who the Inviter is, and thou hast followed the invitation in order to attach thyself more closely to Him. Behold, He spreads out His arms, [As this discourse was delivered in the Cathedral, S. K. had only to point to the famous statue by Torwaldsen which represents Christ spreading out His arms in welcome, corresponding with the inscription in bold letters on the base: COME UNTO ME.] saying, 'Come hither, come hither to ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden'; behold, He bares His breast, upon which all can lean in security, and all equally blessed, for it was only in our Saviour's earthly life that John lay closest to Him upon His breast. However it may be thou art come hither, in whatever sense it may be said of thee that thou art weary and heavy laden, whether thou hast offended in much or in little, whether the guilt be old and... I had almost said, forgotten; but no, it is not forgotten, I would say rather, old and oft repented of — or it is fresh, and no soothing effect of distance has assuaged it — oh, with Him thou shalt find rest for thy soul. I know not what it is in particular that afflicts thee, my hearer; nor perhaps should I comprehend thy sorrow or be able to talk of it understandingly. Oh, but it is not to a man thou comest; after having made confession in secret, thou comest to Him, the merciful Inviter, to Him who is acquainted with all

human sorrow, to Him who was tempted in all points, yet without sin. He too was acquainted with earthly need, He who was hungry in the wilderness, He who thirsted upon the cross; He too was acquainted with poverty, He who had not whereon to lay His head; His soul too was sorrowful unto death; yea, He has known all human sorrow more profoundly than any man, He who at the last was forsaken of God — when He bare all the sin of the world. And He indeed is not merely thy spiritual pastor, He is also thy Saviour; not only does He understand thy sorrow better than thou dost understand it thyself, ah, but he will take off from thee the burden and give thee peace for thy soul. It is hard — yes, that is true — it is hard not to be understood; but what would it help thee if there were one who could entirely understand thy sorrow, but could not take it from thee, could entirely understand thy strife, but could not give thee rest?

So then, there was an invitation: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden’; and the invitation implies a demand: that the guests invited shall labour and be heavy laden with the consciousness of sin. And there is a reliable Inviter, He who here still stands by His word and invites all. God grant that he who seeks may also find; that he who seeks the right thing may also find the one thing needful; that he who comes hither seeking in the right place may also find rest for his soul. For, true enough, it is a restful position to kneel at the foot of the altar, but God grant that this in fact may be but a weak intimation that the soul finds rest in God through the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins.

PRAYER

FATHER IN HEAVEN, Thy grace and mercy change not with the changing times, they grow not older with the course of years, as if, like a man, Thou wert more gracious one day than another, more gracious at first than at the last; Thy grace remains unchanged, as Thou art unchangeable, it is ever the same, eternally young, new every day — for every day Thou sayest, ‘yet today’. Oh, but when one gives heed to this word, is impressed by it, and with a serious, holy resolution says to himself, ‘yet today’ — then for him this means that this very day he desires to be changed, desires that this very day might become important to him above all other days, important because of renewed confirmation in the good he once chose, or perhaps even because of his first choosing of the good. It is an expression of Thy grace and mercy that every day Thou dost say, ‘yet today’, but it would be to forfeit Thy grace and mercy and the season of grace if a man were to say unchangeably from day to day, ‘yet today’; for it is Thou that bestowest the season of grace ‘yet today’, but it is man that must grasp the season of grace ‘yet today’. Thus it is we talk with Thee, O God; between us there is a difference of language, and yet we strive to make ourselves understood of Thee, and Thou dost not blush to be called our God. That word which when Thou, O God, dost utter it is the eternal expression of Thy unchangeable grace, that same word when a man repeats it with due understanding is the strongest expression of the deepest change and decision — yea, as if all were lost if this change and decision did not come to pass ‘yet today’. So do Thou grant to them that today are here assembled, to them that without external prompting, and hence the more inwardly, have resolved ‘yet today’ to seek reconciliation with Thee by the confession of their sins, to them do Thou grant that this day may be truly blessed to them, that they may hear

His voice whom Thou didst send to the world, the voice of the Good Shepherd, that He may know them, and that they may follow Him.

John x. 27. MY SHEEP SHALL HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME.

When the congregation assembles in the house of the Lord on a holy day, God Himself has ordained and commanded this. Today, however, is not a holy day, and yet a little group has assembled here in the sanctuary, not therefore because all are commanded to do so (since none is commanded), but because each single individual here present must severally have felt, though in different ways, a need to come here precisely today. For today is not a holiday, today every one else goes to his field, to his business, to his labour, and only this individual comes today to the house of the Lord. — So the individual departed from his house to come hither. On a holy day, when one who himself is going to church encounters a passer-by, he naturally assumes that the passer-by is also going to church; for on a holy day it is assumed — though not always rightly by any means — that the passer-by is a church-goer. But he who, impelled by an inward need, comes here today — who on meeting him as he went would chance to think that he was going to the house of God? Should therefore this visit to God's house be less solemn? To me it seems that this air of mystery must if possible make it even more inwardly solemn. Openly, before the eyes of all, and yet hidden, the individual came today to church — hidden, or by a hidden path. For no one knew his path except God, it occurred to no passer-by that thou wast on the way to God's house, which even thou dost not say, for thou sayest, 'I am going to the altar', as though this were a more inward and solemn thing than going to church. Thou didst not expect as on a holy day that the passers-by were going the same way or with the same thoughts, therefore thou didst walk hidden among the many, as a stranger. Thou didst not expect to see the

same resolution expressed upon the faces of the passers-by, and therefore thou didst keep thine eyes to thyself, without greeting ceremoniously thine acquaintances as on holy days. No, for thee the passer-by did not exist: with downcast eyes thou didst flee hither, as it were, by stealth. Thine aim was not simply to make supplication, to offer praise, to give thanks unto God, as on a holy day, when accordingly thou couldst not desire to be alone; thine aim is to seek the forgiveness of sins — so that thou must desire to be alone. How quiet now and how solemn! On a holy day everything outside is quiet too; the customary labour gives place to repose; even he who does not visit God's house observes that it is a holy day. Today, however, is no holiday. The business of life outside barely penetrates to this vaulted hall, making the sacred quiet even more marked. For the quiet which the civil authority can exact by worldly ordinance is not the same as godly quiet, but this quiet while the bustle of the world continues is precisely the godly quiet. — So then, it was not thy duty to come hither today, it was a need within thee; there was no external prompting to determine thee, so thou must thyself have resolved upon it inwardly; no one could reproach thee for not coming, it was thine own free will to come; thou didst not do it because others did it, for today the others went every one to his own field, to his business, to his labour — but thou didst come to the house of God, to the altar of the Lord.

And thereby thou hast given precise expression to the fact that thou dost reckon thyself among those who would belong to Christ, who are described in the words just read, taken from the Gospel where Christ likens Himself to the good shepherd, and the true believers to the sheep. Of these a triple affirmation is made: they hear His voice; He knows them; they follow Him.

They hear His voice. And today it is especially, it is solely and alone, His voice that shall be heard. Everything else performed here is merely for the sake of concentrating attention upon the fact that it is His voice we are to

hear. Today there is no preaching: a penitential address is not a sermon; it does not aim to instruct thee, nor to enforce upon thee the old and well-known doctrines, it would merely give thee pause on the way to the altar, in order that through the voice of the speaker thou mayest confess unto thyself before God in secret. Today there is no preaching. What we say here in the brief moment prescribed is not, as I have said, a sermon; and when we have said Amen, the divine service is not, as is usually the case, essentially finished, but at that point it essentially begins. Our discourse therefore would merely give thee pause for an instant on the way to the altar; for today divine worship is not focused as usual upon the pulpit but upon the altar. And at the altar what counts above everything else is to hear *His* voice. It is true that a sermon should also bear witness to Him, proclaiming His word and His teaching, but for all that a sermon is not *His* voice. At the altar, on the other hand, it is *His* voice thou shalt hear. Though another man were to say to thee what is said at the altar, if all men were to unite in saying it to thee — in case thou dost not hear *His* voice, thou hast come in vain to the altar. When by the Lord's minister at the altar every word is said precisely as it was handed down from the fathers; when thou hearest precisely every word so that there does not escape thee the least thing, not a tittle — in case thou dost not hear *His* voice, thou hast come in vain to the altar; though thou art seriously resolved to take it to heart and to order thy life accordingly — in case thou dost not hear *His* voice, thou hast come in vain to the altar. It must be *His* voice thou hearest when He says, 'Come hither, all ye that labour and are heavy laden', hence His voice that invites thee; and it must be His voice thou hearest when He says, 'This is my body.' For at the altar there is no talk about Him; *there* He Himself is personally present, it is He that speaks — if not, then thou art not at the altar. Physically understood, one can point to the altar and say, 'There it is';

but, spiritually understood, it is only really *there*, if *there* thou dost hear *His* voice.

He knows them. That is as much as to say, those who do not hear His voice He does not know; and those He does not know are none of His. For with Him it is not as with a man, who well may have a friend or an adherent without being aware of it and without knowing him; but he whom Christ does not know is none of His, for Christ is omniscient. — He knows them, and He knows them each severally. The sacrifice He made was not made in a general sort of way, nor would He save man in a general sort of way — indeed in such a way it cannot be done. No, He sacrificed Himself to save each severally. Should He not therefore know each severally? One surely should know the man for whom one lays down one's life! — When on feast days the congregation assembles in countless numbers, then too He knows them, and those whom He does not know are none of His. However, on such an occasion one may easily deceive oneself, as though the individual were hidden in the crowd. On the other hand, at the altar, however many are assembled there, yea, though all were assembled at the altar, there is no crowd. He Himself is personally present, and He knows them that are His. He knows thee, whoever thou art, whether known to many or as unknown to all, in case thou art His, He knows thee. Oh, the profound seriousness of eternity, to be known by Him! Oh, blessed comfort, to be known by Him. Yea, if thou wert to flee unto the uttermost parts of the earth, He knows thee; if thou wert to hide thyself in the abyss, He knows thee — but there is no cause to flee, no cause to seek a hiding-place, this very thing is blessedness, that He knows thee. Yet whether He knows thee, no third person can know, that thou must know for thyself alone, with Him — but if He knows thee not, thou art none of His.

Behold, the sun rises upon the earth every morning at the dawn of day, its beams everywhere penetrate to every point, no place is so remote that the

sun does not penetrate it with its rays; however, it makes no distinction in this knowledge it possesses of the earth, it shines equally everywhere and knows every place. But He, the eternal Sun of mankind, with His knowledge of mankind penetrates also like the beams of light everywhere, to every man; but He makes a distinction. For there are also those He does not know, those to whom He will say, ‘I know you not, I never knew you’, those to whom He will say this in spite of the fact that they affirm that they know Him! — If thou wert to go up to the altar of the Lord and take part in the sacred function, though thou couldst prove ever so certainly that thou hadst been to the altar, though the minister of the Lord were to bear witness on thy behalf that to thee in particular, as to each of the others, he had handed the bread and the wine — in case He knows thee not, thou didst go in vain to the altar. For physically one can point to the altar and say, ‘Behold, there it is’, but, spiritually understood, the altar is *there* only if thou art known by Him.

They follow Him. For thou dost not remain at the altar, and thou art not to remain there. Thou wilt return again to thy business, to thy labour, to the joy which perhaps awaits thee, ah, or to sorrow — all such things today thou hast for a moment laid aside — but in case thou art His, thou dost follow Him. And when thou dost follow Him, thou dost leave the altar indeed when thou goest away from it, but it is as though the altar were following thee, for where He is, there is the altar. Ah, solemn seriousness of eternity, that wherever thou goest, whatever thou dost undertake, He follows thee! Oh, marvellous combination, that the solemn seriousness of eternity is also the most blessed comfort! The altar doubtless stays in the same place, therefore thou goest to the altar; but only then is it the altar if *He is there* — so where He is, there is the altar. He Himself says, ‘When thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thine enemy hath aught against thee, go hence, first be reconciled to thine enemy, and then come

and offer thy gift' — ah, what sacrifice dost thou think is dearest to Him, the sacrifice thou offerest by being reconciled with thine enemy, that is, by sacrificing thy wrath to God — or the gift thou couldst offer upon the altar? But if the sacrifice of reconciliation is dearest to God and to Christ, the altar also is *there* where the acceptable sacrifice is offered. Abel sacrificed upon the altar, but Cain did not, for God had not respect unto the sacrifice of Cain — hence it was an altar, but unto Cain's sacrifice God had not respect. Oh, do not *forget* that where He is, there is the altar, that His altar is neither upon Mount Moria, nor upon Gerazim, nor at any visible *there*, but that it is there where He is. If this were not the case, thou mightest indeed remain at the altar, erect thy dwelling there, never budge from the spot; but such superstition is not Christianity. Today is not a holy day, divine service is held on a workday — oh, but in a Christian's life every day is worship! It is not as though therewith everything were settled by going on rare occasions to the altar; no, the appointed task is, on leaving the altar still to remain at the altar. Today, as we said, everything contributes to concentrate the attention of the mind upon the altar. But when thou dost leave it, remember that the cause is not completed; oh, no, it is just begun, the good cause, or, as the Scripture says, the good work, which God who began it will perfect unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today, if, as may God grant, it has for thee the right importance, thou mightest well call it the day of Jesus Christ; but after all there is only one day which properly is called the day of Jesus Christ. This 'today', on the other hand, will soon be past. God grant that when it is long past and forgotten, the blessing of this day, many, many times recalled, may still be a fresh memory to thee, so that the remembrance of the blessing may be a blessing within thee.

> Strive then, O day, which never more
> Mine eye shall here in time behold,
> Recede into the shade of night!
> Onward I strive to heaven's realm,

To see my God eternally,
On this it is my faith I build.

[I have not attempted to reproduce the rhymes of these verses, which conclude the fifth of the ‘Morning Sighs’ by the Danish poet Kingo.]

PRAYER

Remind me, Jesu, yet again
Of all Thine anguish and distress,
Remind me of Thy soul's deep pain.

AH, it is true, our Lord and Saviour, that not even in this respect dare we rely upon our own strength, as though we were able of ourselves to recall impressively enough and to retain steadily this remembrance of Thee, we who would so much rather dwell upon the joyful side than upon the sorrowful, we who all of us desire for ourselves good days and the peace and security of happy times, we who prefer to remain unaware in a profounder sense of the dreadful things, lest, as we foolishly think, they might make our happy life gloomy and serious, or indeed Thine unhappy life, as we are prone to regard it, all too gloomy and serious. Hence we pray Thee, since it is Thee we are now to remember, that Thou wouldst Thyself remind us of these things. Oh, it is a strange language a man talks when it is with Thee he has to talk; it is as though it had become unserviceable when it has to express our relationship to Thee or Thine to us. What is that for a remembrance when he who is to be remembered must himself remind the rememberer! Humanly, it is only the man highly exalted and mighty, with so many and such important things to think about, who says to the lowly man, 'You must yourself remind me to remember you.' Ah, and it is this very thing we say to Thee, Thou Saviour and Redeemer of the world! Ah, and this same thing when we say it to Thee is precisely the expression of our lowliness and nothingness in comparison with Thee who art with God exalted above all heavens! We pray that Thou Thyself wilt remind us of Thy suffering and death, wilt remind us again and again, in our labour, in our joy, and in our sorrow, of the night in which Thou wast betrayed. For this

we make supplication, and we give Thee thanks when Thou dost remind us, and now we thank Thee in behalf of them who are here assembled to approach Thine altar in order to renew their fellowship with Thee.

1 Cor. xi. 23.... THE LORD JESUS, IN THE NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS BETRAYED.

In the night in which He was betrayed. Let it then become night around about thee, for this is in keeping with the sacred function. You who are here assembled to participate in the Supper which was instituted that night in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ have surely prayed that He would bring vividly before your eyes His suffering and death. Oh, there are those perhaps who pray that it might be granted them to see what kings and princes desired in vain to see, one of the days of His glory — do not regret your choice, for verily he has chosen the better part who prays first and foremost that the dreadful scene might stand out vividly before his eyes. — In the night in which He was betrayed. Humanly speaking, what a retrogression this was for Him! For Him who at one time the people would have acclaimed king, for Him upon whom at a later time the high priests dared not lay hands because all the people clung to Him; for Him who by His mighty words had gathered countless hosts about Him; for Him before whose authority as teacher all had bowed, the Pharisees defiantly but under compulsion, the people gladly and expectantly — He now is cast out of the world, He sits in a retired room with the Twelve. But the lot has been cast, His fate has been determined by the counsel of the Father and of the high priests. When He rises from the table to go out into the night, He goes also to meet His death. Then begins the spectacle of horror for which everything was in readiness, then He must live through the past once more in horror's rendering of it, more dreadfully in a certain sense than at the first: He is to be acclaimed king, but in scorn; He is actually to wear the purple, but in

mockery; He is to gather the people about Him in even greater numbers; but the high priests would not any more be afraid to lay hands upon Him, rather would they be compelled to restrain the hands of the people, so that it might appear as if He were sentenced to death; so it was a judicial process, He was seized ‘as a thief’ and crucified ‘as a transgressor’! Thus was His life retrogression instead of advancement, the opposite of what the human mind naturally thinks and desires. For in worldly advancement a man climbs up rung by rung in honour and prestige and power, there are constantly more and more who espouse his cause, until he who was always in the majority, at last, admired by all, stands upon the topmost rung. But He climbed rung by rung downward, and still He climbed. Yet the truth must suffer thus... or be singled out in the world, as surely as He was the Truth. At the first moment the truth seems to please all; but the more explicit it gradually became, the clearer and more definite, the more decisive it was, the more the trappings of illusion fell off, so much the more did the many also fall off — at last He stands alone. But not even there did He remain standing; He now climbs from rung to rung, through all the grades of humiliation, until at the end He is crucified. At the end — yet the conclusion was not far off, for from the instant when the spectacle of horror began in the night in which He was betrayed the decisive moment is at hand with sudden promptness, as when in an instant a tempest darkens heaven and earth. This night is the turning point — and then what a change! Yet in a sense everything is the same. The place is the same, the same high priests, the same governor, the people are the same — yes, and He also is the same: when once they would acclaim Him king, he fled, and when they come armed to seize Him, He advances to meet them, saying, ‘Whom seek ye?’ No doubt He once with a kiss hailed Judas as an Apostle, nor does He refuse the kiss of Judas who, as He knows, would betray Him. Is He not the same?

Ah, my hearer, as a man sometimes has a day or a night he might wish out of his life, so the race might wish this night out of its history! For if it was dark at the midnight hour when He was born, the night in which He was betrayed was still darker! The race might well wish this night out of its history; for this is not an occurrence long past and done with; Christ's suffering we should not and dare not remember as we remember those glorious ones who suffered death innocently, of whom we say, 'That is now long past.' His innocent sacrifice is not passed though the cup of suffering has been drained, it is not a passed event even though it is passed, not an event passed and done with though it was eighteen hundred years ago, it has not become that even if it was eighteen hundred years ago. He did not die a natural death, neither was it by accident He came to His end, nor was it any individual that fell upon Him and slew Him, nor was it that generation which crucified Him; it was the human race, and to that we surely belong if in fact we are men, and so we are present at that scene if in fact we are men. Moreover, we dare not wash our hands — at least we cannot do it, except as Pilate did; we are not spectators and beholders of a past event, we are in fact accomplices in a contemporary event. Hence we do not imagine presumptuously that in a poetical way what is required of us is sympathy — it is indeed His blood that is required of us also who belong to the race. And even the follower who resembled Him most closely, who did not, as superstition requires, bear His wounds upon his body, but whose life was also retrogression instead of advancement, who also, in correspondence with the Christian order of rank, climbed from rung to rung, derided, mocked, persecuted, crucified — even such a follower, when he remembers that night and it is quite vivid in his thought, even he is present as an accomplice! And when the congregation, as often as these words are uttered, closes around Him, anxiously but heartily, as though to ward off the betrayal, as though to promise faithfulness to Him, even if all others were to

forsake Him — yet none dare forget that he was that night involved as an accomplice, none dare forget that lamentable pattern, which yet in other respects he hardly resembles, the Apostle Peter. Oh, we men, even if we are of the truth and are on ‘the truth’s’ side, if we were to follow shoulder to shoulder with the man who is ‘the Truth’, when *truth* is the standard of measurement — we are but children alongside of a giant, we still at the moment of decision are... accomplices.

In the night in which He was betrayed. What crime has more likeness to the night than a betrayal? And what crime is more unlike love than a betrayal? Most of all, alas, when it is accomplished with a kiss! Judas indeed is the traitor, but at bottom all are traitors, only not like him for money. Judas betrays Him to the high priests, and the high priests betray Him to the people, and the people betray Him to Pilate, and Pilate for fear of the Emperor betrays Him to death, and for fear of man those disciples do the same who flee in the night, and Peter who denies Him in the court. This was the last betrayal. Oh, when the last spark is extinguished, how dark it all is! Of the whole race there is not one, not a single man, who will have anything to do with Him — and He is the Truth! And, oh, if thou art inclined to think that thou wouldst never have done this, never have laid thy hand upon Him, never have taken part in the mockery — but as for betraying Him, that thou hast done: thou didst flee, or didst shrewdly remain at home, keeping thyself out of it, letting thy servant report to thee what happened. Oh, but to betray! Thou canst deal love no blow so painful. There is no pain, not even the most torturing bodily pain, at which love winces so feelingly as betrayal; for the greatest felicity of love is faithfulness.

Oh, that this occurred is for me enough to insure that I never can be joyful, lightheartedly in a worldly sense, as the natural man is, as the youth is in his inexperience, as the child is in his innocence. I need see no more, if

indeed anything more dreadful has occurred in the world, anything that can more appal the heart — there may be that which can more appal the senses. Nor is there need that anything dreadful should befall me — for me this is enough: I have seen ‘Love’ betrayed, and I have understood something about myself, that I also am a man, and that to be a man is to be a sinful man. Not for this have I become a hater of men, least of all a hater of other men; but I never forget this night, nor what I have understood about myself. He whom the race crucified was the Redeemer; just for this cause do I, as belonging to the race, feel the need of a redeemer — never was the need of a redeemer clearer than when the race crucified the Redeemer. From this moment I no longer trust myself, I will not let myself be deceived, as though I were better because I was not tried like those contemporaries. No, fearful of myself as I have become, I will seek refuge in Him the Crucified. To Him will I pray that He will deliver me from the evil, and deliver me from myself. Only as saved by Him and in His company, when He holds me fast, do I know that I shall not betray Him. The dread which would frighten me away from Him is precisely what shall bind me to Him. How should I not dare to hope this when that which would frighten me away is precisely what rivets me to Him? I will not do such a thing, and I cannot do it, for He moves me irresistibly, I will not shut myself up within myself with this dread of myself without having confidence in Him; I will not shut myself up within myself with this dread or with this consciousness of guilt in having also betrayed Him — rather as guilty I will belong to Him as my Saviour. Ah, when He wandered in Judea He moved many by His beneficent miracles; but nailed to the cross He did a still greater miracle. He did the miracle of love, that without *doing* anything but by suffering He moves every one who has a heart.

He was betrayed — but He was Love: *in the night in which He was betrayed* He instituted the supper of love! Always the same! For those that

crucified Him He prayed; and in the night in which He was betrayed He utilised the opportunity (oh, infinite depth of love which finds precisely this moment opportune!), He utilised the opportunity to institute the supper of reconciliation. Verily, He came not into the world to receive service without making requital. A woman anoints His head, and for requital she is remembered through all the centuries! Yea, He made requital for what people did against Him! They crucified Him — in requital, this death of His upon the cross is the sacrifice of propitiation for the sin of the world, also for this of crucifying Him! They betray Him — in requital He institutes the supper of reconciliation for all! If Peter had not denied Him, there would have been one man who had not quite in the same way as every other individual of the race a need of reconciliation. But now they all betrayed Him, and so they all needed to participate in the supper of reconciliation!

Behold, everything is now ready; blessed is he who for his part also is ready! Behold, He is waiting here at His holy table — so therefore do this in remembrance of Him, and in expectation of blessing to yourselves.

PRAYER

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, who didst first love us, who until the end didst love them whom Thou didst love from the beginning, who unto the end of days dost continue to love him who would belong to Thee; Thy faithfulness cannot deny itself — oh, only when a man denies thee can he compel Thee as it were to deny him also, Thou loving One. So be this our comfort when we must accuse ourselves of the offences we have committed and of the things we have left undone, of our weakness in temptation, of our slow progress in the good, in short, of our unfaithfulness to Thee, to whom once in early youth and ofttimes again we promised faithfulness — this be our comfort, that even if we are unfaithful, Thou dost remain faithful, Thou canst not deny Thyself.

2 TIM. II. 12, 13. IF WE SHALL DENY HIM, HE ALSO WILL DENY US; IF WE ARE FAITHLESS, HE REMAINS FAITHFUL, FOR HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF.

It might seem as if the sacred words just read contained a contradiction, and if such were the case it not only would seem but would be a strange thing to draw your attention to these words in particular. This, however, is by no means the case. The contradiction might be supposed to lie in the fact that in the one clause it is said that if we shall deny Him, He will also deny us, and in the other clause, that He cannot deny Himself. But might there be no difference between denying Him and being unfaithful to Him? On the one hand it is clear enough that one who denies Him is also unfaithful to Him, for no one can deny Him in the stricter sense unless he had belonged to Him; but from this it does not follow that every one who is unfaithful to

Him also denies Him. Hence there is no contradiction. The one is the stern word, the other is the gentle word; so here we have the Law and the Gospel; but both words are the truth. Neither is there any duplicity in the words, but it is one and the same word of truth which separates men, as the eternal truth separates them, both in time and in eternity, into the good and the evil. It is as when it is related in the sacred story, that only when the Pharisees had gone away did Christ begin to speak privately with His disciples — so it is that the first word relegates to a distance, points away, alas, to the left hand as it were, those who deny, whom He also shall deny; the latter word, the gentle word of comfort is spoken as to those on the right hand. For He who charged His disciples not to cast their pearls before swine — His love, though it would save all, is not a weakness which is whimperingly in want of those that might be saved, but it is compassion towards every one who wants to be saved.

But you who are assembled here to participate in the holy Supper have surely not denied Him, or at any rate you are assembled here to confess Him, or by the very fact of assembling here for this purpose you do confess Him. Though it may be profitable that the stern word be brought to remembrance, be heard along with the other, as it certainly belongs with it, though we ought not to separate what God hath joined together in Christ, add anything to it, or take anything from it, from gentleness take away severity which is in it, from the Gospel take away the Law which is in it, from salvation take away perdition which is in it; yet surely it is the latter word which is pre-eminently appropriate for us to dwell upon today. We allow the dreadful aspect to pass unnoticed, not as though it were irrelevant to us; oh, no, so long as he lives no man is saved in such a way that it would not be possible for him to be lost. As long as there is life there is hope — but as long as there is life there is also the possibility of danger, and so of fear; so long therefore shall there be fear and trembling. We let the dreadful

aspect pass unnoticed; but we hope to God we dare let it pass us by while we comfort ourselves with the gentle word of the Gospel.

He abideth faithful. So in thy relationship with Him thou hast one concern the less, or rather one blessedness more than it is possible any man could ever have in his relationship with another man. In the relationship between two, every individual, humanly speaking, has constantly a double concern: he has it for himself, that he may now remain faithful; ah, but at the same time he is concerned lest the other may not remain faithful. But He, Jesus Christ, remains faithful. Hence in this relationship the peace and blessedness of eternity is complete, thou hast only one concern, the concern for thyself, that thou mayest remain faithful — for He remains eternally faithful. Oh, surely there is no love completely fortunate except the love a man has for God, and no faithfulness completely blessed except the faithfulness with which a man attaches himself to Christ. Everything, absolutely everything God does is profitable to thee; thou hast no need to fear that anything might have escaped Him which might have been to thy profit, for only He knows what is profitable to thee; thou hast no need to fear lest thou mightest not be able to make thyself understood by Him, for He knows thee completely, far better than thou knowest thyself; thou hast only (oh, infinite felicity of love!), thou hast only to rejoice in His love — to be silent and give thanks! To be silent and give thanks; yes, for when thou art silent thou dost understand Him, and most of all when thou art completely silent; and when thou dost give thanks He understands thee, and most of all when thou art continually giving thanks. So fortunate is that love with which a man loves God. But so it is also with the faithfulness which attaches itself to Christ. Oh, in every man's soul there dwells a secret dread lest even he whom he trusted most might become unfaithful to him. No merely human love can completely drive out this dread, which may indeed remain hidden and unobserved in the security of a fortunate love-

relationship, but which nevertheless may sometimes stir inexplicably, and which when the storms of life begin is suddenly present. There is only One whose faithfulness can drive away this dread; yea, though every other faithfulness were to fail, He still remains faithful every day of thy life, whatever may befall thee; He remains faithful to thee in death; He meets thee again in the world to come like a faithful friend. In thy relationship with Him thou hast no cause for concern about His faithfulness; thou never shouldst, nay, thou darest never be visited by this dread that when thou hast given thyself to Him, led thy whole life in Him, He might eventually become unfaithful to thee. No, strengthened by the certainty of eternity with regard to His faithfulness, thou hast (and this also is His gift) more abundant strength to employ all means in order to be faithful to Him. Thou art not as in other cases required to labour with anxious thoughts in two places at once; He by his faithfulness for which He eternally vouches will make thee unconcerned, will reassure thee, support thee, but then in turn by such faithfulness He will prompt thee to remain faithful to Him.

If we are faithless — He abideth faithful. So in thy relationship with Him thou hast one concern the less, or rather one blessedness more than it is possible any man could ever have in relationship with another man. For in the relationship between two, in case the one were to be faithless, but yet repented his unfaithfulness and turned back again — alas, his faithlessness might perhaps have had the effect of so changing the other that he could not make up his mind to forgive him. But He, our Lord Jesus Christ, remains faithful to Himself. Indeed it would be presumptuous and blasphemous if any one were to suppose that by his unfaithfulness he had power to change Him, power to make Him less loving than He was, or rather than He is. But it would also be ungodly if any one were to take His faithfulness in vain. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; ah, but beware also of taking His faithfulness in vain, so as to bring it down as a

punishment upon thyself. For as His unalterable faithfulness means pardon to the penitent, does it not also imply a curse upon him who hardens himself and impotently defies God?

Even if we are faithless, yet He remains faithful. When He wandered here upon earth no sufferer came to Him without finding help, no troubled person went away from Him uncomforted, not even did a sick person touch the border of His garment without being healed (Mark vi. 56) — but if one had come the seventieth time beseeching forgiveness for his unfaithfulness, dost thou believe He would have become weary, or even if it had been seven times seventy? No, sooner shall heaven be tired of bearing the stars and shall cast them away. Oh, blessed thought that there is after all one faithful, one trusty friend, and that (oh, blessed thought, if indeed a man dare entertain such a thought which is all the more blessed for its temerity) to the penitent, to the unfaithful, He is the faithful friend! Alas, perfect faithfulness is never found in the world — assuming that one were justified in seeking it in others; but perfect faithfulness towards unfaithfulness is found only with our heavenly Teacher and Friend — and that we all have need to seek. Yea, if it were possible that Thou, our Teacher and Saviour, mightest some day become weary of our continual protestations of faithfulness, these protestations which doubtless are not hypocritical or fictitious, but which to Thee must so often, or always, seem so weak and childish, if Thou couldst have the heart for once to put our faithfulness seriously to the test, if Thou wouldst throw us out into the current, as teachers commonly do with their pupils, and wert to say, 'Now I will give thee no help at all but merely test thy faithfulness — with that we should instantly be lost! Oh, this human language of ours is but a poor thing, capable only of expressing half truth, when it is used to indicate our relationship to the Deity. Even when we talk in the strongest terms about God testing us, this talk is meaningless if the meaning is not implied that

essentially God is holding on to us. When we see a mother playing the game with her child that the child is walking alone, although the mother holds on to it behind — and then when we behold the indescribable look on the child's face radiant with joy, that look of contentment with itself and its manly bearing, then we smile, for we see the whole situation. But when we ourselves talk about our relationship with God, this thing of walking alone is taken with the utmost seriousness, and we talk in the strongest terms of God laying His hand heavily upon us, as if He were actually employing His hand for no other purpose, or as if He had not two hands, so that, even at such a moment, with the one hand He is holding on to us. Therefore verily we do not presume to require of Thee, our Teacher and Saviour, that Thou shouldst put to the test our faithfulness to Thee; for we know well that at the moment of testing, Thou Thyself must hold on to us, that is, we know that at bottom we are unfaithful, and that every instant it is Thou *at bottom* that holdest us.

My hearers, you are today assembled here to renew your vows of faithfulness. But what path have you taken to reach your destination. It passes through confession. Is not this a detour? Why dost thou not go straight to the altar? Oh, even if it were not prescribed by sacred custom, wouldst thou not feel the need of taking that path to the altar? The shrift will not impose upon thee the guilty burden of unfaithfulness, on the contrary it will help thee through confession to lay aside the burden. Shrift would not compel thee to make confession, on the contrary it would ease thee through confession; in the confessional there is no one to accuse thee in case thou dost not accuse thyself. My hearer, what the priest said in the confessional was heard by you all; but what thou didst say to thyself no one knew but thou who didst say it and God who heard it. After all, it is not the priest that is to go to the altar, but it is thou; neither was it the priest that confessed, he did not even confess thee, but it was thou that didst make

confession before God in secret. This God has heard, but what God has heard, that has been heard also by Him whom thou goest to meet at the altar. Hast thou forgotten something, or hast thou deceitfully forgotten something, ah, that God knows, and that He too knows whom thou goest to meet at the altar? For far be it from us even to essay with this discourse to rehearse as it were all the disloyalties with which a man may have to reproach himself, which moreover are so exceedingly various. No, according to the sacred custom of our Church this is left to thy honesty towards God. But yet reflect that even if the time which has elapsed since last thou didst renew thy fellowship was what men might humbly call a better season — ah, how-much unfaithfulness there was place for in thy relationship with Him to whom thou didst not promise faithfulness in one single matter, neither in this nor in that, but absolutely in everything! Ah, who knows himself! Is it not precisely to this that all serious and honest self-examination leads as to the last and surest result, to this humble confession, 'Who can understand his errors: cleanse Thou me from secret faults' (Ps. xix. 12)? And when a man examines his relationship to Christ, who is it then that entirely understands his unfaithfulness? Who is the man that would dare to maintain that again in self-examination there might not be unfaithfulness? In this way therefore thou dost find no repose. Repose then, seek rest for thy soul in the blessed comfort that even though we are faithless, He still is faithful.

He cannot deny Himself. No, He with His love *cannot* shut Himself up within Himself, He who out of love gave Himself up for the world. But he who shuts himself up within himself and will have nothing to do with others does in fact deny himself. He denies himself to visitors, and if thou wert to make him a visit and wert to succeed in seeing him, thou wilt in vain seek to grasp his hand, for he withdraws it, he denies himself, thou wilt in vain seek an expression of sympathy in his attitude, for he withdraws himself

and denies himself. But He, our Lord Jesus Christ, does not deny Himself, He cannot deny Himself. Behold, therefore, He spreads out His arms here at the altar, He bares His breast for all; thou dost behold it in His attitude, He does not deny Himself. He does not deny Himself, neither does He deny what thou prayest Him for when thou art renewing thy loyalty to Him. He is the same: He was faithful to thee, and He abideth faithful.

PRAYER

GREAT ART THOU, O God; though it is in a dark saying we know Thee and as in a mirror, yet we adore Thy greatness with wonder — how much more must we one day extol it when we learn to know it more fully! When I stand under the dome of heaven, surrounded by the marvels of creation, I extol Thy greatness with a heart deeply stirred to adoration for Thee who dost easily support the stars in infinite space and with fatherly care dost concern Thyself with the sparrow. But when we are assembled here in Thy holy house we are everywhere surrounded with that which in a deeper sense reminds us of Thy greatness. For great art Thou, the Creator and Sustainer of the world; but when Thou, O God, didst forgive the sin of the world and didst reconcile Thyself with the fallen race, ah, then Thou wast still greater in Thine inconceivable compassion! How could we then but with faith render unto Thee praise and thanksgiving and adoration in Thy holy house where everything reminds us of this, and reminds especially those who today are assembled to receive the forgiveness of sins and to appropriate to themselves anew the reconciliation with Thee in Jesus Christ?

1 JOHN III. 20.... THOUGH OUR HEART CONDEMN US, GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART.

Even though our heart condemn us. When the Pharisees and scribes had brought into the Temple a woman who was apprehended openly in sin in order to accuse her before Christ, and when they, put to shame by His reply, had all gone away, Christ said unto her, ‘Did no one condemn thee?’ but she said, ‘No one, Lord.’ So there was no one that condemned her. So it is also in this sanctuary, there is no one that condemns thee; whether thy heart

condemns thee, thou alone must know. No other man dare know it; for this other man also is concerned today with his own heart, whether it condemns him. Whether thy heart condemns thee is something which concerns no other man; for this other man also has only to do with his own heart, with its condemning or acquitting thoughts. How thou dost feel at hearing these words read, 'though our heart condemn us', is no business of any other man; for this other man also devoutly refers everything to himself, thinks only of how he felt, whether the words took him by surprise as a sudden thought, or he heard, alas, what he had said to himself, or he heard what he thought had no application to him. For it may be that a heart accuses itself, but from this it does not follow that it condemns itself; and we are not inculcating melancholy exaggeration, any more than we are inculcating frivolous absolution and indulgence. But when one has to speak upon the words which have just been read, where might one find better hearers than on such a day as this, and among such as have come hither today, not from the distractions of the world, but from the spiritual collectedness of the confessional where each one severally has made an accounting with God, where each one severally has let his heart be the accuser, which it well may be, for it is an accessory, and as it had better be in good time, lest one day it might become an accuser against a man's will. There is a difference between guilt and guilt, there is a difference between owing five hundred shillings and fifty; one man may have far more to reproach himself with than another, there may be one who says to himself that his heart condemns him; perhaps there may be such a man here present, or perhaps there is no one of the sort here present — but comfort we all of us need. And it cannot well be discomforting for any one that the word of comfort is so rich in compassion that it includes every one, this cannot surely be discomforting to any one, even though his heart does not condemn him. After all, it is

essentially the same comfort we all have need of: God’s greatness, that He is greater than our heart.

God’s greatness lies in forgiving, *in showing mercy, and in this greatness He is greater than the heart which condemns itself.* Behold, this is that greatness of God which we have to speak of especially within the sanctuary; for here we know God differently, more closely — from the other side, if one may say so — than out there, where doubtless He is revealed, is to be known in His works, whereas here He is to be known as He has revealed Himself, as He would be known by Christians. The tokens by which God’s greatness can be known in nature every one can behold with *wonder*, or rather there is no special token, for the works themselves are the tokens; thus every one can see the rainbow and must wonder when he sees it. But the token of God’s greatness in showing mercy exists only *for faith;* this token is in fact the Sacrament. God’s greatness in nature is *manifest*, but God’s greatness in showing mercy is a *secret* which has to be believed. Precisely because it is not directly manifest to every one it is called and is *revelation.* God’s greatness in nature awakens at once *amazement*, and then *adoration*; God’s greatness in showing mercy is first a stumbling-block, and then it is *for faith.* When God had created all things, He saw, and, lo, ‘it was very good’; and along with every work of His there stands inscribed as it were: *Extol*, *praise*, *adore the Creator.* But along with His greatness in showing mercy stands: *Blessed is he who is not of ended.*

All our talk about God is of course human talk. However much we may strive to prevent misunderstanding by withdrawing again what we have asserted — if we would not be completely silent, we must after all employ the human measuring-rod when we as men talk about God. What then is the true greatness of man? Surely it is greatness of heart, we do not rightly say that a man is great who has much power and dominion; yea, if there were living or had lived a king whose sovereignty extended over the whole earth

— however hasty amazement may be to call him at once great, the deeper man will not let himself be misled by external circumstance. And on the other hand, though it were the lowliest man that ever lived — when thou art a witness of his actions at a decisive moment, seeing that in truth he acts nobly, forgives his enemies magnanimously with his whole heart, makes the utmost sacrifice self-denyingly, or when thou art a witness of the inward forbearance with which he lovingly endures evil from year to year, then thou dost say, ‘For all that, he is great, he is truly great.’ So greatness of heart is the true human greatness; but greatness of heart is precisely this, to overcome oneself in love.

So then, if we, being men, would form a conception of God’s greatness, we must think of the true human greatness, that is, of love, and of the love which forgives and shows mercy. But what does this signify? Might the meaning be that we would compare God with man, even with the noblest man, the purest, the most compassionate, the most loving man that ever lived? Far from it.

Neither does the Apostle speak in this sense. He does not say that God is greater than the most loving man, but that He is greater than the heart which condemns itself. So then God and man resemble one another only inversely. It is not by the steps of direct resemblance — great, greater, greatest — thou dost attain the possibility of comparison, it is possible to attain it only conversely; neither is it by lifting up his head more and more that a man approaches closer and closer to God, but conversely, by throwing himself down more and more deeply in adoration. The contrite heart which condemns itself cannot get, seeks in vain to find, a term strong enough to express its guilt, its wretchedness, its defilement — still greater is God in showing mercy! Strange comparison! All human purity, all human mercy, is unfit for comparison; but the penitent heart which condemns itself — it is with this the Apostle compares God’s greatness in showing mercy, only that

it is greater. Deeply as the heart can abase itself, and yet never deeply enough to satisfy it, just in that measure is God's greatness infinitely exalted, or infinitely more exalted, in showing mercy. Lo, language as it were bursts and cracks under the strain of expressing God's greatness in showing mercy; thought was seeking in vain for a comparison, then finally it discovered it in what humanly speaking is no comparison, the contrition of a penitent heart — still greater is God's compassion. A penitent heart, when in contrition it condemns itself — yea, this heart allowed itself no rest, not for a single instant, it found no hiding-place where it might flee from itself, it found no excuse possible, rather it found it to be a new and the most terrible fault to seek an excuse, it found no assuagement, even the most compassionate word which the most heartfelt of all compassion was able to invent sounded, to this heart which dared not wish to be comforted, like a new condemnation upon it — so infinite is God's greatness in showing mercy, or it is still greater. This holds good, this comparison — it is the comparison a man always makes after he has striven with God. It is far-fetched, this comparison — without doubt, for it was found and fetched from afar after rejecting with godly fear all human comparison. If man dare not make unto himself any image of God, then he certainly cannot imagine that the human might furnish a direct comparison. Let no one be hasty in seeking, no one be precipitate in willing to find a comparison for God's greatness in showing mercy; every mouth shall be stopped, and every man shall smite upon his breast — for there is only one comparison which is in any way adequate: a fearful heart which condemns itself.

But God is greater than this heart! So then be comforted. Perhaps thou hast had occasion earlier to learn from experience how hard a thing it is with such a heart to be brought before the judgement of Pharisees and scribes, or to encounter the misunderstanding which knows only how to bruise it more and more, or the narrow-mindedness which constricts the

heart still more straitly, O thou who in so high a degree didst stand in need of one who was great. God in heaven is greater; He is not greater than the Pharisees and scribes, not greater than misunderstanding and narrow-mindedness, not greater than the man who yet knew how to speak an assuaging word to thee, with whom thou didst find some solace, because he was not narrow-minded, would not depress thee even more, but would raise thee up — God is not greater than he (comfortless comparison!), no, God is greater than thine own heart! Oh, whether it was a sickness of the soul which every night so darkened thy mind that at last with deathly anguish, brought near to madness by the apprehension of God's holiness, thou didst feel that thou must condemn thyself, whatever the dreadful thing was which so weighed upon thy conscience that thy heart condemned thee — God is greater! Wilt thou not believe, dost thou not dare to believe without seeing signs? Well, they are presented. He who came to earth to die, died also for thee. He did not die for men in a general sort of way; oh, exactly the contrary, He died for some one in particular, not for the ninety and nine — and, alas, thou art too wretched to be reckoned vaguely in the round number, upon thee falls the emphasis of wretchedness and guilt so dreadfully that thou art counted apart. And He who died for thee when thou wast a stranger, might He forsake His own? If God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that no one might be lost, how should He not preserve them that were bought with a price? Oh, torture not thyself; if they are the fears of melancholy that ensnare thee, God knows all, and He is great! And if it is the heavy weight of guilt which rests upon thee like a ton, He who (as it never entered into the heart of man to believe) had compassion upon the world — He is great! Do not torment thyself, remember that woman, that there was no one to condemn her, and reflect that the same thing can also be expressed in another way: Christ was present. Just because He was present, there was therefore no one who

condemned her. He delivered her from the condemnation of the Pharisees and the scribes; they went away ashamed, for Christ was present: there was no one that condemned her. So Christ alone remained with her — but there was no one that condemned her. Just the fact that He alone remained with her signifies in a far deeper sense that there is no one that condemns her. It would have helped her but little that the Pharisees and the scribes went away, they might indeed have come again with their condemnation. But the Saviour remained alone with her: therefore there was no one that condemned her. Ah, there is only one guilt God cannot forgive, that is, not being willing to believe in His greatness!

For He is greater than the heart which condemns itself. But on the other hand, nothing is stated about His being greater than the worldly, frivolous, trifling heart which foolishly counts upon God's fancied greatness in forgiving. No, God can be just as precise in reckoning as He is great and can be great in showing mercy. Thus it is that God's nature always unites contrary aspects, just as in that miracle of the five small loaves. The people had nothing to eat — by a miracle abundance is provided; but, lo, Christ thereupon bids them gather up every scrap that was left over. How divine! For one man may squander, and another be thrifty; but in case there were a man who by a miracle could every instant... provide abundance, dost thou not believe that he... humanly would have despised the scraps, dost thou believe that he... divinely would have gathered up the scraps? So it is also with God's greatness in showing mercy, a man has hardly a bare notion how precise God can be. Let us not deceive ourselves, not lie to ourselves, and, what is the same thing, diminish God's greatness, by wanting to make ourselves out better than we are, less guilty, or by calling our sins by a more frivolous name, for thereby we diminish God's greatness in forgiving. But neither let us be mad enough to sin still more so as to make forgiveness even greater; for God is equally great in being precise in His reckoning.

And so let us here in Thy holy house praise Thy greatness, O God, who incomprehensibly didst show mercy and didst reconcile the world unto Thyself. Behold, outside the stars proclaim Thy majesty, the perfection of all proclaims Thy greatness; but here within it is the imperfect, the sinner, that extols Thy still greater greatness! — The supper of remembrance is again ready, so here within be Thou remembered and be praised for Thy greatness in showing mercy.

PRAYER

THOU WHO DIDST come down from heaven to bring a blessing to the fallen race; Thou who didst wander here upon earth, unappreciated, betrayed, mocked, condemned — but blessing; Thou who in the act of blessing wast parted from Thine own as Thou didst ascend again into heaven, Thou our Saviour and Redeemer, bless also to them that today are here assembled their participation in the holy Supper in remembrance of Thee. Oh, if at every meal something is wanting in case the blessing is lacking, what then might be this holy meal of grace without Thy blessing? It would not even exist, for it is indeed the supper of blessing!

Luke xxiv. 51. AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHILE HE BLESSED THEM, HE PARTED FROM THEM.

'While He blessed them, He parted from them.' These words give an account of His ascension, He parted from them 'and was carried up into heaven' (Luke xxiv. 51), 'a cloud received Him out of their sight' (Acts i. 9), but the blessing remained behind; they beheld Him no more, but they were sensible of the blessing; 'they looked stedfastly towards heaven' (Acts i. 10), for He parted from them with a blessing. But so it is He always parts from His own, with a blessing; ah, and so it is He always comes to His own, with a blessing; and so abiding with His own He is always blessing. In no other way does He part from any one, unless this man himself bears the dreadful responsibility for it. As that forefather of the Jewish people said when he strove with God, 'I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me' — so likewise says He, 'I will not leave thee without blessing thee; and every time thou dost visit me again I will not part from thee without blessing

thee.’ When they who are assembled here to meet with Him return home from this meeting, they are greeted with the wish that it may be for their blessing, for they are convinced that when they parted from Him, or He parted from them, He blessed them.

My hearers, whatever a man is about to undertake, whether the work be great and important, or lowly and unimportant, he is able to accomplish nothing if God give not His blessing. The builder labours but in vain if God give not His blessing, in vain does the wise man ponder if God give not His blessing, in vain does the rich man gather abundance if God give not His blessing; for it is true either way you take it, that when one has abundance it is the blessing which satisfies with contentment, and it is the blessing which transforms poverty into abundance. But is it true then that no labour succeeds and prospers unless God blesses it? Ah, how often one may see an undertaking succeed, even in an extraordinary degree, although God certainly did not bless it! Yes, thus it is, and hence we must say that he who would... have the aid of God’s blessing merely in order that, humanly speaking, his undertaking may succeed, does not pray worthily, he does not clearly comprehend what he prays for, or he may even presume to will that God should serve him instead of himself serving God. No, the blessing is the Good in itself, is the one thing needful, is infinitely more glorious and blessed than all success. What then is the blessing? The blessing is God’s consent that the undertaking which one prays God to bless may be undertaken. And what does it signify that a man prays for the blessing? It signifies that he consecrates himself and the undertaking to God’s service — regardless of whether it succeeds and prospers or no. Hence we must say that every godly undertaking is in vain if God does not bless it, for only when God blesses it is it a godly undertaking.

Doubtless every undertaking may be and ought to be a godly undertaking; but the more decisively it is a godly undertaking in the stricter

sense, and the more clearly a man is conscious that it is a godly undertaking he has in hand, with all the greater clearness also, and all the more deeply, does he feel that he needs the blessing, that the undertaking is in vain if God does not bless it. Accordingly, it is a godly undertaking to engage in prayer; but is not this then the thought that comes first to the prayerful man, not that God will grant his petition, but that He will bless his prayer, so that it may be or become the right prayer? What does a man pray for? For the blessing — but first and foremost this means the blessing of prayer or a blessing upon the prayer. It is a godly undertaking to go up to the house of the Lord; but is not this also the thought that comes first of all, that it may be a blessing? What is it a man seeks in the house of God? A blessing — but first and foremost this means that God will 'bless thine incoming', as the pious phrase has it. The clearer it becomes that it is a godly action thou hast in hand, in that same degree does the need of the blessing become clear to thee; for the more thou art concerned with God, the clearer it becomes how much less thou thyself art able to do. If with all thy mind and with all thy strength thou art concerned with Him, then it becomes entirely clear that thou thyself art not able to do anything whatever, and it becomes clear that thou art entirely in need of the blessing.

But to go to the altar is surely a holy action in the strictest sense, a godly undertaking. Thou art going to the altar — it is for this holy action ye are today assembled here. Thou art going to the altar to meet Him for whom thou dost long more ardently every time thou art parted from Him. But if thou, as a man, art nothing before God and therefore needy — at the altar, as a sinner in relation to the Redeemer, thou art less than nothing, and so all the more deeply dost thou feel the need of the blessing. At the altar thou art able to do nothing. And yet precisely at the altar it is a question of satisfaction to be made for guilt and sin, for thy guilt and thy sin. All the more necessary it is that thou shouldst be able to do something; and the

more this necessity is made clear, whilst thou art able to do nothing, all the clearer it becomes then, and all the more clearly dost thou understand it, that thou art able to do less than nothing — but all the clearer also is the need of the blessing, or that the blessing is everything. At the altar thou art able to do nothing whatever. Satisfaction is made... but by another, the sacrifice is offered... but by another, the redemption is accomplished... but by the Redeemer! — all the clearer it is that the blessing is everything and does all. At the altar thou art able to do less than nothing. At the altar it is thou that art sin's insolvent debtor, thou that by sin art separated from God, thou that art so infinitely far off, thou that hast forfeited all, thou that darest not stand boldly forth — it is another that paid the debt, another that made reconciliation, another that brought thee near to God, another that suffered and died to restore everything, another that stands forth in thy behalf. If at the altar thou wert able to do the least thing, even were it merely to stand boldly forth, thou wouldst derange everything, prevent reconciliation, make impossible the satisfaction. At the altar it is in place to say, as was said to that ungodly man who in a storm called upon heaven for help, 'Hush! Don't let God know you are present!' All depends upon the presence of another, upon whom God looks, instead of looking upon thee, another upon whom thou dost reckon because thou art only a subtraction. At the altar therefore He is present with a blessing, He who parted from His own with a blessing, He to whom thou art in the same relation as the tender infant whom He took up in His arms and blessed, He who is thy Saviour and Redeemer. Him thou canst not meet before the altar as a fellow-worker, as in thy work thou canst meet God as a fellow-worker. The fellow-worker with Christ in relation to the atonement thou canst not be, not in the remotest way. Thou art wholly in debt, He wholly makes satisfaction. So much the clearer it is that the blessing is everything. For what is the blessing? The blessing is what God does; everything that God does is the blessing. The share of the work with

reference to which thou callest thyself a fellow-worker is the share God does, that is the blessing. But at the altar Christ is the blessing. The divine work of reconciliation is Christ's work, and in relation to that man can do only less than nothing — so then the blessing is everything. But if the work is Christ's, then Christ is the blessing.

At the altar thou art able to do nothing whatever, not even to hold fast the thought of thine unworthiness, and by that to make thyself susceptive of the blessing. Or wouldst thou dare, even though it were at the last instant as thou art stepping up to the altar, wouldst thou dare, even though it only had to do with the thought which recognizes its own unworthiness, wouldst thou dare to vouch to thyself for it that thou wouldst be able to ward off every disturbing reflection, every anxious thought of recollection which, alas, wounds from behind, every suddenly awakened distrust which turns against thee as though thou wert not yet completely prepared, every fleeting conceit of self-assurance? Oh, no, thou art able to do nothing whatever, not even to keep thy soul alert to the consciousness that thou art completely in need of grace and blessing. As another supported Moses when he prayed, so must thou at the altar be supported by the blessing when thou art to receive the blessing, it must support thee in its embrace while it is imparted to thee. The priest who is present at the altar is not able to impart to thee the blessing, nor to support thee; only He is able to do it who is personally present, He who not merely imparts but is the blessing. He Himself is present, He blesses the bread when it is broken, it is His blessing in the chalice which is handed to thee. But it is not merely the gifts that are blest, but thou, in partaking of the bread and the wine, dost partake of the blessing, and properly this is the Supper. Only He who instituted this Supper can prepare it — for at the altar He is the blessing.

Behold, therefore, He spreads out His arms yonder at the altar, He inclines His head towards thee... in blessing! Thus it is He is present at the

altar. Then thou dost part from Him again, or He again departs from thee... but with a blessing. God grant that the good wish may be verified, and that to thee it may be a blessing.

The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air (1849)

THREE GODLY DISCOURSES

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1940

CONTENTS

PREFACE

PRAYER

I. ‘BEHOLD THE BIRDS OF THE AIR; CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD’

II. ‘NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS; FOR EITHER HE WILL LOVE THE ONE AND HATE THE OTHER, OR ELSE HE WILL HOLD TO THE ONE AND DESPISE THE OTHER’

III. ‘BEHOLD THE BIRDS OF THE AIR: THEY SOW NOT, NEITHER DO THEY REAP, NOR GATHER INTO BARNS’ — UNCONCERNED FOR THE MORROW. ‘CONSIDER THE GRASS OF THE FIELD WHICH TODAY IS.’

PREFACE

THIS LITTLE BOOK (which in view of the circumstances under which it is issued reminds me of my first, and more especially of the first to my first, the Preface to the *Two Edifying Discourses* of 1843, which came out immediately after *Either/Or)* will, as I hope, recall this to 'that single individual whom I with joy and gratitude call *my* reader': 'it desires to remain in retirement, as it was in concealment it had its origin — a little flower in the cover of a great forest.' Of this he will be reminded by the circumstances; and I hope moreover that it will remind him, as it does me, of the Preface to the *Two Edifying Discourses* of 1844: 'it is offered with the right hand' — in contrast to the pseudonyms, which were handed out and are still handed out with the left.

5*th of May 1849.* S. K.

PRAYER

Father in heaven! What one in society with men, especially there in the human swarm, with so much difficulty learns to know, and what, in case one has elsewhere learned to know it, is so easily forgotten in society with men, namely, what it is to be man, and what in a godly understanding of it is the requirement for being man — oh, that we might learn this, or, if it is forgotten, that we again might learn it from the lilies and the birds; that we might learn it, if not all at once and all in all, yet at least something of it, and little by little; that at this time we might from the lilies and the birds learn silence, obedience, joy!

The Gospel for the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What

shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

I. ‘BEHOLD THE BIRDS OF THE AIR; CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD’

BUT THOU WILT say perhaps with the ‘poet’, and thou art immensely pleased when the poet talks thus: Oh, would I were a bird, or would I were like a bird, like a free bird which gratifies its *Wanderlust* by flying far, far away over sea and land, so near to heaven, unto distant climes — ah, poor me, who feel only too much bound to the spot, bound and nailed there, where I am the mark of daily cares and sufferings and adversities, compelled to dwell there, and for the whole duration of my life! Oh, would I were a bird, or would I were like a bird, which rises into the air lighter than the air itself, oh, would I were like the airy bird which when it lacks a footing can build its nest upon the surface of the sea — while I, alas, with every slightest movement, even when I merely turn upon my bed, feel how gravity weighs me down! Oh, would I were a bird, or would I were like a bird, free from all concern, like the little song-bird that sings so humbly, notwithstanding no one listens, or which sings... so proudly, notwithstanding no one listens — while I, alas, have not an instant to myself but am distracted by a thousand concerns! Oh, would I were a flower, or would I were like the flower of the field, happily in love with myself, and with that enough said — alas for me, who feel in my own heart also the all-too-human-hearted discord, neither to be able in self-love to break with all else, not to be able in love to sacrifice all.’

Thus the poet. Cursorily hearing this, it sounds almost as if he said what the Gospel says, when he employs the strongest expressions to extol the happiness of birds and lilies. But hear him farther. ‘Therefore it comes near to being a cruelty on the part of the Gospel to extol the lilies and the birds and say, Thou shalt be such as these — alas for me in whom this wish is so

real, so real, so real — oh, would I were like a bird of the air or like a lily of the field. But that I might become such a thing is indeed an impossibility; just for this reason is the wish so hearty in me, so tenderly sad and so ardent. How cruel then of the Gospel to talk to me thus, it is as though it would compel me to lose my senses by saying that I *must* be what I am not and cannot be. I cannot understand the Gospel; between us there is a difference of language which would kill me if I could understand it.'

And so it always is with the poet in relation to the Gospel; it is the same likewise with regard to the saying of the Gospel about being a child. 'Oh, would I were a child,' says the poet, 'or would I were like a child; ah, a child, innocent and happy; alas for me, who only become old and guilty and sorrowful!'

This is strange, for one says indeed rightly that the poet is a child. And yet the poet cannot come to an understanding with the Gospel. For at bottom the poet's life is despair of being able to become the thing he wishes; and this despair begets 'the wish'. But the wish is the invention of disconsolateness. For it is true that the wish consoles for an instant, but upon closer inspection it is nevertheless evident that it does not console; and hence we say that the wish is the consolation which disconsolateness invents. Strange self-contradiction! Yes, but the poet himself is this same contradiction. The poet is the child of pain, whom the father calls son of joy. It is in pain that the wish arises in the poet; and this wish, this ardent wish, gladdens man's heart more than wine cheers it, more than the first star, which one who is weary of the day gladly hails in longing for the night, more than the last star in the heavens, of which one takes leave as the day dawns. The poet is the child of eternity, but he lacks the seriousness of eternity. When he thinks of the birds and the lilies he weeps, and in spite of weeping he finds in weeping relief, the wish comes into being, and with it the eloquence of the wish: Oh, would I were a bird, the bird I read of as a

child in the picture-book; oh, would I were a flower of the field, the flower that stood in my mother's garden.' But if one were to say to him in accordance with the Gospel, 'This is seriousness, precisely this is seriousness, that the bird seriously is a teacher,' then the poet might laugh — and he makes jest of the birds and the lilies, so wittily that he makes us all laugh, even the most serious man that ever lived would have to laugh; but he does not affect the Gospel in this way. So serious is the Gospel that all the poet's sadness does not change it, as even the most serious man is changed by it, so that for an instant he yields, enters into the poet's thought, sighs with him and says, 'My dear fellow, if that really is an impossibility for thee, well then, I dare not say to thee, "Thou shalt."' But the Gospel dares to command the poet that he *shall* be as the birds. And so serious is the Gospel that the poet's most irresistible invention does not avail to make it smile.

Thou shalt become a child again, and therefore, or to this end, thou shalt begin by being able and willing to understand the word which is as though coined for the child, and which every child understands, this word thou shalt understand as the child understands it: the word, 'Thou shalt.' The child never asks for reasons, this the child dare not do, nor has it any need to ask for reasons; it is reason enough for the child that it shall; yea, all the reasons united would not to the same extent be reason enough for the child. And the child never says, 'I cannot.' This the child dare not say, nor is it true — the one thing corresponds perfectly with the other: for just because the child dare not say, I cannot,' therefore it is not at all true that it cannot, and hence it appears that the truth is that it can, for it is impossible not to be able to do a thing when one dare not do otherwise, nothing is more certain — it only depends upon whether it is certain that one cannot do otherwise. [Whether this is sound logic or not, it expresses a feeling very characteristic of S. K., who affirmed that it had never entered his head that anything might

be impossible to him — except escape from his melancholy.] And the child never seeks evasions or excuses; for the child understands with frightful realism that for it there is no evasion or excuse, that there is no hiding-place, either in heaven or on earth, either in the parlour or in the garden, where it could hide from the 'Thou shalt'. And when one is quite certain that there is no such hiding-place, then there is no attempt at evasion or excuse. And when one knows with frightful realism that there is no evasion or excuse — then, well then one naturally forgoes finding it, for what does not exist is not to be found — but one also forgoes the seeking of it; and so one does what one 'shall'. And the child never requires long deliberation; for when it 'shall', and perhaps at once, there is no opportunity for deliberation; and even if this opportunity were not lacking, when nevertheless it 'shall' — yea, even if one were to give it an eternity for deliberation, the child would have no need of it, the child would say, 'What is the use of all this time, if nevertheless I have to do it?' And if the child were to take time, it would employ the time in another way, in play, in pleasure, and so forth; for what the child shall do is a thing that stands fast and has nothing whatever to do with deliberation.

So in accordance with the directions of the Gospel let us consider seriously the lilies and the birds as teachers. Seriously, for the Gospel is not so spiritually exalted that it can have no use for the lilies and the birds; but neither is it so earthly that it can consider the lilies and the birds only with a sad face or with a smile.

From the lilies and the birds as teachers let us learn

SILENCE, or learn TO BE SILENT.

For no doubt it is speech which distinguishes man above the beasts, and hence, if one so will, very far above the lilies. But because it is an

advantage to be able to speak, it does not follow that to be able to keep silent is no art, or that it is a humble art. On the contrary, just because a man is able to speak, it is an art to be able to keep silent; and just because this advantage of man is so easily a temptation to him, it is a great art to be able to keep silent. But this we may learn from the silent teachers, the lilies and the birds.

'SEEK YE FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

But what does this mean, what have I to do, or what sort of effort is it that can be said to seek or pursue the kingdom of God? Shall I try to get a job suitable to my talents and powers in order thereby to exert an influence? No, thou shalt *first* seek God's kingdom. Shall I then give all my fortune to the poor? No, thou shalt *first* seek God's kingdom. Shall I then go out to proclaim this teaching to the world? No, thou shalt *first* seek God's kingdom. But then in a certain sense it is nothing I shall do. Yes, certainly, in a certain sense it is nothing; thou shalt in the deepest sense make thyself nothing, become nothing before God, learn to keep silent; in this silence is the beginning, which is, *first* to seek God's kingdom.

In this wise, a godly wise, one gets to the beginning by going, in a sense, backwards. The beginning is not that with which one begins, but at which one arrives, and one arrives at the beginning backwards. The beginning is this art of *becoming* silent; for to be silent, as nature is, is not an art. And to become thus silent in the deepest sense, silent directly before God, is the beginning of godly fear, for as the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, so is silence the beginning of godly fear. And as the fear of God is more than the beginning of wisdom, or rather is wisdom, so is silence more than the beginning of godly fear, it is godly fears In this silence the many thoughts of wish and desire are rendered mute by godly fear, in this silence the prolix eloquence of thanksgiving is rendered mute by godly fear.

It is man's superiority over the beast to be able to speak; but in relation to God it can easily become the ruin of man who is able to speak that he is too willing to speak. God is in heaven, man upon earth — therefore they cannot well talk together. What man knows is idle chatter, therefore they cannot well talk together. God is love, man is (as one says to a child) a silly little thing, even so far as his own wellbeing is concerned. Only in much fear and trembling can a man talk with God; in much fear and trembling. But to talk in much fear and trembling is difficult for a further reason; for as a sense of dread causes the bodily voice to fail, so also does much fear and trembling render the voice mute in silence. This the true man of prayer knows well, and he who was not the true man of prayer learned perhaps precisely this by praying. There was something which lay so close to his heart, a matter of so much consequence to him, it was so important that he should make God understand him, he was afraid that in his prayer he might forget something; ah, and if he had forgotten it, he was afraid that God might not Himself remember it — therefore he would collect himself to pray right earnestly. And what happened then? — in case he did indeed pray right earnestly. The surprising happened to him. In proportion as he became more and more earnest in prayer, he had less and less to say, and in the end he became quite silent. He became silent — indeed, what is if possible still more expressly the opposite of speaking, he became a hearer. He had supposed that to pray is to speak; he learnt that to pray is not merely to be silent but to hear. And so it is; to pray is not to hear oneself speak, but it is to be silent, and to remain silent, to wait, until the man who prays hears God.

Hence it is that the word of the Gospel, '*Seek first* God's kingdom,' as though by way of education seals man's mouth by replying to every single question he asks as to whether it is 'this' he is to do, with a 'No, thou shalt seek *first* God's kingdom.' And hence it is that one can paraphrase this

word of the Gospel thus: Thou shalt begin by praying. Not as though prayer always began with silence (which we have seen is not the case), but when prayer has really become prayer it has become silence. Seek first God's kingdom — that means, Pray! In case thou dost ask — yea, though in asking thou wert to traverse every single possibility, inquiring if it is 'this' that I shall do, and if I do it, is this then to seek God's kingdom? — the answer must be, No, thou shalt first seek God's kingdom. But to pray, that is, to pray aright, is to become silent, and that is' to seek first God's kingdom.

This silence thou canst learn from the lilies and the birds. That is to say, their silence is no art, but when thou becomest silent like the lilies and the birds, thou art at the beginning, which is *first* to seek God's kingdom.

How solemn it is out there under God's heaven with the lilies and the birds. And why? Ask the poet. He replies, 'Because there is silence.' And he longs for this solemn silence, far away from worldliness in the human world where there is so much talk, far away from all the worldly human life, which only in a sorry way gives proof that man by speech distinguishes himself above the beasts. 'For,' as the poet will say, 'is this indeed to distinguish oneself? No, I much prefer the silence out there; I prefer it, indeed it distinguishes itself infinitely above men who are able to talk.' In this silence of nature the poet believes he is able to apprehend God's voice, but not at all to apprehend that man has kinship with God. The poet says, 'Speech is man's advantage over the beasts — yes, true enough... in case he is able to keep silent.'

But to be able to keep silent is something thou canst learn out there with the lilies and the birds, where there is silence, and where there is something divine in this silence. And there there is silence; and that not only when everything holds its peace in the silent night, but also when day is vibrating with a thousand notes and all is like a sea of sound, there still is silence out

there; each one in particular does its part so well that no one of them breaks the solemn silence, and not all of them together. The forest is silent; even when it whispers it still is silent; for the trees, even when they are most closely crowded together, hold to one another, as men so seldom do, in spite of plighted promises — this being said between ourselves. The sea is silent; even when it rages noisily, it yet is silent. In the first instant thou hearest perhaps amiss, and thou hearest it make a noise. In case thou art in haste to carry this report, thou dost do the sea an injustice. On the other hand, if thou wilt give thyself time and listen more attentively, thou dost hear — how amazing! — thou dost hear silence; for after all uniformity also is silence. In the evening, when silence broods over the countryside and thou from the meadow dost hear the distant lowing, or far from the farmer's house dost hear the dog's domestic voice — one cannot say that this lowing or this voice disturbs the silence; no, this belongs to silence, is in mysterious but again in silent accord with silence.

And let us now consider more closely the lilies and the birds from whom we are to learn. The bird is *silent* and *waits,* it knows, or rather it firmly believes, that everything occurs in its season, hence the bird waits; but it knows that it is not for it to know the time or the day, hence it keeps silent. It will yet occur in due time, says the bird — yet no, the bird does not say this, it keeps silent, but its silence is eloquent, and this silence says that it believes this, and because it believes this it keeps silent and waits. Then when the instant is come, the silent bird understands that it is the instant, it employs it, and it never is put to shame. So likewise with the lily, it keeps silent and waits. It does not ask impatiently, 'When is spring coming?' For it knows that it comes in due time, it knows that for itself it would be far from serviceable if it were allowed to determine the season of the year. It does not say, 'When are we going to have rain?' or 'When are we going to have sunshine?' or 'Now we've got too much rain', or 'Now the heat is too

great'; it does not ask beforehand what sort of a summer it will be this year, how long or how short; it keeps silent and waits — so simpleminded it is, but yet it is never deceived, that being a thing which can happen only to shrewdness, not to simplicity, which neither deceives nor is deceived. Then comes the instant, and then the silent lily understands that now is the instant, and employs it. O ye profound teachers of simplicity! But might it not also be possible when one speaks to hit upon 'the instant'? No, only by keeping silent does one hit upon the instant; while one is talking, though one says only a word, one misses the instant. And hence it so seldom happens that man succeeds in understanding when it is the instant, and in rightly employing the instant, because he cannot keep silent. He cannot keep silent and wait, and perhaps this explains why for him the instant never arrives; he cannot keep silence and wait, and perhaps this explains why he did not notice the instant when it came for him. For the instant, although it is pregnant with rich significance, sends no messenger before it to announce its arrival, it comes too suddenly for that, when it comes there is not an instant's time before its coming; nor, however significant the instant is in itself, does it come with noise and outcry; no, it comes quietly, with lighter step than any creature's lightest tread, for it comes with the light step of the sudden, it comes stealing upon one, therefore one must be quite silent if one is to sense that 'now it is there'; and the next instant it is gone, therefore one must have been quite silent if one is to succeed in employing it. But yet everything depends upon the instant. And this doubtless is the misfortune in the lives of the great majority of men, that they never sense the instant, that in their lives the eternal and the temporal are merely separate things. And why? Because they could not keep silent.

The bird is *silent* and *suffers.* However much heartache it has, it keeps silent. Even the melancholy elegiac bird of the desert and of loneliness is silent: it sighs thrice, and thereupon falls silent, it sighs again thrice; but

essentially it is silent. For what it is that ails it, it does not say, it does not complain of anything, it does not reproach any one, it sighs in order to be silent again. It is as if silence would burst it, hence it must sigh for the sake of being able to keep silent. The bird is by no means exempted from suffering; but the silent bird exempts itself from that which makes suffering harder, the misapprehending sympathy of others, from that which makes suffering more protracted, the much talk about suffering, from that which makes suffering more than suffering, the sin of impatience and acidia. For do not suppose that it is merely a piece of duplicity on the part of the bird that it is silent when it suffers, that in its inmost parts, however silent it is with others, it does not keep silent, that it bewails its fate, complains of God and man, and lets 'the heart sin in sorrow'. No, the bird keeps silent and waits. Alas, man does not do that. But how comes it that human suffering, as compared with that of the birds, is so frightful? Is it not for the reason that man is able to talk? No, not for this reason, for this is indeed an advantage, but for the reason that man is not able to keep silent. For it is not as the impatient man is inclined to understand it, and still more vehemently the man in despair, when he says or shrieks (and this already is an abuse of speech and voice), 'Would that I had a voice like that of the tempest, that I might give utterance to all my sufferings as I feel them!' Ah, that would be but a foolish remedy, for in that very degree he would feel them the more. No, but if thou wert able to keep silent, if thou hadst the silence of the bird, the sufferings would surely be less.

And like the bird, the lily also keeps silent. Though it suffers when it fades, it keeps silent; the innocent child is unable to dissemble (nor is this required of it, and it is its good fortune that it cannot, for verily the art of being able to dissemble is dearly bought), it cannot dissemble, it cannot help changing colour and thereby betraying that it suffers, as one can detect by the pallid change of colour; but still it keeps silent. It would fain hold

itself erect to conceal the fact that it suffers, but its strength is not equal to this, it has not so much mastery over itself, its head sinks and is languidly bowed down, and the passer-by (if he has so much sympathy that he observes it) understands what this signifies, it is eloquent enough; but the lily keeps silent. But how comes it that human suffering, as compared with that of the lily, seems so frightful? Is it not for the reason that the lily is unable to talk? And if (like man, alas!) it had not learnt the art of silence, would not then its sufferings also be frightful? Suffering for the lily is simply suffering, neither more nor less. But precisely when suffering is neither more nor less than suffering, is suffering as far as possible narrowed down and simplified and made as small as possible. Less than this, suffering cannot become, for it nevertheless is, and is what it is. But on the other hand, suffering can become endlessly greater when it is not exactly neither more nor less than it is. When suffering is neither more nor less, that is, when it is merely that definite thing which it is, then, even though it were the greatest suffering, it is the least that it can be. But when it becomes indefinite, however great the suffering really is, this indefiniteness increases the suffering endlessly. And this indefiniteness emerges precisely with man's ambiguous advantage of being able to talk. On the other hand, the definiteness of suffering, the experience that it is neither more nor less than it is, is attained only by being able to keep silent; and this silence thou canst learn from the birds and the lilies.

Out there with the lilies and the birds there is silence. But what does this silence express? It expresses reverence before God, that it is He who disposes, and He alone, to whom belongeth wisdom and understanding. And just because this silence is reverence before God, it is (so far as it can be in nature) worship. Just for this reason is the silence so solemn. And because this silence is so solemn, therefore it is that one senses God in nature — what wonder indeed when everything keeps silent in reverence

before Him! Even if *He* does not speak, the fact that everything keeps silent in reverence before Him affects one as if He were speaking.

That which thou, however, without the aid of any poet canst learn from the silence out there in company with the lilies and the birds, that which only the Gospel can teach thee, is that this is seriousness, that it must be taken seriously, that the birds and the lilies *shall* be thy teachers, that thou shalt imitate them, learn of them, quite seriously, that thou shalt be silent like the lilies and the birds. And already this is seriousness (when it is rightly understood, and not as the dreaming poet understands it, who lets nature dream around him), this fact, that out there with the lilies and the birds thou dost sense that *thou art before God*, a fact which is generally so entirely forgotten in speech and conversation with other men. For when there are two of us only that talk together, not to say ten or more, it is so easily forgotten that thou and I, we two, or we ten, are before God. But the lily who is the teacher is profound. It does not enter into conversation with thee, it keeps silent, and by keeping silent it would signify to thee that thou art before God, that thou shouldst remember that thou art before God — that thou also in seriousness and truth mightest become silent before God.

And silent before God like the lily and the bird thou *shalt* become. Thou shalt not say, Of course the birds and the lilies keep silent, they are unable indeed to talk.' This thou shalt not say, thou shalt in fact say absolutely nothing, not make even the least attempt to render impossible the instruction in silence by foolishly and senselessly (instead of being serious about keeping silence) mixing up silence with speech, perhaps as the subject of speech, so that there is no trace of silence, but on the contrary a speech comes into existence... about being silent. Thou shalt before God not be more self-important than a lily or a bird — yet indeed if there is truth and seriousness in the experience that thou art before God, the latter will follow from the former. And although what thou wouldst accomplish in the world

were the most astonishing achievement — thou shalt recognize the lilies and the birds as thy teachers, and shalt not become before God more self-important than the lilies and the birds. And although the whole world were not big enough to contain thy plans when thou wouldst unfold them — from the lilies and the birds as teachers thou shalt learn before God to be able to fold up all thy plans together very simply in what requires less room than a point and makes less fuss than the most insignificant trifle — in silence. And although what thou didst suffer in this world were more agonizing than has ever been experienced — thou shalt recognize the lilies and the birds as thy teachers and not become more self-important than are the lilies and the birds in their little sorrows.

So it is when the Gospel takes seriously the thought that the birds and the lilies are to be teachers. It is otherwise with the poet, or with the man who, just for lack of seriousness, in the silence amongst the lilies and the birds does not become perfectly silent... but becomes a poet. For it is true that poet-speech is different exceedingly from common human speech, is so solemn that in comparison with common human speech it is almost like silence, but nevertheless it is not silence. Nor does the silence of the poet seek to be dumb, but on the contrary it seeks to express itself in speech... as a poet speaks. In the silence out there the poet dreams of achievement which however he never carries out (for the poet is not a hero); and he becomes eloquent (perhaps he becomes eloquent precisely because he is the unfortunate lover of achievement, whereas the hero is the fortunate lover, that is, because the regret makes him eloquent, as it is regret which essentially makes the poet), he becomes eloquent; this eloquence of his is the poem. Out there in the silence he devises great plans to transform the world and render it blissful, great plans which never are realized — no, they become in fact the poem. And there in the silence he broods over his pain, lets everything (yes, even the teachers, birds and lilies, must serve him

instead of teaching him), he lets everything echo his pain; and the echo of this pain is the poem; for a mere scream is not a poem, but the endless echo of the scream within itself, that is the poem.

So the poet is never silent in the silence with the lilies and the birds — and why not? Just because he inverts the relationship, thinks himself the more essential thing in comparison with the lilies and the birds, imagines that he has, as the phrase goes, rendered a service to the birds and the lilies by lending them words and speech, whereas his task was to learn silence from the lilies and the birds.

Ah, if only the Gospel might succeed with the aid of the lilies and the birds in teaching thee, my hearer, seriousness, and me too, in making thee perfectly silent before God! That thou in silence mightest forget thyself, what thy name is, thine own name, the renowned name, the pitiful name, the insignificant name, for the sake of praying in silence to God, 'Hallowed be *Thy* name!' That thou in silence mightest forget thyself, thy plans, the great, the all-comprehensive plans, or the petty plans regarding thy life and its future, for the sake of praying in silence to God, '*Thy* kingdom come!' That thou in silence mightest forget thy will, thy self-will, for the sake of praying in silence to God, '*Thy* will be done!' Yea, if thou couldst learn from the lilies and the birds to become perfectly silent before God, what might not the Gospel help thee to accomplish, then nothing would be impossible for thee! But if only the Gospel with the aid of the lilies and the birds has taught thee silence, how much has it already helped thee to accomplish! For, as has been said, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and so is silence the beginning of godly fear. Go to the ant and be wise, says Solomon; go to the birds and the lilies and learn silence, says the Gospel.

'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' But the expression for the fact that one seeks first God's kingdom is precisely

silence like that of the lilies and the birds. The lilies and the birds seek God's kingdom and nothing else whatsoever, all the rest will be added unto them. But then are they seeking God's kingdom *first* when they seek nothing else whatsoever? How comes it then that the Gospel says, 'Seek *first* God's kingdom,' and thereby seems to mean that there was something else to seek subsequently, in spite of the fact that it evidently is the meaning of the Gospel that God's kingdom is the only thing that is to be sought? This surely is due to the fact that God's kingdom only can be sought when it is sought first; he who does not seek God's kingdom first does not seek it at all. It is due moreover to the fact that being able to seek implies the possibility of being able to seek something else; and hence the Gospel, which for the time being is extraneous to man, who thus can seek something else, must say, 'God's kingdom thou shalt seek first.' And finally it is due to the fact that the Gospel gently and lovingly condescends to man, talks to him so mildly in order to entice him to choose the good. If the Gospel were to say at once, 'Thou shalt solely and only seek God's kingdom,' this would surely seem to man to be requiring too much, half impatiently and half fearfully he would draw back. But now the Gospel accommodates itself to him a little. There stands man with the many things before his eyes which he would seek — then the Gospel addresses him and says, 'Seek first God's kingdom.' Then man thinks, 'All right, if afterwards I am permitted to seek something else, I may as well begin by seeking God's kingdom.' If then he really begins with this, the Gospel knows very well what the consequence will be, namely, that he will become so content and satisfied with this seeking that he entirely forgets to seek anything else — so that it now becomes true that he seeks solely and only God's kingdom. So does the Gospel behave, and so indeed do the parents speak to a child. Imagine a child who is very hungry; when the mother sets the food on the table, and the child catches a sight of what is placed there, then the child is on the

point of tears and says, ‘What does that little bit amount to? When I have eaten that I shall be just as hungry as ever.’ Perhaps the child becomes so impatient that it will not even begin to eat, ‘because that little bit can’t be worth while.’ But the mother, knowing very well that this is all a misunderstanding, says, ‘Well, well, my little friend, first eat this now, and then we can always manage to get a little more.’ So the child sets to work — and what happens? The child is sated before the half is eaten. If the mother had rebuked the child and said, ‘It is really more than enough,’ she would not have been in the wrong, but she would not by her behaviour have given example of the wisdom which is characteristic of good child-training, as in fact she now did. So it is with the Gospel. The most important thing with the Gospel is not to scold and rebuke, what is most important with the Gospel is to get men to follow it. Hence it says ‘Seek first’. Thereby it stops the mouth, so to speak, of all man’s objections, brings him to silence, and gets him actually to begin with this seeking; and then this seeking so satisfies man that it becomes true that he seeks solely and only God’s kingdom.

Seek first God’s kingdom, that is, become like the lilies and the birds, that is, become perfectly silent — then shall the rest be added unto you.

II. 'NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS; FOR EITHER HE WILL LOVE THE ONE AND HATE THE OTHER, OR ELSE HE WILL HOLD TO THE ONE AND DESPISE THE OTHER'

MY HEARER. THOU knowest that in the world there is often talk about an either/or; and this either/or awakens a great sensation, engages the attention of various persons in the most various ways, in hope, in fear, in busy activity, in tense inactivity, etc. Thou knowest also that in the same world there is heard talk about there being no either/or, and the assertion that this wisdom has made just as much sensation as the most significant either/or. But out there in the silence with the lilies and the birds, could it be doubtful whether there is an either/or, or could it there be doubtful what this either/or is, or could it there be doubtful whether this either/or is not in the deepest sense the only either/or?

No, here in this solemn silence, not only under God's heaven, but in the solemn silence before God, there can be no doubt about it. There is an either/or: either God/or... the rest is indifferent. Whatsoever a man chooses, when he does not choose God, he has missed either/or, or he is in perdition with his either/or. So then: either *God/.* Thou seest that no stress falls upon the second term, except by reason of opposition to God, whereby the stress is laid infinitely upon God, so that properly it is God who, as Himself the object of the choice, makes the decision tense, so that the choice becomes truly an either/or. If in light-mindedness or melancholy a man could think that where God is involved as one of the choices there are nevertheless three things to choose amongst — he is lost, or he has lost God, and therefore for him there really is no either/or at all; for along with God, when

the idea of God vanishes or is jumbled, the either/or also vanishes. But how could this happen to any one in the silence with the lilies and the birds?

So then, either/or: either God — and that in the way the Gospel explains it, either to love God*/or* to hate Him. Oh, yes, when there is noise all around thee, or when thou art in a mood of distraction, this seems to be almost an exaggeration, there seems to be too great a distance between loving and hating to justify one in approaching them so near to one another, in one breath, in a single thought, in two words, without intervening clauses, without a word being interjected to effect a closer agreement, the one following upon the other immediately without the slightest sign of separation. But just as in a vacuum a body falls with infinite velocity, so does the silence, the silence out there with the lilies and the birds, the solemn silence before God, bring it about that these two contraries touch and repel one another in one and the same instant, yea, they come into existence in the same instant: either love/or hate. Just as little as there is in the vacuum a third factor which retards the falling body, just so little is there in this solemn silence before God a third factor which could hold hating and loving at a distance which retards their approach. — Either God/ — and that as the Gospel explains it: either hold to Him or despise Him. In the society of men, in common dealings, in intercourse with the many, there seems to lie a great distance between holding to a man and despising him. 'I do not need to have intercourse with that person,' some one says, 'but from this it does not by any means follow that I despise him.' And so it is also in the case of intercourse with the many with whom one has to do 'socially', without essential cordiality, and with more or less indifference. But the smaller the number is, so much the less social, in the conventional sense, does this intercourse become; that is to say, the more cordial the intercourse becomes, so much the more does either/or begin to be the law for the relationship; and intercourse with God is in the deepest sense and absolutely

nonsocial. Take merely the case of two lovers, a relationship which also is non-social just because it is so cordial — for them and for their relationship the rule holds good: either we hold to one another/or despise one another. And now, in the solemn silence before God with the lilies and the birds, where accordingly there is nobody at all present, where accordingly there is no other intercourse for thee but with God — there indeed the rule holds good: either hold to Him/or despise Him. There is no excuse, for no one else is present, in any case no one is present in such a wise that thou canst hold to him without despising God; for precisely there in the silence it is clear how close God is to thee. The two lovers are so close to one another that the one, so long as the other lives, cannot hold to any one else without *despising* the other. Herein consists whatever there may be of either/or in this relationship. For the question whether there exists this either/or (either hold to/or despise) depends upon how close the two are to one another. But God who never dies is still closer to thee, infinitely closer, than two lovers are to one another, He who is thy Creator and thy supporter, He in whom thou dost live and move and have thy being, He by whose grace thou dost receive everything. So there is no exaggeration in this notion of either holding to God/or despising Him; it is not as when a person introduces either/or for a trivial reason, a person of whom it can therefore be justly said that he is captious. It is not so here. For in the first place, God after all is God. And in the second place, He does not introduce this with reference to things indifferent — either a rose/or a tulip. But He introduces it with reference to Himself and says, Either me — either thou holdest to me, and that unconditionally and in every case/or thou dost... despise me. Surely God could not speak otherwise about Himself. If God were to speak or could speak of Himself as if He were not absolutely No. i, as if He were not the only one, absolutely everything, but merely another something or another, one who indulged the hope that he also might perhaps be taken into

account along with other things — in such a case God would have lost Himself, lost the notion of what He is, and He would not be God.

So then, in the silence with the lilies and the birds there is an either/or, either God/ — and one which is to be thus understood: either hold to Him/or... despise Him.

What then does this either/or signify? what does God demand? For either/or is a demand — as indeed the lovers demand love when one says to the other, Either/or. But God is not related to thee as a lover, neither art thou related to Him as a lover. The relationship is a different one: that of the creature to the Creator. What then does He demand by this either/or? He demands obedience, unconditional obedience. If thou art not obedient in everything unconditionally, then thou lovest Him not, and if thou lovest Him not — then thou dost hate Him; if thou art not obedient in everything unconditionally, then thou holdest not to Him, or if thou holdest not to Him in everything unconditionally, then thou holdest not to Him then... thou dost despise Him.

This unconditional obedience (corresponding to the formula that if a man does not love God, he hates Him, and if he does not hold to him unconditionally and in all respects, he despises Him), this unconditional obedience thou canst learn from the teachers which the Gospel indicates, from the lilies and the birds. By learning to obey, one learns to rule, it is said; but still more certain it is that by being oneself obedient one can learn obedience from oneself. So it is with the lilies and the birds. They have no power to compel the learner, they have only their own obedience as the compulsive force. Lilies and birds are ‘the obedient teachers’. Is not this a strange expression? ‘Obedient’ is the word one ordinarily employs for the pupil, of whom it is required that he must be obedient; but here it is the teacher himself that must be obedient! And in what subject does he give instruction? In obedience. And by what means does he impart this

instruction? By obedience. If thou couldst become as obedient as the lilies and the birds, thou wouldst also by obedience be able to learn obedience from thyself. But since thou surely art not so obedient, nor I, let us from the lilies and the birds learn:

OBEDIENCE.

Out there with the lilies and the birds there is silence, we said. But this silence, or to be silent, as we sought to learn from it, is the first prerequisite for being able truly to obey. When all around thee is solemn silence, as out there, and when there is silence within thee, then thou dost apprehend, and apprehend with the emphasis of inwardness, the truth of the saying, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' and thou dost apprehend that it is 'thou', thou who shalt love God, thou, thou alone in the whole world, thou who art alone in the environment of the solemn silence, so alone that every doubt, and every objection, and every excuse, and every evasion, and every question, in short, every voice, is reduced to silence in thine own inward man, every voice, that is to say, every other voice but God's, which about thee and within thee talks to thee by means of the silence. If there never were such silence about thee, and within thee, thou never didst learn or dost learn obedience.

Give heed then to nature around thee. In nature all is obedience, unconditional obedience. Here 'God's will is done, as in heaven, so on earth', or, if some one translates the sacred words in another fashion, they are just as applicable: here in nature 'God's will is done, on earth as it is in heaven'. In nature all is unconditional obedience; here it is not merely (as also it is in the human world) that because God is the Almighty, therefore nothing comes to pass, not the least thing even, without His will; no, here it is at the same time because all is unconditional obedience. But this surely is an infinite difference; for it is one thing that not the most cowardly and not

the most defiant human disobedience, that not the disobedience of the individual, nor that of the whole race, can do even the least thing against the will of Him who is the Almighty — and it is another thing that His will is done because everything obeys Him unconditionally, because there is no other will but His in heaven or on earth; and this is the case in nature. In nature it is true, as the Scripture says, that ‘not one sparrow falls to the ground without His will’, and that not merely because He is almighty, but because all is unconditional obedience, His will the only will: there is not even the least protest, not a word, not a sigh is heard; the absolutely obedient sparrow falls absolutely obedient to the ground because it is His will. In nature all is unconditional obedience. The soughing of the wind, the echo of the forest, the purling of the brook, the humming of summer, the whispering of the leaves, the whistle of the grass, every sound, every sound thou hearest is all assent, [Here there is a play on words which cannot be rendered. In Danish, *Lyd* is sound, *Adlyden* is assent, *Lydigked* is obedience.] unconditional obedience, so that in it thou canst hear God, as thou canst hear Him in the music which is the movement of the heavenly bodies in obedience. And the mettlesome force of the rushing wind, and the easy pliancy of the cloud, and the liquid fluidity of the sea and its consistency, and the swiftness of light, and the still greater swiftness of lightning — it is all obedience. And the sun’s rising on the stroke of the clock, and its setting on the stroke of the clock, and the shifting of the weather as upon a signal, and the alteration of the rising and the ebbing tide at definite times, and the correspondence of the seasons in their precise changes — all, all of it, and altogether, is obedience. Yea, if there were a star in heaven which would have its own will, or a grain of dust upon the earth — in that same instant they are both brought to naught, and with the same ease. For nature so understood is all of it naught, it is nothing else but

unconditionally God’s will; the very instant it is not unconditionally God’s will it has ceased to exist.

So let us consider more closely, and humanly, the lilies and the birds, in order to learn obedience. The lilies and the birds are unconditionally obedient to God. Herein they are masters. They understand, as beseemeth schoolmasters, masterfully to hit the unconditional — which, alas, *most men miss* and fail to hit. For there is one thing the lilies and the birds absolutely do not understand, namely, half-measures — which, alas, most men understand best. That a little disobedience, that this might not be absolute disobedience, is something the lilies and the birds cannot and will not understand. That the least, the very least disobedience, might in truth have any other name than... contempt of God — that the lilies and the birds cannot and will not understand. That there might be something else, or some one else, which one with divided heart *also* might serve besides God, and that this might not... also be to despise God — that the lilies and the birds cannot and will not understand. Marvellous sureness in hitting the mark and in having one’s life in the unconditional! And yet — O ye profound teachers! — might it indeed be possible that in any other place security were to be found but in the unconditional, since the conditional in fact is in itself insecurity? So I ought rather to speak differently, I ought not to admire the sureness with which they hit the unconditional, but say rather that it is the unconditional which gives them the marvellous sureness which makes them teachers in obedience. For the lilies and the birds are unconditionally obedient to God, in obedience they are so simple or so exalted *that they believe that all which comes to pass is unconditionally God’s will, and that they have nothing else in the world to do but unconditionally to do God’s will, or with unconditional obedience to* ‘*submit to God’s will.*

Though the place allotted the lily is as disadvantageous as possible, so that it easily can be foreseen that it will be entirely superfluous all its life long, not be noticed by any one who might rejoice in it; though the place and the environment is (why, here I have forgotten that it is the lily I am talking about!) — is so 'desperately' disadvantageous that not only is it not sought out but is avoided, nevertheless the obedient lily puts up obediently with its circumstances and shoots up in all its beauty. We men, or a man in the situation of the lily, would surely say, 'It is hard, it is not to be endured, when one is a lily and beautiful as a lily, then to be allotted a place in such a situation, to bloom there in an environment which is as unfavourable as possible, as though expressly calculated to annihilate the impression of one's beauty; no, that is not to be put up with, that is indeed a self-contradiction on the part of the Creator!' So it is we men would likely think and talk, if we were in the situation of the lily, and thereupon we would wither with grief. But the lily thinks differently, it thinks thus: 'I myself have not been able to determine the situation and the circumstances, and so it is not in the remotest way my affair; that I stand where I stand is God's will.' So thinks the lily, and it actually is God's will as it thinks; one can perceive this in it, for it is beautiful — not even Solomon in all his glory was so arrayed. And if there were as between lily and lily a difference in beauty, this lily must be accorded the prize — it has one beauty the more; for to be beautiful when one is a lily is really no art, but in such conditions to be beautiful, in such an environment which does everything to hinder it, in such an environment to be completely oneself and to preserve one's identity, to deride the power of the environment — no, not to deride, that the lily does not do, but to be perfectly care-free in all its beauty! For the lily is, in spite of the environment, itself, because it is absolutely obedient to God; and because it is absolutely obedient to God, therefore it is absolutely care-free, as only the absolutely obedient (especially under such conditions)

can be. And because it is fully and completely itself, and absolutely carefree (two things which correspond to one another directly and inversely), therefore it is beautiful. Only by absolute obedience can one with absolute accuracy hit upon the ‘spot’ where one is to stand, and when one hits upon it absolutely one understands that it is absolutely indifferent whether the spot be a dunghill. — Though it happens as unfortunately as possible for the lily that precisely the instant when it is on the point of shooting up is so unfavourable that (as with approach to certainty it can discern beforehand) at that very instant it will be broken, so that its coming into being becomes its destruction, indeed it seems as if it came into existence and became beautiful only to be destroyed — yet the obedient lily obediently submits to this, it knows that such is God’s will, and it shoots up — if thou wert to see it at that instant, there would not be the least thing to suggest that this unfolding was also its destruction, so fully developed, so rich and beauteous, did it shoot up, so rich and beauteous did it advance obediently to its destruction — for in fact it all occurred in an instant. A man, or we men, in the situation of the lily would be in despair at the thought that coming into existence and destruction was one thing, and thereupon would prevent ourselves by despair from becoming what we might have become, though it were but for an instant. With the lily it is otherwise. It was absolutely obedient, hence it became itself in its beauty, it became actually its whole possibility, undisturbed, absolutely undisturbed by the thought that the same instant was its death. Oh, if as between lily and lily there were a difference in beauty, this lily must be accorded the prize; it had one beauty the more, that of being so beautiful in spite of the certainty of destruction at the same instant. And, verily, with destruction before its eyes, to have courage and faith to come into being in all its beauty — that only absolute obedience is capable of. The certainty of destruction would, as was said, so disturb a man that he did not become his possibility, notwithstanding this

was granted him, although but the briefest term of existence was meted out to him. ‘To what purpose?’ he would say, or ‘Why?’ he would say, or ‘What is the use?’ he would say — and so he did not unfold his whole possibility, but had his deserts, in that stunted and ill-formed he sank beforehand under the instant. Only absolute obedience can with absolute precision hit ‘the instant’; only absolute obedience can embrace the instant, absolutely undisturbed by the next instant.

Although for the bird, when the instant arrives for it to make its journey,’, it is as certain as can be, according to the bird’s way of thinking, that it is well enough off where it is, so that it is letting go the certain to grasp the uncertain, nevertheless the obedient bird sets out instantly upon the journey; in its simplicity, by the aid of absolute obedience, it understands only one thing, but this it understands absolutely, that now is the absolute instant. — When the bird is painfully impressed by the harshness of life, when it is tried by hardships and adversity, when every morning for several days it finds its nest disturbed, the obedient bird begins its work over again from the very start every day, with the same eagerness and solicitude as at the first; in its simplicity, by the aid of absolute obedience, it understands one thing, but this it understands absolutely, that this is its work, that it has only to do its task. — When the bird must experience this world’s wickedness, when the little song-bird which sings in God’s honour must endure that a naughty child finds entertainment in mimicking it, to disturb thereby if possible the solemn silence; or when the solitary bird has found an environment which it loves, a beloved bough upon which it especially loves to sit, perhaps additionally dear to it for the fondest memories — and then there is a man who takes pleasure in chasing it away from this spot, by throwing stones or in some other way, a man, alas, who is as indefatigable in evil as the bird, though expelled and frightened away, is indefatigable in returning to its love and to the old

position; nevertheless the obedient bird puts up absolutely with everything, in its simplicity, by the aid of absolute obedience, it understands one thing, but this it understands absolutely, that everything which thus befalls it does not properly concern it, that is, it concerns it only improperly, or rather that what properly concerns it, but that absolutely, is with absolute obedience to God to submit to it.

So it is with the lilies and the birds from whom we should learn. Therefore thou shalt not say, ‘The lilies and the birds, of course, can be obedient, in fact there is nothing else they can be, or they cannot be otherwise; to be in that way a paragon of obedience is to make a virtue of necessity.’ This thou shalt not say, thou shalt in fact say nothing, thou shalt be silent and obey, so that, if indeed it is true that the lily and the bird make a virtue of necessity, thou mightest also succeed in making a virtue of necessity. Thou too art subjected to necessity; God’s will is done nevertheless, so strive to make a virtue of necessity by submitting with absolute obedience to God’s will, so absolutely obedient that thou mightest be able to say of thyself in relation to doing God’s will or submitting to it, ‘I can do nothing else, I can do no otherwise.’ [Recalling Luther’s reply at the Diet of Worms.]

For this thou shouldst strive, and thou shouldst consider that, however it may be with the lilies and the birds, whether it really is more difficult for a man to be absolutely obedient, there is also for man an additional danger, which, if I dare say so. might make this easier for him, namely, the danger of wearing out God’s patience. For if thou hast ever quite seriously considered thine own life, or considered the lives of men, the human world which is so different from nature where all is absolute obedience, if thou hast ever reflected upon this, hardly without a shudder couldst thou apprehend with how much truth it is God calls Himself ‘the God of patience’, apprehend that He is the God who says either/ or, and that in the

sense of either love me/or hate me, either hold to me/or despise me — and that He has the patience to bear with thee and with me and with us all! If God were a man, what then? How long, long, long ago must He then (to take myself as an instance) have become tired and weary of me and of having to deal with me, and said, but with far better reason than human parents have for saying it, 'The child is both ugly and ailing, and stupid and intractable, and if for all that there was something good about it, but with all that it is so very bad that no man can put up with it.' No, there is no man who can put up with it, only the God of patience can.

And then think of the innumerable multitudes of men now living! We men speak of its being a work of patience to be a school-teacher for little children; and then think of God, who must be the school-teacher for this innumerable multitude! What patience! And then what makes the tax upon patience infinitely greater is that where God is school-teacher all the children suffer more or less from the delusion that they are big grown-up men, a delusion from which the lilies and the birds are quite free — and surely just for this reason, that absolute obedience comes so easy to them. 'If on top of everything else,' a human school-teacher might say, 'if on top of everything else the children got the notion that they were grown-up men, one must lose all patience and must despair; for that would be something no man could endure.' No, surely no man could endure it, only the God of patience can. Hence it is that God calls Himself the God of patience. And he knows well what He says. It was not in a transient mood it occurred to Him to call Himself by this name; no, He does not vary in mood, that indeed would be impatience. He knows it from all eternity, and He knows it from the daily experience of thousands and thousands of years, He knows from all eternity that so long as the temporal lasts, and the human race within it, He must be the God of patience, for otherwise human disobedience could not be endured. In relation to the lilies and the birds God is the fatherly

Creator and Sustainer, only in relation to man is He the God of patience. True enough there is a comfort, a very necessary and indescribable comfort, wherefore the Scripture says also that God is the God of patience... and comfort — but at the same time this is a terribly serious thing, that man might take God's patience in vain. Man discovered an attribute of God which the lilies and the birds, which are absolutely obedient, did not know, or God was so loving towards man as to let it be revealed to him that He has this attribute, that He is patience. But also (oh, frightful responsibility!) there is in a sense a correspondence between man's disobedience and God's patience. That is the comfort — but under a terrible responsibility. Man dares to know that even though all men were to give him up, yea, even though he were near to giving up himself, God is nevertheless the God of patience. This is inestimable riches. Oh, but use it rightly, remember that it is a savings-account; for the sake of God in heaven use it rightly, otherwise it precipitates thee into still greater misery, it transforms itself into its opposite, it is no longer comfort, but becomes the most frightful of all indictments against thee. For if it seem to thee too hard a saying (though it is not harder than the truth) that this thing of not holding to God absolutely and in all things, that this is 'straightway'... to despise Him — yet it cannot be too hard a saying that this thing of taking His patience in vain is to despise God!

Be attentive therefore, according to the instruction of the Gospel, to learn obedience from the lily and the bird. Be not affrighted, do not despair, when thou comparest thy life with these teachers. There is nothing to despair about, for indeed thou *shalt* learn from them; and the Gospel first comforts thee by telling thee that God is the God of patience, but then it adds: Thou shalt learn from the lilies and the birds, learn to be absolutely obedient like the lilies and the birds, learn not to serve two masters; for no man can serve two masters, he must either... or.

But if thou canst become absolutely obedient like the lilies and the birds, then thou hast learnt what thou hast to learn, and then thou hast learnt from the lilies and the birds (and if thou hast fully learnt it, thou hast then become more perfect than they, so that the lilies and the birds instead of being teachers become a symbol), thou hast learnt only to serve one master, to love Him alone, and to hold to Him absolutely in all things. Then should also the prayer (which indeed is fulfilled nevertheless) be fulfilled also in thee when thou prayest to God, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ for if thou art absolutely obedient to God, then there is no ambiguity in thee, and if there is no ambiguity in thee, then art thou mere simplicity before God. But one thing there is which all Satan’s cunning and all the snares of temptation cannot take by surprise, and that is simplicity. What Satan spies with keenness of sight as his prey (but what never is found in the lilies and the birds), what all temptation aims at, certain of its prey (but what never is found in the lilies and the birds) — is the ambiguous. Where the ambiguous is, there is temptation, and there it proves only too easily the stronger. But where the ambiguous is, there also, in one way or another, is disobedience down at the bottom; and just for this reason there is no ambiguity in the lilies and the birds, because absolute obedience is deepest and everywhere at the bottom; and just for this reason it is impossible to lead the lilies and the birds into temptation. Where there is no ambiguity, Satan is powerless, where there is no ambiguity, temptation is as powerless as a bird-catcher with his trap when there is no bird to be discovered — but with the merest glimpse of the ambiguous Satan is strong and temptation is enticing; and keen-sighted is the evil one whose trap is called temptation and whose prey is called the human soul. It is not really from him temptation comes, but no ambiguity, absolutely none, can hide itself from him, and if he discovers it, temptation is then at hand. But the man who with absolute obedience hides himself in God is absolutely safe; from his safe hiding-place he can see the

devil, but the devil cannot see him. From his safe hiding-place — for keen-sighted as the devil is with respect to ambiguity, just so blind is he when he looks upon simplicity, he becomes blind, or is stricken with blindness. But it is not without a shudder the absolutely obedient man regards him; this glittering glance which looks as if it could penetrate earth and ocean and the heart's most hidden secret, as indeed it can — and then, that with such a glance he is... blind! But if he who spreads the traps of temptation is blind with respect to him who by absolute obedience is hid in God, then for this man there is no temptation, for 'God tempteth no man'. And so his prayer is heard, 'Lead us not into temptation'; that is to say, Let me never at any time by disobedience venture outside my hiding-place, and in so far as I nevertheless am guilty of a disobedience, do not immediately drive me from my hiding-place, outside of which I am instantly led into temptation. And if with absolute obedience he remains in his hiding-place, then is he also 'delivered from the evil'.

No man can serve two masters, he must either love the one and hate the other, or hold to the one and despise the other, ye cannot serve God and mammon, nor God and the world, good and evil; and the reason why a man only can serve one master is surely this, that these two powers, though the one is infinitely stronger than the other, are in mortal strife one with another. This tremendous danger in which man finds himself by being man (a danger which the lilies and the birds are spared in their absolute obedience, which is happy innocence, for it is not over them that God and the world are at strife, or good and evil), the tremendous danger which consists in the fact that man is placed between these tremendous powers and the choice left to him, this tremendous danger brings it about that man must either love or hate, that not to love is to hate; for so hostile are these two powers that the slightest inclination towards the one side becomes absolute opposite as seen from the other side. When man forgets this tremendous

danger in which he is (and a danger, be it noted, of a sort that to forget it is verily not an efficient way of meeting it), when man forgets that he is in this tremendous danger, when he even says, 'Peace and no danger' — then the saying of the Gospel must seem to him a foolish exaggeration. Ah, but that is just because he is so deeply sunken, so lost in perdition, that he neither has a conception of the love with which God loves him, along with the fact that it is precisely out of love that God requires absolute obedience, nor a conception of the power and craftiness of evil, along with a conception of his own weakness. And from the very first, man is too childish to understand the Gospel, its talk about either/or seems to him a false exaggeration — that the danger should be so great, that absolute obedience should be necessary, that the requirement of absolute obedience should be grounded in love — that is something man cannot get into his head.

What then does the Gospel do? The Gospel, which is the wisdom of child-training, does not enter into strife with man about thoughts and words, in order to *prove* to him that this is so; the Gospel knows full well that it is not thus the thing is accomplished, that it is not as though a man first understands that it is so as it is said to be, and thereupon resolves unconditionally to obey, but conversely, that by obeying unconditionally a man first comes to understand that it is so as the Gospel says. Therefore the Gospel asserts authority and says, *Thou shah.* But at the same instant this is softened so that it might be capable of moving the hardest heart; it takes thee as it were by the hand — and does as a loving father does with his child — and says, 'Come, let us go out among the lilies and the birds.' And there it continues thus: 'Consider the lilies and the birds, abandon thyself to them, lose thyself in them. Does not this sight move thee?' Then when the solemn silence among the lilies and the birds moves thee profoundly, the Gospel explains farther and says, 'But why is this silence so solemn? Because it expresses the unconditional obedience with which everything

only serves one master, turns in serviceable obedience only to one, united in perfect unity, in a solemn divine service — so let thyself be affected by this great thought, for it is all only one thought, and learn from the lilies and the birds.’ But do not forget, thou *shalt* learn from the lilies and the birds, thou shalt become absolutely obedient like the lilies and the birds. Reflect that it was man’s sin which (by not willing to serve one master, or by willing to serve another master, or by willing to serve two, yea, many masters) disturbed all the beauty of the world, where hitherto everything was so very good, his sin which created a discord in a world of harmony; and reflect that every sin is disobedience, and every disobedience sin.

III. 'BEHOLD THE BIRDS OF THE AIR: THEY SOW NOT, NEITHER DO THEY REAP, NOR GATHER INTO BARNS' — UNCONCERNED FOR THE MORROW. 'CONSIDER THE GRASS OF THE FIELD WHICH TODAY IS.'

DO THIS AND LEARN JOYFULNESS

SO LET US then consider the lilies and the birds, these joyous schoolmasters. 'These joyous schoolmasters,' yes, for thou knowest that joy is infectious, and therefore no one is more capable of giving instruction on the subject of joy than he who himself is joyous. The teacher of joy has really nothing else to do but to be himself joyful, or to be joy; however he may exert himself to communicate joy — if he is not himself joyful, the instruction is incomplete. So there is no subject in which it is easier to give instruction than joy — ah, one only needs to be truly joyful oneself. But this 'ah' signifies, alas, that after all it is not so easy, that is to say, not so easy to be truly joyful oneself — for that it is easy enough to give instruction in joy when one is joyful oneself... is as certain as can be.

But out there with the lilies and the birds, or out there where the lilies and the birds give instruction in joy, there always is joy. And never do the lilies and the birds get into embarrassment, as sometimes a human teacher does who has the subject-matter of his teaching inscribed upon paper or kept in his library, that is, in another place and not always with him; no, *there* where the lilies and the birds give instruction in joy, there always is joy — in fact it is in the lilies and the birds. What joy when the day dawns and the birds awaken early to the joy of the day; what joy, although tuned to another key, when the evening draws near and the birds hasten joyously home to their nests; and what joy all the long summer day! What joy when

the bird — who does not merely sing at his work like a joyous labourer, but whose essential work it is to sing — joyfully begins its song; what new joy when thereupon its neighbour begins, and then its opposite neighbour; and when then the whole chorus joins in, what joy; and when at last it is like a sea of tones to which forest and vale, heaven and earth, respond, a sea of tones in which he who struck the first note now tumbles head over heels with joy — what joy, what joy! And so it is throughout the bird's whole life; everywhere and always it finds something, or rather it finds enough to rejoice over; it wastes not a single instant, but it would account every single instant wasted in which it was not joyful. — What joy when the dew falls and refreshes the lily, which now that it is cooled is ready for repose; what joy when the lily after its bath dries itself luxuriously in the first rays of the sun; and what joy all the long summer day! Oh then, consider it — consider the lily, and consider the bird, and behold them both together! What joy when the bird hides itself by the lily, where it has its nest and where it finds itself so indescribably cosy, while for pastime it jests with the lily and hears its banter! What joy when from the bough high up, or even higher up, from the sky, the bird keeps its eye upon the nest, and upon the lily which smilingly turns its eye up to it! Happy and blissful existence, so rich in joy! Or is perhaps its joy the less because, narrow-mindedly understood, it is a little thing which makes it so joyful? No, this narrow-minded understanding is surely a misunderstanding, ah, a very sorry and dismal misunderstanding; for precisely the fact that it is a little thing which makes it so joyful is proof that the bird is itself joy or is joy itself. For this is surely true, is it not, that in case the thing one rejoices over is nothing at all, and yet one were to be indescribably joyful, it would be the very best proof that the man himself is joy or is joy itself — just as the lilies and the birds are, the joyous teachers of joy, who just because they are *unconditionally joyful* are joy itself. For he whose joy is dependent upon certain conditions is not joy itself, his joy is in

fact dependent upon conditions and is conditioned by them. But he who is joy itself is unconditionally joyful, just as, to state the converse proposition, he who is unconditionally joyful is joy itself. Ah, the conditions for becoming joyful put us men to much pains and anxious thought — and perhaps even if we were to attain all of these conditions, we nevertheless might not become unconditionally joyful. Yet is it not true, O ye profound teachers of joy, that it cannot be otherwise? For by the help of conditions, even if it were of all conditions, it is impossible indeed to be more than or otherwise than conditionally joyful. Conditions and the conditional correspond in fact to one another.

No, he only becomes unconditionally joyful who is joy itself, and only by being unconditionally joyful does one become joy itself.

But might it not be possible to state quite briefly how it is that joy is the content of this instruction of the lilies and the birds, or what is the content of this instruction of theirs on the subject of joy, that is to say, might it not be possible to define very briefly the thought-content of this instruction of theirs? Yes indeed, that is easy to do; for simple as the lilies and the birds are, they certainly are not scatter-brained. So then this is easily done; and let us not forget that in this direction a very great abridgement is already accomplished by the fact that the lilies and the birds are themselves what they give instruction in, do themselves express that wherein as teachers they give instruction. This (in contrast to the direct and primitive originality which consists in the fact that the lilies and the birds possess in the strictest sense at first hand the matter in which they give instruction) — this is acquired originality. And again this acquired originality in the lilies and the birds is simplicity; for the simplicity of instruction does not so much depend upon whether one employs simple and everyday expressions or grandiloquent and learned expressions; no, simplicity consists in the fact that the teacher himself is that wherein he imparts instruction. And such is

the case with the lilies and the birds. But their instruction in joy (which their lives in turn express) is quite simply as follows. There is a today. Upon the word '*is*' there falls an infinite emphasis. There is a today — and again, there is no concern at all for the morrow or for the day after. This is not frivolity on the part of the lilies and the birds, but it is the joy of silence and obedience. For when thou dost hold thy peace in the solemn silence which prevails in nature, the morrow is non-existent; and when thou dost obey as the creatures obey, the morrow is non-existent — that baleful day which is the invention of chattering and disobedience. But when by reason of silence and obedience the morrow is non-existent, today is, it *is* — and then there is joy, as there is in the lilies and the birds.

What is joy? or what is it to be joyful? It is to be present to oneself; but to be truly present to oneself is this thing of 'today', that is, this thing of *being* today, of truly *being today.* And in the Cf. what is said about the lilies and the birds in the *Christian Discourses.* same degree that it is more true that *thou* art today, in the same degree that thou art quite present to thyself in being today, in that very same degree is the baleful tomorrow non-existent for thee. Joy is the present tense, with the whole emphasis upon the *present.* Therefore it is that God is blessed, who eternally says, Today. And therefore it is that the lilies and the birds are joy, because with silence and unconditional obedience they are entirely present to themselves in being today.

'But', thou wilt say, 'the lilies and the birds, of course they can.' The answer is: It is not with a 'but' thou must respond, but thou must learn of the lilies and the birds to be as entirely present to thyself in being today, and then thou too art joy. But, as I have said, let there by no 'but' , for it is seriousness that thou *shalt* learn of the lilies and the birds. And still less shouldst thou become self-important, so that because the lilies and the birds are simple, and perhaps because thou wouldst feel thy superiority as a man,

thou wouldst become witty and wouldst say in view of a particular tomorrow, ‘The lilies and the birds, of course they can, since they do not even have tomorrow to worry about, whereas man has not only to be anxious for the morrow what he shall eat, but also for yesterday, in view of what he has eaten... and not paid for!’ No, let there be no witticism which naughtily disturbs the instruction. But learn, begin at least to learn of the lilies and the birds. For surely nobody can seriously think that what the lilies and the birds rejoice over, and the like of that, is nothing to be glad about! As this: that thou didst come into existence, that thou art in existence, that ‘today’ thou hast what is needful for existing; that thou didst come into being, that thou didst become a man; that thou canst see — only think, that thou canst see! — that thou canst hear, thou canst smell, thou canst taste, thou canst feel; that the sun shines upon thee... and for thy sake, that when the sun is weary the moon then begins, then the stars are lit; that it becomes winter, that the whole of nature dons a white robe, pretends to be a stranger... to delight thee; that it becomes spring, that the birds arrive in numerous flocks... and all this for thy delight; that the green leaves burgeon, that the forest becomes beautiful as a bride... and this to delight thee; that it becomes autumn, that the birds depart on their journeys... not because they would make themselves more precious, ah, no, but lest thou shouldst grow tired of them; that the forest keeps its finery in hiding for the next time, in order, in fact, that the next time it may delight thee — and this, they say, is nothing to be glad of! Oh, if I might venture to scold! But this, out of reverence for the lilies and the birds, I dare not do; and therefore, instead of saying that this is nothing to be glad of, I will say, If this is nothing to be glad of, then there is nothing to be glad of. Consider that the lilies and the birds are joy and yet, even so considered, have in fact much less to rejoice over than thou, who hast also the lilies and the birds to rejoice over. Therefore learn of the lilies, and learn of the birds, who are teachers —

teachers that exist, *are today*, and are joy. If thou canst not behold with joy the lilies and the birds, which indeed are joy itself, if thou canst not behold them with joy so that thou dost become willing to learn of them — then it is with thee as when the teacher says of the child, 'Lack of ability it is not, and the subject anyway is so easy that it could not be lack of ability; so it must be something else, perhaps only that he is out of sorts, which is not a thing to be dealt with sternly and treated as unwillingness or maybe as refractoriness.'

Thus it is that the lilies and the birds are teachers of joy. And yet in fact the lilies and the birds also have sorrow, as the whole of nature has sorrow. Does not the whole creation groan under the corruption to which it was subjected against its will? It is all of it subjected to corruption! The stars, firmly as they are fixed in heaven, yea, even that which is fixed most firmly, shall none the less change place by falling, and that which never changed its place shall nevertheless one day change its place by toppling into the abyss; and all this world with all that is within it shall be changed as one changes a garment when it is put off, a prey to corruption! And the lily, even if it escapes the fate of being at once cast into the oven, must nevertheless fade, after already having suffered this and that. And the bird, even if it is allowed to die of old age, must one day die nevertheless, and be separated from its beloved, after already having suffered this and that. Ah, it is all corruption, and all shall one day become what it is, a prey to corruption! This is the *groan* — for to be subjected to corruption is what a groan signifies: to be in confinement, in bondage, in prison. And the content of the groan is: Corruption, corruption!

And yet the lilies and the birds are unconditionally joyful; and it is here most properly thou mayest perceive how true it is when the Gospel says, Thou *shalt* learn joyfulness from the lilies and the birds. A better teacher

thou couldst not possibly require than one who, though he himself carries such an infinitely deep sorrow, is yet unconditionally joyful and is joy itself.

How do the lilies and the birds behave in a case like this which seems almost like a miracle: in the deepest sorrow to be unconditionally joyful, when there is such a dreadful tomorrow, nevertheless *to be* — that is, to be unconditionally joyful today — how do they comport themselves? They behave quite simply and with simplicity (as the lilies and the birds always do), and they get this tomorrow out of the way as if it were non-existent. There is a saying of the Apostle Peter which the lilies and the birds have laid to heart, and, simple as they are, they take it quite literally — ah, and just this fact, that they take it quite literally, just this it is that helps them. There is an immense force in this saying when it is taken quite literally; when it is not taken literally, exactly according to the letter, it is more or less powerless, and at last only an unmeaning phrase; but it absolutely requires simplicity to take it absolutely with perfect literalness. 'Cast *all* your care UPON GOD.' Behold, this is what the lilies and the birds do absolutely. By the help of absolute silence and absolute obedience they cast it — yea, as the most powerful catapult casts something from it, with such passion as that with which one casts from oneself what one most abhors — they cast all care away, and cast it — with such sureness as the surest gun can shoot, and with a trust and confidence of hitting the mark such as only the most practised marksman has — they cast it UPON GOD. In a trice (and this trice is counted from the very first instant, is today, is contemporaneous with the first instant of existence), in a trice they are absolutely joyful. Marvellous dexterity! To be able thus to get hold of all one's care all at once, and then to be able to cast it so dexterously from it, and to hit so surely the mark! Yet this is what the lilies and the birds do, and therefore in that same trice they are absolutely joyful. And indeed this is quite natural, for God the Almighty supports the whole world and all the

world's care (including that of the lilies and the birds) with infinite ease. What indescribable joy! — joy over God the Almighty.

So learn then of the lilies and the birds, learn of them this marvellous dexterity of theirs. True enough, it is a marvellous trick, but just for this cause thou shalt pay closer attention to the lilies and the birds. It is a marvellous trick, and like 'the trick of meekness' it contains a contradiction, or it is a trick which resolves a contradiction. The word 'cast' suggests an expenditure of force, as if one had to collect all one's forces and with an immense expenditure of force... cast care away by sheer strength; and yet 'strength' is exactly the thing which is not to be employed. What is to be employed is... 'compliance' — and yet one is to cast care away. And one is to cast 'all' care away; if one does not cast all care away, one thus retains much of it, something of it, a little, and does not become absolutely joyful. And if one does not cast it absolutely *upon God,* but in some other direction, one is not absolutely rid of it, in one way or another it returns again, most likely in the form of a still greater and more bitter sorrow. For to cast care away, but not... upon God — that is 'distraction'. But distraction is a doubtful and ambiguous remedy for care and sorrow. But on the other hand, to cast all care absolutely... upon God is 'collectedness', and yet — yea, marvellous is this trick of contradiction! — it is a *collection* by which thou dost *become rid* absolutely of care.

Learn then of the lilies and the birds. Cast all thy care upon God! But joy thou shalt not cast away, that on the contrary thou shalt hold fast, with all thy might, with all thy vital power. If thou wilt do this, it is easy to reckon that thou wilt always retain some joy; for if thou dost cast all care away, thou dost still retain whatever thou hast of joyfulness. This, however, avails but little. Learn therefore furthermore from the lilies and the birds: cast all thy care upon God, entirely, absolutely, as the lilies and the birds do — then thou dost become absolutely joyful like the lilies and the birds. For this is

the absolute joy, to adore the almighty power with which God the Almighty bears all thy care and sorrow as easily as nothing. And this also is the absolute joy, the next one, which in fact the Apostle subjoins, adoringly to dare to believe that 'God careth for thee.' The absolute joy is precisely joy over God, over whom and in whom thou canst always rejoice. If in this relationship thou art not absolutely joyful, the fault lies absolutely in thee, in thy lack of dexterity in casting thy care upon Him, in thine unwillingness to do it, in thy self-conceit, in short, it lies in the fact that thou art not like the lilies and the birds. There is but one sorrow with respect to which the lilies and the birds cannot be our teachers, about which sorrow we therefore do not speak here, namely, sorrow for sin. With respect to all other care and sorrow it holds good that, if thou dost not become absolutely joyful, the fault is thine, that thou wilt not learn of the lilies and the birds with absolute silence and obedience to become absolutely joyful over God.

Still one thing more. Perhaps thou art inclined to say with the 'poet', 'Yes, if one could build a nest and live alongside of the bird, where the bird and its mate make a pair, but where apart from this there is no society, or if one could live along with the lily in the peace of the field, where each lily shifts for itself and there is no society; then indeed one could cast all one's care upon God and be or become absolutely joyful. For it is "society", precisely this it is which is the misfortune, the fact that man is the only being which torments itself with the unhappy delusion about society and the happiness of being in society, and this all the more in the precise degree that society, to his destruction and its own, becomes greater.' Thus, however, thou must not talk. No, consider the case more closely and confess to thy shame that it is the ineffable forest-joy, in spite of sorrow, by reason of which the birds, him and her, are a pair, and the self-contented joy of single blessedness, in spite of sorrow, by reason of which the lily is solitary — that properly it is this joy which ensures that society does not disturb them; for

after all there is in fact society. Consider it still more closely, and admit with shame that it is really the absolute silence and the absolute obedience by reason of which the lilies and the birds are absolutely joyful over God — that it really is this which explains how it is that the lilies and the birds are just as joyful, and just as absolutely joyful, in solitude and in society. So learn then of the lilies and the birds.

And if thou couldst learn to be entirely like the lilies and the birds — ah, and if I could learn it — then would also the prayer of truth be true in thee and in me, the last prayer in 'the Prayer' which (a model of all true prayer, which indeed prays itself joyful, and more joyful, and absolutely joyful) at last has nothing, nothing whatever more to pray for or to desire, but with absolute joyfulness concludes with prayer and worship, the prayer: 'For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory.' Yes, *His* is the kingdom; and therefore thou art to be absolutely silent, lest thou mightest make it disturbingly noticeable that thou dost exist, but that with absolute silence thou mayest express the fact that the kingdom is His. And *His* is the power; and therefore thou art to be absolutely obedient and art with absolute obedience to bear with everything, for His is the power. And *His* is the glory; therefore in all that thou doest and in all that thou endurest, thou hast absolutely one thing more to do; to give Him the glory, for the glory is His.

Oh, absolute joy, that His is the kingdom and the power and the glory — for ever and ever, for eternity! 'For eternity' — behold, this day, the day of eternity, never comes to an end. Only hold fast therefore to this, that His is the kingdom and the power and the glory in eternity, and thus for thee there is a day which never comes to an end, a day in which thou canst remain eternally present to thyself. Then let the heavens fall and the stars change their place in the overturning of all things, let the bird die and the lily fade — yet thy joy in worship outlives, and thou in thy joy dost outlive, even now *today*, every destruction. Consider what applies to thee, if not as a

man, at least as a Christian, that even the danger of death is for thee so unimportant that it is said, ‘Even now today art thou in Paradise,’ and thus the transition from time to eternity (the greatest possible transition) is so swift — and though it were to occur in the midst of universal destruction, it is yet so swift that thou even now today art in Paradise, for the fact that thou dost Christianly *remain* in God. For if thou dost remain in God, then whether thou dost live or die, and whether it goes well with thee or ill whilst thou livest, whether thou diest today or only after seventy years, or whether thou findest thy death at the bottom of the sea where it is deepest, or thou art scattered in the air — thou dost not find thyself outside of God, thou *remainest*, and so thou remainest present to thyself in God, and art therefore at the day of thy death even now today in Paradise. The bird and the lily live only one day, and that day a very short one, and yet they are joy because (as was shown) they properly are TODAY, are *present to themselves* in this today. And thou to whom the longest day is granted — to live today... and even now today to be in Paradise — shouldest not thou be absolutely joyful, thou who art even in duty bound, as indeed thou art able, to outdo by far the birds in joyfulness? Of which thou art reminded as often as thou dost make this prayer, and dost approximate it as often as thou dost sincerely make this prayer *of joy:* ‘Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.’

Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays (1849)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1940

CONTENTS

'THE HIGH PRIEST'— 'THE PUBLICAN'— 'THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER'

PREFACE

PRAYER

PRAYER

PRAYER

‘THE HIGH PRIEST’— ‘THE PUBLICAN’— ‘THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER’

by S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen

1849

PREFACE

MAY 'THAT SINGLE individual whom I with joy and gratitude call *my* reader' receive this gift. Truly it is more blessed to give than to receive; but if this be so, then the giver is in a sense the needy one, in need of the blessedness of giving; and if this be so, then the greater beneficence is that of him who receives — and so after all it is more blessed to receive than to give.

May he receive it! That which in imagination I saw when I first sent forth the little book (cf. the Preface to the *Two Edifying Discourses* of 1843) which I compared, and which indeed can best be compared, with 'an insignificant little flower hid in the covert of a great forest', that which then in imagination I saw, that I see again, 'how a little bird which I call *my* reader suddenly cast an eye upon it, swooped down in its flight, plucked it and carried it off'; or, on the other hand, and employing a different figure, I see again what I then saw, how the little book 'made its way along solitary paths, or went solitary along the highways... until finally it encountered that individual whom I call *my* reader, that individual whom it seeks, towards whom as it were it stretches out its arms' — that is, I saw and see that the little book is received by that single individual whom it seeks and who seeks it.

S. K.

September 1, *1849.*

PRAYER

WHITHER SHOULD WE turn, if not to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ? Where might the sufferer find consolation, if not in Thee? Ah, and where the penitent, if not with Thee, Lord Jesus Christ?

HEB. IV. 15. FOR WE HAVE NOT A HIGH PRIEST WHO IS UNABLE TO FEEL COMPASSION WITH OUR INFIRMITIES, BUT ONE WHO IN ALL POINTS WAS TRIED IN LIKE MANNER, YET WITHOUT SIN.

My hearer, whether it be that thou thyself hast been a sufferer, as is only too possible, or whether thou hast learnt to know sufferers, perhaps with the fine purpose of wanting to give consolation, this doubtless thou hast often heard this which is the universal complaint of sufferers: 'Thou dost not understand me, oh, thou dost not understand, thou dost not put thyself in my place, or if thou couldst put thyself in my place, if thou couldst put thyself entirely in my place, and so understand me entirely, thou wouldst talk differently.'

'Thou wouldst talk differently' — by this the sufferer means to say, 'Thou also wouldst perceive that there is no consolation.'

So this is the complaint; almost always the sufferer complains that he who would console him does not put himself in his place. Doubtless the sufferer has generally some justification; for no man experiences quite the same thing as another man, and even if such a thing were possible, it is definitely the universal and reciprocal limit of every man in particular, that he cannot entirely put himself in another man's place, that even with the best will he cannot entirely perceive, feel, think, like another man. But in another respect the sufferer is in the wrong, inasmuch as he would signify

by this that there is no consolation for the sufferer; for this might signify as well that every sufferer is to seek comfort in himself, that is, from God. It was surely not in any way God's will that the one man should be able to find complete consolation in the other man; on the contrary it is God's good pleasure that every sufferer should seek it from God, that when the consolations which others offer become insipid to him, he then should seek after God, in conformity with the saying of the Scriptures: 'Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.' O thou sufferer, and, O thou who perhaps honestly and well-meaningly dost desire to console — strive not with one another in this useless strife! Thou the compassionate one, show true compassion by not requiring that thou be able to put thyself entirely in the other's place; and thou the sufferer, show true gratitude by not requiring of another the impossible — there is indeed One who is able to put Himself entirely in thy place and in the place of every sufferer: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of this consolation speaks the sacred text which has been read. 'We have not a high priest who is unable to feel compassion with our infirmities' — that is, we have one who is able to feel compassion with our infirmities; and further, 'we have one who in all points was tried in like manner.' This actually is the condition for *being able* to have true compassion — for the compassion *of* the inexperienced and the untried is misunderstanding, most commonly it is for the sufferer a more or less grievous and painful misunderstanding — this is the condition; to be tried in like manner. When such is the case, one can entirely put oneself in the sufferer's place; and when in all points one is tried in like manner, one can put oneself entirely in the place of every sufferer. Such a High Priest we have, who *can* be compassionate; and that He *must* be compassionate thou canst perceive in the fact that it was out of compassion He was in all points tried in like manner — it was indeed this which determined Him to come to the world,

and again it was compassion, it was in order that He might truly be compassionate, that by His own free resolution He was in all points tried in like manner, He who entirely can put Himself, and can put Himself entirely, in thy place, in mine, in yours.

About this we would speak in the brief moment prescribed.

Christ put Himself entirely in thy place. He was God and became man — thus it was He put Himself in thy place. This indeed is what true compassion is so fain to do, it so fain would put itself in the sufferer's place, in order to be able to give effectual consolation. But this at the same time is what human compassion is unable to do; only divine compassion is able — and God became man. He became man; and He became the man who of all men, absolutely all, suffered the most; never was there born, never shall there or can there be born a man who shall suffer as He did. Oh, what security for His compassion! Oh, what compassion to give such security! Compassion impels Him to throw open His arms for all sufferers. 'Come unto me', saith He, 'all ye that suffer and are heavy laden'; 'Come unto me,' saith He; and He vouches for what He says, for (and this is the second call of the invitation) He was absolutely the greatest sufferer. Already it is something great if human compassion ventures to suffer almost as much as the sufferer — but out of compassion, for the sake of making the comfort sure, to suffer infinitely more than the sufferer... how great is that compassion 1 Human compassion, however, shrinks back with a shudder, it would rather remain sympathetically upon the secure seashore; or, if it ventures out, it is not willing to go by any means so far out as where the sufferer is — but what compassion, to go still farther out! Thou sufferer, what is it thou dost require? Thou requirest that the compassionate man shall put himself in thy place — and He, Compassion itself, not only put Himself entirely in thy place, but He had to suffer infinitely more than thou! Ah, sometimes it seems perhaps to the sufferer in his despondency as if

compassion were almost treacherously holding back a little — but here is compassion gone beyond thee in the suffering which is infinitely great!

He put Himself He can put Himself entirely in thy place, thou sufferer, whosoever thou art. — Is it a question of temporal and earthly care, of poverty, anxiety about one's livelihood and all that this implies? — He also suffered hunger and thirst, and that just at the most difficult moments of His life, when at the same time he was contending spiritually in the desert and on the cross; and for everyday use He had no more possessions than have the lilies of the field and the birds of the air — so much as this, however, even the poorest man surely must possess! And He who was born in a stable, swaddled in rags, laid in a manger, had throughout His life nothing whereon He could lay His head — as much homely shelter as this however even the homeless surely possess! Would He not then be entirely able to put Himself in thy place and understand thee? — Or is it sorrow of heart? — He also once had friends, or rather He thought once that He had them; but then when the decisive moment came they all forsook Him, yet no, not all, two remained behind, the one betrayed Him, the other denied Him! So then He once had friends, or thought once that He had them, they attached themselves to Him so closely, they even contended which should occupy the place at His right hand, and which at His left hand, until the decisive moment came and He, instead of being raised to the throne was lifted up upon the cross — then were two robbers compelled against their will to occupy the empty place at His right hand and the empty place at His left hand! Dost thou not think that He can entirely put Himself in thy place? — Or is it sorrow over the evil of the world, over the opposition which thou and the Good must suffer, assuming as quite certain that it is thou that wiliest the Good and the True? — oh, in this respect, thou, a man, surely wouldst not venture to compare thyself with Him, thou, a sinner, surely wouldst not venture to compare thyself with Him, the holy One, who first

experienced these sufferings (so that at the utmost thou canst suffer in His likeness), and sanctified these sufferings (thy sufferings also, if so be that thou dost suffer in likeness to Him) — Him who was despised, persecuted, reviled, mocked, spat upon, scourged, evil entreated, tortured, crucified, forsaken by God, crucified amidst universal jubilation — whatsoever thou hast suffered, and whosoever thou art, dost thou not think that He can entirely put Himself in thy place? — Or is it sorrow for the world's sin and ungodliness, sorrow that the world lieth in the evil one, sorrow at how deep man has fallen, sorrow for the fact that gold is virtue, that might is right, that the crowd is the truth, that only lies prosper, that only evil triumphs, that only self-love is loved, that only mediocrity is blest, that only shrewdness is esteemed, that only half-measures are praised, and only paltriness succeeds? — oh, in this respect, thou, a man, surely wouldst not venture to compare thy sorrow with that sorrow which was in the Saviour of the world, as though He were not entirely able to put Himself in thy place! — And so it is with respect to every suffering.

And therefore, thou sufferer, shut not thyself up despairingly with thy sufferings, as though no one, not even He, could understand thee; neither appeal impatiently to thy sufferings as though they were so frightful that not even He were able entirely to put Himself in thy place — presume not to utter this falsehood, bear in mind that He, absolutely, and absolutely beyond comparison, was of all sufferers the greatest sufferer. For if thou wouldst know who the greatest sufferer is, very well, I will tell thee. It is not the silent suppressed shriek of despair, and not that which strikes terror into others, the loudness of the shriek, which decides the matter; no, precisely the opposite. He is absolutely the greatest sufferer of whom in truth it is true (owing to the fact that he does it) that he has absolutely no other consolation than that... of consoling others; for this and this only is Truth's expression for the fact that in truth no one can put oneself in His place, along with the

fact that this is truth in Him. And thus it was with Him, the Lord Jesus Christ; He was not a sufferer who sought consolation from others, still less one who found it in others, still less one who complained of not finding it in others; no, He was *the* sufferer whose only, absolutely His only consolation was to console others. Behold, here thou art come to suffering's utmost possibility, but also to suffering's limit, where everything is inverted; for He, none other than He, is 'the Comforter'. Thou complainest that no one can put himself in thy place; preoccupied day and night with this thought, it perhaps never occurs to thee, I can fancy, that thou shouldst comfort others — and He, 'the Comforter,' He the only one of whom it truly holds good that no one can put himself in His place — how true it would have been if He had made such complaint! — He, 'the Comforter,' in whose place no one can put himself, can entirely put Himself in thy place and in the place of every sufferer. If it were true that no one can put himself in thy place, all right, then give proof of it; one thing only is left for thee: become thyself the one who comforts others. This is the only proof that can be adduced for the assertion that it is truth that no one can put himself in thy place. So long as thou wilt continue to talk about no one being able to put himself in thy place, just so long art thou not absolutely clear in thine own mind about it, otherwise thou wouldst at least hold thy peace. But even if thou wert to keep silent, so long as this does not have the effect that thou undertakest to comfort others, just so long art thou not absolutely clear in thine own mind about no one being able to put himself in thy place, thou sittest brooding in sheer despair, again and again engaged with the thought that no one is able to put himself in thy place; that is, thou must make this thought secure every moment; that is, it is not secure, thou art not clear in thine own mind about it; that is, this is not entirely truth in thee. Truth, however, it cannot possibly be in any man, that no one, absolutely no one, can put himself in his place; for precisely He, Jesus Christ, in whose place no one, either

entirely or in any measure, can put himself, precisely He can put Himself entirely in thy place.

He put Himself entirely in thy place, whosoever thou art who art assaulted by temptations and trials He put Himself entirely in thy place, ‘being tried in all points in like manner.’

As it is with the sufferer, so it is with the man who is tempted and tried, he too is inclined to complain that the person who would comfort or counsel or admonish him does not understand him, cannot entirely put himself in his place. ‘If thou wert in my place,’ says he, ‘or if thou wert able to put thyself in my place, thou couldst understand with what dreadful power temptation besets me, thou couldst understand how frightfully every *effort* of mine is mocked by trials of constancy — then thou wouldst pronounce a different *judgment.* But having thyself no experience of this, thou canst of course talk calmly about it, and of course take advantage of the opportunity to feel thyself a better man because thou hast not fallen into temptation nor succumbed to trial, that is to say, because thou wast not assaulted either by the one or the other. If thou wert in my place!’

Oh, my friend, do not contend in a useless strife which only embitters the more thy life and that of another — there is after all One who entirely can put Himself in thy place, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ‘for the fact that He Himself suffered temptation is able to succour them that are tempted’ (Heb. ii. 18); He it is who can entirely put Himself in thy place, Jesus Christ, who learned to know truly every temptation by withstanding every temptation. — Is it a question of concern about food, and quite literally concern about food in the strictest sense, so that death from starvation threatens thee — He too was tempted thus. Is it rash daring which tempts — He too was tempted thus. Is it to fall away from God thou art tempted — He too was tempted thus; He can entirely put Himself in thy place, whosoever thou art. Art thou tempted in solitude — so was He whom the evil spirit led out into the

solitude in order to tempt Him. Art thou tempted in the confusion of the world — so was He whose good spirit prevented Him from deserting the world before He had completed His work of love. Art thou tempted in the great moment of decision when it is a question of renouncing everything — so was He. Or is it at the next instant when thou art tempted to regret that thou didst sacrifice all — He too. Sinking under the possibility, art thou tempted to wish that the reality of danger were present — He too. In languishing weakness art thou tempted to desire thy death — so was He. Is the temptation that of being forsaken by men — He too was tempted. Is it that... but no, this trial surely no man has experienced, the trial of being deserted by God; but He was tempted thus. And so it is in every way.

Oh, thou therefore who art tempted, be not mute in despair, as though the temptation were superhuman and no one could understand it; neither depict impatiently the magnitude of thy temptation, as though even He could not entirely put Himself in thy place! For wilt thou know what is requisite in order truly to be able to judge how great a temptation truly is, very well then, I will tell thee. It is requisite... that thou hast withstood the temptation. Only then dost thou get to know truly how great the temptation was; so long as thou hast not withstood the temptation thou knowest only falsehood, only what temptation, precisely for the sake of tempting, makes thee believe about how frightful it is. To require from temptation the truth is asking too much; temptation is a deceiver and a liar which takes good care not to utter the truth, for its power is simply falsehood. If thou wouldst get the truth out of it as to how great it really is, thou must take pains to be the stronger, take pains to withstand temptation — then thou dost get to know the truth, or thou dost get the truth out of it. And hence there is but One who truly knows with perfect accuracy the magnitude of every temptation and can entirely put Himself in the place of every one who is tempted — He who was tried in all points in like manner, was tempted, but withstood every

temptation. Beware therefore of describing the magnitude of the temptation or of complaining of it more and more passionately — with every step thou takest along that path thou dost merely accuse thyself more and more, it is not possible along these lines to conduct thy defence for succumbing to temptation, by describing with more and more exaggeration the magnitude of the temptation; for everything of the sort that thou sayest is falsehood, since thou couldst get to know the truth only by withstanding temptation. Perhaps another man could help thee, if thou wouldst let thyself be helped — another man who was tempted in the same way but withstood temptation; for he knows the truth. But even if there is no other man who can tell thee the truth — there is however One who entirely can put Himself in thy place, He who was tried in all points in like manner, was tried and withstood temptation. From Him thou wilt be able to get to know the truth, yet only on the condition that He perceives it is thine honest intention to will to withstand temptation. And then when thou hast withstood temptation, thou dost not complain that no one can entirely put himself in thy place — for in case thou hast withstood temptation, it would be a matter of indifference to thee, certainly nothing to complain of, if it were true that no one could put himself in thy place. This complaint is the invention of the falsehood which belongs to temptation, and the purport of this falsehood is, that if any one were to understand thee entirely, it must be one who also succumbed to temptation, so that the two of you understood one another... in falsehood. Is this to 'understand' one another? No, here is the limit where everything is inverted: there is only One who truly can put Himself in thy place who art tempted — and that He can do just because He alone withstood every temptation. But at the same time — oh, do not forget this! — He can entirely put Himself in thy place.

He put Himself entirely in thy place, was tried in all points in like manner — YET WITHOUT SIN. SO then, in this respect He did not put

Himself in thy place — how could that be possible for Him, the holy One? If the difference is infinite between God who is in heaven and thee who art on earth, the difference is infinitely greater between the holy One and the sinner.

Oh, and yet even in this respect, though in another way, He put Himself entirely in thy place. For when He, when the suffering and death of the Atoner is the satisfaction for thy sin and guilt — being a satisfaction it assumes in fact thy place, or He, the Substitute, steps into thy place, suffering in thy place the punishment for sin, that thou mightest be saved, in thy place suffering death for thee, that thou mightest live — did He not put Himself entirely in thy place? Here indeed it is more literally true that He entirely puts Himself in thy place than it was when we talked of this in the foregoing, where it merely denoted that He could understand thee entirely, whereas thou remainest still in thy place and He in His place. But the satisfaction of the atonement signifies that thou dost step aside and that He assumes thy place — does He not then put Himself entirely in thy place?

For what else is the Atoner than a substitute (*Stedfortraeder*) who entirely puts Himself in thy place? And what is the comfort of it but this, that the Substitute puts Himself entirely in my place and thine? So when retributive justice, either here on earth or hereafter at the Day of Judgement, seeks the place where I a sinner stand with all my guilt — it does not find me, I no longer stand in that place, I have left it, Another stands in my place, Another who entirely puts Himself in my place. For this I thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ.

My hearer, such a High Priest have we — whosoever thou art, and howsoever thou dost suffer, He can entirely put Himself in thy place; whosoever thou art, O sinner, as all of us are, He puts Himself entirely in thy place! Thou art now going up to the altar, bread is handed thee and wine, His sacred body and blood, again presented as an eternal pledge that

He by His suffering and death put Himself entirely in thy place, that thou, saved by standing behind Him, when the Judgement is over mayest enter into life, where again He hath prepared a place for thee.

PRAYER

LORD JESUS CHRIST, let Thy Holy Spirit enlighten our minds and convince us thoroughly of our sin, so that, humbled and with downcast eyes, we may recognize that we stand far, far off and with a sigh, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'; but then let it befall us by Thy grace as it befell that publican who went up to the Temple to pray and went down to his house justified.

LUKE XVIII. 13. AND THE PUBLICAN STOOD AFAR OFF AND WOULD NOT EVEN LIFT UP HIS EYES UNTO HEAVEN, BUT SMOTE UPON HIS BREAST, SAYING, GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER.

My hearer, the sacred text just read belongs, as thou knowest, to the Gospel story of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee represents the hypocrite who deceives himself and would deceive God, whereas the publican represents the sincere man whom God justifies. But there is also another sort of hypocrisy, there are hypocrites who, according to the Bible's description of the Pharisee, 'trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others,' whereas they conform their appearance nevertheless to that of the publican, with mock piety stand afar off, unlike the Pharisee who proudly thanked God that he was righteous; with mock piety they cast their eyes to the ground, unlike the Pharisee who proudly directed his glance towards heaven; with mock piety they sigh, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' unlike the Pharisee who proudly thanked God that he was righteous — hypocrites who like the Pharisee that impiously said in his prayer, 'I thank Thee, O God, that I am not like this publican,' say with mock piety, 'I

thank Thee, O God, that I am not like this Pharisee.' Yes, alas, it indubitably is so; Christianity came into the world and taught humility, but not all learned humility from Christianity, hypocrisy learned to change its mask and remained the same, or rather became even worse. Christianity came into the world and taught that thou shalt not in pride and vainglory seek out the highest seats at table, but sit in the lowest — and soon pride and vainglory were sitting vainly in the lowest seats at table, the same pride and vainglory... oh, no, not the same but still worse. So one might perhaps think it necessary to invert this passage and nearly all the Gospel passages, in consideration of the fact that hypocrisy and pride and vainglory and the worldly mind may want to invert the situation. But how would that be of any avail? It surely can only be the notion of morbid acumen and vain shrewdness to want to be so shrewd that by shrewdness misuse can be prevented. No, there is only one thing which overcomes, which more than overcomes, from the very beginning has endlessly overcome, all cunning, and that is the simplicity of the Gospel, which in its simplicity lets itself be deceived as it were, and yet in simplicity continues to be the simple. And this too is the edifying feature of the Gospel's simplicity, that the Evil could not prevail over it to the point of making it wish to be shrewd. Verily the Evil has won a victory, and a very serious victory, when it has prompted simplicity to wish to be shrewd... for the sake of making itself secure. For simplicity is made secure, eternally secure, only by letting itself in its simplicity be deceived, however clearly it sees through the deceit.

Let us then, in the brief moment prescribed, consider with all simplicity the publican. Throughout all ages he has been represented as the model of a sincere and Godfearing church-goer. And yet it seems to me that he is still more closely related to the act of going to the Holy Communion, this man who said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner' — is not this as though he were going up to the altar? this man of whom it is said, 'he went down to his

house justified' — is it not as though now he were going home from the altar?

The publican *stood afar off.* What does this mean? It means to stand by himself, alone with himself and God — thus thou art far off, far from men, and far from God, with whom nevertheless thou art alone; for in relation to a man it is true that when thou art alone with him thou art closest to him, when there are others present thou art farther away; but in relation to God it is true that when there are several persons present it seems to thee as though thou wert closer, and only when thou art literally alone with Him thou dost discover how far off thou art. Oh, even though thou be not such a sinner as the publican, whom civil justice also accounts guilty — in case thou art alone with thyself before God, thou also standest afar off. So soon as there is somebody between God and thee, thou art easily deceived, as though thou wert not so far off; yea, even if it were the case that he or they who before thee stand between God and thee were in thine opinion better and more perfect than thou — thou art still not so far off as when thou art alone before God. So soon as any one comes between God and thee (regardless of whether it is one whom thou dost consider more perfect than thou or one whom thou dost consider more imperfect) thou dost get a deceitful standard of measurement, the standard of human comparison. It is as though thou couldst measure out how far thou art away, and so thou art not far away.

But the Pharisee who, in fact, according to the saying of the Scripture, 'stood by himself,' was he not standing afar off? Yes, if in truth he had stood by himself. The Gospel says that he stood by himself and thanked God 'that he was not like other men'. And where one has the other men with one, one does not stand by oneself. The Pharisee's pride consisted just in this, that he proudly used the other men to measure his distance from them, that before God he would not let go the thought of the other men, but would hold this thought fast, in order thus to stand proudly by himself... in

contrast with other men; but this indeed is not to stand by oneself, least of all to stand by oneself before God.

The publican stood afar off. Being conscious of his guilt and crime, it was perhaps easier for him not to be tempted by the thought of the other men, who, as he must in fact admit, were better than he. About this, however, we will not presume to decide; but it is certain that he had forgotten all the others. He was alone, alone with the consciousness of his guilt and crime, he had entirely forgotten that there were in fact many other publicans beside him, it was as if he were the only one. He was not alone with his guilt in the face of a righteous man, he was alone before God — ah, that is to be afar off. For what is farther from guilt and sin than God's holiness? — and so, for one who is himself a sinner to be alone with this, is it not to be endlessly far off?

He would not even lift up his eyes unto heaven; so then, he cast them down. Yes, and what wonder! Oh, even physically there is something in endless space which overwhelms a man for the fact that the eye has nothing to fix itself upon, this effect is called dizziness — so that one has to shut one's eyes. And he who, alone with his guilt and sin, knows that were he to cast his eyes up he would behold God's holiness and nothing else, he surely learns to cast his eyes down; or perhaps he looked up and beheld God's holiness — and cast down his eyes. He looked down, beheld his wretchedness; and heavier than sleep upon tired eyelids, heavier than weighs the sleep of death, the conception of God's holiness weighed down his eyes; like a man exhausted, yea, like a dying man, so he was unable to lift up his eyes.

He would not even lift up his eyes unto heaven; but he with his eyes cast down, turned inward, had only insight for his own wretchedness, *nor did he look to one side*, like the Pharisee who saw the publican; for we read in fact that he thanked God he was not like this publican. 'This publican,' yes, it is

precisely this publican of whom we are talking; there were in fact two men who went up to the Temple to pray. The Scripture does not say that two men went up together to the Temple to pray — indeed it hardly would have been fit company for a Pharisee had he gone up to the Temple in company with a publican; and in the Temple they seem to have been as far as possible from being in company, the Pharisee stands by himself, the publican stands afar off — and yet, and yet, the Pharisee saw the publican, this publican, but the publican (ah, well dost thou deserve to be called in a distinguishing sense 'this publican') — the publican did not see the Pharisee; when the Pharisee came home he knew very well that this publican had been in church, but this publican knew nothing of this Pharisee's having been in church. Proudly the Pharisee found satisfaction in seeing the publican; humbly the publican saw no one, saw not the Pharisee; with eyes cast down and turned inward he was in truth... before God.

And he smote upon his breast and said, God be merciful to me a sinner. Oh, my hearer, when in the solitude of the desert a man is attacked by a ferocious beast, the cry verily issues of itself; and when in an unfrequented path thou dost fall amongst robbers, fright itself invents the cry. So it is also in the case of that which is infinitely more dreadful. When thou art alone, alone in the place which is more lonesome than the desert — for even in the loneliest desert it would still be possible that another man might come there; alone in the place which is more lonesome than the most unfrequented path, where it still would be possible that another might come along; alone in individuality, or as a single individual, and face to face with God's holiness — then the cry issues of itself. And if thou, alone before God's holiness, hast learnt that it avails thee nothing though thy cry would call upon some one else to help, that *there* where thou art as the single individual there is literally no one else but thee, that it is the most impossible of all things that *there* there might be or come any one else but thee — then terror discovers,

as need discovered prayer, it discovers this cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' And the cry, the sigh, is so sincere in thee — yea, how could it but be that! What hypocrisy could there be in the fact that a man cries out when the abyss opens in peril at sea? Even though he knows that the storm mocks his weak voice, and that the birds out there listen to him with indifference, he cries out nevertheless, to such a degree is the cry true and the truth. So it is also in the case of that which in quite a different way is infinitely more terrible, the conception of God's holiness, when one, himself a sinner, is alone before it — what hypocrisy could there well be in this cry: 'God be merciful to me a sinner'? If only the danger and the terror are real, this cry is always sincere, yet withal, God be praised, it is never in vain.

The Pharisee on the contrary was not in danger, he stood proudly and securely self-satisfied, from him no cry was heard. What is the meaning of this? It means also something quite different — it means that he was not before God.

And now for the conclusion. *The publican went down to his house justified.*

He went home to his house justified. For to this publican applies what the Scripture says of all publicans and sinners, that they drew *near* to Christ — just by standing afar off he drew near to Him, whereas the Pharisee with presumptuous insolence *(Naergaaenhed)* stood far, far off. Thus the picture is inverted. It begins with the Pharisee standing near, the publican afar off; it ends with the Pharisee standing afar off, the publican near. — He went to his house justified. For he cast down his eyes; but the averted eye *sees* God, and the eye cast down signifies the lifting up of the heart. No glance is so sharp-sighted as that of faith, and yet, humanly speaking, faith is blind; for reason, understanding, is, humanly speaking, the faculty of seeing, but faith is against the understanding. So the cast down eye is the seeing eye, and the humility indicated by the downcast glance is exaltation. Again the picture is

inverted when the two go home from the Temple. He who was exalted was the publican, therewith it ended; but to the Pharisee who began by proudly lifting up his eyes to heaven God is opposed, and God's opposition is annihilating abasement. In ancient times it was not as now when the astronomer erects upon an eminence the building from which he would observe the stars, in ancient times he dug down in the earth to find a place from whence to observe the stars — in relation to God no change has taken place: to be exalted to God is possible only by descending. As little as water changes its nature so as to run up hill, so little can a man succeed in lifting himself up to God... by pride. — He went to his house justified. For selfaccusation is the possibility of *justification.* And the publican accused himself. There was no one that accused him; it was not civil justice which grabbed him by the throat and said, 'Thou art a criminal' — but he smote upon his breast and said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'; it was not the men whom perhaps he had swindled who smote him on the breast and said, 'Thou art a swindler' — but he smote himself on his breast and said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'; he accused himself as a sinner before God. The picture is again inverted. The Pharisee — who, far from accusing himself, proudly praises himself — as he goes away is accused by God; he does not know it, but as he goes away he accuses himself before God: the publican began by accusing himself. The Pharisee goes home with a new sin, in the strictest sense a revolting [literally, to-heaven-crying] sin, with one more sin in addition to the earlier sins which he retained: the publican went home justified. Before God 'to wish to justify oneself', that precisely is to denounce oneself as guilty; but before God to smite oneself upon the breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' that precisely is to justify oneself, or rather it is the condition for God's pronouncing thee justified.

Thus it was with the publican. But now as for thee, my hearer! The similarity so readily suggests itself. From confession thou goest up to the

altar. But to make confession is precisely *to stand afar off;* the more sincere thy confession is, the farther off thou dost stand — and all the more true is this for the fact that thou kneelest at the altar, since to kneel is a symbol of standing afar off, far from Him who is in heaven, from whom accordingly the distance is the greatest possible when thou dost sink to the ground upon thy knees — and yet it is at the altar thou art nearest to God. — To make confession is precisely *to cast down the eyes*, not to wish to look up unto heaven, not to wish to see any one else; the more sincere thy confession is, all the more wilt thou cast down thine eyes, all the less wilt thou see any one else — and all the more true is this for the fact that thou dost kneel there at the altar, since to kneel down is even a stronger expression for what is implied by casting down the eyes, for he who merely casts down his eyes stands nevertheless comparatively erect — and yet it is at the altar the heart is lifted up to God. — To make confession is precisely *to smite oneself upon the breast*, and, without being too much disturbed by the thought of the individual sins, to gather them most briefly and truly into one expression, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' The more hearty thy confession, all the more surely will thy confession end with this silent expression of smiting thyself upon the breast, and in the sigh, 'God be merciful to me a sinner' — and all the more true is this for the fact that thou dost kneel there at the altar, a kneeler who by this expresses that he, condemning himself, only prays for grace — and yet at the altar there is justification.

He went home to his house justified. And thou, my hearer, when thou from the altar dost return home to thy house, pious sympathy greets thee with the wish, 'Good luck and blessing,' well assured that at the altar thou didst find justification, that the visit brought thee good luck and blessing. Now, before thou goest up to the altar, the same wish: that it may bring thee good luck and blessing. Ah, the natural man finds most satisfaction in standing erect: he who truly has learnt to know God, and by learning to

know God has learnt to know himself, finds blessedness only in falling upon his knees, in adoration when he thinks of God, in penitence when he thinks of himself. Offer this man what thou wilt, he craves only one thing, like that woman who chose — not the best part, oh, no, how could there here be any question of comparison! — no, she who, according to the word of the Scripture, chose the good part when she sat at the Saviour's feet — she craved only one thing: to kneel at His altar.

PRAYER

LORD JESUS CHRIST, that we may be able rightly to pray Thee for all things, we pray first for one: help us to love Thee much, increase love and inflame it. Oh, this is a prayer Thou wilt surely hear, Thou who indeed art not love of such a sort — so cruel a sort — that Thou art only the object, indifferent to whether any one loves Thee or not; Thou indeed art not love of such a sort — in wrath — that Thou art only judgement, jealous of who loves Thee and who does not. Oh, no, such Thou art not; Thou wouldst thus only inspire fear and dread, it would then be terrible 'to come to Thee', frightful 'to abide with Thee', and Thou wouldst not be the perfect love which casteth out fear. No, compassionate, or loving, or in love, Thou art love of such a sort that Thou Thyself dost woo forth the love which loves Thee, dost foster it to love Thee much.

LUKE VII. 47. WHEREFORE I SAY UNTO THEE, HER MANY SINS ARE FORGIVEN HER; FOR SHE LOVED MUCH.

My hearer, thou knowest of whom the text speaks, that it is of that woman whose name is, 'a woman that was a sinner.'

'When she knew that Christ sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.'

Tea, she loved much. For there are two opposites which are opposed to one another in a life and death struggle, or at least for one of the opposites it is the most frightful annihilation to approach the other. Thus it is when one is a sinner — to approach the holy One, to be revealed before His face in

the illumination of holiness. Oh, the night does not flee with greater terror from the face of the day which is to annihilate it, and, if there be ghosts, a spectre does not collapse in greater dread when it begins to dawn, than a sinner shrinks from holiness which like the day brings everything to light. So long as he can the sinner flees, avoids so long as he can the march to death, this encounter with light, inventing every shirking excuse and evasion and deceit and palliation. But she loved much. And what is the strongest expression for loving much? It is to hate oneself — *she entered in where the holy One was.* She, a sinful woman! Ah, a woman! And yet the power of shame is strongest in a woman, stronger than life, she would rather give up life than give up the sense of shame. True enough, this sense of shame ought indeed to have withheld her from sinning and prevented her; but yet again it is also true that when a woman comes to herself again the sense of shame is all the stronger, crushing, annihilating. Perhaps it was this that made for her the way to annihilation easier, the fact that she was already annihilated. And yet, humanly speaking, there might still be a question of lenience. Oh, even a sinner who has truly acknowledged to herself, or at least knows within herself, that she is annihilated, would perhaps be inclined to spare herself, if face to face she should become revealed before the holy One; she might have been fain to spare herself — that is to say, she still loved herself so much. But as for her — is there then no lenience towards herself, none whatever? No, there is no lenience! — she hated herself: she loved much. — She went in to the holy One *in the Pharisee's house*, where many Pharisees were assembled who would condemn her, reproaching her also for the vanity, a vanity peculiarly disgusting in a woman, of putting herself forward with her sin, a woman who ought to hide herself from the eyes of all men in a remote corner of the world. She might have wandered the world around and been certain of finding in no place so stern a condemnation as that which awaited her in the

Pharisee’s house from the proud Pharisees; and on the other hand there is perhaps no suffering so calculated to torture a woman in particular as the cruelty of mockery which awaited her in the Pharisee’s house from the proud Pharisees. But as for her — is there no compassion which spares her this cruelty. No, there is no compassion! — she hated herself: she loved much. — She went in to the Holy One in the Pharisee’s house, *to the banquet.* To a banquet! Thou dost shudder, thou dost shrink from following her; thou canst easily convince thyself how shuddering a thought it is, for thou art constantly inclined to the temptation to forget that the whole thing is enacted at a banquet, that it is not a ‘house of mourning’ but a ‘house of mirth’.

To a banquet there comes a woman, she brings with her an alabaster cruse containing ointment — well, that is appropriate to the banquet; she sits at the feet of one of the guests and weeps — that is not appropriate to the banquet. In truth the banquet is disturbed by this woman! Yes, but she was not disturbed, this sinful woman, she who certainly not without a shudder, not without shrinking, went straight ahead to the banquet... and to confession; she hated herself: she loved much. Oh, heavily as nothing else weighs upon a man weighs sin’s heavy secret; there is only one thing heavier — to have to go to confession. Oh, frightful as no other secret is, is the secret of sin; there is only one thing more frightful — the admission of it. For this reason human compassion has sympathetically invented what may alleviate and assist this difficult delivery. In the holy edifice where all is quiet and grave solemnity, and in a more hidden enclosure within it, where all is silent as the tomb, and there is such lenience as that which passes judgement upon the departed — there the sinner is given opportunity to confess his sin. And human compassion invented an alleviation in the provision that he who received the confession was hidden, so that the sight of him might not make it too hard for him, yes, too hard for the sinner to

lighten his conscience. Finally human compassion discovered that there was no necessity even of such a confession or of such a hidden hearer; discovered that in secret before God, who nevertheless knows all, confession should be made and might then remain hidden in one’s inmost soul. But at a banquet — and a woman! A banquet! That is very far from being a hidden, retired spot, nor is the mood like that among the tombs, and the hearer is neither hidden nor unseen. No, if concealment and subdued light and a retired spot and everything which is in harmony with this is an alleviation in the confession of one’s sin — a banquet was surely the crudest invention. Who is the cruel inventor, that we by our prayers might appease him and persuade him to spare her. No invention of a cruel man was so cruel as this, it was she only, the sinful woman, who invented such a thing. Ah, commonly the cruel man is one, and the tortured person is another — she herself invented this torture, was herself the cruel one, she hated herself: she loved much.

Yea, she loved much. ‘She sat at the feet of Christ, wet them with tears, dried them with the hairs of her head’ — by this she expressed: I am able to do literally nothing; He is able to do absolutely everything. But this indeed is to love much. When one thinks that one is able of oneself to do something, one may love in a way, but one does not love much; and just in the degree that one thinks that of oneself one can do more, in the same degree one loves less. She on the contrary loved much. She utters not a word, least of all does she ‘protest’ — ah, how all too often is this a deceitful word which so easily makes a new protest necessary, the protest that it really is as one protests. She does not protest, she acts: she weeps, she kisses His feet. She is not careful to stifle her tears; no, to weep is her proper work. She weeps, it is not her eyes that weep, but it is with the hairs of her head she wipes his feet: she is able to do literally nothing, He everything — she loved much. Oh, eternal truth, that He is able to do

absolutely everything! Oh, indescribable truth in this woman! Oh, indescribable power of truth in this woman who powerfully expressed the impotence of being able to do literally nothing! She loved much.

Yea, she loved much. She sits weeping at His feet: she has altogether forgotten herself, forgotten every disturbing thought in her own inward world, is perfectly quiet, or is quieted like a sick babe at the mother's breast, where it weeps itself out and forgets itself; for one does not succeed in forgetting such thoughts while yet remembering oneself — therefore she weeps, and whilst she weeps she forgets herself. Ah, blessed tears; ah, that in weeping there is also this blessing — forgetfulness! She has entirely forgotten herself, forgotten the environment with all that is disturbing in it; for it is impossible to forget such an environment if one does not forget oneself, it was indeed an environment calculated to remind her frightfully and anguishingly of herself: but she weeps, and whilst she weeps she forgets herself. Ah, blessed tears of self-forgetfulness, when the fact that she weeps, when not even this reminds her any longer of what she weeps over: thus it was she entirely forgot herself. But the true expression for loving much is precisely this: to forget oneself entirely. When one remembers oneself, one can love in a way, but one does not love much; and just in the degree that one remembers oneself the more, in the same degree one loves the less. She, however, had entirely forgotten herself. But the stronger the impulse is at a given moment to remember or to think of oneself — if one nevertheless forgets oneself and thinks of the other, so much the more does one love. Such is the case in fact in the relation of man to man, and though this relationship does not correspond precisely with what we are talking about, it may nevertheless illuminate it. He who at the moment when he himself is most occupied, the moment which to him is the most precious, forgets himself and thinks of the other, he it is who loves much; he who being hungry himself forgets himself and gives to the other

the meagre provision which is sufficient only for one, he it is who loves much; he who in mortal danger forgets himself and leaves to the other the only plank of safety on the waves, he it is who loves much. So also he who at the moment when everything within him and everything about him not only reminds him of himself but would compel him against his will to remember himself — when nevertheless he forgets himself, he loves much, as she did. ‘She sits at his feet, anoints them with ointment, dries them with the hairs of her head, kisses them — and weeps.’ She says nothing, she is not therefore what she says, but she is what she does not say, or, what she does not say, that she is, she *is* a characterization, like a picture — she has forgotten speech and language and the restlessness of thoughts and (what is even more restless) this self, has forgotten herself, she, the lost woman, who now is lost in her Saviour and as lost in Him rests at His feet — like a picture. And it is almost as if the Saviour for a moment regarded her and the situation thus, as though she were not a real person but a picture. It is certain that in order to make the application to the persons present more impressive, He does not speak *to* her, He does not say, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’ He speaks *about* her, He says, ‘Her many sins are forgiven because she loved much’; notwithstanding she is present, it is almost as if she were absent, it is almost as if He transformed her into a picture, a parable, almost as if He said, ‘Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. Once upon a time there was a woman, she was a sinner. When one day the Son of Man sat at table in the house of a Pharisee, she too came in. The Pharisees scoffed at her and condemned her as a sinner. But she sat at his feet, anointed them with ointment, wiped them with the hairs of her head, kissed them and wept — Simon, I would say somewhat unto thee: Her many sins were forgiven her because she loved much.’ It is almost like a story, a sacred story, a parable — and yet that very thing was occurring in reality at that same moment.

But ‘her many sins are forgiven her’ — and how could this be more strongly expressed than by the fact that everything is forgotten, that she, the great sinner, is transformed into a picture! When it is said, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’ ah, how readily does the remembrance of herself return to her, if she were not fortified by this boundless forgetfulness: ‘Her many sins are forgiven her.’ She loved much, hence she forgot herself entirely; she forgot herself entirely, ‘hence her many sins were forgiven’ — forgotten, yea, they were drowned with her as it were in forgetfulness, she herself, being transformed into a picture, became a recollection, yet not as though it recalled her to herself; no, as she forgot the recollection by forgetting herself, the recollection also (not gradually but at once) forgot her name — her name is ‘a woman that was a sinner’, neither more nor less.

And suppose some one were to say, ‘There was nevertheless some self-love in this woman’s love. The Pharisees censored her indeed also for the fact that she drew near to Christ, and from this inferred something disparaging to Him, that He was no prophet — so that it was she who exposed Him to this, she with her love, that is, with her self-love.’ Would any one say that there was an element of self-love in this woman’s love, that in her need it was essentially herself she loved — if any one were to speak thus, I would reply: ‘Naturally’, and thereupon I would add, ‘God be gracious to us, but there simply is no other way’ — and then add, ‘God forbid that I might ever presume to love my God or my Saviour in any other way; for if there were in my love nothing of self-love in that significance of the word, I would only be imagining that I could love Him without having need of Him — and from this presumption God preserve me!’

My hearer, this woman was a sinner. The Pharisees condemned her, they even condemned Christ for being willing to consort with her, they judged — and for this reason precisely — that He was no prophet, not to say the Saviour of the world, and yet it was precisely by this He showed Himself to

be the Saviour of the world. This woman was a sinner — yet she became and is a pattern; blessed is he who resembles her in loving much! The forgiveness of sins which Christ offered while He lived on earth, continues to be, from generation to generation, offered to all in Christ. It is said to all, and to each one severally, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'; they all, and each one severally, receive at the altar the pledge that their sins are forgiven — blessed is he who resembles that woman in loving much! For though it is said to all, it is nevertheless only true when it is said to him who like that woman loved much! It is true, thy sins are forgiven thee in Christ; but this truth (which also for this reason is declared to each one severally) is nevertheless in another sense not true, it must be made true by each one severally. Thus is this woman an eternal picture; by her great love she made herself, if I dare say so, indispensable to the Saviour. For that it was the forgiveness of sins she gained, she made to be truth, she who loved much. Thou canst therefore turn it in whatever way thou wilt and still be saying the same thing. Thou canst extol her as blessed because her many sins were forgiven her, or thou canst extol her as blessed because she loved much. Substantially thou art saying the same thing — if only thou dost note well that He whom she loved much was Christ, and if at the same time thou dost not forget that Christ is grace and the giver of grace. For what sort of a test is it in which her love is tried? In consideration of what it is she loves much, what is it she loves less? Is this the test: to love Christ more dearly than mother and father, than gold and goods, than honour and reputation? No, the test by which this woman was tried is: to love her Saviour more than her sin. Ah, there was perhaps one who loved Christ more than father and mother and gold and goods and honour and reputation, and yet loved his sin more than his Saviour, loved it, not in the sense of willing to remain in it, to continue to sin, but in the sense of not being quite willing to confess it. Frightful this is in a sense, but it is true, and every one who has merely

some little knowledge of the human heart can verify it: there is nothing to which a man holds so desperately fast as to his sin. And hence a complete, honest, deep, utterly true, entirely unvarnished confession of sin is the perfect love, to make such a confession of sin is to love much. [This I understand as a sigh. S. K. never made *such* a confession. He recalls with evident sympathy that his father sighed for ‘a good old father confessor’, which as a Protestant he did not have. And above he has described with rare sympathy the Catholic ‘invention’ of the confessional box — which as a Protestant he could not avail himself of. For a long while he felt impelled to make a *public* confession of the sin which most tormented him — but he did not do it, and in the end he no longer felt the need. It may be said indeed that the whole literature he produced was a confession — but it was an anonymous confession, and as such it was, as he himself perceived, a species of daimonia.]

Now the discourse is ended. But surely it is true that, though the Pharisees accounted that this woman pressed in upon the banquet very inopportunely — yet today she has not come to the wrong place, between the confessional and the altar! Oh, forget the orator who has been speaking, forget his art, if so be he has displayed any, forget his defects, which perhaps were many, forget the discourse about her — but forget her not; along this road she is a guide, she who loved much, and to whom therefore her many sins were forgiven. She is far from being a deterrent picture; on the contrary, she is more of an incentive than the incentives of all orators, when it is a question of following that invitation which leads to the altar: ‘Come hither, all ye that labour and are heavy laden’; for there she marches in the van, she who loved much, she who therefore found rest for her soul in loving much, yea, or in the fact that her many sins were forgiven her, yea, or let us say, she who, because she loved much, found rest in the fact that her many sins were forgiven her.

The Sickness unto Death (1849)

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1941

The Sickness unto Death was written in 1849 under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus. A work of Christian existentialism, the treatise explains Kierkegaard's concept of despair, which he equates with the Christian concept of sin: "the sin of despair". The themes covered in *The Sickness unto Death* serve as a repetition of the earlier works, *Fear and Trembling* and *The Concept of Anxiety*. The author employs two pseudonyms for opposite purposes: "Johannes Climacus" suggests that he is not a Christian, whereas "Anti-Climacus" suggests he is "an extraordinary Christian".

Anti-Climacus introduces the book with a reference to a phrase in the Gospel of *John, 11:4*: "This sickness is not unto death." The phrase occurs in John's telling of the story of Lazarus, in which Jesus raises him from the dead. However, Anti-Climacus poses the question: would not this statement still be true even if Jesus had not raised Lazarus from the dead? While the human conception of death is that it is the end of life, the Christian conception of death is that it is merely a stop along the path of eternal life, and thus nothing to be feared. Rather, it is the inability to die that is to be feared. The real "sickness unto death", according to Anti-Climacus, is not physical death but despair — a kind of spiritual death, which stems from not embracing one's self.

According to Kierkegaard, an individual is "in despair" if he does not align himself with God or with God's plan for the self. In this way, he loses his self. Kierkegaard defines the self as the "relation's relating itself to itself in the relation," and defines the human experience as the tension between "the finite and the infinite", and between "the possible and the necessary".

He writes that this tension is identifiable with the dialectical balancing act — the relationship — between these opposing features. Although humans are inherently reflective and self-conscious, to become a true "self" one must be conscious that the source and ground of this "self" is love, "the power that created it". When one either fails to understand the true nature of the self, or the true nature of the power that creates and sustains it, he says, one is in despair.

The Sickness unto Death is noted for its strong existentialist themes. For example, the concepts of the finite and infinite parts of the human self translate to Heidegger's concept of "facticity" and Sartre's concept of "transcendence" in *Being and Nothingness*. Kierkegaard's argument is, of course, in other ways profoundly different from Sartre, most obviously because of Kierkegaard's belief that only religious faith can save the soul from despair. This particular brand of existentialism is often called *Christian existentialism*.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a German philosopher best known for contributions to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existentialism. He is often considered to be among the most important and influential philosophers of the twentieth century.

CONTENTS

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR
INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR
THOUGHTS WHICH HEAL FUNDAMENTALLY, CHRISTIAN THERAPEUTIC
THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH
PREFACE
INTRODUCTION

PART FIRST. THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH IS DESPAIR

I. THAT DESPAIR IS THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH
II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS SICKNESS (SIN)
III. THE FORMS OF THIS SICKNESS, i.e. OF DESPAIR

PART SECOND. DESPAIR IS SIN

I. DESPAIR IS SIN
CHAPTER l. GRADATIONS IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SELF (THE QUALIFICATION "BEFORE GOD")
CHAPTER 2. THE SOCRATIC DEFINITION OF SIN
CHAPTER 3. SIN IS NOT A NEGATION BUT A POSITION
II. CONTINUATION OF SIN
CHAPTER 1. THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OVER ONE'S SIN
CHAPTER 2. THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (OFFENSE)
CHAPTER 3. THE SIN OF ABANDONING CHRISTIANITY MODO PONENDO, OF DECLARING IT FALSEHOOD

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR

AS THE TRANSLATION of Kierkegaard's works into English manifestly required the labor of many, I chose in the division of labor to assume responsibility for the religious works which were begun or completed in the year 1848 and were published for the most part in the following year. In fact I have done more than that, for I have translated the *Stages on Life's Way, Repetition, and Fear and Trembling,* beside completing Professor Swenson's translation of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript.* Nevertheless I have in one respect done less than I proposed, for I did not venture till now to lay hands upon *The Sickness unto Death,* which not only belongs to the period I had chosen but is one of the most important productions of that most productive period of S.K.'s life. For the Oxford University Press had another translator in mind for this difficult task, and only when the war had put an end to this plan, and when Mrs. Swenson generously put in my hands her husband's translation of about a quarter of this work, was I encouraged to undertake it. To David F. Swenson, who had been my chief stay in this whole enterprise, I owe also this posthumous encouragement, which I am glad to acknowledge here. I wish that I could put his name as translator upon the title page of this book, as I at first proposed to do; but, though his work was a necessary encouragement, the translation which he left among his papers was merely a first draft, which surely with his scrupulous self-criticism he would have revised very radically had he lived, and I cannot venture to ascribe to him the translation I have made.

The Sickness unto Death is a "repetition" in maturer years of *Fear and Trembling,* one of S.K.'s earliest works (1843), in which the completely non-religious pseudonym Johannes de silentio investigated the problems of

repentance and faith. It is still more closely related to *The Concept of Dread* by Vigilius Haufniensis (1844), which is the only other book which the author himself describes as "psychological." Mr. Dru, who has undertaken to translate this work, is in spite of the war free to carry it out, because a serious wound has for the present incapacitated him for active service, and therefore this work will be available for comparison.

With this publication the religious works of S.K.'s most mature period are complete in an English translation. They are so closely related that they ought to be translated by one author, even if his translation is not the best attainable. Besides this one volume issued by the Princeton University Press, there have been published in five volumes by the Oxford University Press: *Christian Discourses, The Point of View, The Present Age, Training in Christianity,* and *For Self-Examination.* But these six volumes contain thirteen separate works, which I enumerate here in the order in which they were produced: *Christian Discourses*, *The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air,* the *Three Discourses* of 1848, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author, About My Work as an Author, Two Notes about the Individual, Two Treatises* (one translated by Mr. Dru), *Training in Christianity, An Edifying Discourse of* 1851, *For Self-Examination,* and *Judge for Yourselves.*

A point has now been reached in the publication of S.K.'s works in English when it can be affirmed that all the works properly included in what S.K. called his "Literature" have been, or are about to be, in the space of barely six years, rendered available to English readers. Besides this we have Mr. Dru's *Selections from the Journal,* which are far more ample than even Germany can boast of; and we have, beside my biography entitled *Kierkegaard,* eight works about the man and his doctrine. Three of the works have appeared in translations by different authors — which shows, as Professor Steere aptly said to me, "how many hens are setting on these

eggs.” There have been in fact during this brief period fifteen authors at work on S.K., ten of them as translators; and eight publishers have been involved, among whom the Oxford University Press easily leads with nine volumes, Princeton University Press comes next with six, and then the Augsburg Publishing House with six smaller volumes.

Princeton, New Jersey

May 5, 1941

WALTER LOWRIE

INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR

MY BOOK ON *Kierkegaard* (p-449) furnishes a more ample introduction to the works of this period of S.K.'s life, and to this work in particular, than can be given here, and the following chapter (p-483) gives an account of the difficulty he encountered in deciding to publish them. A more searching analysis of the whole situation may be found in the *Kierkegaard-Studien* of Professor Emanuel Hirsch, p-389.

This is not said as a way of evading the task of writing an introduction to this book, but as a justification for restricting the scope of it to essential points which are illuminated by the *Journal.*

A part of this work, as S.K. says, "was written before the catastrophe" (i.e. the war with Germany and the Danish constitutional revolution, both of which were compressed within a period of a month in the spring of 1848), and hence before his Easter experience which altered radically the character of his writing. The polemical tone of the later chapters attests the effect of it.

Hirsch speaks of this work and the *Training in Christianity* as "the two masterpieces of Kierkegaard as a Christian writer," and he affirms that along with *The Point of View* "no other Christian-religious or Christian-theological works of the nineteenth century stand so good a chance of being introduced into the rank of the imperishable works of the Christian Church."

S.K.'s purpose in this work was essentially religious. He proposed to preface the book with a prayer, as he did all of his Edifying Discourses; but he discarded this thought when he reflected that "a prayer would give the book almost too much the semblance of the edifying" (VII B 143). Yet the prayer may well be cited here:

“Father in heaven, to Thee the congregation often makes its petition for all who are sick and sorrowful, and when someone amongst us lies ill, alas, of mortal sickness the congregation sometimes desires a special petition; Grant that we may each one of us become in good time aware what sickness it is which is the sickness unto death, and aware that we are all of us suffering from this sickness. O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst come to earth to heal them that suffer from this sickness, from which, alas, we all suffer, but from which Thou art able to heal only those who are conscious that they are sick in this way; help Thou us in this sickness to hold fast to Thee, to the end that we may be healed of it. O God the Holy Ghost, who comest to help us in this sickness if we honestly desire to be healed; remain with us so that for no single instant we may to our own destruction shun the Physician, but may remain with Him — delivered from sickness. For to be with Him is to be delivered from our sickness, and when we are with Him we are saved from all sickness.”

The word “psychological” was substituted in the title of this book for “edifying.” Making a subtle distinction, S.K. declared, “*for* edification is not my category.” He meant, I suppose, that this expression implied authority, whereas when he called his Discourses “edifying” he was asserting merely that they were of a sort that might have this effect. It is significant therefore that this word ultimately found its way back into the title in the form which hitherto he had not ventured to use — except in the last section of the *Christian Discourses,* “Thoughts which Wound from Behind — for edification.”

In all his works S.K. gives evidence of a profound knowledge of human psychology, but only this work and *The Concept of Dread* are described in the title as “psychological.” No one can deny the appropriateness of this characterization — but how different all this is from what today passes for psychology!

In the preliminary notes for this book S.K. remarks (VIII B 151), “in Section III of Part First I will now describe psychologically the forms of despair as they display themselves in reality, in actual men, whereas in Section I despair was treated as abstractly as possible, and in Section II it was shown that consciousness is the decisive characteristic of despair.”

On the date of May 13, 1848, when the book was finished, S.K. made an entry in his *Journal* (VIII A 651*ff*.) which he entitled “A Report about *The Sickness unto Death*.” He says, “There is one difficulty about this book: it is too dialectical and strict to permit of the employment of rhetoric, of revival, of moving effect. The title itself seems to indicate discourses, the title is lyrical. Perhaps the title cannot be used; but at any rate the book has enriched me with a capital *schema* which can always be used in discourses, but without being apparent. The fact is that before I can begin to employ the rhetorical I always must have the dialectical at my finger tips, must go through it many times. This was not the case with this subject.” He proceeds to suggest eight themes for discourses.

Before this work had assumed a definite form S.K. proposed (VIII A 558, February 1848) to publish it along with others he then had in hand under the common title:

THOUGHTS WHICH HEAL FUNDAMENTALLY, CHRISTIAN THERAPEUTIC

"HERE THE DOCTRINE of the atonement shall be treated. First it is to be shown where the sickness is: sin. So it will be in two parts — or better in three.

(1). THOUGHTS WHICH WOUND FROM BEHIND — FOR EDIFICATION.

(2). ABOUT THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN.

THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

Christian Discourses.

(3). FUNDAMENTAL HEALING

The Christian Therapeutic.

The Atonement."

In November of 1848 he proposed to include all the works produced in that year, except *The Point of View,* under a single title: "The Collected Works of Completion."

About the beginning of 1850, looking back upon the year 1848, S.K. said of it in his *Journal* (X6 A 249), "for me it was incomparably the richest and most fruitful year I have experienced as an author. The productions of the year 1848 I have not yet published, with exception of the little work by the new pseudonym Anti-Climacus, *The Sickness unto Death,* a part of which

antedates the catastrophe of '48. The remaining productions are lying completely finished and ready for publication so soon as I understand that the moment has come." In another place (X4 A 560, June 19, 1852) he says, "Then came '48. I was raised to such a height as I never had known, and I understood myself completely in what was past and already accomplished." This was in fact the zenith of his productivity as an author. He pursued with singleness of aim "the task of making clear what Christianity is," and he performed it with a degree of success which could be attained only by the rare combination of dialectical acumen and poetical genius which he possessed. But naturally this prodigious labor, carried on throughout a year which for him was marked by more emotional experiences than any other, almost exhausted the strength of this frail man, or, as he said (X2 A 66), "to put it in my language, God has run me to a standstill."

And not for physical weariness only was S.K. at a standstill in 1849. Having produced this great literature, he did not know what to do with it. From the thought of publishing such trenchant works he recoiled in dismay. Difficulty after difficulty presented itself to his mind. These were of many sorts. The difficulty about publishing *The Point of View* was simple but very singular: it was the doubt "whether a man has a right to let people know how good he is." That proved an insurmountable obstacle. Hence he resolved to leave this work to be published after his death, "as a report to history," and even the "abbreviation" which he wrote in place of it he could not bring himself to publish until August 1851. There were more practical obstacles in the way of publishing the other works, which might well be regarded, even if they had not been so described, as "a condemnation of Christendom," as "an attempt to introduce Christianity into Christendom"; and as such they were sure to be resented, even though they were introduced by the statement that they were written "poetically, without authority," and merely "to call attention." If he were to publish these books,

or, as he put it, “to step forth in character,” he expected to encounter the most serious sort of persecution, at least that he would find it impossible to obtain a post in the Established Church, either as a country parson (as he had thought at an earlier time), or in a seminary (which now seemed to him more appropriate). At that moment such a post seemed essential to his physical welfare, for he was then faced by the gravest economic difficulties. But he also entertained the hope that after suffering so much by reason of his “heterogeneity” he might find happiness in working like normal men, working “more extensively,” as he put it, instead of “intensively” as hitherto he had worked. And we find to our surprise that there was another reason, the hope that if he became “homogeneous” he might look for a *rapprochement* with Regina, who was now Madame Schlegel. For all of these reasons combined the publication of such works seemed to him a very bold “venture,” which would deprive him of all the conditions which had made his life tolerable, or indeed which made it possible.

His debate with himself was excruciating and long drawn out. It was not until the middle of the year 1849 that, by a combination of circumstances, his resolution was formed to publish at least *The Sickness unto Death,* that being the work which seemed likely to give the least offense. When the book was published he was agreeably surprised that Bishop Mynster made no great fuss about it. For this he was so grateful that he proposed to dedicate to the old Bishop one of the smaller and least offensive of the works he had ready — perhaps it was the *Cyclus of Ethico-Religious Treatises.* Among his published papers there are six pages (X6 B 162-170) devoted to various drafts of an elaborate dedication to the Bishop, which were never used because in the meanwhile the breach between the two men became wider.

But it would be unjust to S.K. were we to stop here, without seeking a nobler and more generous reason for his desperate solicitude. In fact the

principal obstacle which he discovered was not unlike that which prevented him from publishing *The Point of View*; for it seemed to him inhuman, even “demoniacal,” to confront Christendom with such an “assault of thoughts,” unless one had the authority of an Apostle or the attestation which only martyrdom could give to a “witness for the truth.” He felt that while he was a very imperfect Christian he might seem to be exacting perfection of others, whereas in fact he regarded these works as his own education in Christianity (cf. especially X4 A 560, 666).

That this was the principal obstacle is shown by his almost childish delight in the discovery of the new pseudonym Anti-Climacus (X2 A 147, 177; cf. my *Kierkegaard,* p/.), who figured first as the author of *The Sickness unto Death,* and again as the author of *Training in Christianity.* It must be understood that this manifest fiction could not in the least degree protect S.K. from the external dangers he apprehended, for no one could be in doubt who was the author, even if S.K.’s name had not appeared on the title page as editor. This pseudonym was adopted merely to relieve his own fine feeling of propriety. It must be understood also that this form of pseudonymity was totally different from that which hitherto he had used. In the case of the other pseudonymous works S.K. was scrupulous to make the text agree with the character he ascribed to the pseudonym. Hence he was justified in affirming that not a word uttered by his pseudonyms could properly be referred to him as an expression of his personal view. There is nothing of the sort here, for these later works were the sincerest expression of his own belief, and he had expected to publish them under his own name. The pseudonym was an afterthought. Here therefore every word can be regarded as his own, when now for the first time, with complete frank-heartedness, without resort to the device of “indirect communication,” as in the earlier pseudonymous works, and without the “economy” (to use a word which is not his) he employed in the Edifying Discourses, he essays to tell

directly and as plainly as possible what Christianity is and all that it is, even if no man can live up to the obligations which it imposes.

The Sickness unto Death is (to recall the title of Robert Burton's famous book) an "Anatomy of Melancholy." But so also was *The Concept of Dread*, and some of the other pseudonymous works are hardly less deserving of this title — *Either/Or* most of all, and in some measure *Repetition, Fear and Trembling,* and the *Stages.* But S.K. was not content with a diagnosis, he also prescribed the remedy. In his earlier works (inasmuch as he himself had not yet been healed) he could only indicate in a general way that the remedy was to be sought in religion. Here (in the last word of the book, which repeats one of the first words) he gives, if not the prescription for medication of this sickness in the self, at least the precise formula for health, that is, for the condition of the self when this sickness is completely eradicated: that the self "by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it." And "this," he says emphatically, "is the definition of faith."

W. L.

THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

A Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening

By

ANTI-CLIMACUS

Edited by

S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen 1849
[July 30]

Herr! gieb uns blöde Augen
für Dinge, die nichts taugen,
und Augen voller Klarheit
in alle deine Wahrheit.

In the manuscript S.K. indicated the source of this motto as follows: A sermon by Bishop Albertini, cf. *Handbuch deutcher Beredsamkeit* v. Dr. D. L. B. Wolff, Leipzig, 1845, 1ste D. .

PREFACE

TO MANY THE form of this “exposition” will perhaps seem strange; it will seem to them too strict to be edifying, and too edifying to be strictly scientific. As to this latter point I have no opinion. As to the first, however, this does not express my opinion of the matter; and if it were true that the form is too strict to be edifying, that, according to my conception, would be a fault. It is one question whether it cannot be edifying to everyone, seeing that not everyone possesses the capacity for following it; it is another question whether it possesses the specific character of the edifying. From the Christian point of view everything, absolutely everything should serve for edification. The sort of learning which is not in the last resort edifying is precisely for that reason unchristian. Everything that is Christian must bear some resemblance to the address which a physician makes beside the sick-bed: although it can be fully understood only by one who is versed in medicine, yet it must never be forgotten that it is pronounced beside the sickbed. This relation of the Christian teaching to life (in contrast with a scientific aloofness from life), or this ethical side of Christianity, is essentially the edifying, and the form in which it is presented, however strict it may be, is altogether different, qualitatively different, from that sort of learning which is “indifferent,” the lofty heroism of which is from a Christian point of view so far from being heroism that from a Christian point of view it is an inhuman sort of curiosity. The Christian heroism (and perhaps it is rarely to be seen) is to venture wholly to be oneself, as an individual man, this definite individual man, alone before the face of God, alone in this tremendous exertion and this tremendous responsibility; but it is not Christian heroism to be humbugged by the pure idea of humanity or to play the game of marvelling at world-history. All Christian knowledge,

however strict its form, ought to be anxiously concerned; but this concern is precisely the note of the edifying. Concern implies relationship to life, to the reality of personal existence, and thus in a Christian sense it is seriousness; the high aloofness of indifferent learning, is, from the Christian point of view, far from being seriousness, it is, from the Christian point of view, jest and vanity. But seriousness again is the edifying.

This little book therefore is in one sense composed in a way that a seminary student could write it; in another sense, however, in a way that perhaps not every professor could write it.

But the fact that the form in which this treatise is clothed is what it is, is at least the result of due reflection, and at all events it is certainly correct from a psychological point of view. There is a more solemn style which is so solemn that it does not signify much, and since one is too well accustomed to it, it easily becomes entirely meaningless.

Only one remark more, doubtless a superfluity, but for that I am willing to assume the blame: I would call attention once for all to the fact that in this whole book, as the title indeed says, despair is conceived as the sickness, not as the cure. So dialectical is despair. So also in the Christian terminology death is the expression for the greatest spiritual wretchedness, and yet the cure is simply to die, to "die from."

1848.

INTRODUCTION

"THIS SICKNESS IS not unto death" (John 11: 4), and yet Lazarus died; for when the disciples misunderstood the words which Christ adjoined later, "Lazarus our friend is asleep, but I go to wake him out of his sleep" (11:11), He said plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (11:14). So then Lazarus is dead, and yet this sickness was not unto death; he was dead, and yet this sickness is not unto death. Now we know that Christ was thinking of the miracle which would permit the bystanders, "if they believed, to see the glory of God" (11:40), the miracle by which He awoke Lazarus from the dead, so that this sickness was not only not unto death, but, as Christ had foretold, "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (11:4). Oh, but even if Christ had not awakened Lazarus from the dead, is it not true that this sickness, that death itself, was not a sickness unto death? When Christ comes to the grave and cries with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (11:43), it is evident enough that "this" sickness is not unto death. But even if Christ had not said these words — merely the fact that He, who is "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), comes to the grave, is not this a sufficient sign that *this* sickness is not unto death, does not the fact that Christ exists mean that *this* sickness is not unto death? And what help would it have been to Lazarus to be awakened from the dead, if the thing must end after all with his dying — how would that have helped Lazarus, if He did not live who is the resurrection and the life for everyone who believes in Him? No, it is not because Lazarus was awakened from the dead, not for this can one say that *this* sickness is not unto death; but because He lives, therefore this sickness is not unto death. For, humanly speaking, death is the last thing of all; and, humanly speaking, there is hope only so long as there is life. But Christianly understood death is by no

means the last thing of all, hence it is only a little event within that which is all, an eternal life; and Christianly understood there is in death infinitely much more hope than merely humanly speaking there is when there not only is life but this life exhibits the fullest health and vigor.

So then in the Christian understanding of it not even death is the sickness unto death, still less everything which is called earthly and temporal suffering: want, sickness, wretchedness, affliction, adversities, torments, mental sufferings, sorrow, grief. And even if such things are so painful and hard to bear that we men say, or at all events the sufferer says, "This is worse than death" — everything of the sort, which, if it is not a sickness, is comparable to a sickness, is nevertheless, in the Christian understanding of it, not the sickness unto death.

So it is that Christianity has taught the Christian to think dauntlessly of everything earthly and worldly, including death. It is almost as though the Christian must be puffed up because of this proud elevation above everything men commonly call misfortune, above that which men commonly call the greatest evil. But then in turn Christianity has discovered an evil which man as such does not know of; this misery is the sickness unto death. What the natural man considers horrible — when he has in this wise enumerated everything and knows nothing more he can mention, this for the Christian is like a jest. Such is the relation between the natural man and the Christian; it is like the relation between a child and a man: what the child shudders at, the man regards as nothing. The child does not know what the dreadful is; this the man knows, and he shudders at it. The child's imperfection consists, first of all, in not knowing what the dreadful is; and then again, as an implication of this, in shuddering at that which is not dreadful. And so it is also with the natural man, he is ignorant of what the dreadful truly is, yet he is not thereby exempted from shuddering; no, he

shudders at that which is not the dreadful: he does not know the true God, but this is not the whole of it, he worships an idol as God.

Only the Christian knows what is meant by the sickness unto death. He acquires as a Christian a courage which the natural man does not know — this courage he acquires by learning fear for the still more dreadful. Such is the way a man always acquires courage; when one fears a greater danger, it is as though the other did not exist. But the dreadful thing the Christian learned to know is “the sickness unto death.”

PART FIRST. THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH IS DESPAIR

I. THAT DESPAIR IS THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

A. DESPAIR IS A SICKNESS IN THE SPIRIT, IN THE SELF, AND SO IT MAY ASSUME A TRIPLE FORM: IN DESPAIR AT NOT BEING CONSCIOUS OF HAVING A SELF (DESPAIR IMPROPERLY SO CALLED); IN DESPAIR AT NOT WILLING TO BE ONESELF; IN DESPAIR AT WILLING TO BE ONESELF.

MAN IS SPIRIT. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but [consists in the fact] that the relation relates itself to its own self. Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third term as a negative unity, and the two relate themselves to the relation, and in the relation to the relation; such a relation is that between soul and body, when man is regarded as soul. If on the contrary the relation relates itself to its own self, the relation is then the positive third term, and this is the self.

Such a relation which relates itself to its own self (that is to say, a self) must either have constituted itself or have been constituted by another.

If this relation which relates itself to its own self is constituted by another, the relation doubtless is the third term, but this relation (the third term) is in turn a relation relating itself to that which constituted the whole relation.

Such a derived, constituted, relation is the human self, a relation which relates itself to its own self, and in relating itself to its own self relates itself

to another. Hence it is that there can be two forms of despair properly so called. If the human self had constituted itself, there could be a question only of one form, that of not willing to be one's own self, of willing to get rid of oneself. This formula [i.e. that the self is constituted by another] is the expression for the total dependence of the relation (the self namely), the expression for the fact that the self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation. Indeed, so far is it from being true that this second form of despair (despair at not willing to be one's own self) denotes only a particular kind of despair, that on the contrary all despair can in the last analysis be reduced to this. If a man in despair is as he thinks conscious of his despair, does not talk about it meaninglessly as of something which befell him (pretty much as when a man who suffers from vertigo talks with nervous self-deception about a weight upon his head or about its being like something falling upon him, etc., this weight and this pressure being in fact not something external but an inverse reflection from an inward experience), and if by himself and by himself only he would abolish the despair, then by all the labor he expends he is only laboring himself deeper into a deeper despair. The disrelationship of despair is not a simple disrelationship but a disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to its own self and is constituted by another, so that the disrelationship in that self-relation reflects itself infinitely in the relation to the Power which constituted it.

This then is the formula which describes the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it.

B. POSSIBILITY AND ACTUALITY OF DESPAIR

Is despair an advantage or a drawback? Regarded in a purely dialectical way it is both. If one were to stick to the abstract notion of despair, without thinking of any concrete despairer, one might say that it is an immense advantage. The possibility of this sickness is man's advantage over the beast, and this advantage distinguishes him far more essentially that the erect posture, for it implies the infinite erectness or loftiness of being spirit. The possibility of this sickness is man's advantage over the beast; to be sharply observant of this sickness constitutes the Christian's advantage over the natural man; to be healed of this sickness is the Christian's bliss.

So then it is an infinite advantage to be able to despair; and yet it is not only the greatest misfortune and misery to be in despair; no, it is perdition. Ordinarily there is no such relation between possibility and actuality; if it is an advantage to be able to be this or that, it is a still greater advantage to be such a thing. That is to say, being is related to the ability to be as an ascent. In the case of despair, on the contrary, being is related to the ability to be as a fall. Infinite as is the advantage of the possibility, just so great is the measure of the fall. So in the case of despair the ascent consists in not being in despair. Yet this statement is open to misunderstanding. The thing of not being in despair is not like not being lame, blind, etc. In case the not being in despair means neither more nor less than not being this, then it is precisely to be it. The thing of not being in despair must mean the annihilation of the possibility of being this; if it is to be true that a man is not in despair, one must annihilate the possibility every instant. Such is not ordinarily the relation between possibility and actuality. Although thinkers say that actuality is the annihilated possibility, yet this is not entirely true; it is the fulfilled, the effective possibility. Here, on the contrary, the actuality (not being in despair), which in its very form is a negation, is the impotent, annihilated possibility; ordinarily, actuality in comparison with possibility is a confirmation, here it is a negation.

Despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself. But the synthesis is not the disrelationship, it is merely the possibility, or, in the synthesis is latent the possibility of the disrelationship. If the synthesis were the disrelationship, there would be no such thing as despair, for despair would then be something inherent in human nature as such, that is, it would not be despair, it would be something that befell a man, something he suffered passively, like an illness into which a man falls, or like death which is the lot of all. No, this thing of despairing is inherent in man himself; but if he were not a synthesis, he could not despair, nor, if the synthesis were not from God's hand, constituted in the right relationship, could man despair.

Whence then comes despair? From the relation wherein the synthesis relates itself to itself, in that God who made man a relationship lets this go as it were out of His hand, that is, in the fact that the relation relates itself to itself. And herein, in the fact that the relation is spirit, is the self, consists the responsibility under which all despair lies, and so lies every instant it exists, however much and however ingeniously the despairer, deceiving himself and others, may talk of his despair as a misfortune which has befallen him, with a confusion of things different, as in the case of vertigo aforementioned, with which, though it is qualitatively different, despair has much in common, since vertigo is under the rubric soul what despair is under the rubric spirit, and is pregnant with analogies to despair.

So when the disrelationship — that is, despair — has set in, does it follow as a matter of course that it continues? No, it does not follow as a matter of course; if the disrelationship continues, it does not follow as a consequence of the disrelation but as a consequence of the relation which relates itself to itself. That is to say, every time the disrelation expresses itself, and every instant it exists, it is to the relation one must revert. Observe that we speak of a man contracting a disease, maybe through

carelessness. Then the illness sets in, and from that instant it affirms itself and is now an *actuality,* the origin of which recedes more and more into the *past.* It would be cruel and inhuman if one were to continue to say incessantly, “This instant thou, the sick man, art contracting this disease”; that is, if every instant one were to resolve the actuality of the disease into its possibility. It is true that he did contract the disease, but this he did only once; the continuance of the disease is a simple consequence of the fact that he once contracted it, its progress is not to be referred every instant to him as the cause; he contracted it, but one cannot say that he *is contracting* it. Not so with despair: every actual instant of despair is to be referred back to possibility, every instant the man in despair is *contracting* it, it is constantly in the present tense, nothing comes to pass here as a consequence of a bygone actuality superseded; at every actual instant of despair the despairer bears as his responsibility all the foregoing experience in possibility as a present. This comes from the fact that despair is a qualification of spirit, that it is related to the eternal in man. But the eternal he cannot get rid of, no, not to all eternity; he cannot cast it from him once for all, nothing is more impossible; every instant he does not possess it he must have cast it or be casting it from him — but it comes back, every instant he is in despair he contracts despair. For despair is not a result of the disrelationship but of the relation which relates itself to itself. And the relation to himself a man cannot get rid of, any more than he can get rid of himself, which moreover is one and the same thing, since the self is the relationship to oneself.

C. DESPAIR IS “THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH”

The concept of the sickness unto death must be understood, however, in a peculiar sense. Literally it means a sickness the end and outcome of which is death. Thus one speaks of a mortal sickness as synonymous with a sickness unto death. In this sense despair cannot be called the sickness unto death. But in the Christian understanding of it death itself is a transition

unto life. In view of this, there is from the Christian standpoint no earthly, bodily sickness unto death. For death is doubtless the last phase of the sickness, but death is not the last thing. If in the strictest sense we are to speak of a sickness unto death, it must be one in which the last thing is death, and death the last thing. And this precisely is despair.

Yet in another and still more definite sense despair is the sickness unto death. It is indeed very far from being true that, literally understood, one dies of this sickness, or that this sickness ends with bodily death. On the contrary, the torment of despair is precisely this, not to be able to die. So it has much in common with the situation of the moribund when he lies and struggles with death, and cannot die. So to be sick *unto* death is, not to be able to die — yet not as though there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness in this case is that even the last hope, death, is not available. When death is the greatest danger, one hopes for life; but when one becomes acquainted with an even more dreadful danger, one hopes for death. So when the danger is so great that death has become one's hope, despair is the disconsolateness of not being able to die.

It is in this last sense that despair is the sickness unto death, this agonizing contradiction, this sickness in the self, everlastingly to die, to die and yet not to die, to die the death. For dying means that it is all over, but dying the death means to live to experience death; and if for a single instant this experience is possible, it is tantamount to experiencing it forever. If one might die of despair as one dies of a sickness, then the eternal in him, the self, must be capable of dying in the same sense that the body dies of sickness. But this is an impossibility; the dying of despair transforms itself constantly into a living. The despairing man cannot die; no more than "the dagger can slay thoughts" can despair consume the eternal thing, the self, which is the ground of despair, whose worm dieth not, and whose fire is not quenched. Yet despair is precisely *self*-consuming, but it is an impotent self-

consumption which is not able to do what it wills; and this impotence is a new form of self-consumption, in which again, however, the despairer is not able to do what he wills, namely, to consume himself. This is despair raised to a higher potency, or it is the law for the potentiation. This is the hot incitement, or the cold fire in despair, the gnawing canker whose movement is constantly inward, deeper and deeper, in impotent self-consumption. The fact that despair does not consume him is so far from being any comfort to the despairing man that it is precisely the opposite, this comfort is precisely the torment, it is precisely this that keeps the gnawing pain alive and keeps life in the pain. This precisely is the reason why he despairs — not to say despaired — because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothing. This is the potentiated formula for despair, the rising of the fever in the sickness of the self.

A despairing man is in despair over *something.* So it seems for an instant, but only for an instant; that same instant the true despair manifests itself, or despair manifests itself in its true character. For in the fact that he despaired of *something,* he really despaired of himself, and now would be rid of himself. Thus when the ambitious man whose watchword was “Either Caesar or nothing” does not become Caesar, he is in despair thereat. But this signifies something else, namely, that precisely because he did not become Caesar he now cannot endure to be himself. So properly he is not in despair over the fact that he did not become Caesar, but he is in despair over himself for the fact that he did not become Caesar. This self which, had he become Caesar, would have been to him a sheer delight (though in another sense equally in despair), this self is now absolutely intolerable to him. In a profounder sense it is not the fact that he did not become Caesar which is intolerable to him, but the self which did not become Caesar is the thing that is intolerable; or, more correctly, what is intolerable to him is that he cannot get rid of himself. If he had become Caesar he would have been rid

of himself in desperation, but now that he did not become Caesar he cannot in desperation get rid of himself. Essentially he is equally in despair in either case, for he does not possess himself, he is not himself. By becoming Caesar he would not after all have become himself but have got rid of himself, and by not becoming Caesar he falls into despair over the fact that he cannot get rid of himself. Hence it is a superficial view (which presumably has never seen a person in despair, not even one's own self) when it is said of a man in despair, "He is consuming himself." For precisely this it is he despairs of, and to his torment it is precisely this he cannot do, since by despair fire has entered into something that cannot burn, or cannot burn up, that is, into the self.

So to despair over something is not yet properly despair. It is the beginning, or it is as when the physician says of a sickness that it has not yet declared itself. The next step is the declared despair, despair over oneself. A young girl is in despair over love, and so she despairs over her lover, because he died, or because he was unfaithful to her. This is not a declared despair; no, she is in despair over herself. This self of hers, which, if it had become "his" beloved, she would have been rid of in the most blissful way, or would have lost, this self is now a torment to her when it has to be a self without "him"; this self which would have been to her her riches (though in another sense equally in despair) has now become to her a loathsome void, since "he" is dead, or it has become to her an abhorrence, since it reminds her of the fact that she was betrayed. Try it now, say to such a girl, "Thou art consuming thyself," and thou shalt hear her reply, "Oh, no, the torment is precisely this, that I cannot do it."

To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself, is the formula for all despair, and hence the second form of despair (in despair at willing to be oneself) can be followed back to the first (in despair at not willing to be oneself), just as in the foregoing we resolved the first into the

second (cf. I). A despairing man wants despairingly to be himself. But if he despairingly wants to be himself, he will not want to get rid of himself. Yes, so it seems; but if one inspects more closely, one perceives that after all the contradiction is the same. That self which he despairingly wills to be is a self which he is not (for to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair); what he really wills is to tear his self away from the Power which constituted it. But notwithstanding all his despair, this he is unable to do, notwithstanding all the efforts of despair, that Power is the stronger, and it compells him to be the self he does not will to be. But for all that he wills to be rid of himself, to be rid of the self which he is, in order to be the self he himself has chanced to choose. To be *self* as he wills to be would be his delight (though in another sense it would be equally in despair), but to be compelled to be *self* as he does not will to be is his torment, namely, that he cannot get rid of himself.

Socrates proved the immortality of the soul from the fact that the sickness of the soul (sin) does not consume it as sickness of the body consumes the body. So also we can demonstrate the eternal in man from the fact that despair cannot consume his self, that this precisely is the torment of contradiction in despair. If there were nothing eternal in a man, he could not despair; but if despair could consume his self, there would still be no despair.

Thus it is that despair, this sickness in the self, is the sickness unto death. The despairing man is mortally ill. In an entirely different sense than can appropriately be said of any disease, we may say that the sickness has attacked the noblest part; and yet the man cannot die. Death is not the last phase of the sickness, but death is continually the last. To be delivered from this sickness by death is an impossibility, for the sickness and its torment… and death consist in not being able to die.

This is the situation in despair. And however thoroughly it eludes the attention of the despairer, and however thoroughly the despairer may succeed (as in the case of that kind of despair which is characterized by unawareness of being in despair) in losing himself entirely, and losing himself in such a way that it is not noticed in the least — eternity nevertheless will make it manifest that his situation was despair, and it will so nail him to himself that the torment nevertheless remains that he cannot get rid of himself, and it becomes manifest that he was deluded in thinking that he succeeded. And thus it is eternity must act, because to have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession made to man, but at the same time it is eternity's demand upon him.

II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS SICKNESS (SIN)

JUST AS THE physician might say that there lives perhaps not one single man who is in perfect health, so one might say perhaps that there lives not one single man who after all is not to some extent in despair, in whose inmost parts there does not dwell a disquietude, a perturbation, a discord, an anxious dread of an unknown something, or of a something he does not even dare to make acquaintance with, dread of a possibility of life, or dread of himself, so that, after all, as physicians speak of a man going about with a disease in him, this man is going about and carrying a sickness of the spirit, which only rarely and in glimpses, by and with a dread which to him is inexplicable, gives evidence of its presence within. At any rate there has lived no one and there lives no one outside of Christendom who is not in despair, and no one in Christendom, unless he be a true Christian, and if he is not quite that, he is somewhat in despair after all.

This view will doubtless seem to many a paradox, an exaggeration, and a gloomy and depressing view at that. Yet it is nothing of the sort. It is not gloomy; on the contrary, it seeks to throw light upon a subject which ordinarily is left in obscurity. It is not depressing; on the contrary it is uplifting, since it views every man in the aspect of the highest demand made upon him, that he be spirit. Nor is it a paradox; on the contrary, it is a fundamental apprehension consistently carried through, and hence it is no exaggeration.

On the other hand, the ordinary view of despair remains content with appearances, and so it is a superficial view, that is, no view at all. It assumes that every man must know by himself better than anyone else whether he is in despair or not. So whoever says that he is in despair is regarded as being in despair, but whoever thinks he is not in despair is not so regarded.

Consequently despair becomes a rather rare phenomenon, whereas in fact it is quite universal. It is not a rare exception that one is in despair; no, the rare, the very rare exception is that one is not in despair.

But the vulgar view has a very poor understanding of despair. Among other things (to mention only one which, if rightly understood, would bring thousands, yea, millions under this category), it completely overlooks the fact that one form of despair is precisely this of not being in despair, that is, not being aware of it. The vulgar view is exposed, though in a much deeper sense, to the same fallacy it sometimes falls into when it would determine whether a man is sick or not. In a much deeper sense, I say, for the vulgar view has a far more inadequate notion of spirit than of sickness and health — and without understanding spirit it is impossible to understand despair. It is ordinarily assumed that a man is well when he does not himself say that he is sick, and still more confidently when he says that he is well. The physician on the other hand regards sickness differently. And why? Because he has a definite and well thought out conception of what it is to be in sound health, and by this he tests the man's condition. The physician knows that just as there is sickness which is only imaginary, so also there is such a thing as fictitious health. In the latter case, therefore, the physician first employs medicines to cause the disease to become manifest. Generally the physician, just because he is a physician, i.e. the competent man, has no unconditional faith in a person's own assertion about the state of his health. If it were true that what every man says about the state of his health (as to whether he is sick or well, where he suffers, etc.) were absolutely to be relied upon, it would be an illusion to be a physician. For a physician does not merely have to prescribe medicines, but first and foremost he has to be acquainted with sickness, and so first and foremost to know whether a supposedly sick man really is sick, or whether a supposedly well man is not really sick. So it is also with the physician of souls when dealing with

despair. He knows what despair is, he is acquainted with it, and hence he is not satisfied with a man's assertion that he is in despair or that he is not. For it must be observed that in a certain sense not even all who say they are in despair always are so. One may affect despair, and one may make a mistake and confuse despair with all sorts of transitory dejection or grief which pass away without coming to the point of despair. However, the physician of souls does, it is true, regard these states also as forms of despair. He perceives very well that this is affectation — but precisely this affectation is despair. He perceives very well that this dejection etc. does not mean much — but precisely this fact, that it does not mean much, is despair.

Furthermore, the vulgar view overlooks the fact that, as compared with sickness, despair is much more dialectical than what is commonly called sickness, because it is a sickness of the spirit. And this dialectical quality, rightly understood, again brings thousands under the category of despair. For in case at a given moment a physician is convinced that this or that person is in good health and at a later moment becomes sick — the physician may be right in affirming that the person *was* well then, and at a later moment became sick. With despair it is different. As soon as despair manifests itself in a person, it is manifest that the person was in despair. For this reason one cannot at a given moment decide anything about a person who is not saved by the fact that he has been in despair. For in case the condition comes about which brings him to despair, it is at that same moment manifest that he has been in despair throughout the whole of his previous life. On the other hand, one is by no means justified in saying, when a man has a fever, that he has had a fever throughout his whole life. But despair is a phenomenon of the spirit, is related to the eternal, and therefore has something of the eternal in its dialectic.

Not only is despair far more dialectical than an illness, but all its symptoms are dialectical, and for this reason the superficial view is so

readily deceived in determining whether despair is present or not. For not to be in despair may mean to be in despair, and it may also mean to be delivered from being in despair. A sense of security and tranquillity may mean that one is in despair, precisely this security, this tranquillity, may be despair; and it may mean that one has overcome despair and gained peace. In this respect despair is unlike bodily sickness; for not to be sick cannot possibly mean to be sick; but not to be despairing may mean precisely to be despairing. It is not true of despair, as it is of bodily sickness, that the feeling of indisposition is the sickness. By no means. The feeling of indisposition is again dialectical. Never to have been sensible of this indisposition is precisely to be in despair.

This points to the fact, and has its ground therein, that man, regarded as spirit, is always in a critical condition — and if one is to talk of despair, one must conceive of man as spirit. In relation to sickness we talk of a crisis, but not in relation to health. And why not? Because bodily health is an "immediate" qualification, and only becomes dialectical in sickness, when one can speak of the crisis. But spiritually, or when man is regarded as spirit, both health and sickness are critical. There is no such thing as "immediate" health of the spirit.

So long as one does not regard man as spirit (in which case we cannot talk about despair) but only as a synthesis of soul and body, health is an "immediate" determinant, and only the sickness of soul or body is a dialectical determinant. But despair is expressed precisely by the fact that a person is unaware of being characterized as spirit. Even that which, humanly speaking, is the most beautiful and lovable thing of all, a feminine youthfulness which is sheer peace and harmony and joy — even that is despair. For this indeed is happiness, but happiness is not a characteristic of spirit, and in the remote depths, in the most inward parts, in the hidden recesses of happiness, there dwells also the anxious dread which is despair;

it would be only too glad to be allowed to remain therein, for the dearest and most attractive dwelling-place of despair is in the very heart of immediate happiness. All immediacy, in spite of its illusory peace and tranquillity, is dread, and hence, quite consistently, it is dread of nothing; one cannot make immediacy so anxious by the most horrifying description of the most dreadful something, as by a crafty, apparently casual half word about an unknown peril which is thrown out with the surely calculated aim of reflection; yea, one can put immediacy most in dread by slyly imputing to it knowledge of the matter referred to. For immediacy doubtless does not know; but never does reflection catch its prey so surely as when it makes its snare out of nothing, and never is reflection so thoroughly itself as when it is… nothing. There is need of an eminent reflection, or rather of a great faith, to support a reflection based upon nothing, i.e. an infinite reflection. So even the most beautiful and lovable thing of all, a feminine youthfulness which is sheer peace and harmony and joy, is nevertheless despair, is happiness. Hardly will one have the good hap to get through life on the strength of this immediacy. And if this happiness has the hap to get through, it would be of little help for it is despair. Despair, just because it is wholly dialectical, is in fact the sickness of which it holds that it is the greatest misfortune not to have had it — the true good hap to get it, although it is the most dangerous sickness of all, if one does not wish to be healed of it. In other cases one can only speak of the good fortune of being healed of a sickness, sickness itself being misfortune.

Therefore it is as far as possible from being true that the vulgar view is right in assuming that despair is a rarity; on the contrary, it is quite universal. It is as far as possible from being true that the vulgar view is right in assuming that everyone who does not think or feel that he is in despair is not so at all, and that only he is in despair who says that he is. On the contrary, one who without affectation says that he is in despair is after all a

little bit nearer, a dialectical step nearer to being cured than all those who are not regarded and do not regard themselves as being in despair. But precisely this is the common situation (as the physician of souls will doubtbless concede), that the majority of men live without being thoroughly conscious that they are spiritual beings — and to this is referable all the security, contentment with life, etc., etc., which precisely is despair. Those, on the other hand, who say that they are in despair are generally such as have a nature so much more profound that they must become conscious of themselves as spirit, or such as by the hard vicissitudes of life and its dreadful decisions have been helped to become conscious of themselves as spirit — either one or the other, for rare is the man who truly is free from despair.

Ah, so much is said about human want and misery — I seek to understand it, I have also had some acquaintance with it at close range; so much is said about wasted lives — but only that man's life is wasted who lived on, so deceived by the joys of life or by its sorrows that he never became eternally and decisively conscious of himself as spirit, as self, or (what is the same thing) never became aware and in the deepest sense received an impression of the fact that there is a God, and that he, he himself, his self, exists before this God, this gain of infinity, which is never attained except through despair. And, oh, this misery, that so many live on and are defrauded of this most blessed of all thoughts; this misery, that people employ themselves about everything else, or, as for the masses of men, that people employ them about everything else, utilize them to generate the power for the theater of life, but never remind them of their blessedness; that they heap them in a mass, instead of splitting them apart so that they might gain the highest thing, the only thing worth living for, and enough to live in for an eternity — it seems to me that I could weep for an eternity over the fact that such misery exists! And, oh, to my thinking

this is one expression the more of the dreadfulness of this most dreadful sickness and misery, namely, its hiddenness — not only that he who suffers from it may wish to hide it and may be able to do so, to the effect that it can so dwell in a man that no one, no one whatever discovers it; no, rather that it can be so hidden in a man that he himself does not know it! And, oh, when the hour-glass has run out, the hour-glass of time, when the noise of worldliness is silenced, and the restless or the ineffectual busyness comes to an end, when everything is still about thee as it is in eternity — whether thou wast man or woman, rich or poor, dependent or independent, fortunate or unfortunate, whether thou didst bear the splendor of the crown in a lofty station, or didst bear only the labor and heat of the day in an inconspicuous lot; whether thy name shall be remembered as long as the world stands (and so was remembered as long as the world stood), or without a name thou didst cohere as nameless with the countless multitude; whether the glory which surrounded thee surpassed all human description, or the judgment passed upon thee was the most severe and dishonoring human judgement can pass — eternity asks of thee and of every individual among these million millions only one question, whether thou hast lived in despair or not, whether thou wast in despair in such a way that thou didst not know thou wast in despair, or in such a way that thou didst hiddenly carry this sickness in thine inward parts as thy gnawing secret, carry it under thy heart as the fruit of a sinful love, or in such a way that thou, a horror to others, didst rave in despair. And if so, if thou hast lived in despair (whether for the rest thou didst win or lose), then for thee all is lost, eternity knows thee not, it never knew thee, or (even more dreadful) it knows thee as thou art known, it puts thee under arrest by thyself in despair.

III. THE FORMS OF THIS SICKNESS, i.e. OF DESPAIR

THE FORMS OF despair must be discoverable abstractly by reflecting upon the factors which compose the self as a synthesis. The self is composed of infinity and finiteness. But the synthesis is a relationship, and it is a relationship which, though it is derived, relates itself to itself, which means freedom. The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical element in the terms possibility and necessity.

Principally, however, despair must be viewed under the category of consciousness: the question whether despair is conscious or not, determines the qualitative difference between despair and despair. In its concept all despair is doubtless conscious; but from this it does not follow that he in whom it exists, he to whom it can rightly be attributed in conformity with the concept, is himself conscious of it. It is in this sense that consciousness is decisive. Generally speaking, consciousness, i.e. consciousness of self, is the decisive criterion of the self. The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will, and the more will the more self. A man who has no will at all is no self; the more will he has, the more consciousness of self he has also.

A. DESPAIR REGARDED IN SUCH A WAY THAT ONE DOES NOT REFLECT WHETHER IT IS CONSCIOUS OR NOT, SO THAT ONE REFLECTS ONLY UPON THE FACTORS OF THE SYNTHESIS.

(a). Despair viewed under the aspects of Finitude/Infinitude.

The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God. But to become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete means neither to become finite nor infinite, for that which is to become concrete is a synthesis.

Accordingly, the development consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows it or not. However, a self, every instant it exists, is in process of becoming, for the self κατὰ δύναμιν does not actually exist, it is only that which it is to become. In so far as the self does not become itself, it is not its own self; but not to be one's own self is despair.

(1). The Despair of Infinitude is due to the lack of Finitude.

The truth of this is inherent in the dialectical fact that the self is a synthesis [of two factors], the one of which is constantly the opposite of the other. No kind of despair can be defined directly (i.e. undialectically), but only by reflecting upon the opposite factor. The despairing person's condition of despair can be directly described, as the poet does in fact by attributing to him the appropriate lines. But to describe despair is possible only by its opposite; and if the lines are to have poetic value, they must contain in their coloring a reflection of the dialectical opposite. So then every human existence which supposedly has become or merely wills to become infinite is despair. For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor, and the infinite is the expanding factor. Infinitude's despair is therefore the fantastical, the limitless. The self is in sound health and free from despair only when, precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparently in God.

The fantastical is doubtless most closely related to fantasy, imagination, but imagination in turn is related to feeling, knowledge, and will, so that a person may have a fantastic feeling, or knowledge, or will. Generally speaking, imagination is the medium of the process of infinitizing; it is not one faculty on a par with others, but, if one would so speak, it is the faculty *instar omnium.* What feeling, knowledge, or will a man has, depends in the

last resort upon what imagination he has, that is to say, upon how these things are reflected, i.e. it depends upon imagination. Imagination is the reflection of the process of infinitizing, and hence the elder Fichte quite rightly assumed, even in relation to knowledge, that imagination is the origin of the categories. The self is reflection, and imagination is reflection, it is the counterfeit presentment of the self, which is the possibility of the self. Imagination is the possibility of all reflection, and the intensity of this medium is the possibility of the intensity of the self.

Generally the fantastical is that which so carries a man out into the infinite that it merely carries him away from himself and therewith prevents him from returning to himself.

So when feeling becomes fantastic, the self is simply volatilized more and more, at last becoming a sort of abstract sentimentality which is so inhuman that it does not apply to any person, but inhumanly participates feelingly, so to speak, in the fate of one or another abstraction, e.g. that of mankind *in abstracto.* As the sufferer from rheumatism is unable to master his physical feelings which are under the sway of wind and weather, with the result that he is involuntarily aware of a change in the air etc., so it is with him whose feeling has become fantastic; he becomes in a way infinitized, but not in such a way that he becomes more and more himself, for he loses himself more and more.

So it is with knowledge when it becomes fantastic. The law for the development of the self with respect to knowledge, in so far as it is true that the self becomes itself, is this, that the increasing degree of knowledge corresponds with the degree of self-knowledge, that the more the self knows, the more it knows itself. If this does not occur, then the more knowledge increases, the more it becomes a kind of in-human knowing for the production of which man’s self is squandered, pretty much as men were

squandered for the building of the Pyramids, or as men were squandered in the Russian horn-bands to produce one note, neither more nor less.

When the will becomes fantastic, the self likewise is volatilized more and more. In this case the will does not constantly become concrete in the same degree that it is abstract, in such a way that the more it is infinitized in purpose and resolution, the more present and contemporaneous with itself does it become in the small part of the task which can be realized at once, so that in being infinitized it returns in the strictest sense to its self, so that what is *farthest* from itself (when it is most infinitized in purpose and resolution) is in the same instant *nearest* to itself in accomplishing the infinitely small part of the task which can be done even today, even at this hour, even at this instant.

And when feeling, or knowledge, or will have thus become fantastic, the entire self may at last become so, whether in a more active form, as when a man runs headlong into the fantastic, or in a more passive form, when he is carried away, but in either case with moral responsibility. The self thus leads a fantastic existence in abstract endeavor after infinity, or in abstract isolation, constantly lacking itself, from which it merely gets further and further away. So, for example, in the religious sphere. The God-relationship infinitizes; but this may so carry a man away that it becomes an inebriation, it may seem to a man as though it were unendurable to exist before God — for the reason that a man cannot return to himself, cannot become himself. Such a fantastic religious individual would say (to characterize him by putting into his mouth these lines), “That a sparrow can live is comprehensible; it does not know anything about existing before God. But to know that one exists before God — and then not to go crazy or be brought to naught!”

But in spite of the fact that a man has become fantastic in this fashion, he may nevertheless (although most commonly it becomes manifest) be

perfectly well able to live on, to be a man, as it seems, to occupy himself with temporal things, get married, beget children, win honor and esteem — and perhaps no one notices that in a deeper sense he lacks a self. About such a thing as that not much fuss is made in the world; for a self is the thing the world is least apt to inquire about, and the thing of all things the most dangerous for a man to let people notice that he has it. The greatest danger, that of losing one's own self, may pass off as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, that of an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc., is sure to be noticed.

(2). The Despair of Finitude is due to the lack of Infinitude.

The truth of this (as was shown under 1) is inherent in the dialectical fact that the self is a synthesis [of two factors], one of which is the opposite of the other.

The lack of infinitude means to be desperately narrow-minded and mean-spirited. Here of course it is only a question of ethical meanness and narrowness. The world really never talks of any narrowness but intellectual or aesthetic narrowness — or about the indifferent, which is always the principal subject of the world's talk; for worldliness means precisely attributing infinite value to the indifferent. The worldly view always clings fast to the difference between man and man, and naturally it has no understanding of the one thing needful (for to have that is spirituality), and therefore no understanding of the narrowness and meanness of mind which is exemplified in having lost one's self — not by evaporation in the infinite, but by being entirely finitized, by having become, instead of a self, a number, just one man more, one more repetition of this everlasting *Einerlei.*

Despairing narrowness consists in the lack of primitiveness, or of the fact one has deprived oneself of one's primitiveness; it consists in having emasculated oneself, in a spiritual sense. For every man is primitively planned to be a self, appointed to become oneself; and while it is true that

every self as such is angular, the logical consequence of this merely is that it has to be polished, not that it has to be ground smooth, not that for fear of men it has to give up entirely being itself, nor even that for fear of men it dare not be itself in its essential accidentality (which precisely is what should not be ground away), by which in fine it is itself. But while one sort of despair plunges wildly into the infinite and loses itself, a second sort permits itself as it were to be defrauded by "the others." By seeing the multitude of men about it, by getting engaged in all sorts of worldly affairs, by becoming wise about how things go in this world, such a man forgets himself, forgets what his name is (in the divine understanding of it), does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the others, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd.

This form of despair is hardly ever noticed in the world. Such a man, precisely by losing his self in this way, has gained perfectibility in adjusting himself to business, yea, in making a success in the world. Here there is no hindrance, no difficulty, occasioned by his self and his infinitization, he is ground smooth as a pebble, *courant* as a well-used coin. So far from being considered in despair, he is just what a man ought to be. In general the world has of course no understanding of what is truly dreadful. The despair which not only occasions no embarrassment but makes one's life easy and comfortable is naturally not regarded as despair. That this is the view of the world can also be seen in almost all the proverbs, which are merely rules for shrewd behavior. It is said, for example, that a man ten times regrets having spoken, for the once he regrets his silence. And why? Because the fact of having spoken is an external fact, which may involve one in annoyances, since it is an actuality. But the fact of having kept silent! Yet this is the most dangerous thing of all. For by keeping silent one is relegated solely to oneself, no actuality comes to a man's aid by punishing him, by bringing

down upon him the consequences of his speech. No, in this respect, to be silent is the easy way. But he who knows what the dreadful is, must for this very reason be most fearful of every fault, of every sin, which takes an inward direction and leaves no outward trace. So it is too that in the eyes of the world it is dangerous to venture. And why? Because one may lose. But not to venture is shrewd. And yet, by not venturing, it is so dreadfully easy to lose that which it would be difficult to lose in even the most venturesome venture, and in any case never so easily, so completely as if it were nothing… one's self. For if I have ventured amiss — very well, then life helps me by its punishment. But if I have not ventured at all — who then helps me? And, moreover, if by not venturing at all in the highest sense (and to venture in the highest sense is precisely to become conscious of oneself) I have gained all earthly advantages…and lose my self! What of that?

And thus it is precisely with the despair of finitude. In spite of the fact that a man is in despair he can perfectly well live on in the temporal, in fact all the better for it; he may be praised by men, be honored and esteemed, and pursue all the aims of temporal life. What is called worldliness is made up of just such men[5] who (if one may use the expression) pawn themselves to the world. They use their talents, accumulate money, carry on worldly affairs, calculate shrewdly, etc., etc., are perhaps mentioned in history, but themselves they are not; spiritually understood, they have no self, no self for whose sake they could venture everything, no self before God — however *self*ish they may be for all that.

(b). Despair viewed under the aspects of Possibility/Necessity.

For the purpose of becoming (and it is the task of the self freely to become itself) possibility and necessity are equally essential. Just as infinitude and finitude (*ἄπειρον πέρας)* both belong to the self, so also do

possibility and necessity. A self which has no possibility is in despair, and so in turn is the self which has no necessity.

(1). The Despair of Possibility is due to the lack of Necessity.

The truth of this proposition, as was shown, is inherent in the dialectical situation.

Just as finitude is the limiting factor in relation to infinitude, so in relation to possibility it is necessity which serves as a check. When the self as a synthesis of finitude and infinitude is once constituted, when already it *is κατὰ δύναμιν,* then in order to *become* it reflects itself in the medium of imagination, and with that the infinite possibility comes into view. The self *κατὰ δύναμιν,* is just as possible as it is necessary; for though it is itself, it has to become itself. Inasmuch as it is itself, it is the necessary, and inasmuch as it has to become itself, it is a possibility.

Now if possibility outruns necessity, the self runs away from itself, so that it has no necessity whereto it is bound to return — then this is the despair of possibility. The self becomes an abstract possibility which tires itself out with floundering in the possible, but does not budge from the spot, nor get to any spot, for precisely the necessary is the spot; to become oneself is precisely a movement at the spot. To become is a movement from the spot, but to become oneself is a movement at the spot.

Possibility then appears to the self ever greater and greater, more and more things be come possible, because nothing becomes actual. At last it is as if everything were possible — but this is precisely when the abyss has swallowed up the self. Every little possibility even would require some time to become actuality. But finally the time which should be available for actuality becomes shorter and shorter, everything becomes more and more instantaneous. Possibility becomes more and more intense — but only in the sense of possibility, not in the sense of actuality; for in the sense of actuality the meaning of intensity is that at least something of that which is

possible becomes actual. At the instant something appears possible, and then a new possibility makes its appearance, at last this phantasmagoria moves so rapidly that it is as if everything were possible — and this is precisely the last moment, when the individual becomes for himself a mirage.

What the self now lacks is surely reality — so one would commonly say, as one says of a man that he has become unreal. But upon closer inspection it is really necessity the man lacks. For it is not true, as the philosophers explain, that necessity is a unity of possibility and actuality; no, actuality is a unity of possibility and necessity. Nor is it merely due to lack of strength when the soul goes astray in possibility — at least this is not to be understood as people commonly understand it. What really is lacking is the power to obey, to submit to the necessary in oneself, to what may be called one's limit. Therefore the misfortune does not consist in the fact that such a self did not amount to anything in the world; no, the misfortune is that the man did not become aware of himself, aware that the self he is, is a perfectly definite something, and so is the necessary. On the contrary, he lost himself, owing to the fact that this self was seen fantastically reflected in the possible. Even in looking at one's *self* in a mirror it is requisite to know oneself; for, if not, one does not behold one's *self* but merely a man. But the mirror of possibility is not an ordinary mirror, it must be used with the utmost precaution. For of this mirror it is true in the highest sense that it is a false mirror. That the self looks so and so in the possibility of itself is only half truth; for in the possibility of itself the self is still far from itself, or only half itself. So the question is how the necessity of the self determines it more precisely. A case analogous to possibility is when a child is invited to participate in some pleasure or another: the child is at once willing, but now it is a question whether the parents will permit it — and as with the parents, so it is with necessity.

In possibility, however, everything is possible. Hence in possibility one can go astray in all possible ways, but essentially in two. One form is the wishful, yearning form, the other is the melancholy fantastic — on the one hand hope; on the other, fear or anguished dread. Fairy-tales and legends so often relate that a knight suddenly perceived a rare bird, which he continues to run after, since at the beginning it seemed as if it were so very near — but then it flies off again, until at last night falls, and he has become separated from his companions, being unable to find his way in the wilderness where he now is. So it is with the possibility of the wish. Instead of summoning back possibility into necessity, the man pursues the possibility — and at last he cannot find his way back to himself. — In the melancholy form the opposite result is reached in the same way. The individual pursues with melancholy love a possibility of agonizing dread, which at last leads him away from himself, so that he perishes in the dread, or perishes in that in which he was in dread of perishing.

(2). The Despair of Necessity is due to the lack of Possibility.

If one will compare the tendency to run wild in possibility with the efforts of a child to enunciate words, the lack of possibility is like being dumb. Necessity is like a sequence of consonants only, but in order to utter them there must in addition be possibility. When this is lacking, when a human existence is brought to the pass that it lacks possibility, it is in despair, and every instant it lacks possibility it is in despair.

One commonly thinks that there is a certain age which is especially rich in hope, or one talks about being or having been at a certain period or a particular moment of one's life so rich in hope and possibility. All this is merely human talk, which never reaches the truth. All this hoping and all this despairing is not yet the true hope and the true despair.

The decisive thing is, that for God all things are possible. This is eternally true, and true therefore every instant. This is commonly enough

recognized in a way, and in a way it is commonly affirmed; but the decisive affirmation comes only when a man is brought to the utmost extremity, so that humanly speaking no possibility exists. Then the question is whether he will believe that for God all things are possible — that is to say, whether he will *believe.* But this is completely the formula for losing one's mind or understanding; to believe is precisely to lose one's understanding in order to win God. Suppose it occurs as follows. Picture a man who with all the shuddering revolt of a terrified imagination has represented to himself some horror as a thing absolutely not to be endured. Now it befalls him, precisely this horror befalls him. Humanly speaking his destruction is the most certain of all things — and the despair in his soul fights desperately to get leave to despair, to get, if you will, repose for despair, the consent of his whole personality to despair, so that he would curse nothing and nobody more fiercely than him who attempted (or it may be the attempt) to prevent him from despairing, as the poet's poet so capitally, so incomparably expresses it in *Richard II,* Act 3, Scene 2:

Beshrew thee, cousin, which didst lead me forth
Of that sweet way I was in to despair.

So then, salvation is humanly speaking the most impossible thing of all; but for God all things are possible! This is the fight *of faith,* which fights madly (if one would so express it) for possibility. For possibility is the only power to save. When one swoons people shout for water, *Eau-de-Cologne,* Hoffman's Drops; but when one is about to despair the cry is, Procure me possibility, procure possibility! Possibility is the only saving remedy; given a possibility, and with that the desperate man breathes once more, he revives again; for without possibility a man cannot, as it were, draw breath. Sometimes the inventiveness of a human imagination suffices to procure possibility, but in the last resort, that is, when the point is to *believe,* the only help is this, that for God all things are possible.

Thus is the fight carried on. Whether he who is engaged in this fight will be defeated, depends solely and alone upon whether he has the will to procure for himself possibility, that is to say, whether he will believe. And yet he understands that humanly speaking his destruction is the most certain thing of all. This is the dialectical character of faith. For the most part a man knows no more than that this or that, as he has reason to hope, as seems probable, etc., will not befall him. If it befalls him, then he succumbs. The foolhardy man plunges into a danger involving this or that possibility; if it befalls him, he despairs and succumbs. The *believer* perceives and understands, humanly speaking, his destruction (in what has befallen him and in what he has ventured), but he believes. Therefore he does not succumb. He leaves it wholly to God how he is to be helped, but he believes that for God all things are possible. To *believe* in his own destruction is impossible. To understand that, humanly, it is his own destruction, and then nevertheless to believe in the possibility, is what is meant by faith. So then God helps him — perhaps by letting him escape the terror, perhaps by means of the terror — in the fact that here, unexpectedly, miraculously, divinely, help appears. Miraculously — for it is a strange pedantry to assume that only eighteen hundred years ago it could occur that a man was helped miraculously. Whether a man has been helped by a miracle depends essentially upon the degree of intellectual passion he has employed to understand that help was impossible, and next upon how honest he is toward the Power which helped him nevertheless. But usually it is neither the one thing nor the other: men cry that there is no help, without having strained the understanding to find help, and afterwards they lie ungratefully.

The believer possesses the eternally certain antidote to despair, viz. possibility; for with God all things are possible every instant. This is the sound health of faith which resolves contradictions. The contradiction in this case is that, humanly speaking, destruction is certain, and that

nevertheless there is possibility. Health consists essentially in being able to resolve contradictions. So it is bodily or physically: a draft is indifferently cold and warm, disparate qualities undialectically combined; but a healthy body resolves this contradiction and does not notice the draft. So it is also with faith.

The loss of possibility signifies: either that everything has become necessary to a man /or that everything has become trivial.

The determinist or the fatalist is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self, because for him everything is necessary. He is like that king who died of hunger because all his food was transformed into gold. Personality is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. The condition of its survival is therefore analogous to breathing (respiration), which is an in- and an a-spiration. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity alone, which taken pure and simple suffocates the human self.

The fatalist is in despair — he has lost God, and therefore himself as well; for if he has no God, neither has he a self. But the fatalist has no God — or, what is the same thing, his god is necessity. Inasmuch as for God all things are possible, it may be said that this is what God is, viz. one for whom all things are possible. The worship of the fatalist is therefore at its maximum an exclamation, and essentially it is dumbness, dumb submission, he is unable to pray. So to pray is to breathe, and possibility is for the self what oxygen is for breathing. But for possibility alone or for necessity alone to supply the conditions for the breathing of prayer is no more possible than it is for a man to breathe oxygen alone or nitrogen alone. For in order to pray there must be a God, there must be a self plus possibility, or a self and possibility in the pregnant sense; for God *is* that all things are possible, and that all things are possible *is* God; and only the man whose being has been so shaken that he became spirit by understanding that all things are

possible, only he has had dealings with God. The fact that God's will is the possible makes it possible for me to pray; if God's will is only the necessary, man is essentially as speechless as the brutes.

In the case of philistinism or triviality, which also lacks possibility, the situation is somewhat different. Philistinism is spiritlessness, in the literal sense of the word; determinism and fatalism are spiritual despair; but such spiritlessness is also despair. Philistinism lacks every determinant of spirit and terminates in probability, within which the possible finds its insignificant place. Thus it lacks sufficient possibility to take notice of God. Devoid of imagination, as the Philistine always is, he lives in a certain trivial province of experience as to how things go, what is possible, what usually occurs. Thus the Philistine has lost his self and God. For in order to be aware of oneself and God imagination must enable a man to soar higher than the misty precinct of the probable, it must wrench one out of this and, by making possible that which transcends the *quantum satis* of every experience, it must teach him to hope and fear, or to fear and hope. But imagination the Philistine does not possess, he does not want to have it, he abhors it. So here there is no help. And if sometimes reality helps by terrors which transcend the parrot-wisdom of trivial experience, then philistinism despairs — that is, it becomes manifest that it was in despair. It lacks the possibility of faith in order by God's help to be able to deliver itself from certain destruction.

Fatalism and determinism, however, have enough imagination to despair of possibility, and have possibility enough to discover impossibility. Philistinism tranquilizes itself in the trivial, being equally in despair whether things go well or ill. Fatalism or determinism lacks the possibility of relaxing and soothing, of tempering necessity, and so it lacks possibility as assuagement. Philistinism lacks possibility as revival from spiritlessness. For philistinism thinks it is in control of possibility, it thinks that when it

has decoyed this prodigious elasticity into the field of probability or into the mad-house it holds it a prisoner; it carries possibility around like a prisoner in the cage of the probable, shows it off, imagines itself to be the master, does not take note that precisely thereby it has taken itself captive to be the slave of spiritlessness and to be the most pitiful of all things. For with the audacity of despair that man soared aloft who ran wild in possibility; but crushed down by despair that man strains himself against existence to whom everything has become necessary. But philistinism spiritlessly celebrates its triumph.

B. DESPAIR VIEWED UNDER THE ASPECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

With every increase in the degree of consciousness, and in proportion to that increase, the intensity of despair increases: the more consciousness, the more intense the despair. This is everywhere to be seen, most clearly in the maximum and minimum of despair. The devil's despair is the most intense despair, for the devil is sheer spirit, and therefore absolute consciousness and transparency; in the devil there is no obscurity which might serve as a mitigating excuse, his despair is therefore absolute defiance. This is the maximum of despair. The minimum of despair is a state which (as one might humanly be tempted to express it) by reason of a sort of innocence does not even know that there is such a thing as despair. So when consciousness is at its minimum the despair is least; it is almost as if it were a dialectical problem whether one is justified in calling such a state despair.

(a). The Despair which is Unconscious that it is Despair, or the Despairing Unconsciousness of having a Self and an Eternal Self

That this condition is nevertheless despair and is rightly so denominated may be taken as an expression for a trait which we may call, in a good sense, the opinionativeness of truth. *Veritas est index sui et falsi.* But this opinionativeness of truth is, to be sure, held in scant honor, as also it is far from being the case that men in general regard relationship to the truth, the

fact of standing in relationship to the truth, as the highest good, and it is very far from being the case that they, Socratically, regard being under a delusion as the greatest misfortune; their sensuous nature is generally predominant over their intellectuality. So when a man is supposed to be happy, he imagines that he is happy (whereas viewed in the light of the truth he is unhappy), and in this case he is generally very far from wishing to be torn away from that delusion. On the contrary, he becomes furious, he regards the man who does this as his most spiteful enemy, he considers it an insult, something near to murder, in the sense that one speaks of killing joy. What is the reason of this? The reason is that the sensuous nature and the psycho-sensuous completely dominate him; the reason is that he lives in the sensuous categories agreeable/disagreeable, and says goodbye to truth etc.; the reason is that he is too sensuous to have the courage to venture to be spirit or to endure it. However vain and conceited men may be, they have nevertheless for the most part a very lowly conception of themselves, that is to say, they have no conception of being spirit, the absolute of all that a man can be — but vain and conceited they are…by way of comparison. In case one were to think of a house, consisting of cellar, ground-floor and *premier étage,* so tenanted, or rather so arranged, that it was planned for a distinction of rank between the dwellers on the several floors; and in case one were to make a comparison between such a house and what it is to be a man — then unfortunately this is the sorry and ludicrous condition of the majority of men, that in their own house they prefer to live in the cellar. The soulish-bodily synthesis in every man is planned with a view to being spirit, such is the building; but the man prefers to dwell in the cellar, that is, in the determinants of sensuousness. And not only does he prefer to dwell in the cellar; no, he loves that to such a degree that he becomes furious if anyone would propose to him to occupy the *bel étage* which stands empty at his disposition — for in fact he is dwelling in his own house.

No, to be in error or delusion is (quite un-Socratically) the thing they fear the least. One may behold amazing examples which illustrate this fact on a prodigious scale. A thinker erects an immense building, a system, a system which embraces the whole of existence and world-history etc. — and if we contemplate his personal life, we discover to our astonishment this terrible and ludicrous fact, that he himself personally does not live in this immense high-vaulted palace, but in a barn alongside of it, or in a dog kennel, or at the most in the porter's lodge. If one were to take the liberty of calling his attention to this by a single word, he would be offended. For he has no fear of being under a delusion, if only he can get the system completed…by means of the delusion.

So then, the fact that the man in despair is unaware that his condition is despair, has nothing to do with the case, he is in despair all the same. If despair is bewilderment (*Forvildelse),* then the fact that one is unconscious of it is the additional aggravation of being at the same time under a delusion (*Vildfarelse*). Unconsciousness of despair is like unconsciousness of dread (cf. *The Concept of Dread* by Vigilius Haufniensis): the dread characteristic of spiritlessness is recognizable precisely by the spiritless sense of security; but nevertheless dread is at the bottom of it, and when the enchantment of illusion is broken, when existence begins to totter, then too does despair manifest itself as that which was at the bottom.

The despairing man who is conscious of being in despair is, in comparison with him who is unconscious of it, merely a negative step further from the truth and from salvation. Despair itself is a negativity, unconsciousness of it is a new negativity. But to reach truth one must pierce through every negativity. For here applies what the fairy-tale recounts about a certain enchantment: the piece of music must be played through backwards; otherwise the enchantment is not broken. However, it is only in one sense, in a purely dialectical sense, that he who is unconscious of

despair is further away from truth and salvation than the man who is conscious of his despair and yet remains in it. For in another sense, an ethical-dialectic sense, the despairing man who consciously remains in despair is further from salvation, since his despair is more intense. But unawareness is so far from removing despair, or of transforming despair into non-despair, that, on the contrary, it may be the most dangerous form of despair. By unconsciousness the despairing man is in a way secured (but to his own destruction) against becoming aware — that is, he is securely in the power of despair.

In unconsciousness of being in despair a man is furthest from being conscious of himself as spirit. But precisely the thing of not being conscious of oneself as spirit is despair, which is spiritlessness — whether the condition be that of complete deadness, a merely vegetative life, or a life of higher potency the secret of which is nevertheless despair. In the latter instance the man is like the sufferer from consumption: he feels well, considers himself in the best of health, seems perhaps to others to be in florid health, precisely when the sickness is most dangerous.

This form of despair (i.e. unconsciousness of it) is the commonest in the world — yes, in what people call the world, or, to define it more exactly, what Christianity calls "the world," i.e. paganism, and the natural man in Christendom. Paganism as it historically was and is, and paganism within Christendom, is precisely this sort of despair, it is despair but does not know it. It is true that a distinction is made also in paganism, as well as by the natural man, between being in despair and not being in despair; that is to say, people talk of despair as if only certain particular individuals were in despair. But this distinction is just as deceitful as that which paganism and the natural man make between sexual love and self-love, as though this love were not essentially self-love. Further, however, than this deceitful distinction it was impossible for paganism, including the natural man, to go;

for the specific character of despair is precisely this: it is unconscious of being despair.

From this we can easily perceive that the aesthetic concept of spiritlessness by no means furnishes the scale for judging what is despair and what is not — which moreover is a matter of course; for since it is unable to define what spirit truly is, how could the aesthetical make answer to a question which does not exist for it at all? It would also be a prodigious stupidity to deny that pagan nations *en masse*, as well as individual pagans, have performed amazing exploits which have prompted and will prompt the enthusiasm of poets; to deny that paganism exhibits examples of achievement which aesthetically cannot be sufficiently admired. It would also be foolish to deny that in paganism lives have been led which were rich in aesthetic enjoyment, and that the natural man can lead such a life, utilizing every advantage offered with the most perfect good taste, even letting art and learning enhance, embellish, ennoble the enjoyment. No, it is not the aesthetic definition of spiritlessness which furnishes the scale for judging what is despair and what is not; the definition which must be used is the ethico-religious: either spirit/or the negative lack of spirit, spiritlessness. Every human existence which is not conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence which is not thus grounded transparently in God but obscurely reposes or terminates in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.), or in obscurity about itself takes its faculties merely as active powers, without in a deeper sense being conscious whence it has them, which regards itself as an inexplicable something which is to be understood from without — every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically — every such existence is after all despair. It was this the old theologians meant when they talked

about the virtues of the pagans being splendid vices. They meant that the most inward experience of the pagan was despair, that the pagan was not conscious of himself before God as spirit. Hence it came about (to cite here an example which has at the same time a deeper relation to the whole study) that the pagans judged self-slaughter so lightly, yea, even praised it, notwithstanding that for the spirit it is the most decisive sin, that to break out of existence in this way is rebellion against God. The pagan lacked the spirit's definition of the self, therefore he expressed such a judgment of *self*-slaughter — and this the same pagan did who condemned with moral severity theft, unchastity, etc. He lacked the point of view for regarding self-slaughter, he lacked the God-relationship and the self. From a purely pagan point of view self-slaughter is a thing indifferent, a thing every man may do if he likes, because it concerns nobody else. If from a pagan point of view one were to warn against self-slaughter, it must be by a long detour, by showing that it was breach of duty toward one's fellow-men. The point in self-slaughter, that it is a crime against God, entirely escapes the pagan. One cannot say, therefore, that the self-slaughter was despair, which would be a thoughtless hysteron proteron; one must say that the fact that the pagan judged self-slaughter as he did was despair.

Nevertheless there is and remains a distinction, and a qualitative one, between paganism in the narrowest sense, and paganism within Christendom. The distinction (as Vigilius Haufniensis has pointed out in relation to dread) is this, that paganism, though to be sure it lacks spirit, is definitely oriented in the direction of spirit, whereas paganism within Christendom lacks spirit with a direction away from it, or by apostacy, and hence in the strictest sense is spiritlessness.

(b). The Despair which is Conscious of being Despair, as also it is Conscious of being a Self wherein there is after all something Eternal, and

then is either in despair at not willing to be itself, or in despair at willing to be itself.

A distinction of course must be made as to whether he who is conscious of his despair has the true conception of what despair is. Thus a man may be right, according to the conception he has, in asserting that he is in despair, it may be true that he is in despair, and yet this is not to say that he has the true conception of despair, it may be that one who contemplated this man's life in the light of the true conception would say, "You are far more in despair than you are aware, the despair lies far deeper." So with the pagan (to recall the foregoing instance), when in comparison with others he considered himself in despair, he doubtless was right in thinking that he was in despair, but he was wrong in thinking that the others were not; that is to say, he had not the true conception of despair.

So then, for conscious despair there is requisite on the one hand the true conception of what despair is. On the other hand, clearness is requisite about oneself — in so far, that is to say, as clearness and despair are compatible. How far complete clarity about oneself, as to whether one is in despair, may be united with being in despair, whether this knowledge and self-knowledge might not avail precisely to tear a man out of his despair, to make him so terrified about himself that he would cease to be in despair — these questions we shall not decide here, we shall not even attempt to do so, since in the sequel we shall find a place for this whole investigation. But without pursuing the thought to this extremest point, we here merely call attention to the fact that, although the degree of consciousness as to what despair is may be very various, so also may be the degree of consciousness touching one's own condition, the consciousness that it is despair. Real life is far too multifarious to be portrayed by merely exhibiting such abstract contrasts as that between a despair which is completely unconscious, and one which is completely conscious of being such. Most frequently, no

doubt, the condition of the despairing man, though characterized by multiform nuances, is that of a half obscurity about his own condition. He himself knows well enough in a way up to a certain point that he is in despair, he notices it in himself, as one notices in oneself that one is going about with an illness as yet unpronounced, but he will not quite admit what illness it is. At one moment it has almost become clear to him that he is in despair; but then at another moment it appears to him after all as though his indisposition might have another ground, as though it were the consequence of something external, something outside himself, and that if this were to be changed, he would not be in despair. Or perhaps by diversions, or in other ways, e.g. by work and busy occupations as means of distraction, he seeks by his own effort to preserve an obscurity about his condition, yet again in such a way that it does not become quite clear to him that he does it for this reason, that he does what he does in order to bring about obscurity. Or perhaps he even is conscious that he labors thus in order to sink the soul into obscurity, does this with a certain acuteness and shrew calculation, with psychological insight, but is not in a deeper sense clearly conscious of what he does, of how despairingly he labors etc. For in fact there is in all obscurity a dialectical interplay of knowledge and will, and in interpreting a man one may err, either by emphasizing knowledge merely, or merely the will.

But, as was pointed out above, the degree of consciousness potentiates despair. In the same degree that a man has a truer conception of despair while still remaining in it, and in the same degree that he is more conscious of being in despair, in that same degree is his despair more intense. He who with the consciousness that suicide is despair, and to that extent with the true conception of what despair is, then commits suicide — that man has a more intense despair than the man who commits suicide without having the true conception that suicide is despair; but, conversely, the less true his

conception of suicide is, the less intense his despair. On the other hand, the clearer consciousness of himself (self-consciousness) a man has in committing suicide, the more intense is his despair, in comparison with that of the man whose soul, compared with his, is in a confused and obscure condition.

In what follows I shall go on to examine the two forms of conscious despair, in such a way as to display at the same time a heightening of the consciousness of what despair is, and of the consciousness of the fact that one's own condition is despair — or, what is the same thing and the decisive thing, a heightening of the consciousness of the self. But the opposite of being in despair is believing; hence we may perceive the justification for what was stated above (I.A) as the formula which describes a condition in which no despair at all exists, for this same formula is also the formula for believing: by relating itself to its own self, and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it.

(1). In despair at not willing to be oneself, the despair of weakness.

When this form of despair is called the despair of weakness, there is already contained in this a reflection upon the second form (2); in despair at not willing to be oneself. So the contrast here is only relative. No despair is entirely without defiance: in fact defiance is implied in the very expression, “not to will to be.” On the other hand, even the extremest defiance of despair is after all never without some weakness. The difference is therefore only relative. The one form is, so to speak, the despair of womanliness, the other of manliness.

(i). *Despair over the earthly or over something earthly.* This is pure immediacy, or else an immediacy which contains a quantitative reflection. — Here there is no infinite consciousness of the self, of what despair is, or of the fact that the condition is one of despair; the despair is passive,

succumbing to the pressure of the outward circumstance, it by no means comes from within as action. It is, if I may say so, by an innocent misuse of language, a play upon words, as when children play at being soldiers, that in the language of immediacy such words as the self and despair occur.

The *immediate* man (in so far as immediacy is to be found without any reflection) is merely soulishly determined, his self or he himself is a something included along with "the other" in the compass of the temporal and the worldly, and it has only an illusory appearance of possessing in it something eternal. Thus the self coheres immediately with "the other," wishing, desiring, enjoying, etc., but passively; even in desiring, the self is in the dative case, like the child when it says "me" for I. Its dialectic is: the agreeable and the disagreeable; its concepts are: good fortune, misfortune, fate.

Now then there *happens,* befalls (falls upon) this immediate self something which brings it to despair; in no other way can this come about, since the self has no reflection in itself, that which brings it to despair must come from without, and the despair is merely passive. That wherein immediacy has its being, or (supposing that after all it has a little bit of reflection in itself) that part thereof to which it especially clings, a man is deprived of by "a stroke of fate," in short, he becomes, as he calls it, unfortunate, that is, the immediacy in him receives such a shock that it cannot recover itself — he despairs. Or (to mention a case which is more rarely to be seen in real life, but which dialectically is entirely correct) this despair of immediacy occurs through what the immediate man calls an all-too-great good fortune; for it is a fact that immediacy as such is prodigiously fragile, and every *quid nimis* which demands of it reflection brings it to despair.

So then he despairs, that is to say, by a strangely preposterous attitude and a complete mystification with regard to himself, he calls this despair.

But to despair is to lose the eternal — and of this he does not speak, does not dream. The loss of the earthly as such is not the cause of despair, and yet it is of this he speaks, and he calls it despairing. What he says is in a certain sense true, only it is not true in the sense in which he understands it; he stands with his face inverted, and what he says must be understood inversely: he stands and points at that which is not a cause of despair, and he declares that he is in despair, and nevertheless it is quite true that despair is going on behind him without his knowing it. It is as if one were to stand with one's back toward the City Hall and the Court House, and pointing straight before him were to say, "There is the City Hall and the Court House." The man is right, there it is… if he turns around. It is not true, he is not in despair, and yet he is right when he says it. But he calls himself "in despair," he regards himself as dead, as a shadow of himself. But dead he is not; there is, if you will, *life* in the characterization. In case everything suddenly changes, everything in the outward circumstances, and the wish is fulfilled, then life enters into him again, immediacy rises again, and he begins to live as fit as a fiddle. But this is the only way immediacy knows how to fight, the one thing it knows how to do: to despair and swoon — and yet it knows what despair is less than anything else. It despairs and swoons, and thereupon it lies quite still as if it were dead, like the childish play of "lying dead"; immediacy is like certain lower animals which have no other weapon or means of defense but to lie quite still and pretend they are dead.

Meanwhile time passes. If outward help comes, then life returns to the despairer, he begins where he left off; he had no self, and a self he did not become, but he continues to live on with only the quality of immediacy. If outward help does not come, then in real life something else commonly occurs. Life comes back into him after all, but "he never will be himself again," so he says. He now acquires some little understanding of life, he learns to imitate the other men, noting how they manage to live, and so he

too lives after a sort. In Christendom he too is a Christian, goes to church every Sunday, hears and understands the parson, yea, they understand one another; he dies; the parson introduces him into eternity for the price of $10 — but a self he was not, and a self he did not become.

This form of despair is: in despair at not willing to be oneself; or still lower, in despair at not willing to be a self; or lowest of all, in despair at willing to be another than himself. Properly speaking, immediacy has no self, it does not recognize itself, so neither can it recognize itself again, it terminates therefore preferably in the romantic. When immediacy despairs it possesses not even enough self to wish or to dream that it had become what it did not become. The immediate man helps himself in a different way: he wishes to be another. Of this one may easily convince oneself by observing immediate men. At the moment of despair no wish is so natural to them as the wish that they had become or might become another. In any case one can never forbear to smile at such a despairer, who, humanly speaking, although he is in despair, is so very innocent. Commonly such a despairer is infinitely comic. Think of a self (and next to God there is nothing so eternal as a self), and then that this self gets the notion of asking whether it might not let itself become or be made into another…than itself. And yet such a despairer, whose only wish is this most crazy of all transformations, loves to think that this change might be accomplished as easily as changing a coat. For the immediate man does not recognize his self, he recognizes himself only by his dress, he recognizes (and here again appears the infinitely comic trait) he recognizes that he has a self only by externals. There is no more ludicrous confusion, for a self is just infinitely different from externals. When then the whole of existence has been altered for the immediate man and he has fallen into despair, he goes a step further, he thinks thus, this has become his wish: “What if I were to become another, were to get myself a new self?” Yes, but if he did become another, I

wonder if he would recognize himself again! It is related of a peasant who came cleanly shaven to the Capital, and had made so much money that he could buy himself a pair of shoes and stockings and still had enough left over to get drunk on — it is related that as he was trying in his drunken state to find his way home he lay down in the middle of the highway and fell asleep. Then along came a wagon, and the driver shouted to him to move or he would run over his legs. Then the drunken peasant awoke, looked at his legs, and since by reason of the shoes and stockings he didn't recognize them, he said to the driver, "Drive on, they are not my legs." So in the case of the immediate man when he is in despair it is impossible to represent him truly without a touch of the comic; it is, if I may say so, a clever trick to talk in this jargon about a self and about despair.

When immediacy is assumed to have self-reflection, despair is somewhat modified; there is somewhat more consciousness of the self, and therewith in turn of what despair is, and of the fact that one's condition is despair; there is some sense in it when such a man talks of being in despair: but the despair is essentially that of weakness, a passive experience; its form is, in despair at not wanting to be oneself.

The progress in this case, compared with pure immediacy, is at once evident in the fact that the despair does not always come about by reason of a blow, by something that happens, but may be occasioned by the mere reflection within oneself, so that in this case despair is not a purely passive defeat by outward circumstances, but to a certain degree is self-activity, action. Here there is in fact a certain degree of self-reflection, and so a certain degree of observation of oneself. With this certain degree of self-reflection begins the act of discrimination whereby the self becomes aware of itself as something essentially different from the environment, from externalities and their effect upon it. But this is only to a certain degree. Now when the self with a certain degree of self-reflection wills to accept

itself, it stumbles perhaps upon one difficulty or another in the composition of the self. For as no human body is perfection, so neither is any self. This difficulty, be it what it may, frightens the man away shudderingly. Or something happens to him which causes within him a breach with immediacy deeper that he has made by reflection. Or his imagination discovers a possibility which, if it were to come to pass, would likewise become a breach with immediacy.

So he despairs. His despair is that of weakness, a passive suffering of the self, in contrast to the despair of self-assertion; but, by the aid of relative self-reflection which he has, he makes an effort (which again distinguished him from the purely immediate man) to defend his self. He understands that the thing of letting the self go is a pretty serious business after all, he is not so apoplectically muddled by the blow as the immediate man is, he understands by the aid of reflection that there is much he may lose without losing the self; he makes admissions, is capable of doing so — and why? Because to a certain degree he has dissociated his self from external circumstances, because he has an obscure conception that there may even be something eternal in the self. But in vain he struggles thus; the difficulty he stumbled against demands a breach with immediacy as a whole, and for that he has not sufficient self-reflection or ethical reflection; he has no consciousness of a self which is gained by the infinite abstraction from everything outward, this naked, abstract self (in contrast to the clothed self of immediacy) which is the first form of the infinite self and the forward impulse in the whole process whereby a self infinitely accepts its actual self with all its difficulties and advantages.

So then he despairs, and his despair is: not willing to be himself. On the other hand, it strikes him as ridiculous to want to be another; he maintains the relationship to his self — to that extent reflection has identified him with the self. He then is in just such a situation with regard to the self as a

man may be with regard to his dwelling-place. The comic feature is that a self certainly does not stand in such a casual relation to itself as does a man to his dwelling-place. A man finds his dwelling-place distasteful, either because the chimney smokes, or for any other reason whatsoever; so he leaves it, but he does not move out, he does not engage a new dwelling, he continues to regard the old one as his habitation; he reckons that the offense will pass away. So it is with the despairer. As long as the difficulty lasts he does not dare to come to himself (as the common phrase expresses it with singular pregnancy), he does not want to be himself — but that surely will pass by, perhaps things will change, the dark possibility will surely be forgotten. So meanwhile he comes to himself only once in a while, as it were on a visit, to see whether the change has not occurred, and so soon as it has occurred he moves home again, "is again himself," so he says. However, this only means that he begins again where he left off; he was to a certain degree a self of a sort, and he became nothing more.

But if no change occurs, he helps himself in another way. He swings away entirely from the inward direction which is the path he ought to have followed in order to become truly a self. The whole problem of the self in a deeper sense becomes a sort of blind door in the background of his soul behind which there is nothing. He accepts what in his language he calls his self, that is to say, whatever abilities, talents, etc. may have been given him; all this he accepts, yet with the outward direction toward what is called life, the real, the active life; he treats with great precaution the bit of self-reflection which he has in himself, he is afraid that this thing in the background might again emerge. So little by little he succeeds in forgetting it; in the course of years he finds it almost ludicrous, especially when he is in good company with other capable and active men who have a sense and capacity for real life. *Charmant*! He has now, as they say in romances, been happily married for a number of years, is an active and enterprising man, a

father and a citizen, perhaps even a great man; at home in his own house the servants speak of him as “him”; in the city he is among the *honoratiores*; his bearing suggests “respect of persons,” or that he is to be respected as a person, to all appearance he is to be regarded as a person. In Christendom he is a Christian (quite in the same sense in which in paganism he would have been a pagan, and in England an Englishman), one of the cultured Christians. The question of immortality has often been in his mind, more than once he has asked the parson whether there really was such an immortality, whether one would really recognize oneself again — which indeed must have for him a very singular interest, since he has no self.

It is impossible to represent truly this sort of despair without a certain admixture of satire. The comical thing is that he will talk about having been in despair; the dreadful thing is that after having, as he thinks, overcome despair, he is then precisely in despair. It is infinitely comic that at the bottom of the practical wisdom which is so much extolled in the world, at the bottom of all the devilish lot of good counsel and wise saws and “wait and see” and “put up with one’s fate” and “write in the book of forgetfulness” — that at the bottom of all this, ideally understood, lies complete stupidity as to where the danger really is and what the danger really is. But again this ethical stupidity is the dreadful thing.

Despair over the earthly or over something earthly is the commonest sort of despair, especially in the second form of immediacy with a quantitative reflection. The more thoroughly reflected the despair is, the more rarely it occurs in the world. But this proves that most men have not become very deep even in despair; it by no means proves, however, that they are not in despair. There are very few men who live even only passably in the category of spirit; yea, there are not many even who merely make an attempt at this life, and most of those who do so, shy away. They have not learned to fear, they have not learned what “must” means, regardless,

infinitely regardless of what it may be that comes to pass. Therefore they cannot endure what even to them seems a contradiction, and which as reflected from the world around them appears much more glaring, that to be concerned for one's own soul and to want to be spirit is a waste of time, yes, an inexcusable waste of time, which ought if possible to be punishable by law, at all events is punished by contempt and ridicule as a sort of treason against men, as a froward madness which crazily fills up time with nothing. Then there is a period in their lives (alas, their best period) when they begin after all to take the inward direction. They get about as far as the first difficulties, there they veer away; it seems to them as though this road were leading to a disconsolate desert — *und rings umher liegt schöne grüne Weide*, So they are off, and soon they forget that best period of theirs; and, alas, they forget it as though it were a bit of childishness. At the same time they are Christians, tranquilized by the parson with regard to their salvation. This despair, as I have said, is the commonest, it is so common that only thereby can one explain the rather common opinion in common intercourse that despair is something belonging to youth, which appears only in youthful years, but is not to be found in the settled man who has come to the age of maturity and the years of wisdom. This is a desperate error, or rather a desperate mistake, which overlooks (yes, and what is worse, it overlooks the fact that what it overlooks is pretty nearly the best thing that can be said of a man, since far worse often occurs) — it overlooks the fact that the majority of men do never really manage in their whole life to be more than they were in childhood and youth, namely, immediacy with the addition of a little dose of self-reflection. No, despair verily is not something which appears only in the young, something out of which one grows as a matter of course— "as one grows out of illusion." But neither is illusion something one grows out of, though people are foolish enough to think so. On the contrary, one encounters grown men and women and aged

persons who have as much childish illusion as any youth. People overlook the fact that illusion has essentially two forms: that of hope, and that of recollection. But just because the older person is under illusion, he has also an entirely onesided conception of what illusion is, thinking that it is only the illusion of hope. And this is natural. The older man is not plagued by the illusion of hope, but he is on the other hand by the whimsical idea of looking down at the illusion of youth from a supposedly superior standpoint which is free from illusion. The youth is under illusion, he hopes for the extraordinary from life and from himself. By way of compensation one often finds in an older man illusion with respect to the recollections of his youth. An elderly woman who has now supposedly given up all illusions is often found to be as fantastic in her illusion as any young girl, with respect to how she remembers herself as a girl, how happy she once was, how beautiful, etc. This *juimus* which is so often heard from old people is fully as great an illusion as the futuristic illusion of the youth. They both of them are lying or poetizing.

But far more desperate than this is the mistake that despair belongs only to youth. In the main it is a great folly, and precisely it is a lack of sense as to what spirit is, and moreover it is failure to appreciate that man is spirit, not merely an animal, when one supposes that it might be such an easy matter to acquire faith and wisdom which come with the years as a matter of course, like teeth and a beard and such like. No, whatever it may be that a man as a matter of course comes to, and whatever it may be that comes to a man as a matter of course — one thing it is not, namely, faith and wisdom. But the thing is this: with the years man does not, spiritually understood, come to anything; on the other hand, it is very easy with the years to go from something. And with the years one perhaps goes from the bit of passion, feeling, imagination, the bit of inwardness, which one had, and goes as a matter of course (for such things go as a matter of course) under

triviality's definition of understanding of life. This…prearranged condition, which true enough has come about with the years, he now in despair regards as a good, he readily assures himself (and in a certain satirical sense there is nothing more sure) that it now never could occur to him to despair — no, he has assured himself against this, yet he *is* in despair, spiritually in despair. Why I wonder did Socrates love youths — unless it was because he knew men!

And if it does not so happen that a man with the years sinks into the most trivial kind of despair, from this it does not by any means follow that despair might belong only to youth. If a man really develops with the years, if he ripens into essential consciousness of the self, he may perhaps despair in a higher form. And if he does not essentially develop with the years, neither does he sink into sheer triviality, that is to say, if he remains pretty much a young man, a youth, although he is mature, a father and gray-haired, retaining therefore something of the good traits of youth; then indeed he will be exposed also to the possibility of despairing as a youth over the earthly or over something earthly.

So a difference there may well be between the despair of an older man and of a youth, but no essential difference, only a fortuitous one. The youth despairs over the future, as a present tense *injuturo*; there is something in the future he is not willing to accept, hence he is not willing to be himself. The older man despairs over the past, as a present *in praeterito,* which refuses to become more and more past — for so desperate he is not that he entirely succeeds in forgetting it. This past is perhaps something even which repentance should have taken in hand. But if repentance were to emerge, one would first have to despair completely, to despair out and out, and then the spirit-life might break through from the very bottom. But desperate as he is, he dare not let the thing come to such a pass. So there he remains standing, time goes on — unless he succeeds, still more desperately, by the

help of forgetfulness, in healing it, so that instead of becoming a repenter, he becomes his own healer [or accomplice, as the word would be more commonly understood]. But such despair, whether it be of the youth or of the man, is essentially the same, it does not reach any metamorphosis in which the consciousness of the eternal in the self breaks through, so that the battle might begin which either potentiates despair to a higher power or leads to faith.

But is there no essential difference between the two expressions hitherto used as identical: to despair over the earthly (the determinant of totality), and to despair over something earthly (the particular)? Indeed there is. When with infinite passion the self by means of imagination despairs over something earthly, this infinite passion transforms this particular, this something, into the earthly *in toto,* that is to say, the determinant of totality inheres in and belongs to the despairer. The earthly and temporal as such are precisely what falls apart into the particular. It is impossible actually to lose or be deprived of all that is earthly, for the determinant of totality is a thought-determinant. So the self first increases infinitely the actual loss, and then it despairs over the earthly *in toto.* But so soon as this distinction (between despairing over the earthly and over something earthly) is essentially affirmed there is also an essential advance made in the consciousness of the self. This formula, "to be in despair over the earthly" is a dialectic first expression for the next form of despair.

(ii). *Despair about the eternal or over oneself.* Despair over the earthly or over something earthly is really despair also about the eternal and over oneself, in so far as it is despair, for this is the formula for all despair. But the despairer, as he was depicted in the foregoing, did not observe what was happening behind him, so to speak; he thinks he is in despair over something earthly and constantly talks about what he is in despair over, and yet he is in despair about the eternal; for the fact that he ascribes such great

value to the earthly, or, to carry the thought further, that he ascribes to something earthly such great value, or that he first transforms something earthly into everything earthly, and then ascribes to the earthly such great value, is precisely to despair about the eternal.

This despair is now well in advance. If the former was the despair of *weakness,* this is *despair over his weakness*, although it still remains as to its nature under the category “despair of weakness,” as distinguished from defiance in the next section. So there is only a relative difference. This difference consists in the fact that the foregoing form has the consciousness of weakness as its final consciousness, whereas in this case consciousness does not come to a stop here but potentiates itself to a new consciousness, a consciousness of its weakness. The despairer understands that it is weakness to take the earthly so much to heart, that it is weakness to despair. But then, instead of veering sharply away from despair to faith, humbling himself before God for his weakness, he is more deeply absorbed in despair and despairs over his weakness. Therewith the whole point of view is inverted, he becomes now more clearly conscious of his despair, recognizing that he is in despair about the eternal, he despairs over himself that he could be weak enough to ascribe to the earthly such great importance, which now becomes his despairing expression for the fact that he has lost the eternal and himself.

Here is the scale of ascent. First, in consciousness of himself: for to despair about the eternal is impossible without having a conception about the self, that there is something eternal in it, or that it has had something eternal in it. And if a man is to despair over himself, he must indeed be conscious also of having a self; that, however, is the thing over which he despairs — not over the earthly or over something earthly, but over himself. Moreover there is in this case a greater consciousness of what despair is; for despair is precisely to have lost the eternal and oneself. As a matter of

course there is greater consciousness of the fact that one's condition is that of despair. Furthermore, despair in this case is not merely passive suffering but action. For when the earthly is taken away from the self and a man despairs, it is as if despair came from without, though it comes nevertheless always from the self, indirect-directly from the self, as counter-pressure (reaction), differing in this respect from defiance, which comes directly from the self. Finally, there is here again, though in another sense, a further advance. For just because this despair is more intense, salvation is in a certain sense nearer. Such a despair will hardly forget, it is too deep; but despair is held open every instant, and there is thus possibility of salvation.

For all that, this despair is to be referred to the formula: in despair at not willing to be oneself. Just as a father disinherits a son, so the self is not willing to recognize itself after it has been so weak. In its despair it cannot forget this weakness, it hates itself in a way, it will not humble itself in faith under its weakness in order to gain itself again; no, in its despair it will not hear of itself, so to speak, will not know anything about itself. But there can be no question of being helped by forgetfulness, no question of slipping by the aid of forgetfulness under the determinant of selflessness, and so being a man and a Christian like other men and Christians; no, for this the self is too much a self. As it often was the case with the father who disinherited his son that the outward fact was of little avail to him, he did not by this get free of his son, at least his thought did not; as is often the case with the lover's curse upon the hated one (i.e. the loved one) that it does not help much, it almost imprisons him the more — so it is in the case of the despairing self with relation to itself.

This despair is one quality deeper than the foregoing and is a sort which rarely is met with in the world. That blind door behind which there was nothing is in this case a real door, a door carefully locked to be sure, and behind it sits as it were the self and watches itself, employed in filling up

time with not willing to be itself, and yet is self enough to love itself. This is what is called *introversion*. And from now on we shall be dealing with introversion, which is the direct opposite to immediacy and has a great contempt for it, in the sphere of thought more especially.

But does there then in the realm of reality exist no such self? Has he fled outside of reality to the desert, to the cloister, to the mad-house? Is he not a real man, clothed like others, or like others clad in the customary outer-garments? Yes, certainly there is! Why not? But with respect to this thing of the self he initiates no one, not a soul, he feels no urge to do this, or he has learnt to suppress it. Hear how he talks about it. "After all it's only the purely immediate men — who so far as spirit is concerned are about at the same point as the child in the first period of earliest infancy when with a thoroughly endearing nonchalance it lets everything pass out — it's the purely immediate men who can't retain anything. It is this sort of immediacy which often with great pretentiousness proclaims itself 'truth,' that one is 'a true man and just like people generally are' — which is just as true as it is untrue that a grown man as soon as he feels a corporal need at once yields to it. Every self which is even a little bit reflective has surely a notion of what it is to repress the self." And our despairer is introverted enough to be able to keep every intruder (that is, every man) at a distance from the topic of the self, whereas outwardly he is completely "a real man." He is a university man, husband and father, an uncommonly competent civil functionary even, a respectable father, very gende to his wife and carefulness itself with respect to his children. And a Christian? Well, yes, he is that too after a sort; however, he preferably avoids talking on the subject, although he willingly observes and with a melancholy joy that his wife for her edification engages in devotions. He very seldom goes to church, because it seems to him that most parsons really don't know what they are talking about. He makes an exception in the case of one particular priest of

whom he concedes that he knows what he is talking about, but he doesn't want to hear him for another reason, because he has a fear that this might lead him too far. On the other hand, he often feels a need of solitude, which for him is a vital necessity — sometimes like breathing, at other times like sleeping. The fact that he feels this vital necessity more than other men is also a sign that he has a deeper nature. Generally the need of solitude is a sign that there is spirit in a man after all, and it is a measure for what spirit there is. The purely twaddling inhuman and too-human men are to such a degree without feeling for the need of solitude that like a certain species of social birds (the so-called love birds) they promptly die if for an instant they have to be alone. As the little child must be put to sleep by a lullaby, so these men need the tranquilizing hum of society before they are able to eat, drink, sleep, pray, fall in love, etc. But in ancient times as well as in the Middle Ages people were aware of the need of solitude and had respect for what it signifies. In the constant sociability of our age people shudder at solitude to such a degree that they know no other use to put it to but (oh, admirable epigram!) as a punishment for criminals. But after all it is a fact that in our age it is a crime to have spirit, so it is natural that such people, the lovers of solitude, are included in the same class with criminals.

The introverted despairer thus lives on *horis succesivis,* through hours which, though they are not lived for eternity, have nevertheless something to do with the eternal, being employed about the relationship of one's self to itself — but he really gets no further than this. So when this is done, when the need for solitude is satisfied, he goes outside as it were — even when he goes in or converses with wife and children. That which as a husband makes him so gentle and as a father so careful is, apart from his goodnature and his sense of duty, the admission he has made to himself in his most inward reserve concerning his weakness.

If it were possible for anyone to be privy to his introversion and were to say to him, “This is in fact pride, thou art proud of thyself,” he would hardly be likely to admit it to another. When he was alone with himself he would likely admit that there was something in it; but the passionateness with which his self had pictured his weakness would quickly make him believe again that it could not possibly be pride, for it was in fact precisely over his weakness he was in despair — just as if it were not pride which attached such prodigious weight to weakness, just as if it were not because he wanted to be proud of himself that he could not endure this consciousness of weakness. — If one were to say to him, “This is a strange complication, a strange sort of knot; for the whole misfortune consists in the way thought is twined; otherwise the direction is quite normal, it is just this path you must travel through the despair of the self to faith. It is true enough about the weakness, but it is not over this you must despair; the self must be broken in order to become a self, so cease to despair over it.” If one were to talk to him thus, he would perhaps understand it in a dispassionate moment, but soon passion would again see falsely, and so again he takes the wrong turn into despair.

As I have said, such despair is rather rare. If it does not stay at that point, merely marking time, and if on the other hand there does not occur a radical change in the despairer so that he gets on the right path to faith, then such despair will either potentiate itself to a higher form and continue to be introversion, or it breaks through to the outside and demolishes the outward disguise under which the despairing man has been living in his incognito. In the latter case such a despairer will then plunge into life, perhaps into the distractions of great undertakings, he will become a restless spirit which leaves only too clear a trace of its actual presence, a restless spirit which wants to forget, and inasmuch as the noise within is so loud stronger means are needed, though of a different sort, than those which Richard III.

employs in order not to hear his mother's curses. Or he will seek forgetfulness in sensuality, perhaps in debauchery, in desperation he wants to return to immediacy, but constantly with consciousness of the self, which he does not want to have. In the first case, when despair is potentiated it becomes defiance, and it now becomes manifest how much truth there was in this notion of weakness, it becomes manifest how dialectically correct it is to say that the first expression of defiance is precisely despair over one's weakness.

However, let us in conclusion take another little look at the introvert who in his introversion marks time on the spot. If this introversion is absolutely maintained, *omnibus numeris absoluta,* then suicide will be the danger nearest to him. The common run of men have of course no presentiment of what such an introvert is capable of bearing; if they were to come to know it, they would be astonished. If on the other hand he talks to someone, if to one single man he opens his heart, he is in all probability strained to so high a tension, or so much let down, that suicide does not result from introversion. Such an introvert with one person privy to his thought is a whole tone milder than the absolute case. He probably will shun suicide. It may happen, however, that he falls into despair just for the fact that he has opened his heart to another; it may be that he thinks it would have been infinitely preferable to maintain silence rather than have anyone privy to his secret. There are examples of introverts who are brought to despair precisely because they have acquired a confidant. So after all suicide may be the consequence. Poetically the catastrophe (assuming *poetice* that the protagonist was e.g. a king or emperor) might be fashioned in such a way that the hero had the confidant put to death. One could imagine such a demoniacal tyrant who felt the need of talking to a fellow-man about his torment, and in this way consumed successively a whole lot of men; for to be his confidant was certain death. — It would be the task for a poet to

represent this agonizing self-contradiction in a demoniac man who is not able to get along without a confidant, and not able to have a confidant, and then resolving it in such a way as this.

(2). The despair of willing desparingly to be oneself — defiance.

As it was shown that one might call the despair dealt with in section 1 the despair of weakness, so one might call the despair now to be considered the despair of manliness. In connection with the kind just described it may be called: despair viewed under the determinant of spirit. But manliness belongs more precisely under the determinant of spirit, and womanliness is a lower synthesis.

The despair described in section 1 (ii) was despair over one's weakness, the despairer does not want to be himself. But if one goes one single dialectical step further, if despair thus becomes conscious of the reason why it does not want to be itself, then the case is altered, then defiance is present, for then it is precisely because of this a man is despairingly determined to be himself.

First comes despair over the earthly or something earthly, then despair over oneself about the eternal. Then comes defiance, which really is despair by the aid of the eternal, the despairing abuse of the eternal in the self to the point of being despairingly determined to be oneself. But just because it is despair by the aid of the eternal it lies in a sense very close to the true, and just because it lies very close to the true it is infinitely remote. The despair which is the passage-way to faith is also by the aid of the eternal: by the aid of the eternal the self has courage to lose itself in order to gain itself. Here on the contrary it is not willing to begin by losing itself but wills to be itself.

In this form of despair there is now a mounting consciousness of the self, and hence greater consciousness of what despair is and of the fact that one's condition is that of despair. Here despair is conscious of itself as a deed, it does not come from without as a suffering under the pressure of

circumstances, it comes directly from the self. And so after all defiance is a new qualification added to despair over one's weakness.

In order to will in despair to be oneself there must be consciousness of the infinite self. This infinite self, however, is really only the abstractest form, the abstractest possibility of the self, and it is this self the man despairingly wills to be, detaching the self from every relation to the Power which posited it, or detaching it from the conception that there is such a Power in existence. By the aid of this infinite form the self despairingly wills to dispose of itself or to create itself, to make itself the self it wills to be, distinguishing in the concrete self what it will and what it will not accept. The man's concrete self, or his concretion, has in fact necessity and limitations, it is this perfectly definite thing, with these faculties, dispositions, etc. But by the aid of the infinite form, the negative self, he wills first to undertake to refashion the whole thing, in order to get out of it in this way a self such as he wants to have, produced by the aid of the infinite form of the negative self — and it is thus he wills to be himself. That is to say, he is not willing to begin with the beginning but "in the beginning." He is not willing to attire himself in himself, nor to see his task in the self given him; by the aid of being the infinite form he wills to construct it himself.

If one would have a common name for this despair, one might call it Stoicism — yet without thinking only of this philosophic sect. And to illuminate this sort of despair more sharply one would do well to distinguish between the active and the passive self, showing how the self is related to itself when it is active, and how it is related to itself in suffering when it is passive, and showing that the formula constantly is: in despair to will to be oneself.

If the despairing *self* is *active,* it really is related to itself only as experimenting with whatsoever it be that it undertakes, however great it

may be, however astonishing, however persistently carried out. It acknowledges no power over it, hence in the last resort it lacks seriousness and is able only to conjure up a show of seriousness when the self bestows upon its experiments its utmost attention. Like the fire which Prometheus stole from the gods, so does this mean to steal from God the thought which is seriousness, that God is regarding one, instead of which the despairing self is content with regarding itself, and by that it is supposed to bestow upon its undertakings infinite interest and importance, whereas it is precisely this which makes them mere experiments. For though this self were to go so far in despair that it becomes an experimental god, no derived self can by regarding itself give itself more than it is: it nevertheless remains from first to last the self, by self-duplication it becomes neither more nor less than the self. Hence the self in its despairing effort to will to be itself labors itself into the direct opposite, it becomes really no self. In the whole dialectic within which it acts there is nothing firm, what the self is does not for an instant stand firm, that is, eternally firm. The negative form of the self exercises quite as much the power of loosing as of binding, every instant it can quite arbitrarily begin all over again, and however far a thought may be pursued, the whole action is within a hypothesis. It is so far from being true that the self succeeds more and more in becoming itself, that in fact it merely becomes more and more manifest that it is a hypothetical self. The self is its own lord and master, so it is said, its own lord, and precisely this is despair, but so also is what it regards as its pleasure and enjoyment. However, by closer inspection one easily ascertains that this ruler is a king without a country, he rules really over nothing; his condition, his dominion, is subjected to the dialectic that every instant revolution is legitimate. For in the last resort this depends arbitrarily upon the self.

So the despairing self is constantly building nothing but castles in the air, it fights only in the air. All these experimented virtues make a brilliant showing; for an instant they are enchanting like an oriental poem: such self-control, such firmness, such ataraxia, etc., border almost on the fabulous. Yes, they do to be sure; and also at the bottom of it all there is nothing. The self wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself, of developing itself, of being itself; it wants to have the honor of this poetical, this masterly plan according to which it has understood itself. And yet in the last resort it is a riddle how it understands itself; just at the instant when it seems to be nearest to having the fabric finished it can arbitrarily resolve the whole thing into nothing.

If the despairing self is a *passive* sufferer, we have still the same formula: in despair at willing to be oneself. Perhaps such an experimenting self which in despair wills to be itself, at the moment when it is making a preliminary exploration of its concrete self, stumbles upon one or another hardship of the sort that the Christian would call a cross, a fundamental defect, it matters not what. The negative self, the infinite form of the self, will perhaps cast this clean away, pretend that it does not exist, want to know nothing about it. But this does not succeed, its virtuosity in experimenting does not extend so far, nor does its virtuosity in abstraction; like Prometheus the infinite, negative self feels that it is nailed to this servitude. So then it is a passively suffering self. How then does the despair which despairingly wills to be itself display itself in this case?

Note that in the foregoing the form of despair was represented which is in despair over the earthly or over something earthly, so understood that at bottom this is and also shows itself to be despair about the eternal, i.e. despair which wills not to let itself be comforted by the eternal, which rates the earthly so high that the eternal can be of no comfort. But this too is a form of despair: not to be willing to hope that an earthly distress, a temporal

cross, might be removed. This is what the despair which wills desperately to be itself is not willing to hope. It has convinced itself that this thorn in the flesh gnaws so profoundly that he cannot abstract it — no matter whether this is actually so or his passion makes it true for him, and so he is willing to accept it as it were eternally. So he is offended by it, or rather from it he takes occasion to be offended at the whole of existence, in spite of it he would be himself, not despitefully be himself without it (for that is to abstract from it, and that he cannot do, or that would be a movement in the direction of resignation); no, in spite of or in defiance of the whole of existence he wills to be himself with it, to take it along, almost defying his torment. For to hope in the possibility of help, not to speak of help by virtue of the absurd, that for God all things are possible — no, that he will not do. And as for seeking help from any other — no, that he will not do for all the world; rather than seek help he would prefer to be himself — with all the tortures of hell, if so it must be.

And of a truth it is not quite so true after all when people say that "it is a matter of course that a sufferer would be so glad to be helped, if only somebody would help him" — this is far from being the case, even though the opposite case is not always so desperate as this. The situation is this. A sufferer has one or more ways in which he would be glad to be helped. If he is helped thus, he is willing to be helped. But when in a deeper sense it becomes seriousness with this thing of needing help, especially from a higher or from the highest source — this humiliation of having to accept help unconditionally and in any way, the humiliation of becoming nothing in the hand of the Helper for whom all things are possible, or merely the necessity of deferring to another man, of having to give up being oneself so long as one is seeking help — ah, there are doubtless many sufferings, even protracted and agonizing sufferings, at which the self does not wince to this extent, and which therefore at bottom it prefers to retain and to be itself.

But the more consciousness there is in such a sufferer who in despair is determined to be himself, all the more does despair too potentiate itself and become demoniac. The genesis of this is commonly as follows. A self which in despair is determined to be itself winces at one pain or another which simply cannot be taken away or separated from its concrete self. Precisely upon this torment the man directs his whole passion, which at last becomes a demoniac rage. Even if at this point God in heaven and all his angels were to offer to help him out of it — no, now he doesn't want it, now it is too late, he once would have given everything to be rid of this torment but was made to wait, now that's all past, now he would rather rage against everything, he, the one man in the whole of existence who is the most unjustly treated, to whom it is especially important to have his torment at hand, important that no one should take it from him — for thus he can convince himself that he is in the right. This at last becomes so firmly fixed in his head that for a very peculiar reason he is afraid of eternity — for the reason, namely, that it might rid him of his (demoniacally understood) infinite advantage over other men, his (demoniacally understood) justification for being what he is. It is himself he wills to be; he began with the infinite abstraction of the self, and now at last he has become so concrete that it would be an impossibility to be eternal in that sense, and yet he wills in despair to be himself. Ah, demoniac madness! He rages most of all at the thought that eternity might get it into its head to take his misery from him!

This sort of despair is seldom seen in the world, such figures generally are met with only in the works of poets, that is to say, of real poets, who always lend their characters this "demoniac" ideality (taking this word in the purely Greek sense). Nevertheless such a despairer is to be met with also in real life. What then is the corresponding outward mark? Well, there is no "corresponding" mark, for in fact a corresponding outward expression

corresponding to close reserve is a contradiction in terms; for if it is corresponding, it is then of course revealing. But outwardness is the entirely indifferent factor in this case where introversion, or what one might call inwardness with a jammed lock, is so much the predominant factor. The lowest forms of despair, where there really was no inwardness, or at all events none worth talking about, the lowest forms of despair one might represent by describing or by saying something about the outward traits of the despairer. But the more despair becomes spiritual, and the more inwardness becomes a peculiar world for itself in introversion, all the more is the self alert with demoniac shrewdness to keep despair shut up in close reserve, and all the more intent therefore to set the outward appearance at the level of indifference, to make it as unrevealing and indifferent as possible. As according to the report of superstition the troll disappears through a crack which no one can perceive, so it is for the despairer all the more important to dwell in an exterior semblance behind which it ordinarily would never occur to anyone to look for it. This hiddenness is precisely something spiritual and is one of the safety-devices for assuring oneself of having as it were behind reality an enclosure, a world for itself locking all else out, a world where the despairing self is employed as tirelessly as Tantalus in willing to be itself.

We began in section 1 (ii) with the lowest form of despair, which in despair does not will to be itself. The demoniac despair is the most potentiated form of the despair which despairingly wills to be itself. This despair does not will to be itself with Stoic doting upon itself, nor with self-deification, willing in this way, doubtless mendaciously, yet in a certain sense in terms of its perfection; no, with hatred for existence it wills to be itself, to be itself in terms of its misery; it does not even in defiance or defiantly will to be itself, but to be itself in spite; it does not even will in defiance to tear itself free from the Power which posited it, it wills to

obtrude upon this Power in spite, to hold on to it out of malice. And that is natural, a malignant objection must above all take care to hold on to that against which it is an objection. Revolting against the whole of existence, it thinks it has hold of a proof against it, against its goodness. This proof the despairer thinks he himself is, and that is what he wills to be, therefore he wills to be himself, himself with his torment, in order with this torment to protest against the whole of existence. Whereas the weak despairer will not hear about what comfort eternity has for him, so neither will such a despairer hear about it, but for a different reason, namely, because this comfort would be the destruction of him as an objection against the whole of existence. It is (to describe it figuratively) as if an author were to make a slip of the pen, and that this clerical error became conscious of being such — perhaps it was no error but in a far higher sense was an essential constituent in the whole exposition — it is then as if this clerical error would revolt against the author, out of hatred for him were to forbid him to correct it, and were to say, “No, I will not be erased, I will stand as a witness against thee, that thou art a very poor writer.”

PART SECOND. DESPAIR IS SIN

I. DESPAIR IS SIN

SIN IS THIS: *before God, or with the conception of God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself.* Thus sin is potentiated weakness or potentiated defiance: sin is the potentiation of despair. The point upon which the emphasis rests is *before God,* or the fact that the conception of God is involved; the factor which dialectically, ethically, religiously, makes "qualified" despair (to use a juridical term) synonymous with sin is the conception of God.

Although in this Second Part, and especially in this section, there is no place or occasion for psychological description, there here may be introduced, as the most dialectical borderline between despair and sin, what one might call a poet-existence in the direction of the religious, an existence which has something in common with the despair of resignation, only that the conception of God is involved. Such an existence (as is to be seen from the conjunction and position of the categories) will be the most eminent poet-existence. From a Christian standpoint such an existence (in spite of all aesthetic) is sin, it is the sin of poetizing instead of being, of standing in relation to the Good and the True through imagination instead of being that, or rather existentially striving to be it. The poet-existence here in question is distinguished from despair by the fact that it includes the conception of God or is before God; but it is prodigiously dialectical, and is in an impenetrable dialectical confusion as to how far it is conscious of being sin. Such a poet may have a very deep religious need, and the conception of God is included in his despair. He loves God above everything, God is for him the only comfort in his secret torment, and yet he loves the torment, he will not let it go. He would so gladly be himself before God, but not with respect to this fixed point where the self suffers, there despairingly he will not be himself;

he hopes that eternity will remove it, and here in the temporal, however much he suffers under it, he cannot will to accept it, cannot humble himself under it in faith. And yet he continues to hold to God, and this is his only happiness, for him it would be the greatest horror to have to do without God, "it would be enough to drive one to despair"; and yet he permits himself commonly, but perhaps unconsciously, to poetize God, making him a little bit other than He is, a little bit more like a loving father who all too much indulges the child's "only wish." He who became unhappy in love, and therefore became a poet, blissfully extolls the happiness of love — so he became a poet of religiousness, he understands obscurely that it is required of him to let this torment go, that is, to humble himself under it in faith and to accept it as belonging to the self — for he would hold it aloof from him, and thereby precisely he holds it fast, although doubtless he thinks (and this, like every other word of despair, is correct in the opposite sense and therefore must be understood inversely) that this must mean separating himself from it as far as possible, letting it go as far as it is possible for a man to do so. But to accept it in faith, that he cannot do, or rather in the last resort he will not, or here is where the self ends in obscurity. But like that poet's description of love, so this poet's description of the religious possesses an enchantment, a lyrical flight, such as no married man's description has, nor that of his Reverence. What he says is not untrue, by no means, his representation reflects his happier, his better *ego.* With respect to the religious he is an unhappy lover, that is, he is not in a strict sense a believer, he has only the first prerequisite of faith, and with that an ardent longing for the religious. His collision is essentially this: is he the elect, is the thorn in the flesh the expression for the fact that he is to be employed as the extraordinary, is it before God quite as it should be with respect to the extraordinary figure he has become? or is the thorn in the flesh the experience he must humble himself under in order to attain the

universal human? But enough of this. I can say with the emphasis of truth, “To whom am I talking?” Who will bother about such psychological investigations carried to the *nth* power? The Nüremburg Picture Books painted by priests are easily understood, they all resemble one another — deceptively — and spiritually understood they are nothing.

CHAPTER l. GRADATIONS IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SELF (THE QUALIFICATION "BEFORE GOD")

In the foregoing there is steadily pointed out a gradation in the consciousness of the self: first came unconsciousness of being an eternal self (III.B a), then a knowledge of having a self in which there is after all something eternal (III.B b), and under this (1 i and ii, 2) there were again pointed out gradations. This whole situation must now be turned about and viewed in a new way. The point is this. The gradations in the consciousness of the self with which we have hitherto been employed are within the definition of the human self, or the self whose measure is man. But this self acquires a new quality or qualification in the fact that it is the self directly in the sight of God. This self is no longer the merely human self but is what I would call, hoping not to be misunderstood, the theological self, the self directly in the sight of God. And what an infinite reality this self acquires by being before God! A herdsman who (if this were possible), is a self only in the sight of cows is a very low self, and so also is a ruler who is a self in the sight of slaves — for in both cases the scale or measure is lacking. The child who hitherto has had only the parents to measure himself by, becomes a self when he is a man by getting the state as a measure. But what an infinite accent falls upon the self by getting God as a measure! The measure for the self always is that in the face of which it is a self; but this does not define what "measure" is. As one can add up only magnitudes of the same order, so each thing is qualitatively that by which it is measured; and that which is qualitatively its measure (*Maalestok*) is ethically its goal (*Maal*); and the measure and goal are qualitatively that which something is — with exception of the relation which obtains in the world of freedom, where a man by not being qualitatively that which is his goal and his measure must

himself have deserved this disqualification, so that the goal and the measure remain the same…condemningly, making manifest what it is he is not: that, namely which is his goal and his measure.

It was a very just thought to which the older dogmatic frequently recurred, whereas a later dogmatic so often censored it for lack of understanding and a proper sense of its meaning — it was a very just thought, although sometimes a wrong application was made of it: the thought that what makes sin so frightful is that it is before God. From this the theologians proved the eternity of hell-punishment. Subsequently they became shrewder and said, “Sin is sin; sin is not greater because it is against God or before God.” Strange! For even the jurists talk about “qualified” crimes and extenuating circumstances, even the jurists make distinction with regard to a crime, inquiring, for example, whether it is committed against a public functionary or a private person, they prescribe a different punishment for the murder of a father and an ordinary murder.

No, the earlier dogmatic was right in asserting that the fact that the sin was before God infinitely potentiated it. Their fault lay in regarding God as something external, and in assuming that it was only now and then men sinned against God. But God is not something external in the sense that a policeman is. What we need to emphasize is that the self has the conception of God, and that then it does not will as He wills, and so is disobedient. Nor is it only now and then one sins before God; for every sin is before God, or rather it is this which properly makes human guilt to be sin.

Despair is potentiated in proportion to consciousness of self; but the self is potentiated in the ratio of the measure proposed for the self, and infinitely potentiated when God is the measure. The more conception of God, the more self; the more self, the more conception of God. Only when the self as this definite individual is conscious of existing before God, only then is it the infinite self; and then this self sins before God. The selfishness of

paganism, therefore, in spite of all that can be said about it, is not nearly so “qualified” as that of Christendom, in so far as here also there is selfishness; for the pagan did not possess his self directly in the face of God. The pagan and the natural man have as their measure the merely human self. One may be right therefore from a higher standpoint in regarding paganism as lying in sin, but properly the sin of paganism was the despairing unawareness of God, unawareness of existing before God; this means to be “without God in the world.” On the other hand, it is for this reason true that the pagan did not sin in the strictest sense, for he did not sin before God. Moreover, it is also in a sense quite certain that many a time a pagan is enabled in a way to slip through the world irreproachably precisely because his light-minded Pelagian interpretation saved him; but then his sin is a different one, namely, this light-minded interpretation. On the other hand and in a different aspect it is quite certain that just by being brought up strictly in Christianity a man has in a certain sense been plunged into sin, because the whole Christian view was too serious for him, especially in an earlier period of his life; but then in another sense this is again of some help to him, this deeper apprehension of what sin is.

Sin is: before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself. But is not this definition, even though in other aspects it may be conceded to have advantages (and among them this which is the weightiest of all, that it is the only Scriptural definition, for the Scripture always defines sin as disobedience), is it not after all too spiritual? To this one must first of all make answer that a definition of sin can never be too spiritual (unless it becomes so spiritual that it does away with sin); for sin is precisely a determinant of spirit. And in the next place, why should it then be too spiritual? Because it does not talk about murder, theft, unchastity, etc.? But does it not talk of them? Is it not also self-assertion against God when one is disobedient and defies His commandment? But on

the other hand, when in talking about sin one talks only of such sins, it is so easily forgotten that in a way it may be all right, humanly speaking, with respect to all such things up to a certain point, and yet the whole life may be sin, the well-known kind of sin: glittering vices, wilfulness, which either spiritlessly or impudently continues to be or wills to be unaware in what an infinitely deeper sense a human self is morally under obligation to God with respect to every most secret wish and thought, with respect to quickness in comprehending and readiness to follow every hint of God as to what His will is for this self. The sins of the flesh are the self-assertion of the lower self; but how often one devil is cast out by the devil's help, and the last state becomes worse than the first. For so it is with men in this world: first a man sins from frailty and weakness; and then — yes, then perhaps he learns to flee to God and to be helped by faith which saves from all sin; but of this we are not talking here — then he despairs over his weakness and becomes, either a Pharisee who in despair manages to attain a certain legal righteousness, or he despairs and plunges again into sin.

The definition therefore certainly embraces every conceivable and actual form of sin; it certainly throws into relief the decisive fact that sin is despair (for sin is not the wildness of flesh and blood, but it is the spirit's consent thereto), and it is…before God. As a definition it is algebraic. In this little work it would be out of place, and an effort moreover which perhaps would not succeed, were I to begin by describing the particular sins. The principal thing here is that the definition like a net must embrace all forms. And that it does, as can be seen when one tests it by setting up the opposite, namely, the definition of faith, by which I steer my course in the whole of this work, as by a sure mariners' mark. Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God.

But too often it has been overlooked that the opposite of sin is not *virtue,* not by any manner of means. This is in part a pagan view which is content

with a merely human measure and properly does not know what *sin* is, that all sin is before God. No, *the opposite of sin is faith,* as is affirmed in Rom.14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And for the whole of Christianity it is one of the most decisive definitions that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.

APPENDIX

THAT THE DEFINITION OF SIN CONTAINS THE POSSIBILITY OF THE OFFENSE — A GENERAL OBSERVATION ABOUT OFFENSE

The opposition sin/faith is the Christian one, which in a Christian way transforms the definition of all ethical concepts, giving them one distillation the more. At the bottom of this opposition lies the decisive Christian concept, "before God," a determinant which in turn stands in relation to the decisive criterion of Christianity: the absurd, the paradox, the possibility of offense. And that this should be'indicated in every definition of Christianity is of the utmost importance, for the offense is Christianity's defense against all speculation. In this instance where is the possibility of the offense? It lies in the fact that a man, as a particular individual, should have such a reality as is implied by existing directly in the sight of God; and then again, and as a consequence of this, that a man's sin should concern God. This notion of the particular man…before God speculative philosophy never gets into its head, it can only universalize the particular man fantastically. It was just for this reason also that an incredulous Christianity made out that sin is sin, no matter whether it is directly in the sight of God or not. That is to say, they wanted to do away with the determinant "before God," and to this end they discovered a higher wisdom — which, however, strangely enough, was neither more nor less than what the higher wisdom no doubt generally is… the old paganism.

There is so much said now about people being offended at Christianity because it is so dark and gloomy, offended at it because it is so severe, etc.

It is now high time to explain that the real reason why man is offended at Christianity is because it is too high, because its goal is not man's goal, because it would make of a man something so extraordinary that he is unable to get it into his head. A perfectly simple psychological investigation of what offense is will explain this, and at the same time it will show how infinitely silly their behavior has been who defended Christianity by taking away the offense, how stupidly or impudently they have ignored Christ's own instruction, who often and with such deep concern warns against the offense, that is, intimates that the possibility of the offense is present, and must be ever-present; for if it is not present, if it is not an eternally essential constituent of Christianity, it is nonsense, humanly speaking, for Christ, instead of taking it away, to be distressed about it and to give warning against it.

If I were to imagine to myself a day-laborer and the mightiest emperor that ever lived, and were to imagine that this mighty Emperor took a notion to send for the poor man, who never had dreamed, "neither had it entered into his heart to believe," that the Emperor knew of his existence, and who therefore would think himself indescribably fortunate if merely he was permitted once to see the Emperor, and would recount it to children and children's children as the most important event of his life — but suppose the Emperor sent for him and informed him that he wished to have him for his son-in-law…what then? Then the laborer, humanly, would become somewhat or very much puzzled, shame-faced, and embarrassed, and it would seem to him, quite humanly (and this is the human element in it), something exceedingly strange, something quite mad, the last thing in the world about which he would say a word to anybody else, since he himself in his own mind was not far from explaining it by supposing (as his neighbors would be busily doing as soon as possible) that the Emperor wanted to make a fool of him, so that the poor man would be the laughing-

stock of the whole town, his picture in the papers, the story of his espousal to the Emperor's daughter the theme of ballad-mongers. This thing, however, of becoming the Emperor's son-in-law might readily be subjected to the tests of reality, so that the laborer would be able to ascertain how far the Emperor was serious in this matter, or whether he merely wanted to make fun of the poor fellow, render him unhappy for the rest of his life, and help him to find his way to the mad-house; for the *quid nimis* is in evidence, which with such infinite ease can turn into its opposite. A small expression of favor the laborer would be able to get through his head; it would be understood in the market-town by "the highly respected cultured public," by all ballad-mongers, in short, by the 5 times 100,000 persons who dwelt in that market-town, which with respect to its population was even a very big city, but with respect to possessing understanding of and sense for the extraordinary was a very small market-town — but this thing of becoming the Emperor's son-in-law was far too much. And suppose now that this was not an external reality but an inward thing, so that factual proofs could not help the laborer to certitude, but faith itself was the facticity, and so it was all left to faith whether he possessed humble courage enough to dare to believe it (for impudent courage cannot help one to *believe*) — how many laboring men were there likely to be who possessed this courage? But he who had not this courage would be offended; the extraordinary would seem to him almost like mockery of him. He would then perhaps honestly and plainly admit, "Such a thing is too high for me, I cannot get it into my head; it seems to me, if I may blurt it straight out, foolishness."

And now for Christianity! Christianity teaches that this particular individual, and so every individual, whatever in other respects this individual may be, man, woman, serving-maid, minister of state, merchant, barber, student, etc. — this individual exists *before God* — this individual who perhaps would be vain for having once in his life talked with the King,

this man who is not a little proud of living on intimate terms with that person or the other, this man exists before God, can talk with God any moment he will, sure to be heard by Him, in short, this man is invited to live on the most intimate terms with God! Furthermore, for this man's sake God came to the world, let himself be born, suffers and dies; and this suffering God almost begs and entreats this man to accept the help which is offered him! Verily, if there is anything that would make a man lose his understanding, it is surely this! Whosoever has not the humble courage to dare to believe it, must be offended at it. But why is he offended? Because it is too high for him, because he cannot get it into his head, because in the face of it he cannot acquire frank-heartedness, and therefore must have it done away with, brought to naught and nonsense, for it is as though it would stifle him.

For what is offense? Offense is unhappy admiration. It is therefore akin to envy, but it is an envy which is turned against oneself, or, more exactly, envy which is worst of all against oneself. The narrow-mindedness of the natural man cannot welcome for itself the extraordinary which God has intended for him; so he is offended.

The degree of the offense depends upon what passion a man has for admiration. The more prosaic men, devoid of imagination and passion, and who therefore are not apt to admire, they too may be offended, but they confine themselves to saying, "Such a thing I can't get through my head, I let it alone." These are the sceptics. But the more passion and imagination a man has, the nearer he also is in a certain sense (that is, in the possibility) to being able to become a believer — *nota bene I* by adoringly humbling himself under the extraordinary — and with that, all the more passionate is the offense, which at last cannot be contented with less than the expression: annihilated and trodden in the dust.

If one would learn to understand offense, let him study human envy, a subject which I offer as an extra course, pluming myself upon having studied it profoundly. Envy is concealed admiration. An admirer who feels that he cannot be happy by surrendering himself elects to become envious of that which he admires. So he speaks another language, and in that language of his the thing which he really admires is called a stupid, insipid and queer sort of thing. Admiration is happy self-surrender; envy is unhappy self-assertion.

So also it is with offense: that which in the relation between man and man is known as admiration /envy, in the relation between man and God is adoration /offense. The *summa summarum* of all human wisdom is this "golden," or perhaps more properly the gilded, *ne quid nimis*, too much or too little spoils the broth. This is given and taken between man and man as wisdom and is honored by admiration, its quotation never fluctuates, the whole of humanity guarantees its value. So if once in a while there lives a genius who goes a little bit beyond it, he is declared mad…by the wise. But Christianity takes a prodigious giant-stride beyond this *ne quid nimis*, a stride into the absurd — there Christianity begins…and the offense.

One sees now how extraordinarily (that there might be something extraordinary left) — how extraordinarily stupid it is to defend Christianity, how little knowledge of men this betrays, and how truly, even though it be unconsciously, it is working in collusion with the enemy, by making of Christianity a miserable something or another which in the end has to be rescued by a defense. Therefore it is certain and true that he who first invented the notion of defending Christianity in Christendom is *de facto* Judas No. 2; he also betrays with a kiss, only his treachery is that of stupidity. To defend anything is always to discredit it. Let a man have a storehouse full of gold, let him be willing to dispense every ducat to the poor — but let him besides that be stupid enough to begin this benevolent

undertaking with a defense in which he advances three reasons to prove that it is justifiable — and people will be almost inclined to doubt whether he is doing any good. But now for Christianity! Yea, he who defends it has never believed in it. If he believes, then the enthusiasm of faith is…not defense, no, it is attack and victory. The believer is a victor.

Thus it stands with Christianity and the offense. The possibility of the offense is quite rightly included in the Christian definition of sin — in this phrase, "before God." A pagan, the natural man, is very willing to admit that sin exists, but this "before God," which really is what makes sin to be sin, is for him too much, it seems to him (though in a different sense from that pointed out here) to make too much of what it is to be a man; a little less, and then he is willing to agree to it— "but too much is too much."

CHAPTER 2. THE SOCRATIC DEFINITION OF SIN

SIN IS IGNORANCE. This is the well-known Socratic definition of sin, which, like everything Socratic, is an opinion always worthy of attention. However, with respect to this Socratic position, as with respect to many other Socratic positions, how many men have felt a need of going further? What an innumerable number have felt the need of going further than the Socratic ignorance — presumably because they felt that it was impossible for them to stay there; for in every generation how many men are there that are capable, even for only a month, of enduring and existentially expressing ignorance about everything?

Therefore I do not by any means intend to dispose of the Socratic definition on the ground that one cannot stop with it; but, having the Christian definition *in mente*, I would make use of it to bring the other out sharply (just because the Socratic definition is so genuinely Greek), so that here as always the hollowness of every other definition which is not in the strictest sense Christian (that is, of every partial definition) may become manifest.

The difficulty with the Socratic definition is that it leaves undetermined how ignorance itself is to be more precisely understood, the question of its origin, etc. That is to say, even if sin be ignorance (or what Christianity would perhaps prefer to call stupidity), which in one sense cannot be denied, we have to ask, is this an original ignorance, is it always the case that one has not known and hitherto could not know anything about the truth, or is it a super-induced, a subsequent ignorance? If it is what the last question implies, then sin must properly have its ground in something else, it must have its ground in the activity with which a man has labored to obscure his intelligence. But also when this is assumed, the stiff-necked and

tough-lived difficulty returns, prompting the question whether at the instant a man began to obscure his intelligence he was distinctly conscious of what he was doing. If he was not distinctly conscious of this, then his intelligence was already somewhat obscured before he began, and the question merely returns again. If it is assumed on the contrary that when he began to obscure his intelligence he was distinctly conscious of it, then sin (even though it be unconsciousness, seeing that this was an induced state) would not lie in the intelligence but in the will, and the question which must be raised is about the relation of the intelligence and the will to one another. With such questions as these (and one might continue to augment them for many a day) the Socratic definition does not deal. Socrates was certainly an ethical teacher (the Classical age claims him absolutely as the discoverer of ethics), he was the first one, as he is and remains the first in his class; but he begins with ignorance. Intellectually, it is toward ignorance he tends, toward the position of knowing nothing. Ethically, he understands by ignorance quite a different thing, and so he begins with that.

But on the other hand, as a matter of course, Socrates is not an essentially religious ethicist, still less a dogmatic one, as the Christian ethicist is. Hence he does not really enter into the whole investigation with which Christianity begins, into the *prius* in which sin presupposes itself, and which is Christianly explained by the doctrine of original sin — a dogma to the border of which only we come in this investigation.

Socrates therefore never really gets to the determinant we know as sin, which is surely a defect in a definition of sin. Why is this? For if sin is indeed ignorance, then sin properly does not exist, since sin is definitely consciousness. If sin consists in being ignorant of what is right, so that one consequently does what is wrong, sin does not exist. If this is sin, then it must be assumed, as Socrates also assumed, that the case does not occur of a man knowing what is right and doing what is wrong, or knowing that a

thing is wrong and doing the wrong. So then, if the Socratic definition is correct, sin does not exist. But, lo, precisely this is, Christianly understood, just as it should be, in a deeper sense it is quite correct, in the interest of Christianity it is *quod erat demonstrandum.* Precisely the concept by which Christianity distinguishes itself qualitatively and most decisively from paganism is the concept of sin, the doctrine of sin; and therefore Christianity also assumes quite consistently that neither paganism nor the natural man knows what sin is; yea, it assumes that there must be a revelation from God to make manifest what sin is. For it is not true, as a superficial view assumes, that the doctrine of the atonement is the qualitative difference between paganism and Christianity. No, the beginning must be made far deeper, with sin, with the doctrine of sin, as Christianity also does. What a dangerous objection therefore against Christianity if paganism had a definition of sin which Christianity must admit is correct!

What determinant is it then that Socrates lacks in determining what sin is? It is will, defiant will. The Greek intellectualism was too happy, too naive, too aesthetic, too ironical, too witty…to be able to get it sinfully into its head that a person knowingly could fail to do the good, or knowingly, with knowledge of what was right, do what was wrong. The Greek spirit proposes an intellectual categorical imperative.

The truth in this definition must by no means be overlooked, and it needs to be enforced in times such as these which have gone astray in so much flatulent and unfruitful knowledge, so that doubtless now, just as in Socrates' age, only much more, it is advisable that people should be starved a little bit. It is enough to provoke both laughter and tears — not only all these protestations about having understood and comprehended the highest thought, but also the virtuosity with which many know how to present it *in abstracto*, and in a certain sense quite correctly — it is enough to provoke both laughter and tears when one sees then that all this knowing and

understanding exercises no influence upon the lives of these men, that their lives do not in the remotest way express what they have understood, but rather the contrary. One involuntarily exclaims at the sight of a disproportion at once so sorrowful and so ludicrous. But how in the world is it possible that they have understood it? And is it true that they have understood? Here the ancient ironist and ethicist makes answer: “My dear man, never believe it, for if they truly had understood, their lives also would have expressed it, they would have done what they understood.”

To understand /and to understand are therefore two things? Certainly they are; and he who has understood this (but not, be it noted, in the sense of the first sort of understanding) is initiated into all the secret mysteries of irony. It is with this contradiction irony is properly employed. To perceive the comic in the fact that a person is actually ignorant of something means a very low sort of comic, beneath the dignity of irony. There is properly no profound comic in the fact that people once lived who assumed that the earth stands still — when nobody knew any better. The same thing will presumably befall our age in contrast with an age which knows more of physical law. The contradiction is one between two different ages, there is lacking a deeper point of coincidence; such a contradiction is not essential, and hence neither is it essentially comic. No, but that a man stands up and says the right thing…and so has understood it, and then when he has to act does the wrong thing… and so shows that he has not understood it — yes, that is comic. It is infinitely comic that a man, moved unto tears, so much moved that not only tears but sweat trickle from him, can sit and read, or hear, representations of self-denial, of the nobility of sacrificing one’s life for the truth — and then the next instant — one, two, three, slap-dash, almost with the tears still in his eyes — is in full swing, in the sweat of his brow, with all his might and main, helping falsehood to conquer. It is infinitely comic that an orator, with truth in his voice and in the expression

of his features, profoundly touched and profoundly touching, can present the truth in a heart-rending way, can tread all evil and all the powers of hell under his feet, with an aplomb in his attitude, an assurance in his glance, a resoluteness in his step, which is altogether admirable — it is infinitely comic that almost at the same moment, almost "with his dressing-gown still on," he can run cowardly and timidly out of the way of the least inconvenience. It is infinitely comic that a man can understand the whole truth about how wretched and petty this world is, etc. — that he can understand this, and then cannot recognize again what he understood; for almost in the same moment he himself goes off and takes part in the same pettiness and wretchedness, takes glory in it and receives glory from it, that is, accepts it. O when one beholds a man who protests that he has entirely understood how Christ went about in the form of a lowly servant, poor, despised, and, as the Scripture says, spat upon — when I see the same man so careful to betake himself thither where in a worldly sense it is good to be, and accommodate himself there in the utmost security, when I see him apprehensive of every puff of wind from right or left, as though his life depended upon it, and so blissful, so utterly blissful, so awfully glad — yes, to make the thing complete, so awfully glad that he is able to thank God for it — glad that he is held in honor by all men — then I have often said to myself and by myself, "Socrates, Socrates, Socrates, can it be possible that this man has understood what he says he has understood?" So I have said, and at the same time I have wished that Socrates might be right. For it seemed to me after all as though Christianity were too severe, nor can I bring it into accord with my experience to treat such a man as a hypocrite. No, Socrates, thee I can understand; thou dost treat him as a wag, as a sort of merry Andrew, thou dost treat him as a butt for laughter, thou hast no objection, it has even thine approval, that I prepare and serve him up as a comic dish — provided I do it well.

Socrates, Socrates, Socrates! Yes, one may well call thy name thrice, it would not be too much to call it ten times, if that would do any good. People think that the world needs a republic, and they think that it needs a new social order, and a new religion — but it never occurs to anybody that what the world now needs, confused as it is by much knowing, is a Socrates. But that is perfectly natural, for if anybody had this notion, not to say if many were to have it, there would be less need of a Socrates. What a delusion most needs is the very thing it least thinks of — naturally, for otherwise it would not be a delusion.

So then, such an ironic-ethical correction might very well be what our age needs, and perhaps the only thing it really needs; for it is evident that this is the thing it least thinks of. It is highly important that, instead of going further than Socrates, we simply return to the Socratic dictum that to understand /and to understand are two things — not returning to it as a result [once for all acquired], for in the end that only helps men into the deepest wretchedness, since it simply abolishes the distinction between understanding /and understanding, but returning to it as the ethical interpretation of every-day life.

The Socratic definition helps itself out as follows. When a person doesn't do the right thing; why then, neither has he understood it; his understanding is a vain conceit, his assertion that he has understood it is a false indication of the way, his repeated assertion that the devil take him if he has not understood it is a prodigious remoteness along the greatest possible detour. But then indeed the definition is correct. If a man does the right thing, then surely he doesn't sin; and if he doesn't do the right thing, then neither has he understood it; if in truth he had understood it, this would at once have moved him to do it, would at once make him an echo of his understanding — *ergo* sin is ignorance.

But where does the difficulty lie? It is to be ascribed to a fact of which the Socratic view itself was aware (though only to a certain degree) and sought to remedy, that it lacks a dialectical determinant for the transition from having understood something to the doing of it. In this transition Christianity makes its start; by proceeding along this path it proves that sin lies in the will, thus attaining the concept of defiance; and then, in order to make the end thoroughly fast, it adjoins to this the dogma of original sin — for, alas, the secret of Speculation's success in comprehending is just this, of sewing without making the end fast and without knotting the thread, and therefore it can marvellously keep on sewing, i.e. keep on pulling the end through. Christianity, on the contrary, fastens the end by means of the paradox.

In pure ideality, where there is no question of the real individual man, the transition is accomplished by necessity (in the System indeed everything comes about by necessity), in other words, there is no difficulty at all connected with the transition from understanding to doing. This is purely in the Greek spirit — yet not Socratic, for Socrates was too much of an ethicist for that. And quite the same thing is really the secret of the whole of recent philosophy: *cogito ergo sum*, to think is to be. The Christian motto, on the contrary, is: As thou believest, so it comes to pass; or As thou believest, so art thou; to believe is to be. So one can see that modern philosophy is neither more nor less than paganism. But this is not the worst, to be akin to Socrates is not the meanest position. But the entirely unsocratic trait of modern philosophy is that it wants to make itself and us believe that it is Christianity.

In the world of reality, on the other hand, where it is a question of the individual man, there is this little tiny transition from having understood to doing; it is not always *cito citissime*, not *gesckwind wie der Wind*, if I may

speak German for lack of philosophic terms. On the contrary, here begins a very prolix story.

In the life of spirit, on the other hand, there is no stopping *[Stilstand]* (nor in reality is there any condition *[Tilstand]*, everything is actuality): in case then a man the very same second he has known what is right does not do it — well then, first of all, the knowledge stops boiling. And next comes the question how the will likes this thing that is known. If it does not like it, it does not follow that the will goes ahead and does the opposite of that which the intelligence understood, such strong contrasts occur doubtless rather seldom; but the will lets some time pass, there is an interim, that means, "We'll see about that to-morrow." All this while the intelligence becomes more and more obscured, and the lower nature triumphs more and more. For, alas, the good must be done at once — at once, the moment it is known (and hence the transition goes so easily in the pure ideality where everything is "at once"), but the strength of the lower nature consists in dragging a thing out. The will has no particular objection to it — so it says with its fingers crossed. And then when the intelligence has become duly darkened, the intelligence and the will can understand one another better; at last they agree entirely, for now the intelligence has gone over to the side of the will and acknowledges that the thing is quite right as it would have it. And so there live perhaps a great multitude of men who labor off and on to obscure their ethical and religious understanding which would lead them out into decisions and consequences which the lower nature does not love, extending meanwhile their aesthetic and metaphysical understanding, which ethically is a distraction.

However, with all this we have not yet got any further than the Socratic position; for, as Socrates would say, if this comes about, then it only shows that such a man had not understood what is right. That is to say, the Greek spirit had not the courage to assert that a man knowingly does what is

wrong, with knowledge of the right does what is wrong; so Socrates comes to its aid and says, When a man does wrong, he has not understood what is right.

Quite correct, and further than that no *man* can go: no man by himself and of himself can explain what sin is, precisely because he is in sin. All his talk about sin is at bottom palliation for sin, an excuse, a sinful mitigation. Hence Christianity begins also in another way, by declaring that there must be a revelation from God in order to instruct man as to what sin is, that sin does not consist in the fact that man has not understood what is right, but in the fact that he will not understand it, and in the fact that he will not do it.

With respect to the distinction between not being *able* to understand /and not being *willing* to understand, even Socrates furnishes no real enlightenment, whereas he is Grand Master above all ironists in operating by means of the distinction between understanding /and understanding. Socrates explains that he who does not do the right thing has not understood it; but Christianity goes a little further back and says, it is because he will not understand it, and this in turn is because he does not will the right. And in the next place, describing what properly is defiance, it teaches that a man does wrong although he understands what is right, or forbears to do right although he understands what is right; in short, the Christian doctrine of sin is pure impertinence against man, accusation upon accusation; it is the charge which the Deity as prosecutor takes the liberty of lodging against man.

But can anyone comprehend this Christian doctrine? By no means — this too is Christian, and so is an offense. It must be believed. Comprehension is conterminous with man's relation to the human, but faith is man's relation to the divine. How then does Christianity explain this incomprehensible? Quite consistently, in an equally incomprehensible way, by means of the fact that it is revealed.

So then, Christianly understood, sin lies in the will, not in the intellect; and this corruption of the will goes well beyond the consciousness of the individual. This is the perfectly consistent declaration, for otherwise the question how sin began must arise with respect to each individual.

Here again we have the criterion of the offense. The possibility of the offense consists in the fact that there has to be a revelation from God to enlighten man as to what sin is and how deep it lies. The natural man, the pagan, thinks thus: “O well, I admit that I have not understood everything in heaven and earth; if there is to be a revelation, let it inform us about the heavenly; but that there should be a revelation to explain what sin is, that is the most preposterous thing of all. I don’t pretend to be a perfect man, far from it, but I know and I am willing to concede how far I am from perfection — ought I not then to know what sin is?” But Christianity makes answer, “No, that is what you know least about, how far you are from perfection, and what sin is.” Behold, in this sense, in a Christian sense, sin doubtless is ignorance, it is ignorance of what sin is.

The definition of sin which was given in the preceding chapter therefore still needs to be completed: sin is, after having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is, then before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself.

CHAPTER 3. SIN IS NOT A NEGATION BUT A POSITION

FOR THE TRUTH of this affirmation the orthodox dogmatic as a whole has constantly contended, and it has rejected as pantheistic every definition of sin which makes it something negative — weakness, sensuality, finiteness, ignorance, etc. Orthodoxy has perceived very rightly that here is where the battle has to be fought, or (to recall the foregoing) that it is here the end must be made fast, that here is the place to put up resistence. Orthodoxy has rightly perceived that, if sin is defined negatively, all of Christianity totters. Therefore orthodoxy insists that there must be a revelation from God in order to teach fallen men what sin is, a revelation which, quite consistently, must be believed, since it is a dogma. And naturally paradox, faith, dogma, these three determinants, form an alliance and accord which is the firmest support and bulwark against pagan wisdom.

So it is with orthodoxy. By a strange misunderstanding, a so-called speculative dogmatic, which certainly has suspicious dealings with philosophy, has entertained the notion that it is able to *comprehend* this definition of sin as a position. But if this is true, then sin is a negation. The secret of all comprehending is that the very act of comprehension is higher than every position which it posits. The concept posits a position, but the fact that it is comprehended means precisely that it is negated. The speculative dogmatic, being itself aware of this to a certain degree, has known no other way to help itself but by the maneuver, not very seemly in a philosophic science, of throwing out a detachment of asseverations at the point where a movement is being made. One asseverates, each time more solemnly than the last, and with more and more oaths and curses, that sin is a position, that to say that it is merely a negation is pantheism and rationalism, and God knows what all, but altogether something which the

speculative dogmatic renunciates and abhors — and then one goes on to comprehend what it means that sin is a position. That is to say that after all it is a position only up to a certain degree, not any more so than that one can after all comprehend it.

And the same duplicity of speculation is manifested also at another point, which is, however, related to the same subject. The interpretation of sin, or the way sin is defined, is decisive for the interpretation of repentance. Then since this thing of negating a negation is so speculative, there is nothing else to be done, repentance must be a negation of the negation — and so sin becomes the negation.

However, it is certainly very much to be desired that a sober thinker would for once explain how far this purely logical process, which recalls the grammatical rule that two negatives make an affirmative, and the mathematical rule that two minuses are a plus — how far, I say, this logical process is valid in the world of reality, in the world of qualities; whether after all the qualities are not subject to a different dialectic; whether in this case "transition" does not play a different role. *Sub specie aeterni, aeterno modo*, etc. the element of time is lacking in which things can be spaced out, and hence everything is transition or nothing is. In this abstract medium to posit is *eo ipso* the same thing as to cancel or "resolve." But to regard reality in the same way is pretty close to madness. One can say also *in abstracto* that the perfect tense follows the imperfect. But if in the world of reality a man were to infer that it followed by itself and followed at once, that a work he had not completed (the imperfect) became complete (the perfect) — he surely would be crazy. But so it is too with the so-called "position" of sin when the medium in which it is posited is pure thinking; that medium is far too unstable to insure that this as sertion that sin is a position can be taken seriously.

However, all such questions are aside from the issue which immediately concerns me here. I am merely keeping a steady hold upon the Christian dogma that sin is a position — not, however, as though it could be comprehended, but as a paradox which must be believed. To my way of thinking, this is the correct thing. If only one can get it made manifest that all attempts at comprehending are self-contradictory, then the thing assumes the correct position, and then it becomes clear that it must be left to faith whether one will believe or not.

I can well comprehend (this being not too divine a matter to be comprehended) that one who just simply has to comprehend, and only can think of such matters as offer themselves to comprehension, may find this material very scanty. But in case the whole of Christianity hinges upon this, that it must be believed, not comprehended, that it *either* must be believed / *or* one must be offended at it — is it then so meritorious to be determined to comprehend it? Is it meritorious, or is it not rather insolence or thoughtlessness, to will to comprehend that which is not willing to be comprehended? When a King takes the notion of wishing to be entirely incognito, to be treated in all respects as a simple man, is it then, just because in general it seems to men a greater distinction to do him royal homage, is it then the correct thing to do it? Or is it not precisely to assert oneself and one's own way of thinking directly in opposition to the King's will? Is it not to do as one wilfully prefers to do, instead of deferring to the King's will? Or would it, I wonder, give pleasure to the King in proportion as such a man was more ingenious in displaying toward him the proper reverence of a subject when the King does not wish to be treated in that way — that is to say, the more ingenious such a man might be in acting contrary to the King's will?

So let others admire and extoll him who claims to be able to comprehend Christianity — I regard it as a plain ethical duty, which perhaps demands no

little self-denial in such speculative times when all “the others” are busy about comprehending — I regard it then as a plain duty to admit that one neither can nor shall comprehend it. Just this, however, is doubtless what the age, what Christendom, needs, namely, a little Socratic ignorance in relation to the Christian — but I say emphatically *Socratic* ignorance. Let us never forget (yet after all how many are there that ever have known it or thought of it?) — let us never forget that the ignorance of Socrates was a kind of godly fear and divine worship, that his ignorance was the Greek rendering of the Jewish perception that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Let us never forget that precisely out of reverence for the Deity he was ignorant, that, so far as a pagan could be, he kept watch as a *judge* on the border between God/and man, watching out to see that the deep gulf of qualitative distinction be firmly fixed between them, between God/and man, that God /and man may not in a way, *philosophice, poetice*, etc., coalesce into one. Lo, for this reason Socrates was the ignorant man, and for this reason the Deity recognized him as the most knowing. — But Christianity teaches that everything Christian exists only for faith; for this reason precisely it wills to be a Socratic, a Godfearing ignorance, which by ignorance defends faith against speculation, keeping watch to see that the deep gulf of qualitative distinction between God/and man may be firmly fixed, as it is in the paradox and in faith, lest God /and man, still more dreadfully than ever it occurred in paganism, might in a way, *philosophice, poetice*, etc., coalesce into one…in the System.

Only from one side can there be any question here of illuminating the fact that sin is a position. In the foregoing description of despair attention was constantly directed to an ascending scale. The expression for the scale was in part potentiation of consciousness of the self, in part potentiation as from passive suffering to conscious action. Both expressions in combination are in turn the expression for the fact that despair does not come from

without but from within. And in the same degree despair is more and more positive [*ponirende*.] But according to the definition of sin we have formulated, a constituent of sin is the self as infinitely potentiated by the conception of God, and thus in turn it is the greatest possible consciousness of sin as a deed. This is the expression for the fact that sin is a position; the positive factor in it is precisely this, that it is *before God.*

Moreover, the determination of sin as a position involves also, in an entirely different sense, the possibility of offense, the paradox. For the paradox results from the doctrine of the atonement. First Christianity goes ahead and establishes sin so securely as a position that the human understanding never can comprehend it; and then it is the same Christian doctrine which in turn undertakes to do away with this position so completely that the human understanding never can comprehend it. Speculation, which chatters itself away from the paradoxes, lops a little bit off at both ends, and so it goes easier: it does not make sin so entirely positive — and in spite of this it cannot get it through its head that sin should be entirely forgotten. But Christianity, which is the first discoverer of the paradoxes, is in this case also as paradoxical as possible; it works directly against itself when it establishes sin so securely as a position that it seems a perfect impossibility to do away with it again — and then it is precisely Christianity which, by the atonement, would do away with it so completely that it is as though drowned in the sea.

APPENDIX TO I

BUT THEN IN A CERTAIN SENSE DOES NOT SIN BECOME A GREAT RARITY? (THE MORAL)

It was remarked in Part First that the more intense despair becomes, the more rare it is in the world. But now, as we have seen, sin is that despair which has been still further potentiated and qualitatively potentiated, and so this surely must be exceedingly rare! Marvellous objection! Christianity has

concluded all under sin; we have endeavored to represent the Christian position as rigorously as possible — and from this results the strange conclusion that sin is not to be found at all in paganism, but only in Judaism and Christianity, and there again only very rarely!

And yet this is (but only in one sense) perfectly correct. "After having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is, then before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself," is to sin — and certainly it is rare for a man to be so developed, so transparent to himself, that this can fit his case. But what logically follows from this? Yea, one may well take heed of this, for here there is a peculiar dialectical turn. From the fact that a man is not in a more intense despair it did not follow that he is not in despair. On the contrary, it was proved precisely that most men, by far the majority of men, are in despair, despair in a lower form. There is no merit in being in despair in a higher degree. Aesthetically it is an advantage, for aesthetically one has regard merely to strength; but ethically the more intense kind of despair is further from salvation than is the lower.

And so it is also in the case of sin. The lives of most men, being determined by a dialectic of indifference, are so remote from the good (faith) that they are almost too spiritless to be called sin, yes, almost too spiritless to be called despair.

To be in the strictest sense a sinner is again very far from being meritorious. But then on the other hand how on earth can one expect to find an essential consciousness of sin (and after all that is what Christianity wants) in a life which is so retarded by triviality, by a chattering imitation of "the others," that one hardly can call it sin, that it is too spiritless to be so called, and fit only, as the Scripture says, to be "spewed out"?

But this is not the end of the matter, for the dialectic of sin merely catches one in another way. For how does it come about that a man's life

becomes so spiritless that it is as if Christianity could not be brought into relation to it, as when a jack-screw (and like a jack-screw is the uplifting power of Christianity) cannot be employed because there is no solid ground but only moss and bog? Is there anything that stands in a man's way? No, it is man's own fault. No man is born with spiritlessness, and however many there be who in death bring with them this as the only acquisition of their lives — this is not the fault of life.

But it must be said, and as outspokenly as possible, that the so-called Christendom (in which after a sort all men are Christians in a way, so that there are just as many, precisely as many Christians as there are men) — it must be said that not only is it a wretched edition of Christianity, full of misprints disturbing to the sense, and of senseless omissions and additions, but that it has abusively taken Christianity's name in vain. In a small country there are born hardly three poets in every generation, but of priests there are a plenty, many more than can get appointments. With regard to a poet people speak of his having a call; but as for becoming a priest, it seems enough to the generality of men (and that means of Christians) that one has taken an examination. And yet, alas, a true priest is even more rare than a true poet, and the word "call" originally was used in a religious sense. But with respect to being a poet people still retain a notion that it is something, and that there is something in it that a man is called. On the other hand, to be a priest is in the eyes of the generality of men (and so also of Christians) a thing bereft of every uplifting conception, lacking the least trace of the mysterious, *inpuris naturalibus* it is a career. "Call" means a benefice; people talk about getting a call; but about having a call — O yes, they talk about being "called" for trumps.

And, alas, the fate of this word in Christendom is like a motto for Christianity as a whole. The misfortune is not that Christian truth is never uttered (just as it is not the misfortune that there are not priests enough), but

that it is uttered in such a way that at last the generality of men attach to it no significance whatever (just as the generality of men attach to being a priest no other significance than that which goes with the week-day occupations of a merchant, attorney, book-binder, veterinary, etc.), so that the highest things make no impression at all, but sound out and are heard as something which somehow, God knows how, has become use and wont, like so many other things. What wonder then that certain people, instead of finding their own conduct indefensible, find it incumbent upon them to defend Christianity.

After all, a priest surely ought to be a believer. And think what a believer is! A believer is surely a lover, yea, of all lovers the most in love. With respect to enthusiasm a lover is after all only a stripling in comparison with a believer. Think now of a lover. He would be capable, would he not, day in and day out, as long as it was day and well into the night, of talking about his love. But dost thou believe it could occur to him, dost thou believe it would be possible for him, dost thou not believe that it would be an abomination to him, to talk in such a way as to try to prove by three reasons that there is after all something in this thing of being in love? — pretty much as when the parson proves by three reasons that it is profitable to pray, so that this thing of prayer has sunk so low in price that there must be three reasons alleged to bring it a little bit into repute. Or as when the parson (and this is the same thing, only still more laughable) proves by three reasons that to pray is a bliss surpassing all understanding. Oh, priceless anticlimax! The fact that something surpasses all understanding is proved by three…reasons, which, whatever else they may be good for, surely do not surpass the understanding, but precisely on the contrary make it evident to the understanding that this bliss does not surpass the understanding; for, after all, reasons certainly lie within the compass of the understanding. No, for that which surpasses the understanding, and for him

who believes in it, the three reasons signify no more than three bottles or three red deer! — And now further. Dost thou believe it would occur to a lover to put up a defense for his love, that is, to admit that to him it was not the absolute, unconditionally the absolute, but that he thinks this thought of love along with objections against it, and from this proceeds the defense; that is to say, dost thou believe that he could or would concede that he was not in love, denounce himself as not being a lover? And in case a man were to propose to a lover to talk thus, dost thou not believe that he would regard that man as mad? And in case, besides being in love, he was something of an observer, dost thou not believe that he would suspect that the man who made to him this proposal had never known what it is to be in love, or would like to get him to betray and deny his love…by defending it? — Is it not evident that it could never occur to one who really is in love to want to prove it by three reasons or to defend it? For in fact he himself is that which is more than all reasons and more than every defense — he is a lover. And he who does this is not in love, he merely gives himself out *[adgiver]* to be that, and unfortunately — or fortunately — he does it so stupidly that he merely denounces *[afgiver]* himself as one who is not in love.

But this is just the way Christianity is talked about…by believing priests. They either "defend" Christianity, or they translate it into "reasons" — if they are not at the same time dabbling in "comprehending" it speculatively. This is what is called preaching, and it is regarded in Christendom as already a big thing that such preaching is done and that some hear it. And it is precisely for this reason that Christendom (here is the proof of it) is so far from being what it calls itself that the lives of most men are, Christianly understood, too spiritless even to be called in a strictly Christian sense sin.

II. CONTINUATION OF SIN

EVERY STATE OR condition in sin is new sin, or, as it might be more exactly expressed and as it will be expressed in the following, the state of being in sin is the new sin, is emphatically the sin. This seems perhaps to the sinner an exaggeration; he at the most recognizes every actual sin as a new sin. But eternity which keeps his accounts must register the state of being in sin as a new sin. It has only two rubrics, and “everything Which is not of faith is sin”; every unrepented sin is a new sin. But how rare is the man who possesses continuity with respect to his consciousness of himself! Generally men are only momentarily conscious, conscious in the great decisions, but the daily things are not computed at all; such men are spirit (if this word may be applied to them) once a week for one hour — of course that is a pretty bestial way of being spirit. Eternity, however, is essential continuity and requires this of man, or requires that he shall be conscious of himself as spirit and shall have faith. The sinner on the other hand is so thoroughly in the power of sin that he has no conception of its totalitarian character, or that he is in the byway of perdition. He takes into account only each individual new sin by which he acquires new headway onward along the path of perdition, just as if the previous instant he were not going with the speed of the previous sins along that same path. So natural has sin become to him, or sin has so become his second nature, that he finds the daily continuance quite a matter of course, and it is only when by a new sin he acquires as it were new headway that for an instant he is made aware. By perdition he is blinded to the fact that his life, instead of possessing the essential continuity of the eternal by being before God in faith, has the continuity of sin.

But, “The continuity of sin!” Is not sin precisely the discontinuous? Lo, here we have again the notion that sin is merely a negation to which one can acquire no title, as one can acquire no title to stolen property, a negation, an impotent attempt to give itself consistency, which nevertheless, suffering as it does from the torture of impotence in the defiance of despair, it is not able to do. Yes, so it is speculatively; but Christianly sin is (and this has to be believed, it is indeed the paradox which no man can comprehend) — sin is a position which out of itself develops a more and more positive *[ponirende*] continuity.

And the law for the growth of this continuity is moreover different from the law which applies to a debt or to a negation. For a debt does not grow because it is not paid, it grows every time it is added to. But sin grows every instant one does not get out of it. It is as far as possible from being true that the sinner is right in only regarding every new sin as an increase of sin — so far from being true that, Christianly understood, the state of remaining in sin is really a greater sin. We have even a proverb which says that to sin is human, but to remain in sin is devilish. But Christianly this proverb must be understood in a rather different sense. The merely desultory way of conceiving the case, which has regard only to the new sin and passes over the intermediate state, the interval between the particular sins, is just as superficial a way of conceiving it as it would be to assume that the railway train moved only when the locomotive puffed. No, this puffing and the onrush which succeeds it is really not the thing that has to be considered, but rather the even momentum with which the locomotive proceeds and which occasions the puffing. And so it is with sin. The state of remaining in sin is in the deepest sense sin, the particular sins are not the continuation of sin, but they are the expression for the continuation of sin; in the particular new sins the momentum of sin merely becomes more observable.

The state of being in sin is a worse sin than the particular sins, it is the sin emphatically, and thus understood it is true that the state of remaining in sin is the continuation of sin, is a new sin. Generally one understands this differently, one understands that the one sin gives birth to new sin. But this has a far deeper ground for the fact that the state of being in sin is new sin. Psychologically it is a masterly stroke of Shakespeare to let Macbeth say (Act iii, Scene 2), *Sünentsprossne Werke erlangen nur durch Sünde Kraft und Stärke*." That is to say, sin is within itself a consistency, and in this consistency of evil within itself it possesses a certain power. But one never reaches such a point of view when one considers merely the particular sins.

Doubtless most men live with far too little consciousness of themselves to have a conception of what consistency is; that is to say, they do not exist *qua* spirit. Their lives (either with a certain childish and lovable naïveté or in sheer banality) consist in some act or another, some occurrence, this or that; and then they do something good, then in turn something wrong, and then it begins all over again; now they are in despair, for an afternoon, perhaps for three weeks, but then they are jovial again, and then again they are a whole day in despair. They take a hand in the game of life as it were, but they never have the experience of staking all upon one throw, never attain the conception of an infinite self-consistency. Therefore among themselves their talk is always about the particular, particular deeds, particular sins.

Every existence which is under the rubric of spirit (even if it is such only on its own responsibility and at its own peril) has essentially consistency within itself, and consistency in something higher, at least in an idea. But again such an existence fears infinitely every inconsistency, because it has an infinite conception of what the consequence may be, that because of it one might be wrenched out of the totality in which one has one's life. The least inconsistency is a prodigious loss, for with that a man in fact loses

consistency; that same instant the charm is perhaps broken, the mysterious power which bound all powers in harmony is enfeebled, the spring loses its tension, the whole machinery is a chaos where the forces fight in rebellion against one another, to the injury of the self, and therein there is no accord with oneself, no momentum, no impetus. The prodigious machine which in consistency was so compliant with its iron strength, so pliable with all its power, is in disorder; and the more excellent the machine was, all the more frightful is the confusion. — The believer, who reposes in and has his strength in the consistency of the good, has an infinite fear of even the least sin, for he stands to lose infinitely. The immediate men — the childlike or the childish — have no totality to lose, they constantly lose and win only the particular thing and in the particular instance.

But as with the believer, so it is also with his counterpart, the demoniac man, with respect to the consistency of sin in itself. As the drunkard steadily keeps up the intoxication from day to day, for fear of the languor which would ensue from arresting it, and the possible consequences if for one day he were to remain entirely sober — so it is with the demoniac. Yea, just as the good man, if one were to approach him temptingly, picturing sin in one or another alluring form, would bid him, "tempt me not," so one has instances of exactly the same thing on the part of the demoniac. Face to face with one who is stronger than he in the good, the demoniac, when one would picture to him the good in its blissful sublimity, might beg for himself, beg him with tears in his eyes, that he would not talk to him, would not, as he expresses it, make him weak. Just because the demoniac is consistent in himself and in the consistency of evil, just for this cause he also has a totality to lose. A single instant outside of his consistency, one single dietetic imprudence, one single glance aside, one instant when the whole thing, or at least a part thereof, is seen and understood in a different way — and with that, he would never more be himself, he says. That is, he

has given up the good in despair, it could not help him anyway, he says, but it well might disturb him, make it impossible for him ever again to acquire the full momentum of consistency, make him weak. Only in the continuation of sin he is himself, only in that does he live and have an impression of himself. What does this mean? It means that the state of being in sin is that which, in the depth to which he has sunk, holds him together, impiously strengthening him by consistency; it is not the particular new sin which (crazy as it sounds to say it) helps him, but the particular new sin is merely the expression for the state of being in sin which properly is the sin.

By “the continuation in sin,” which is the theme we now have to deal with, we are to think not so much of the particular new sins as of the state of being in sin, which in turn becomes the potentiation of sin in itself, an abiding in the state of sin with consciousness thereof, so that the law for the movement in potentiation is, here as everywhere, in the inward direction, in more and more intense consciousness.

CHAPTER 1. THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OVER ONE’S SIN

SIN IS DESPAIR, the potentiation of this is the new sin of despairing over one’s sin. It can easily be seen moreover that this is characterized as potentiation. It is not a new sin in the sense of repetition, as in the case of a man who once stole $100 and another time steals $1,000. No, it is not a question of particular acts of sin; the state of sin is sin, and this is potentiated in a new consciousness.

Despairing over one’s sin is the expression for the fact that sin has become or would become consistent in itself. It will have nothing to do with the good, will not be weak enough to harken once in a while to another sort of talk. No, it will hear only itself, have to do only with itself, shut itself in with itself, yea, enclose itself within one enclosure more and by despair over its sin secure itself against every assault of the good or every aspiration after it. It is conscious of having cut the bridge behind it and so of being inaccessible to the good as the good is to it, so that though in a weak moment it were to will the good, this would nevertheless be impossible. Sin itself is detachment from the good, but despair over sin is a second detachment. This of course tortures out of sin its utmost demoniac powers, bestowing upon it the ungodly hardiness or obduracy which must constantly regard everything which is of the nature of repentance and everything which is of the nature of grace not only as empty and meaningless but as its foe, as the thing which most of all it has to guard against, quite in the same way as the good guards itself against temptation. So understood, it is rightly said by Mephistopheles in *Faust* that nothing is more miserable than a devil who despairs; for by despairing must here be understood unwillingness to hear anything about repentance and grace. To indicate the character of this

potentiation from sin to despair over sin one might say that the former is the breach with the good, the latter is the breach with repentance.

Despair over sin is an attempt to maintain oneself by sinking still deeper. As one who ascends in a balloon rises by casting weights from him, so does the despairing man sink by casting from him the good (for the weight of the good is uplift), he sinks, doubtless he thinks he is rising — he does indeed become lighter. Sin itself is the struggle of despair; but then when strength is exhausted there must needs be a new potentiation, a new demoniacal introversion, and this is despair over one's sin. This is a step in advance, an ascent in the demoniacal, but of course it means sinking deeper in sin. It is an attempt to impart to sin as a positive power firmness and interest, by the fact that now it is eternally decided that one will hear nothing about repentance, nothing about grace. Nevertheless despair over sin is conscious of its own emptiness, conscious of the fact that it has nothing whatever to live on, not even a lofty conception of one's own self. Psychologically it is a masterly line Macbeth utters after the murder when he is in despair over his sin (Act ii, Scene 3):

For, from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead.

The masterly double stroke is in the last words, "*renown* and *grace*." By sin, that is to say, by despairing over his sin, he has lost every relation to grace — and to himself at the same time. His selfish self culminates in ambition. Now he has indeed become king, and yet, by despairing over his sin, and about the reality of repentance, about grace, he has also lost himself, he cannot even maintain himself in his own eyes, and he is precisely as far from being able to enjoy his own self in ambition as he is from grasping grace.

In real life (in so far as despair over sin actually occurs in life — but there occurs at all events something they call such) people generally have a mistaken notion of despair over sin, presumably because in the world one generally has to do with levity, thoughtlessness and pure prattle, and therefore becomes quite solemn and reverently lifts the hat before every expression of something deeper. Either in confused obscurity about oneself and one's significance, or with a trace of hypocrisy, or by the help of cunning and sophistry which is present in all despair, despair over sin is not indisposed to bestow upon itself the appearance of something good. So it is supposed to be an expression for a deep nature which thus takes its sin so much to heart. I will adduce an example. When a man who has been addicted to one sin or another, but then for a long while has withstood temptation and conquered — if he has a relapse and again succumbs to temptation, the dejection which ensues is by no means always sorrow over sin. It may be something else, for the matter of that it may be exasperation against providence, as if it were providence which had allowed him to fall into temptation, as if it ought not to have been so hard on him, since for a long while he had victoriously withstood temptation. But at any rate it is womanish without more ado to regard this sorrow as good, not to be in the least observant of the duplicity there is in all passionateness, which in turn has this ominous consequence that at times the passionate man understands afterwards, almost to the point of frenzy, that he has said exactly the opposite of that which he meant to say. Such a man asseverated with stronger and stronger expressions how much this relapse tortures and torments him, how it brings him to despair, "I can never forgive myself for it," he says. And all this is supposed to be the expression for how much good there dwells within him, what a deep nature he is. In this representation I intentionally introduced the catchword, "I can never forgive myself for it," precisely the word which is commonly used in such a

connection. And precisely by this catchword one can orient oneself dialectically. He can never forgive himself for it — but now in case God would forgive him for it, he might well have the kindness to forgive himself. No, his despair over sin, and all the more, the more it storms in the passion of expression, whereby without being aware of it in the least he informs against himself when he “never can forgive himself” that he could sin thus (for this sort of talk is pretty nearly the opposite of penitent contrition which prays God for forgiveness) — this despair is far from being a characteristic of the good, rather it is a more intensive characterization of sin, the intensity of which is a deeper sinking into sin. The fact is that during the time he victoriously withstood temptation he was in his own eyes better than he actually was, he was proud of himself. It is now in the interest of pride that the past should be something entirely left behind. But in the relapse the past suddenly becomes again entirely present. This reminder his pride cannot endure, and hence the deep distress etc. But the direction of this distress is evidently away from God, manifesting a hidden self-love and pride — instead of humbly beginning by thanking God humbly for helping him so long to withstand temptation, acknowledging before God and before himself that this after all is much more than he had deserved, and so humbling himself under the remembrance of what he had been.

In this instance as usual the explanation given in the old works of edification is so profound, so understanding, so instructive. They teach that God sometimes permits the believer to stumble and fall into one temptation or another — precisely to humble him and thereby confirm him the more in the good; the contrast between the relapse and the perhaps considerable progress in the good is so humiliating, the identity with himself so painful. The better a man is, the more dangerous, in case he does not make the right turn, is even the least little bit of impatience. He may perhaps for sorrow

sink into the darkest melancholy — and a fool of a pastor may not be far from admiring his deep soul and the power of good which is in him… as though this were the good. And his wife, yea, she feels herself deeply humbled in comparison with such an earnest and holy man who can thus sorrow for his sin. Perhaps his talk is still more deceptive, he perhaps does not say, I can never forgive myself for it (as if before he had forgiven himself for his sins — a blasphemy), no, he talks about God never forgiving him for it. And, alas, this is only a mystification. His sorrow, his concern, his despair, is selfish (like the dread of sin which at times almost frightens a man into sin) because it is self-love which would like to be proud of itself, like to be without sin — and consolation is what he is least in need of, wherefore also the prodigious quantity of consoling thoughts the physicians of the soul prescribe only make the sickness worse.

CHAPTER 2. THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (OFFENSE)

THE POTENTIATION IN consciousness of the self is in this instance knowledge of Christ, being a self face to face with Christ. First there came (in Part First) ignorance of having an eternal self; then knowledge of having a self wherein there is after all something eternal. Thereupon (as a transition to Part Second) it was shown that this distinction is referable to the self which has a human conception of itself or whose goal is man. The contrast to this was a self face to face with God, and this was taken as the basis of the definition of sin.

Now comes a self face to face with Christ — a self which nevertheless in despair will not be itself, or in despair will be itself. For despair of the forgiveness of sins must be related to one or the other formula of despair: that of weakness, or that of defiance; that of weakness which being offended does not dare to believe, or that of defiance which being offended will not believe. Only in this case (since here it is not a question about being oneself simply, but about being oneself as characterized by one's imperfection) defiance is the converse of what it ordinarily is. Ordinarily weakness is: in despair not to will to be oneself. Here this is defiance; for here it is clearly defiance not to will to be the man one is, a sinner, and for this reason to will to dispense with the forgiveness of sins. Ordinarily defiance is: in despair to will to be oneself. Here this weakness is: in despair to will to be oneself, a sinner, in such wise that there is no forgiveness.

A self face to face with Christ is a self potentiated by the prodigious concession of God, potentiated by the prodigious emphasis which falls upon it for the fact that God also for the sake of this self let Himself to be born, became man, suffered, died. As was said in the foregoing, "the more

conception of God, the more self," so here it is true that the more conception of Christ, the more self. A self is qualitatively what its measure is. That Christ is the measure is on God's part attested as the expression for the immense reality a self possesses; for it is true for the first time in Christ that God is man's goal and measure, or measure and goal. — But the more self, the more intense the sin.

There is also another side from which the potentiation in sin can be shown. In the first instance we considered that sin was despair, its potentiation was despair over sin. But now God offers reconciliation in the forgiveness of sins. Yet the sinner despairs, and despair acquires a still deeper expression. It now relates itself after a sort to God, but precisely thereby it is still further away, still more deeply sunken in sin. When the sinner despairs of the forgiveness of sins it is almost as if he were directly picking a quarrel with God, it sounds in fact like a rejoinder when he says, "No, there is not any forgiveness of sins, it is an impossibility"; this looks like a hand-to-hand scuffle. But yet a man must remove himself to a qualitative distance from God in order to be able to say this and in order that it may be heard, and in order to fight *comminus* he must be *eminus;* so strangely constructed in an acoustic sense is the world of spirit, so strangely are the relationships of distance arranged. A man must be as far as possible removed from God for that "No" to be heard, while yet in a way he wants to pick a quarrel with God. The greatest possible nearness to God, actually treading on His toes, means to be far off. In order to behave forwardly toward God one must retire far backward; if one is nearer, one cannot be forward, and if one is forward, this signifies *eo ipso* that one is far off. O human impotence in the face of God! When one behaves forwardly toward a man of high station, one may perhaps as a punishment be cast far away from him; but to behave forwardly toward God one must retire backward far from Him.

In real life the sin of despairing of the forgiveness of sins is generally misunderstood, especially now that they have done away with the ethical, so that one seldom or never hears a sound ethical word. Aesthetic-metaphysically it is honored as a sign of a deep nature that one despairs of the forgiveness of sins, pretty much as if one were to regard it as a sign of a deep nature in a child that it is naughty. On the whole it is unbelievable what confusion has invaded the religious sphere since in man's relationship to God there has been abolished the "Thou shalt," which is the only regulative principle. This "Thou shalt" ought to be a part of every definition of the religious; instead of which people have employed fantastically conceptions of God as an ingredient in human self-importance, so as to be self-important over against God. As in political life one becomes important by belonging to the Opposition, and in the last resort may well wish that there should be a government so that one might at least have something to oppose; so in the last resort one does not wish to abolish God — if merely with a view to becoming still more self-important by being the Opposition. And all that which in the old days was regarded with horror as the expression of impious insubordination has now become spirited, the sign of a deep nature. "Thou shalt *believe*," that is what was said in the old days, as soberly as possible and in so many words — now it is spirited and the sign of a deep nature not to be able to do so. "Thou shalt believe in the forgiveness of sins," was what they said, and as the only commentary to this text it was said, "It will go ill with thee if thou canst not, for what one shall do, one can do" — now it is spirited and the sign of a deeper nature not to be able to believe it. Splendid result attained by Christendom! If not a word about Christianity were heard, men would not be so conceited (as paganism never has been at any time); but by the help of the fact that Christian conceptions are unchristianly floating in the air they are employed in the interest of this most potentiated impertinence, in so far as they are not

misused in another and equally shameless way. For it surely is very epigrammatic that swearing was after all not customary in paganism but on the other hand is properly at home in Christendom; that paganism generally uttered the name of God with great solemnity, with a certain horror, with a dread of the mysterious, whereas in Christendom the name of God is surely the word which occurs most frequently in daily speech and is absolutely the word to which one attaches the least meaning and uses most carelessly, because this poor revealed God (who was so imprudent and unwise as to become revealed instead of keeping Himself hidden as superior persons always do) has become a personage all too well known by the whole population, to whom one renders an exceedingly great service by going once in a while to church, where one is praised for it by the parson, who on God's behalf thanks one for the honor of the visit, confers upon one the tide of pious, and on the other hand taunts a bit those who never do God the honor of going to church.

The sin of despairing of the forgiveness of sins is *offense.* The Jews were quite right in being offended at Christ because He would forgive sins. It requires a singularly high degree of dullness (that is to say, the sort ordinarily found in Christendom) in case a man is not a believer (and if he is, then he believes that Christ is God) not to be offended at the fact that a man would forgive sins. And in the next place it requires an equally singular degree of dullness not to be offended at the assertion that sin can be forgiven. This is for the human understanding the most impossible thing. Not that I would extoll it as a sign of genius that one is unable to believe this, for it *shall* be believed.

In paganism of course this sin did not exist. If the pagan might have the true conception of sin (but even this he could not have because he lacked the conception of God), he could not get further than to despair over his sin. Yea, what is more (and herein lies all the concession one can make to

human understanding and human thinking), one might praise the pagan who really managed to despair, not over the world, not over himself in general, but over his sin. Humanly speaking, both depths of understanding and ethical definitions are requisite for this. No man as such can get further, and seldom does one get so far. But Christianly everything is altered, for thou shalt believe in the forgiveness of sins.

And where does Christendom find itself with reference to the forgiveness of sins? Indeed, the situation of Christendom is really despair over the forgiveness of sins. This, however, must be understood in the sense that Christendom is so backward that it is not even manifest that the situation is such. People have not even reached the consciousness of sin, they know only the kind of sin which paganism also knew, and they live on happily in pagan security. But by the fact that they live in Christendom they go further than paganism, they go on to imagine that this security is…consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. Indeed how can it be otherwise in Christendom? In this the parsons confirm the congregation.

The fundamental misfortune of Christendom is really Christianity, the fact that the doctrine of the God-Man (the Christian understanding of which, be it noted, is secured by the paradox and the possibility of offense) is taken in vain, the qualitative distinction between God and man is pantheistically abolished — first speculatively with an air of superiority, then vulgarly in the streets and alleys. Never anywhere has any doctrine on earth brought God and man so near together as has Christianity; neither could anyone else do it, only God Himself can, every human invention remains after all a dream, an uncertain imagination. Neither has any doctrine ever so carefully defended itself against the most shocking of all blasphemies, that after God had taken this step it then should be taken in vain, as though God and man coalesced in one and the same thing — never has any doctrine ever defended itself against this as Christianity has, which

defends itself by the help of the offense. Woe unto the slack orators, woe unto the loose thinkers, and woe, woe unto all the adherents who have learnt from them and extolled them!

If order is to be maintained in existence — and that after all is what God wills, for He is not a God of confusion — first and foremost it must be remembered that every man is an individual man, is himself conscious of being an individual man. If once men are permitted to coalesce into what Aristotle calls "the multitude," a characteristic of beasts, this abstraction (instead of being regarded as less than nothing, as in fact it is, less than the lowliest individual man) will be regarded as something, and no long time will elapse before this abstraction becomes God. And then, why then in fact it corresponds *philosophice* with the God-Man. Then as people in the various nations have learnt that the multitude overawes the King and the daily papers overawe the Privy Council, so then at last they discover that the *summa summarum* of all men overawes God. This then is called the doctrine of the God-Man or the doctrine that God and men are *idem per idem*. Naturally several of the philosophers who took part in spreading this doctrine of the preponderance of the generations of mankind over the individual now turn away in disgust when their doctrine has sunk so low that the mob is God. But these philosophers forget that after all this was their doctrine, they overlook the fact that it was not more true when the superior men accepted it, when the élite of the superior class or an elect circle of philosophers was the Incarnation.

This means that the doctrine of the God-Man has made Christendom impudent. It almost appears as if God had been too weak. It is as though it had come to pass with Him as with the good-natured man who makes too great a concession and is rewarded by ingratitude. It was God who discovered the doctrine of the God-Man, and now Christendom has got the thing turned topsy-turvy and imputes to God consanguinity, so that the

concession God has made means pretty much what in these times it means when a king grants a freer constitution — and one knows well enough what that means, "He pretty well had to." It is as though God had got Himself into an embarrassing situation; it is as though the shrewd man were in the right if he were to say to God, "It is Thine own fault. Why hast Thou put Thyself upon such familiar terms with man? It never would have occurred to anyone, never have entered into any man's heart, that there might be likeness between God and man. It was Thou Thyself that had this proclaimed, now Thou art reaping the fruits."

Yet Christianity has secured itself from the very beginning. It begins with the doctrine of sin. The category of sin is the category of the individual. Speculatively sin cannot be thought at all. The individual man is subsumed under the concept; one cannot think an individual man but only the concept man. — Hence it is that Speculation at once reaches the doctrine of the preponderance of the generations over the individual; for it is not to be expected that Speculation should recognize the *impotence* of the concept in relation to reality. — But as one cannot think an individual man, so neither can one think an individual sinner; one can think sin (then it becomes negative), but not an individual sinner. Just for this reason, however, there can be no seriousness about sin when it is merely thought. For seriousness is precisely the fact that thou and I are sinners. Seriousness is not sin in general, but the emphasis of seriousness falls upon the sinner who is an individual. In relation to "the individual man" Speculation, if it is consistent, must think very scornfully of what it is to be an individual or that it is something which cannot be thought. If it would do anything in this line, it must say to the individual, "Is that anything to waste time on? Above all try to forget it, to be an individual man is not to be anything — think, and then thou art the whole of humanity, *cogito ergo sum.*" This, however, might perhaps be a lie, and the individual might be the highest. Yet suppose

it is so. But to be entirely consistent Speculation must also say, “The thing of being an individual sinner, that’s not to be anything, it is subsumed under the concept, waste no time on it etc.” And then what further? Is one perhaps to think sin instead of being an individual sinner? — just as one was exhorted to think the concept of man instead of being the individual man. And then what further? Does a man become himself “sin” by thinking sin? *Cogito ergo sum.* A capital proposal! However, one does not even in this case need to be afraid of becoming sin…the pure sin, for sin cannot be thought. This after all Speculation itself might concede, since sin is in fact a falling away from the concept. But not to dispute any longer *e concessis*, the principal difficulty is another. Speculation does not take heed of the fact that in relation to sin the ethical has its place, which employs an emphasis which is the converse of that of Speculation and accomplishes the opposite development; for the ethical does not abstract from reality but goes deeper into reality, operating essentially by the aid of the category of the individual, which is the category overlooked and despised by Speculation. Sin is a characteristic of the individual; it is frivolity and a new sin to act as if it were nothing to be an individual sinner. Here Christianity is in place. It marks a cross before Speculation. It is as impossible for Speculation to get out of this difficulty as for a sailing vessel to sail directly against a contrary wind. The seriousness of sin is its reality in the individual, whether it be thou or I. Speculatively one has to look away from the individual. So it is only frivolously one can talk speculatively about sin. The dialectic of sin is directly contrary to that of Speculation.

Here Christianity begins with the doctrine of sin, and therefore with the individual. For it is Christianity to be sure which has taught this about the God-Man, about the likeness between God and man, but Christianity is a great hater of wanton and impertinent forwardness. By the help of the doctrine of sin and of the individual sinner God and Christ have been

secured once for all, and far better than any king, against the nation, the people, the crowd, etc., *item* against every demand for a freer constitution. All these abstractions are before God nonexistent, before God in Christ there live only individual men (sinners) — yet God can well oversee the whole, He can care for the sparrows too. God is wholly a friend of order, and to that end He is Himself present at every point, in every instant, He is omnipresent — which is specified in the text-books as one of the titles by which God is called, which men once in a while think about a little but surely never try to think every instant. His concept is not like that of man under which the individual is subsumed as a thing which is absorbed by the concept, His concept comprises everything, and in another sense He has no concept. God does not help Himself by an abbreviation, He comprehends (*comprehendit)* reality itself, all the individuals; for Him the individual is not subsumed under the concept.

The doctrine of sin, the doctrine that we are sinners, thou and I, which absolutely disperses the "crowd," fixes then the qualitative distinction between God and man more deeply than ever it was fixed anywhere — for again this God alone can do, sin is in fact *before God* etc. In no respect is a man so different from God as in the fact that he is a sinner, as every man is, and is a sinner "before God," whereby indeed the opposites are held together in a double sense: they are held together (*continentur*), not allowed to separate from one another; but by being thus held together the differences display themselves all the more strikingly, as when one speaks of holding colors together, *opposita juxta se posita magis illucescunt.* Sin is the only thing universally predicated of man which cannot in any way, either *via negationis* or *via eminentia*, be affirmed of God. It may be affirmed of God that He is not finite as man is, and so, *via negationis*, that He is infinite; but to affirm of God that He is not a sinner is blasphemy. As a sinner man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously God is

separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins.

Here then lies the utmost concentration of the offense, which precisely that doctrine has found necessary which teaches the likeness between God and man.

But offense is the most decisive determinant of subjectivity, of the individual man, the most decisive it is possible to think of. Doubtless to think of offense without thinking the offended man is not so impossible as to think of the music of the flute without thinking the flute-player; but after all even thought must admit that offense even more than love is an unreal concept which only becomes real when there is an individual who is offended.

So then offense is related to the individual. And therewith Christianity begins, by making every man an individual, an individual sinner; and now everything that heaven and earth can manage to raise up by way of the possibility of offense (God alone disposing of it) is concentrated in one place — and that is Christianity. Then it says to every individual, "Thou shalt believe," i.e. thou shalt either be offended or thou shalt believe. Not one word more. There is nothing more to add. "Now I have spoken," says God, "in eternity we shall speak together again. In the meanwhile thou canst do what thou wilt, but the Judgment is to come."

What, a judgment! Why, we men have learned, indeed experience teaches, that when there is a mutiny aboard ship or in an army, the guilty are so numerous that the punishment cannot be applied; and when it is a question of the public, "the highly respected cultured public," then not only is there no crime, but, according to the newspapers, upon which one can rely as upon the Gospel or divine revelation, this is the will of God. Why is

this? The reason for it is that the concept of judgment corresponds to the individual, one does not pronounce a judgment *en masse*; one can put the people to death *en masse*, play the hose on them *en masse*, flatter them *en masse*, in fine can treat the people in many ways like beasts, but to hold judgment over the people as beasts one cannot do, for one cannot hold judgment over beasts; even though ever so many are judged, if there is to be any seriousness and truth in the judgment, it is each individual who is judged. Now when the guilty are so numerous it is not humanly possible to do this, therefore one must give the whole thing up, one perceives that there can be no question of any judgment, they are too numerous to be judged, one cannot make them or in any way manage to make them individuals, so one must give up holding judgment.

And since now in our enlightened age when people find all anthropomorphic and anthropathic conceptions of God improper, yet do not find it improper to think of God as a judge in likeness of an ordinary civil judge or solicitor general who cannot get at the rights of such a prolix affair — they conclude then that it will be exactly so in eternity. Therefore only let us hold together and secure ourselves by seeing to it that the parson preachifies in this way. And if there should be an individual who ventured to talk differently, an individual who was foolish enough to make his own life anxious and responsible in fear and trembling, and should then want also to worry others — then let us secure ourselves by regarding him as mad, or, if need be, by putting him to death. If only there are many of us engaged in it, it is not wrong, what the many do is the will of God. To this wisdom we know by experience — for we are not inexperienced youths, we do not throw out ill considered words, we talk as men of experience, and we know that hitherto all men have submitted to this wisdom, kings and emperors and their excellencies. By the aid of this wisdom all our cattle have been bred up — and, by Jove, God shall also have to submit to it. The

thing to do is to become many, a whole lot of us, if we do that, then we are secured against the judgment of eternity.

Yes, doubtless they are secured if it was only in eternity they became individuals. But they were and are before God constantly individuals. A man seated in a glass case is not put to such embarrassment as is a man in his transparency before God. This is the factor of conscience. By the aid of conscience things are so arranged that the judicial report follows at once upon every fault, and that the guilty one himself must write it. But it is written with sympathetic ink and only becomes thoroughly clear when in eternity it is held up to the light, while eternity holds audit over the consciences. Substantially everyone arrives in eternity bringing with him and delivering the most accurate account of every least insignificance which he has committed or has left undone. Therefore to hold judgment in eternity is a thing a child could manage; there is really nothing for a third person to do, everything, even to the most insignificant word is counted and in order. The case of the guilty man who journeys through life to eternity is like that of the murderer who with the speed of the railway train fled from the place where he perpetrated his crime. Alas, just under the railway coach where he sat ran the electric telegraph with its signal and the order for his apprehension at the next station. When he reached the station and alighted from the coach he was arrested. In a way he had himself brought the denunciation with him.

So then despair of the forgiveness of sins is offense. And offense is the potentiation of sin. Generally one hardly thinks of this as sin at all; it is likely that people hardly account offense a sin, and of that therefore they do not talk, but rather of sinners, among whom offense has no place. Still less do they interpret offense as the potentiation of sin. This is due to the fact that they do not Christianly construct the opposition sin /faith, but sin /virtue.

CHAPTER 3. THE SIN OF ABANDONING CHRISTIANITY MODO PONENDO, OF DECLARING IT FALSEHOOD

THIS IS SIN against the Holy Ghost. The self is here most despairingly potentiated; it not merely casts away from itself the whole of Christianity, but it makes it a lie and a falsehood. What a prodigiously despairing conception of itself the self must have!

The potentiation of sin is clearly shown when it is apprehended as a war between man and God where the tactics are changed; the potentiation ascends from the defensive to the offensive. Sin is despair: here one fights by evading. Then came despair over one's sin: here one still is fighting by evasion or by fortifying oneself in the position to which one has retired, but constantly *pedem referens*. Now the tactic is changed: notwithstanding that sin becomes more and more absorbed in itself, and so withdraws, yet in another sense it comes nearer, becomes more and more decisively itself. Despair of the forgiveness of sins is a definite position directly in the face of the offer of God's compassion; sin is now not entirely in flight, not on the defensive. But the sin of abandoning Christianity as a falsehood and a lie is offensive warfare. All the foregoing forms of despair conceded that the adversary is the stronger, but now sin is aggressive.

Sin against the Holy Ghost is the positive form of offense.

The doctrine of Christianity is the doctrine of the God-Man, of kinship between God and men, but in such a way, be it noted, that the possibility of offense is, if I may dare to express it thus, the guarantee whereby God assures Himself that man cannot come too near to Him. The possibility of offense is the dialectical factor in everything Christian. Take that away, and then Christianity is not simply paganism but something so fantastic that paganism might well declare it bosh. To be so near to God as Christianity

teaches that man can come to Him, and dare come to Him, and shall come to Him in Christ, has never entered into any man's head. If this then is to be understood bluntly, just as a matter of course, without the least reservation, to be taken quite unconcernedly and flippantly — then, if paganism's poetic fiction about the gods might be called human craziness, Christianity might be the invention of a crazy god; such a doctrine could only occur to a god who had lost his wits — so a man must judge who had kept his wits. The incarnate God, if man wanted to be as it were a chum of His, would be an apt counterpart to Prince Henry in Shakespeare.

God and man are two qualities between which there is an infinite qualitative difference. Every doctrine which overlooks this difference is, humanly speaking, crazy; understood in a godly sense, it is blasphemy. In paganism man made God a man (the Man-God); in Christianity God makes Himself man (the God-Man) — but in the infinite love of His compassionate grace He made nevertheless one stipulation, He can do no other. This precisely is the sorrow in Christ: "He can do no other"; He can humble Himself, take the form of a servant, suffer and die for man, invite all to come unto Him, sacrifice every day of His life and every hour of the day, and sacrifice His life — but the possibility of the offense He cannot take away. Oh, unique work of love! Oh, unfathomable sorrow of love! that God Himself cannot, as in another sense He does not will, cannot will it, but, even if He would, He could not make it impossible that this work of love might not turn out to be for a person exactly the opposite, to be the extremest misery! For the greatest possible human misery, greater even than sin, is to be offended in Christ and remain offended. And Christ cannot, "Love" cannot render this impossible. Lo, for this reason He says, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." More He cannot do. So then He may (that is possible), He may by His love have the effect of making a man more miserable than ever in any other way he could become. Oh,

unfathomable contradiction in love! But for all that, in love, He cannot find the heart to leave unfinished the work of love. Alas, if then this were to make a man more miserable than ever in any other way he could become!

Let us talk of this quite humanly. Ah, wretched is the man who never has felt the compelling urge of love to sacrifice everything out of love, and who accordingly has not been able to do it! But then when he discovered that precisely this sacrifice of his out of love might possibly occasion the other, the loved one, the greatest unhappiness — what then? Then either love within him lost its resilience, from being a life of power collapsed into the introverted rumination of a sad sentiment, he was a deserter to love, he did not venture to perform this work of love, himself sinking down, not under this work, but under the weight of this possibility. For just as a weight is infinitely heavier when it is attached to the end of a rod and the man who lifts it has to hold the opposite end, so every work becomes infinitely harder when it becomes dialectic, so that what love prompts one to do for the beloved, care for the beloved seems again in another sense to dissuade from doing. — Or else love conquered, and he ventured to do this work out of love. Oh, but in the joyfulness of love (as love always is joyful, especially when it sacrifices all) there was nevertheless a deep sorrow — for this sad result indeed was possible! Behold, he therefore brought to completion this work of love, he offered the sacrifice (in which for his part he exulted), but not without tears. Over this — what shall I call it? — historical painting of inward life there hovered that dark possibility. And yet, if this had not hovered over it, his work would not have been that of true love — O my friend, what hast thou maybe attempted to do in life? Tax thy brain, tear off every covering and lay bare the *viscera* of feeling in thy breast, surmount every barrier which separates thee from him of whom thou readest, and then read Shakespeare — and thou shalt shrink from the collisions. But Shakespeare himself seems to have shrunk back from the genuinely

religious collisions. Perhaps these can only be expressed in the language of the gods. And this language no man can speak; for, as a Greek already has said so beautifully, “From men man learns to speak, from the gods to keep silent.”

That there is an infinite difference of quality between God and man is the possibility of offense which cannot be taken away. Out of love God becomes man; He says, “Look what it is to be a man”; but He adds, “O take heed, for at the same time I am God — blessed is he who shall not be offended in me.” As man He assumes the lowly form of a servant. He expresses what it is to be a lowly man, to the intent that no one shall think himself excluded, or think that it is human prestige or prestige among men which brings one nearer to God. No, he is the lowly man. “Look hither,” He says, “and learn what it is to be a man; O but take heed, for at the same time I am God — blessed is he who shall not be offended in me.” Or conversely, “I and the Father are one, and yet I am this particular lowly man, poor, forsaken, delivered into the hands of men — blessed is he who shall not be offended in me. I, this lowly man, am He who maketh the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lame to walk, the leper to be cleansed, the dead to rise up — blessed is he who shall not be offended in me.”

Under accountability to the highest seat of authority I therefore make bold to say that these words, “blessed is he who shall not be offended in me,” belong essentially to the preaching about Christ, if not in the same way as the words of institution at the Holy Communion, yet at least like the words, “let every man examine himself.” They are Christ’s own words, and they must (especially in Christendom) be again and again enjoined, repeated, addressed to every man severally. Everywhere where these words do not resound, or at least wherever the statement of Christianity is not at every point permeated by this thought — there Christianity is blasphemy. For without a bodyguard, without servants who might prepare His way and

make men attentive to who it was that came, Christ walked here upon earth in the lowly form of a servant. But the possibility of offense (O how great a sorrow this was to Him in His love!) defended Him and defends Him, fixes a yawning abyss between Him and the man who was closest to Him and stood nearest.

For he who is not offended worships in faith. But to worship (which is the expression of faith) is to express the consciousness that the infinite yawning abyss of quality is fixed between them. For in faith again the possibility of offense is the dialectical factor.

But the sort of offense here in question is *modo ponendo*, it affirms of Christianity that it is a falsehood and a lie, and therefore affirms the same of Christ.

To illustrate this sort of offense it is best to pass in review the various forms of offense which are fundamentally related to the paradox (Christ), and then with every definition to come back to the Christian conception, for every such definition is related to Christ, has Christ *in mente.*

The lowest form of offense, that which, humanly speaking, is the least guilty, is to let the whole question about Christ remain undecided and to judge in this fashion: "I do not presume to pass any judgment; I do not believe, but I pass no judgement." That this is a form of offense escapes the attention of most men. The fact is that people have clean forgotten the Christian "*thou shalt.*" Therefore it is that they do not perceive that this is offense, this thing of treating Christ as a matter of indifference. The fact that Christ is preached to thee signifies that thou shalt have an opinion about Christ. The judgment that He is, or that He exists, or that He has existed, is the decision for the whole of existence. If Christ is preached to thee, it is offense to say, "I will have no opinion about it."

This however must be understood with a certain qualification in these times, inasmuch as Christianity is so poorly preached as it now is. There

doubtless are living thousands of men who have heard Christ preached and have never heard a word about this “shall.” But he who has heard it and says, “I will have no opinion about it,” is offended. For he denies the divinity of Christ when he denies that it has a right to require a man to have an opinion. It is of no avail for such a man to say, “I do not affirm anything about Christ, either yes or no”; for then one has only to ask, “Hast thou then no opinion as to whether thou shalt have an opinion about this or not?”, and if he replies, “well, yes,” he has trapped himself; and if he replies, “No,” then Chrsitianity condemns him all the same, requiring that he shall have an opinion about Christianity and also about Christ, that no one shall presume to treat Christ as a curiosity. When God lets Himself be born and becomes man, this is not an idle notion of His, something that occurs to Him as a way of undertaking something to put an end after all to the boredom which people have been impudent enough to say must be associated with being God — it is not for the interest of an adventure. No, when God does this it is the seriousness of existence. And the seriousness in this seriousness is that every one *shall* have an opinion about it. When a king visits a provincial town he regards it as an affront if without sufficient excuse an office-bearer in the town fails to do him homage. But what I wonder would he judge if one were to ignore entirely the fact that the King was in town, were to behave as a private person who on such an occasion “doesn’t care a fig for His Majesty and the royal law”? And so it is also when it pleases God to become man — that then it pleases a man (and what the office-bearer is to the King, that is every man before God) to say of it, “Well, that’s something about which I don’t wish to have any opinion.” So it is one speaks superciliously of that upon which one essentially looks down — and so one superciliously looks down upon God.

The next form of offense is the negative but passive form. It feels to be sure that it is not able to ignore Christianity, it is not capable of letting all

that about Christ remain in doubt, and then being for the rest busy about life. But neither does it believe; it continues to stare at one and the same point, the paradox. To that extent is honors Christianity after all, it gives expression to the conviction that the question, “What think ye of Christ?”, is the most decisive question. Such an offended man lives on like a shadow; his life is consumed because in his inmost soul he is constantly preoccupied with this decision. And thus he attests (as the suffering of unhappy love attests the reality of love) — he attests what a reality Christianity possesses.

The last form of offense is that about which we are speaking in this chapter, the positive form. It declares that Christianity is a falsehood and a lie, it denies (denies that He existed or said He was what he said He was) either docetically or rationalistically, so that Christ either becomes a particular man, but only apparently, or He becomes only a particular man, so that He either becomes, docetically, poetry and mythology which make no claim to reality, or rationalistically, a reality which makes no claim to be divine. In this denial of Christ as the paradox there is naturally implied the denial of everything Christian: sin, the forgiveness of sins, etc.

This form of offense is sin against the Holy Ghost. As the Jews said of Christ that He cast out devils by the help of the devil, so does this form of offense make of Christ an invention of the devil.

This offense is the highest potentiation of sin, which is a fact people generally overlook inasmuch as they do not Christianly construct the opposition sin /faith.

On the other hand, this opposition is affirmed in the whole of this work, which straightway in the first section (I.A) constructed the formula for the situation where no offense at all is to be found: “By relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it.” And this formula again, as has often been noted, is the definition of faith.

Selections from the Writings of Kierkegaard (1923)

Translated by Lee M. Hollander

CONTENTS

DIAPSALMATA[1]

ENDNOTES.

IN VINO VERITAS (THE BANQUET)

THE YOUNG PERSON'S SPEECH
CONSTANTIN'S SPEECH
VICTOR EREMITA'S SPEECH
THE DRESSMAKER'S SPEECH
THE SPEECH OF JOHN THE SEDUCER
ENDNOTES.

FEAR AND TREMBLING

INTRODUCTION II
PREPARATION
A PANEGYRIC ON ABRAHAM
PRELIMINARY EXPECTORATION
ENDNOTES.

PREPARATION FOR A CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE INVITATION
THE PAUSE
A. Who spoke these words of invitation?

B. Can one from history[7] learn to know anything about Christ?
C. Can one prove from history that Christ was God?
D. Are the consequences of Christ's life more important than his life?
E. A comparison between Christ and a man who in his life endured the same treatment by his times as Christ endured.
F. The Misfortune of Christendom
THE FIRST PHASE OF HIS LIFE
THE SECOND PHASE OF HIS LIFE
THE INVITATION AND THE INVITER
CHRISTIANITY AS THE ABSOLUTE; CONTEMPORANEOUSNESS WITH CHRIST
THE MORAL
ENDNOTES.

THE PRESENT MOMENT[1]

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION (No. I, 1)
A PANEGYRIC ON THE HUMAN RACE OR PROOF THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT IS NO LONGER TRUE. (No. II, 5)
IF WE ARE REALLY CHRISTIANS — THEN WHAT IS GOD? (No. II, 8)
DIAGNOSIS (No. IV, 1)
THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT; THE CHRISITANITY OF "CHRISTENDOM." (No. V, 4)
MODERN RELIGIOUS GUARANTEES (No. V, 8)
WHAT SAYS THE FIRE-MARSHAL (No. VI, 5)
CONFIRMATION AND WEDDING CEREMONY; CHRISTIAN — COMEDY — OR WORSE STILL. (No. VII, 6)
THE WEDDING CEREMONY
AN ETERNITY TO REPENT IN! (No. VIII, 3)

A DOSE OF DISGUST WITH LIFE (No. IX, 3)

ENDNOTES.

The benefits of education and of
useful knowledge, generally diffused
through a community, are essential
to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian
genius of democracy.... It is the
only dictator that freemen acknowledge
and the only security that free-men
desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar

To my Father-in-Law

The Reverend George Fisher,

A Christian

The original frontispiece

S. Kierkegaard
Magister artium

DIAPSALMATA[1]

WHAT IS A poet? An unhappy man who conceals profound anguish in his heart, but whose lips are so fashioned that when sighs and groans pass over them they sound like beautiful music. His fate resembles that of the unhappy men who were slowly roasted by a gentle fire in the tyrant Phalaris' bull — their shrieks could not reach his ear to terrify him, to him they sounded like sweet music. And people flock about the poet and say to him: do sing again; which means, would that new sufferings tormented your soul, and: would that your lips stayed fashioned as before, for your cries would only terrify us, but your music is delightful. And the critics join them, saying: well done, thus must it be according to the laws of æsthetics. Why, to be sure, a critic resembles a poet as one pea another, the only difference being that he has no anguish in his heart and no music on his lips. Behold, therefore would I rather be a swineherd on Amager,[2] and be understood by the swine than a poet, and misunderstood by men.

In addition to my numerous other acquaintances I have still one more intimate friend — my melancholy. In the midst of pleasure, in the midst of work, he beckons to me, calls me aside, even though I remain present bodily. My melancholy is the most faithful sweetheart I have had — no wonder that I return the love!

Of all ridiculous things the most ridiculous seems to me, to be busy — to be a man who is brisk about his food and his work. Therefore, whenever I see a fly settling, in the decisive moment, on the nose of such a person of affairs; or if he is spattered with mud from a carriage which drives past him in still greater haste; or the drawbridge opens up before him; or a tile falls down and knocks him dead, then I laugh heartily. And who, indeed, could help laughing? What, I wonder, do these busy folks get done? Are they not

to be classed with the woman who in her confusion about the house being on fire carried out the fire-tongs? What things of greater account, do you suppose, will they rescue from life's great conflagration?

Let others complain that the times are wicked. I complain that they are paltry; for they are without passion. The thoughts of men are thin and frail like lace, and they themselves are feeble like girl lace-makers. The thoughts of their hearts are too puny to be sinful. For a worm it might conceivably be regarded a sin to harbor thoughts such as theirs, not for a man who is formed in the image of God. Their lusts are staid and sluggish, their passions sleepy; they do their duty, these sordid minds, but permit themselves, as did the Jews, to trim the coins just the least little bit, thinking that if our Lord keep tab of them ever so carefully one might yet safely venture to fool him a bit. Fye upon them! It is therefore my soul ever returns to the Old Testament and to Shakespeare. There at least one feels that one is dealing with men and women; there one hates and loves, there one murders one's enemy and curses his issue through all generations — there one sins.

Just as, according to the legend,[3] Parmeniscus in the Trophonian cave lost his ability to laugh, but recovered it again on the island of Delos at the sight of a shapeless block which was exhibited as the image of the goddess Leto: likewise did it happen to me. When I was very young I forgot in the Trophonian cave how to laugh; but when I grew older and opened my eyes and contemplated the real world, I had to laugh, and have not ceased laughing, ever since. I beheld that the meaning of life was to make a living; its goal, to become Chief Justice; that the delights of love consisted in marrying a woman with ample means; that it was the blessedness of friendship to help one another in financial difficulties; that wisdom was what most people supposed it to be; that it showed enthusiasm to make a speech, and courage, to risk being fined 10 dollars; that it was cordiality to

say “may it agree with you” after a repast; that it showed piety to partake of the communion once a year. I saw that and laughed.

A strange thing happened to me in my dream. I was rapt into the Seventh Heaven. There sat all the gods assembled. As a special dispensation I was granted the favor to have one wish. “Do you wish for youth,” said Mercury, “or for beauty, or power, or a long life; or do you wish for the most beautiful woman, or any other of the many fine things we have in our treasure trove? Choose, but only one thing!” For a moment I was at a loss. Then I addressed the gods in this wise: “Most honorable contemporaries, I choose one thing — that I may always have the laughs on my side.” Not one god made answer, but all began to laugh. From this I concluded that my wish had been granted and thought that the gods knew how to express themselves with good taste; for it would surely have been inappropriate to answer gravely: your wish has been granted.

ENDNOTES.

[1]Interlude (of aphorisms). Selection.

[2]A flat island south of the capital, called the “Kitchen Garden of Copenhagen.”

[3]Told by Athenaios.

IN VINO VERITAS (THE BANQUET)

IT WAS ON one of the last days in July, at ten o'clock in the evening, when the participants in that banquet assembled together. Date and year I have forgotten; indeed, this would be interesting only to one's memory of details, and not to one's recollection of the contents of what experience. The "spirit of the occasion" and whatever impressions are recorded in one's mind under that heading, concerns only one's recollections; and just as generous wine gains in flavor by passing the Equator, because of the evaporation of its watery particles, likewise does recollection gain by getting rid of the watery particles of memory; and yet recollection becomes as little a mere figment of the imagination by this process as does the generous wine.

The participants were five in number: John, with the epithet of the Seducer, Victor Eremita, Constantin Constantius, and yet two others whose names I have not exactly forgotten — which would be a matter of small importance — but whose names I did not learn. It was as if these two had no proper names, for they were constantly addressed by some epithet. The one was called the Young Person. Nor was he more than twenty and some years, of slender and delicate build, and of a very dark complexion. His face was thoughtful; but more pleasing even was its lovable and engaging expression which betokened a purity of soul harmonizing perfectly with the soft charm, almost feminine, and the transparency of his whole presence. This external beauty of appearance was lost sight of, however, in one's next impression of him; or, one kept it only in mind whilst regarding a youth nurtured or — to use a still tenderer expression — petted into being, by thought, and nourished by the contents of his own soul — a youth who as yet had had nothing to do with the world, had been neither aroused and fired, nor disquieted and disturbed. Like a sleep-walker he bore the law of

his actions within himself, and the amiable, kindly expression of his countenance concerned no one, but only mirrored the disposition of his soul.

The other person they called the Dressmaker, and that was his occupation. Of him it was impossible to get a consistent impression. He was dressed according to the very latest fashion, with his hair curled and perfumed, fragrant with eau-de-cologne. One moment his carriage did not lack self-possession, whereas in the next it assumed a certain dancing, festive air, a certain hovering motion, which, however, was kept in rather definite bounds by the robustness of his figure. Even when he was most malicious in his speech his voice ever had a touch of the smoothtonguedness of the shop, the suaveness of the dealer in fancy-goods, which evidently was utterly disgusting to himself and only satisfied his spirit of defiance. As I think of him now I understand him better, to be sure, than when I first saw him step out of his carriage and I involuntarily laughed. At the same time there is some contradiction left still. He had transformed or bewitched himself, had by the magic of his own will assumed the appearance of one almost half-witted, but had not thereby entirely satisfied himself; and this is why his reflectiveness now and then peered forth from beneath his disguise.

As I think of it now it seems rather absurd that five such persons should get a banquet arranged. Nor would anything have come of it, I suppose, if Constantin had not been one of us. In a retired room of a confectioner's shop where they met at times, the matter had been broached once before, but had been dropped immediately when the question arose as to who was to head the undertaking. The Young Person was declared unfit for that task, the Dressmaker affirmed himself to be too busy. Victor Eremita did not beg to be excused because "he had married a wife or bought a yoke of oxen which he needed to prove";[1] but, he said, even if he should make an

exception, for once, and come to the banquet, yet he would decline the courtesy offered him to preside at it, and he therewith “entered protest at the proper time.[2]“ This, John considered a work spoken in due season; because, as he saw it, there was but one person able to prepare a banquet, and that was the possessor of the wishing-table which set itself with delectable things whenever he said to it “Cover thyself!” He averred that to enjoy the charms of a young girl in haste was not always the wisest course; but as to a banquet, he would not wait for it, and generally was tired of it a long while before it came off. However, if the plan was to be carried into effect he would make one condition, which was, that the banquet should be so arranged as to be served in one course. And that all were agreed on. Also, that the settings for it were to be made altogether new, and that afterwards they were to be destroyed entirely; ay, before rising from table one was to hear the preparation for their destruction. Nothing was to remain; “not even so much,” said the Dressmaker, “as there is left of a dress after it has been made over into a hat.” “Nothing,” said John, “because nothing is more unpleasant than a sentimental scene, and nothing more disgusting than the knowledge that somewhere or other there is an external setting which in a direct and impertinent fashion pretends to be a reality.”

When the conversation had thus became animated, Victor Eremita suddenly arose, struck an attitude on the floor, beckoned with his hand in the fashion of one commanding and, holding his arm extended as one lifting a goblet, he said, with the gesture of one waving a welcome: “With this cup whose fragrance already intoxicates my senses, whose cool fire already inflames my blood, I greet you, beloved fellow-banqueters, and bid you welcome; being entirely assured that each one of you is sufficiently satisfied by our merely speaking about the banquet; for our Lord satisfied the stomach before satisfying the eye, but the imagination acts in the reverse fashion.” Thereupon he inserted his hand in his pocket, took from it a cigar-

case, struck a match, and began to smoke. When Constantin Constantius protested against this sovereign free way of transforming the banquet planned into an illusory fragment of life, Victor declared that he did not believe for one moment that such a banquet could be got up and that, in any case, it had been a mistake to let it become the subject of discussion in advance. “Whatever is to be good must come at once; for ‘at once’ is the divinest of all categories and deserves to be honored as in the language of the Romans: *ex templo*,[3] because it is the starting point for all that is divine in life, and so much so that what is not done at once is of evil.” However, he remarked, he did not care to argue this point. In case the others wished to speak and act differently he would not say a word, but if they wished him to explain the sense of his remarks more fully he must have leave to make a speech, because he did not consider it all desirable to provoke a discussion on the subject.

Permission was given him; and as the others called on him to do so at once, he spoke as follows: “A banquet is in itself a difficult matter, because even if it be arranged with ever so much taste and talent there is something else essential to its success, to wit, good luck. And by this I mean not such matters as most likely would give concern to an anxious hostess, but something different, a something which no one can make absolutely sure of: a fortunate harmonizing of the spirit and the minutiæ of the banquet, that fine ethereal vibration of chords, that soul-stirring music which cannot be ordered in advance from the town-musicians. Look you, therefore is it a hazardous thing to undertake, because if things do go wrong, perhaps from the very start, one may suffer such a depression and loss of spirits that recovery from it might involve a very long time.

“Sheer habit and thoughtlessness are father and godfather to most banquets, and it is only due to the lack of critical sense among people that one fails to notice the utter absence of any idea in them. In the first place,

women ought never to be present at a banquet. Women may be used to advantage only in the Greek style, as a chorus of dancers. As it is the main thing at a banquet that there be eating and drinking, woman ought not to be present; for she cannot do justice to what is offered; or, if she can, it is most unbeautiful. Whenever a woman is present the matter of eating and drinking ought to be reduced to the very slightest proportions. At most, it ought to be no more than some trifling feminine occupation, to have something to busy one's hands with. Especially in the country a little repast of this kind — which, by the way, should be put at other times than the principal meals — may be extremely delightful; and if so, always owing to the presence of the other sex. To do like the English, who let the fair sex retire as soon as the real drinking is to start, is to fall between two stools, for every plan ought to be a whole, and the very manner with which I take a seat at the table and seize hold of knife and fork bears a definite relation to this whole. In the same sense a political banquet presents an unbeautiful ambiguity inasmuch as one does not[4] want to cut down to a very minimum the essentials of a banquet, and yet does not wish to have the speeches thought of as having been made over the cups.

"So far, we are agreed, I suppose; and our number — in case anything should come of the banquet — is correctly chosen, according to that beautiful rule: neither more than the Muses nor fewer than the Graces. Now I demand the greatest superabundance of everything thinkable. That is, even though everything be not actually there, yet the possibility of having it must be at one's immediate beck and call, aye, hover temptingly over the table, more seductive even than the actual sight of it. I beg to be excused, however, from banqueting on sulphur-matches or on a piece of sugar which all are to suck in turn. My demands for such a banquet will, on the contrary, be difficult to satisfy; for the feast itself must be calculated to arouse and incite that unmentionable longing which each worthy participant is to bring

with him. I require that the earth's fertility be at our service, as though everything sprouted forth at the very moment the desire for it was born. I desire a more luxurious abundance of wine than when Mephistopheles needed but to drill holes into the table to obtain it. I demand an illumination more splendid than have the gnomes when they lift up the mountain on pillars and dance in a sea of blazing light. I demand what most excites the senses, I demand their gratification by deliciously sweet perfumes, more superb than any in the Arabian Nights. I demand a coolness which voluptuously provokes desire and breathes relaxation on desire satisfied. I demand a fountain's unceasing enlivenment. If Mæcenas could not sleep without hearing the splashing of a fountain, I cannot eat without it. Do not misunderstand me, I can eat stockfish without it, but I cannot eat at a banquet without it; I can drink water without it, but I cannot drink wine at a banquet without it. I demand a host of servants, chosen and comely, as if I sate at table with the gods; I demand that there shall be music at the feast, both strong and subdued; and I demand that it shall be an accompaniment to my thoughts; and what concerns you, my friends, my demands regarding you are altogether incredible. Do you see, by reason of all these demands — which are as many reasons against it — I hold a banquet to be a *pium desideratum*,[5] and am so far from desiring a repetition of it that I presume it is not feasible even a first time."

The only one who had not actually participated in this conversation, nor in the frustration of the banquet, was Constantin. Without him, nothing would have been done save the talking. He had come to a different conclusion and was of the opinion that the idea might well be realized, if one but carried the matter with a high hand.

Then some time passed, and both the banquet and the discussion about it were forgotten, when suddenly, one day, the participants received a card of invitation from Constantius for a banquet the very same evening. The motto

of the party had been given by him as: *In Vino Veritas*, because there was to be speaking, to be sure, and not only conversation; but the speeches were not to be made except *in vino*, and no truth was to be uttered there excepting that which is *in vino* — when the wine is a defense of the truth and the truth a defense of the wine.

The place had been chosen in the woods, some ten miles distant from Copenhagen. The hall in which they were to feast had been newly decorated and in every way made unrecognizable; a smaller room, separated from the hall by a corridor, was arranged for an orchestra. Shutters and curtains were let down before all windows, which were left open. The arrangement that the participants were to drive to the banquet in the evening hour was to intimate to them — and that was Constantin's idea — what was to follow. Even if one knows that one is driving to a banquet, and the imagination therefore indulges for a moment in thoughts of luxury, yet the impression of the natural surroundings is too powerful to be resisted. That this might possibly not be the case was the only contingency he apprehended; for just as there is no power like the imagination to render beautiful all it touches, neither is there any power which can to such a degree disturb all — misfortune conspiring — if confronted with reality. But driving on a summer evening does not lure the imagination to luxurious thoughts, but rather to the opposite. Even if one does not see it or hear it, the imagination will unconsciously create a picture of the longing for home which one is apt to feel in the evening hours — one sees the reapers, man and maid, returning from their work in the fields, one hears the hurried rattling of the hay wagon, one interprets even the far-away lowing from the meadows as a longing. Thus does a summer evening suggest idyllic thoughts, soothing even a restless mind with its assuagement, inducing even the soaring imagination to abide on earth with an indwelling yearning for home as the place from whence it came, and thus teaching the insatiable mind to be

satisfied with little, by rendering one content; for in the evening hour time stands still and eternity lingers.

Thus they arrived in the evening hour: those invited; for Constantin had come out somewhat earlier. Victor Eremita who resided in the country not far away came on horseback, the others in a carriage. And just as they had discharged it, a light open vehicle rolled in through the gate carrying a merry company of four journeymen who were entertained to be ready at the decisive moment to function as a corps of destruction: just as firemen are stationed in a theatre, for the opposite reason at once to extinguish a fire.

So long as one is a child one possesses sufficient imagination to maintain one's soul at the very top-notch of expectation — for a whole hour in the dark room, if need be; but when one has grown older one's imagination may easily cause one to tire of the Christmas tree before seeing it.

The folding doors were opened. The effect of the radiant illumination, the coolness wafting toward them, the beguiling fragrance of sweet perfumes, the excellent taste of the arrangements, for a moment overwhelmed the feelings of those entering; and when, at the same time, strains from the ballet of "Don Juan" sounded from the orchestra, their persons seemed transfigured and, as if out of reverence for an unseen spirit about them, they stopped short for a moment like men who have been roused by admiration and who have risen to admire.

Whoever knows that happy moment, whoever has appreciated its delight, and has not also felt the apprehension lest suddenly something might happen, some trifle perhaps, which yet might be sufficient to disturb all! Whoever has held the lamp of Aladdin in his hand and has not also felt the swooning of pleasure, because one needs but to wish? Whoever has held what is inviting in his hand and has not also learned to keep his wrist limber to let go at once, if need be?

Thus they stood side by side. Only Victor stood alone, absorbed in thought; a shudder seemed to pass through his soul, he almost trembled; he collected himself and saluted the omen with these words: "Ye mysterious, festive, and seductive strains which drew me out of the cloistered seclusion of a quiet youth and beguiled me with a longing as mighty as a recollection, and terrible, as though Elvira had not even been seduced but had only desired to be! Immortal Mozart, thou to whom I owe all; but no! as yet I do not owe thee all. But when I shall have become an old man — if ever I do become an old man; or when I shall have become ten years older — if ever I do; or when I am become old — if ever I shall become old; or when I shall die — for that, indeed, I know I shall: then shall I say: immortal Mozart, thou to whom I owe all — and then I shall let my admiration, which is my soul's first and only admiration, burst forth in all its might and let it make away with me, as it often has been on the point of doing. Then have I set my house in order,[6] then have I remembered my beloved one, then have I confessed my love, then have I fully established that I owe thee all, then am I occupied no longer with thee, with the world, but only with the grave thought of death."

Now there came from the orchestra that invitation in which joy triumphs most exultantly, and heaven-storming soars aloft above Elvira's sorrowful thanks; and gracefully apostrophizing, John repeated: "*Viva la liberta*"— "*et veritas*," said the Young Person; "but above all, *in vino*," Constantin interrupted them, seating himself at the table and inviting the others to do likewise.

How easy to prepare a banquet; yet Constantin declared that he never would risk preparing another. How easy to admire; yet Victor declared that he never again would lend words to his admiration; for to suffer a discomfiture is more dreadful than to become an invalid in war! How easy

to express a desire, if one has the magic lamp; yet that is at times more terrible than to perish of want!

They were seated. In the same moment the little company were launched into the very middle of the infinite sea of enjoyment — as if with one single bound. Each one had addressed all his thoughts and all his desires to the banquet, had prepared his soul for the enjoyment which was offered to overflowing and in which their souls overflowed. The experienced driver is known by his ability to start the snorting team with a single bound and to hold them well abreast; the well-trained steed is known by his lifting himself in one absolutely decisive leap: even if one or the other of the guests perhaps fell short in some particular, certainly Constantin was a good host.

Thus they banqueted. Soon, conversation had woven its beautiful wreaths about the banqueters, so that they sat garlanded. Now, it was enamored of the food, now of the wine, and now again of itself; now, it seemed to develop into significance, and then again it was altogether slight. Soon, fancy unfolded itself — the splendid one which blows but once, the tender one which straightway closes its petals; now, there came an exclamation from one of the banqueters: “These truffles are superb,” and now, an order of the host: “This Chateau Margaux!” Now, the music was drowned in the noise, now it was heard again. Sometimes the servants stood still as if *in pausa*, in that decisive moment when a new dish was being brought out, or a new wine was ordered and mentioned by name, sometimes they were all a bustle. Sometimes there was a silence for a moment, and then the re-animating spirit of the music went forth over the guests. Now, one with some bold thought would take the lead in the conversation and the others followed after, almost forgetting to eat, and the music would sound after them as it sounds after the jubilant shouts of a host storming on; now, only the clinking of glasses and the clattering of plates was heard and the

feasting proceeded in silence, accompanied only by the music that joyously advanced and again stimulated conversation. Thus they banqueted.

How poor is language in comparison with that symphony of sounds unmeaning, yet how significant, whether of a battle or of a banquet, which even scenic representation cannot imitate and for which language has but a few words! How rich is language in the expression of the world of ideas, and how poor, when it is to describe reality!

Only once did Constantin abandon his omnipresence in which one actually lost sight of his presence. At the very beginning he got them to sing one of the old drinking songs, "by way of calling to mind that jolly time when men and women feasted together," as he said — a proposal which had the positively burlesque effect he had perhaps calculated it should have. It almost gained the upper hand when the Dressmaker wanted them to sing the ditty: "When I shall mount the bridal bed, hoiho!" After a couple of courses had been served Constantin proposed that the banquet should conclude with each one's making a speech, but that precautions should be taken against the speakers' divagating too much. He was for making two conditions, viz., there were to be no speeches until after the meal; and no one was to speak before having drunk sufficiently to feel the power of the wine — else he was to be in that condition in which one says much which under other circumstances one would leave unsaid — without necessarily having the connection of speech and thought constantly interrupted by hiccoughs.[7] Before speaking, then, each one was to declare solemnly that he was in that condition. No definite quantity of wine was to be required, capacities differed so widely. Against this proposal, John entered protest. He could never become intoxicated, he averred, and when he had come to a certain point he grew the soberer the more he drank. Victor Eremita was of the opinion that any such preparatory premeditations to insure one's becoming drunk would precisely militate against one's becoming so. If one desired to

become intoxicated the deliberate wish was only a hindrance. Then there ensued some discussion about the divers influences of wine on consciousness, and especially about the fact that, in the case of a reflective temperament, an excess of wine may manifest itself, not in any particular *impetus* but, on the contrary, in a noticeably cool self-possession. As to the contents of the speeches, Constantin proposed that they should deal with love, that is, the relation between man and woman. No love stories were to be told though they might furnish the text of one's remarks.

The conditions were accepted. All reasonable and just demands a host may make on his guests were fulfilled: they ate and drank, and "drank and were filled with drink," as the Bible has it;[8] that is, they drank stoutly.

The desert was served. Even if Victor had not, as yet, had his desire gratified to hear the splashing of a fountain — which, for that matter, he had luckily forgotten since that former conversation — now champagne flowed profusely. The clock struck twelve. Thereupon Constantin commanded silence, saluted the Young Person with a goblet and the words *quod felix sit faustumque*[9] and bade him to speak first.

THE YOUNG PERSON’S SPEECH

THE YOUNG PERSON arose and declared that he felt the power of the wine, which was indeed apparent to some degree; for the blood pulsed strongly in his temples, and his appearance was not as beautiful as before the meal. He spoke as follows:

If there be truth in the words of the poets, dear fellow-banqueters, then unrequited love is, indeed, the greatest of sorrows. Should you require any proof of this you need but listen to the speech of lovers. They say that it is death, certain death; and the first time they believe it — for the space of two weeks. The next time they say that it is death; and finally they will die sometime — as the result of unrequited love. For that love has killed them, about that there can obtain no doubt. And as to love’s having to take hold three times to make away with them, that is not different from the dentist’s having to pull three times before he is able to budge that firmly rooted molar. But, if unrequited love thus means certain death, how happy am I who have never loved and, I hope, will only achieve dying some time, and not from unrequited love! But just this may be the greatest misfortune, for all I know, and how unfortunate must I then be!

The essence of love probably (for I speak as does a blind man about colors), probably lies in its bliss; which is, in other words, that the cessation of love brings death to the lover. This I comprehend very well as in the nature of a hypothesis correlating life and death. But, if love is to be merely by way of hypothesis, why, then lovers lay themselves open to ridicule through their actually falling in love. If, however, love is something real, why, then reality must bear out what lovers say about it. But did one in real life ever hear of, or observe, such things having taken place, even if there is hearsay to that effect? Here I perceive already one of the contradictions in

which love involves a person; for whether this is different for those initiated, that I have no means of knowing; but love certainly does seem to involve people in the most curious contradictions.

There is no other relation between human beings which makes such demands on one's ideality as does love, and yet love is never seen to have it. For this reason alone I would be afraid of love; for I fear that it might have the power to make me too talk vaguely about a bliss which I did not feel and a sorrow I did not have. I say this here since I am bidden to speak on love, though unacquainted with it — I say this in surroundings which appeal to me like a Greek symposion; for I should otherwise not care to speak on this subject as I do not wish to disturb any one's happiness but, rather, am content with my own thoughts. Who knows but these thoughts are sheer imbecilities and vain imaginings — perhaps my ignorance is explicable from the fact that I never have learned, nor have wished to learn, from any one, how one comes to love; or from the fact that I have never yet challenged a woman with a glance — which is supposed to be smart — but have always lowered my eyes, unwilling to yield to an impression before having fully made sure about the nature of the power into whose sphere I am venturing.

At this point he was interrupted by Constantin who expostulated with him because, by his very confession of never having been in love, he had debarred himself from speaking. The Young Person declared that at any other time he would gladly obey an injunction to that effect as he had often enough experienced how tiresome it was to have to make a speech; but that in this case he would insist upon his right. Precisely the fact that one had had no love affair, he said, also constituted an affair of love; and he who could assert this of himself was entitled to speak about Eros just because his thoughts were bound to take issue with the whole sex and not with individuals. He was granted permission to speak and continued.

Inasmuch as my right to speak has been challenged, this may serve to exempt me from your laughter; for I know well that, just as among rustics he is not considered a man who does not call a tobacco pipe his own, likewise among men-folks he is not considered a real man who is not experienced in love. If any one feels like laughing, let him laugh — my thought is, and remains, the essential consideration for me. Or is love, perchance, privileged to be the only event which is to be considered after, rather than before, it happens? If that be the case, what then if I, having fallen in love, should later on think that it was too late to think about it? Look you, this is the reason why I choose to think about love before it happens. To be sure, lovers also maintain that they gave the matter thought, but such is not the case. They assume it to be essential in man to fall in love; but this surely does not mean thinking about love but, rather, assuming it, in order to make sure of getting one's self a sweetheart.

In fact, whenever my reflection endeavors to pin down love, naught but contradiction seems to remain. At times, it is true, I feel as if something had escaped me, but I cannot tell what it is, whereas my reflection is able at once to point out the contradictions in what does occur. Very well, then, in my opinion love is the greatest self-contradiction imaginable, and comical at the same time. Indeed, the one corresponds to the other. The comical is always seen to occur in the category of contradictions — which truth I cannot take the time to demonstrate now; but what I shall demonstrate now is that love is comical. By love I mean the relation between man and woman. I am not thinking of Eros in the Greek sense which has been extolled so beautifully by Plato who, by the way, is so far from considering the love of woman that he mentions it only in passing, holding it to be inferior to the love of youths.[10] I say, love is comical to a third person — more I say not. Whether it is for this reason that lovers always hate a third person I do not know; but I do know that reflection is always in such a

relation the third person, and for this reason I cannot love without at the same time having a third person present in the shape of my reflection.

This surely cannot seem strange to any one, every one having doubted everything, whereas I am uttering my doubts only with reference to love. And yet I do think it strange that people have doubted everything and have again reached certainty, without as much as dropping a word concerning the difficulties which have held my thought captive — so much so that I have, now and then, longed to be freed of them — freed by the aid of one, note well, who was aware of these difficulties, and not of one who in his sleep had a notion to doubt, and to have doubted, everything, and again in his sleep had the notion that he is explaining, and has explained, all.[11]

Let me then have your attention, dear fellow banqueters, and if you yourselves be lovers do not therefore interrupt me, nor try to silence me because you do not wish to hear the explanation. Rather turn away and listen with averted faces to what I have to say, and what I insist upon saying, having once begun.

In the first place I consider it comical that every one loves, and every one wishes to love, without any one ever being able to tell one what is the nature of the lovable or that which is the real object of love. As to the word "to love" I shall not discuss it since it means nothing definite; but as soon as the matter is broached at all we are met by the question as to what it is one loves. No other answer is ever vouchsafed us on that point other than that one loves what is lovable. For if one should make answer, with Plato,[12] that one is to love what is good, one has in taking this single step exceeded the bounds of the erotic.

The answer may be offered, perhaps, that one is to love what is beautiful. But if I then should ask whether to love means to love a beautiful landscape or a beautiful painting it would be immediately perceived that the erotic is not, as it were, comprised in the more general term of the love of things

beautiful, but is something entirely of its own kind. Were a lover — just to give an example — to speak as follows, in order to express adequately how much love there dwelled in him: “I love beautiful landscapes, and my Lalage, and the beautiful dancer, and a beautiful horse — in short, I love all that is beautiful,” his Lalage would not be satisfied with his encomium, however well satisfied she might be with him in all other respects, and even if she be beautiful; and now suppose Lalage is not beautiful and he yet loved her!

Again, if I should refer the erotic element to the bisection of which Aristophanes tells us[13] when he says that the gods severed man into two parts as one cuts flounders, and that these parts thus separated sought one another, then I again encounter a difficulty I cannot get over, which is, in how far I may base my reasoning on Aristophanes who in his speech — just because there is no reason for the thought to stop at this point — goes further in his thought and thinks that the gods might take it into their heads to divide man into three parts, for the sake of still better fun. For the sake of still better fun; for is it not true, as I said, that love renders a person ridiculous, if not in the eyes of others then certainly in the eyes of the gods?

Now, let me assume that the erotic element resides essentially in the relation between man and woman — what is to be inferred from that? If the lover should say to his Lalage: I love you because you are a woman; I might as well love any other woman, as for instance, ugly Zoë: then beautiful Lalage would feel insulted.

In what, then, consists the lovable? This is my question; but unfortunately, no one has been able to tell me. The individual lover always believes that, as far as he is concerned, he knows. Still he cannot make himself understood by any other lover; and he who listens to the speech of a number of lovers will learn that no two of them ever agree, even though they all talk about the same thing. Disregarding those altogether silly

explanations which leave one as wise as before, that is, end by asserting that it is really the pretty feet of the beloved damsel, or the admired mustachios of the swain, which are the objects of love — disregarding these, one will find mentioned, even in the declamations of lovers in the higher style, first a number of details and, finally, the declaration: all her lovable ways; and when they have reached the climax: that inexplicable something I do not know how to explain. And this speech is meant to please especially beautiful Lalage. Me it does not please, for I don't understand a word of it and find, rather, that it contains a double contradiction — first, that it ends with the inexplicable, second, that it ends with the inexplicable; for he who intends to end with the inexplicable had best begin with the inexplicable and then say no more, lest he lay himself open to suspicion. If he begin with the inexplicable, saying no more, then this does not prove his helplessness, for it is, anyway, an explanation in a negative sense; but if he does begin with something else and lands in the inexplicable, then this does certainly prove his helplessness.

So then we see: to love corresponds to the lovable; and the lovable is the inexplicable. Well, that is at least something; but comprehensible it is not, as little as the inexplicable way in which love seizes on its prey. Who, indeed, would not be alarmed if people about one, time and again, dropped down dead, all of a sudden, or had convulsions, without any one being able to account for it? But precisely in this fashion does love invade life, only with the difference that one is not alarmed thereby, since the lovers themselves regard it as their greatest happiness, but that one, on the contrary, is tempted to laugh; for the comical and the tragical elements ever correspond to one another. Today, one may converse with a person and can fairly well make him out — tomorrow, he speaks in tongues and with strange gestures: he is in love.

Now, if to love meant to fall in love with the first person that came along, it would be easy to understand that one could give no special reasons for it; but since to love means to fall in love with one, one single person in all the world, it would seem as if such an extraordinary process of singling out ought to be due to such an extensive chain of reasoning that one might have to beg to be excused from hearing it — not so much because it did not explain anything as because it might be too lengthy to listen to. But no, the lovers are not able to explain anything at all. He has seen hundreds upon hundreds of women; he is, perhaps, advanced in years and has all along felt nothing — and all at once he sees her, her the Only one, Catherine. Is this not comical? Is it not comical that the relation which is to explain and beautify all life, love, is not like the mustard seed from which there grows a great tree,[14] but being still smaller is, at bottom, nothing at all; for not a single antecedent criterion can be mentioned, as e.g., that the phenomenon occurred at a certain age, nor a single reason as to why he should select her, her alone in all the world — and that by no means in the same sense as when "Adam chose Eve, because there was none other.[15]"

Or is not the explanation which the lovers vouchsafe just as comical; or, does it not, rather, emphasize the comical aspect of love? They say that love renders one blind, and by this fact they undertake to explain the phenomenon. Now, if a person who was going into a dark room to fetch something should answer, on my advising him to take a light along, that it was only a trifling matter he wanted and so he would not bother to take a light along — ah! then I would understand him excellently well. If, on the other hand, this same person should take me aside and, with an air of mystery, confide to me that the thing he was about to fetch was of the very greatest importance and that it was for this reason that he was able to do it in the dark — ah! then I wonder if my weak mortal brain could follow the soaring flight of his speech. Even if I should refrain from laughing, in order

not to offend him, I should hardly be able to restrain my mirth as soon as he had turned his back. But at love nobody laughs; for I am quite prepared to be embarrassed like the Jew who, after ending his story, asks: Is there no one who will laugh?[16] And yet I did not miss the point, as did the Jew, and as to my laughter I am far from wanting to insult any one. Quite on the contrary, I scorn those fools who imagine that their love has such good reasons that they can afford to laugh at other lovers; for since love is altogether inexplicable, one lover is as ridiculous as the other. Quite as foolish and haughty I consider it also when a man proudly looks about him in the circle of girls to find who may be worthy of him, or when a girl proudly tosses her head to select or reject; because such persons are simply basing their thoughts on an unexplained assumption. No. What busies my thought is love as such, and it is love which seems ridiculous to me; and therefore I fear it, lest I become ridiculous in my own eyes, or ridiculous in the eyes of the gods who have fashioned man thus. In other words, if love is ridiculous it is equally ridiculous, whether now my sweetheart be a princess or a servant girl; for the lovable, as we have seen, is the inexplicable.

Look you, therefore do I fear love, and find precisely in this a new proof of love's being comical; for my fear is so curiously tragic that it throws light on the comical nature of love. When people wreck a building a sign is hung up to warn people, and I shall take care to stand from under; when a bar has been freshly painted a stone is laid in the road to apprise people of the fact; when a driver is in danger of running a man over he will shout "look out"; when there have been cases of cholera in a house a soldier is set as guard; and so forth. What I mean is that if there is some danger, one may be warned and will successfully escape it by heeding the warning. Now, fearing to be rendered ridiculous by love, I certainly regard it as dangerous; so what shall I do to escape it? In other words, what shall I do to escape the danger of some woman falling in love with me? I am far from entertaining

the thought of being an Adonis every girl is bound to fall in love with (*relata refero*,[17] for what this means I do not understand) — goodness no! But since I do not know what the lovable is I cannot, by any manners of means, know how to escape this danger. Since, for that matter, the very opposite of beauty may constitute the lovable; and, finally, since the inexplicable also is the lovable, I am forsooth in the same situation as the man Jean Paul speaks of somewhere who, standing on one foot, reads a sign saying, “fox-traps here,” and now does not dare, either to lift his foot or to set it down.

No, love any one I will not, before I have fathomed what love is; but this I cannot, but have, rather, come to the conclusion that it is comical. Hence I will not love — but alas! I have not thereby avoided the danger, for, since I do not know what the lovable is and how it seizes me, or how it seizes a woman with reference to me, I cannot make sure whether I have avoided the danger. This is tragical and, in a certain sense, even profoundly tragical, even if no one is concerned about it, or if no one is concerned about the bitter contradiction for one who thinks — that a something exists which everywhere exercises its power and yet is not to be definitely conceived by thought and which, perhaps, may attack from the rear him who in vain seeks to conceive it. But as to the tragic side of the matter it has its deep reason in the comic aspects just pointed out. Possibly, every other person will turn all this upside down and not find that to be comical which I do, but rather that which I conceive to be tragical; but this too proves that I am right to a certain extent. And that for which, if so happens, I become either a tragic or comic victim is plain enough, viz., my desire to reflect about all I do, and not imagine I am reflecting about life by dismissing its every important circumstance with an “I don’t care, either way.”

Man has both a soul and a body. About this the wisest and best of the race are agreed. Now, in case one assumes the essence of love to lie in the

relation between man and woman, the comic aspect will show again in the face-about which is seen when the highest spiritual values express themselves in the most sensual terms. I am now referring to all those extraordinary and mystic signals of love — in short, to all the free-masonry which forms a continuation of the above-mentioned inexplicable something. The contradiction in which love here involves a person lies in the fact that the symbolic signs mean nothing at all or — which amounts to the same — that no one is able to explain what they do signify. Two loving souls vow that they will love each the other in all eternity; thereupon they embrace, and with a kiss they seal this eternal pact. Now I ask any thinking person whether he would have hit upon that! And thus there is constant shifting from the one to the other extreme in love. The most spiritual is expressed by its very opposite, and the sensual is to signify the most spiritual. — Let me assume I am in love. In that case I would conceive it to be of the utmost importance to me that the one I love belonged to me for all time. This I comprehend; for I am now, really, speaking only of Greek eroticism which has to do with loving beautiful souls. Now when the person I love had vowed to return my love I would believe her or, in as far as there remained any doubt in me, try to combat my doubt. But what happens actually? For if I were in love I would, probably, behave like all the others, that is, seek to obtain still some other assurance than merely to believe her I love; which, though, is plainly the only assurance to be had.

When Cockatoo[18] all at once begins to plume himself like a duck which is gorged with food, and then emits the word "Marian," everybody will laugh, and so will I. I suppose the spectator finds it comical that Cockatoo, who doesn't love Marian at all, should be on such intimate terms with her. But suppose, now, that Cockatoo does love Marian. Would that be comical still? To me it would; and the comical would seem to me to lie in love's having become capable of being expressed in such fashion. Whether now

this has been the custom since the beginning of the world makes no difference whatsoever, for the comical has the prescriptive right from all eternity to be present in contradictions — and here is a contradiction. There is really nothing comical in the antics of a manikin since we see some one pulling the strings. But to be a manikin at the beck of something inexplicable is indeed comical, for the contradiction lies in our not seeing any sensible reason why one should have to twitch now this leg and now that. Hence, if I cannot explain what I am doing, I do not care to do it; and if I cannot understand the power into whose sphere I am venturing, I do not care to surrender myself to that power. And if love is so mysterious a law which binds together the extremest contradictions, then who will guarantee that I might not, one day, become altogether confused? Still, that does not concern me so much.

Again, I have heard that some lovers consider the behavior of other lovers ridiculous. I cannot conceive how this ridicule is justified, for if this law of love be a natural law, then all lovers are subject to it; but if it be the law of their own choice, then those laughing lovers ought to be able to explain all about love; which, however, they are unable to do. But in this respect I understand this matter better as it seems a convention for one lover to laugh at the other because he always finds the other lover ridiculous, but not himself. If it be ridiculous to kiss an ugly girl, it is also ridiculous to kiss a pretty one; and the notion that doing this in some particular way should entitle one to cast ridicule on another who does it differently, is but presumptuousness and a conspiracy which does not, for all that, exempt such a snob from laying himself open to the ridicule which invariably results from the fact that no one is able to explain what this act of kissing signifies, whereas it is to signify all — to signify, indeed, that the lovers desire to belong to each other in all eternity; aye, what is still more amusing, to render them certain that they will. Now, if a man should

suddenly lay his head on one side, or shake it, or kick out with his leg and, upon my asking him why he did this, should answer “To be sure I don’t know, myself, I just happened to do so, next time I may do something different, for I did it unconsciously” — ah, then I would understand him quite well. But if he said, as the lovers say about their antics, that all bliss lay therein, how could I help finding it ridiculous — just as I thought that other man’s motions ridiculous, to be sure in a different sense, until he restrained my laughter by declaring that they did not signify anything. For by doing so he removed the contradiction which is the basic cause of the comical. It is not at all comical that the insignificant is declared to signify nothing, but it is very much so if it be asserted to signify all.

As regards involuntary actions, the contradiction arises at the very outset because involuntary actions are not looked for in a free rational being. Thus if one supposed that the Pope had a coughing spell the very moment he was to place the crown on Napoleon’s head; or that bride and groom in the most solemn moment of the wedding ceremony should fall to sneezing — these would be examples of the comical. That is, the more a given action accentuates the free rational being, the more comical are involuntary actions. This holds true also in respect of the erotic gesticulations, where the comical element appears a second time, owing to the circumstance that the lovers attempt to explain away the contradiction by attributing to their gesticulations an absolute value. As is well known, children have a keen sense of the ridiculous — witness children’s testimony which can always be relied on in this regard. Now as a rule children will laugh at lovers, and if one makes them tell what they have seen, surely no one can help laughing. This is, perhaps, due to the fact that children omit the point. Very strange! When the Jew omitted the point no one cared to laugh. Here, on the contrary, every one laughs because the point is omitted; since, however, no one can explain what the point is — why, then there is no point at all.

So the lovers explain nothing; and those who praise love explain nothing but are merely intent on — as one is bidden in the Royal Laws of Denmark — on saying anent it all which may be pleasant and of good report. But a man who thinks, desires to have his logical categories in good order; and he who thinks about love wishes to be sure about his categories also in this matter. The fact is, though, that people do not think about love, and a "pastoral science" is still lacking; for even if a poet in a pastoral poem makes an attempt to show how love is born, everything is smuggled in again by help of another person who teaches the lovers how to love!

As we saw, the comical element in love arose from the face-about whereby the highest quality of one sphere does not find expression in that sphere but in the exactly opposite quality of another sphere. It is comical that the soaring flight of love — the desire to belong to each other for all time — lands ever, like Saft,[19] in the pantry; but still more comical is it that this conclusion is said to constitute love's highest expression.

Wherever there is a contradiction, there the comical element is present also. I am ever following that track. If it be disconcerting to you, dear fellow banqueters, to follow me in what I shall have to say now, then follow me with averted countenances. I myself am speaking as if with veiled eyes; for as I see only the mystery in these matters, why, I cannot see, or I see nothing.

What is a consequence? If it cannot, in some way or other, be brought under the same head as its antecedent — why, then it would be ridiculous if it posed as a consequence. To illustrate: if a man who wanted to take a bath jumped into the tank and, coming to the surface again somewhat confused, groped for the rope to hold on to, but caught the douche-line by mistake, and a shower now descended on him with sufficient motivation and for excellent good reason — why, then the consequence would be entirely in order. The ridiculous here consisted in his seizing the wrong rope; but there

is nothing ridiculous in the shower descending when one pulls the proper rope. Rather, it would be ridiculous if it did not come; as for example, just to show the correctness of my contention about contradictions, if a man nerved himself with bold resolution in order to withstand the shock and, in the enthusiasm of his decision, with a stout heart pulled the line — and the shower did not come.

Let us see now how it is with regard to love. The lovers wish to belong to each other for all time, and this they express, curiously, by embracing each other with all the intensity of the moment; and all the bliss of love is said to reside therein. But all desire is egotistic. Now, to be sure, the lover's desire is not egotistic in respect of the one he loves, but the desire of both in conjunction is absolutely egotistic in so far as they in their union and love represent a new ego. And yet they are deceived; for in the same moment the race triumphs over the individual, the race is victorious, and the individuals are debased to do its bidding.

Now this I find more ridiculous than what Aristophanes thought so ridiculous. The ridiculous aspect of his theory of bi-section lies in the inherent contradiction (which the ancient author does not sufficiently emphasize, however). In considering a person one naturally supposes him to be an entity, and so one does believe till it becomes apparent that, under the obsession of love, he is but a half which runs about looking for its complement. There is nothing ridiculous in half an apple. The comical would appear if a whole apple turned out to be only half an apple. In the first case there exists no contradiction, but certainly in the latter. If one actually based one's reasoning on the figure of speech that woman is but half a person she would not be ridiculous at all in her love. Man, however, who has been enjoying civic rights as a whole person, will certainly appear ridiculous when he takes to running about (and looking for his other half);[20] for he betrays thereby that he is but half a person. In fact, the more one

thinks about the matter the more ridiculous it seems; because if man really be a whole, why, then he will not become a whole in love, but he and woman would make up one and a half. No wonder, then, that the gods laugh, and particularly at man.

But let me return to my consequence. When the lovers have found each other, one should certainly believe that they formed a whole, and in this should lie the proof of their assertion that they wished to live for each other for all time. But lo! instead of living for each other they begin to live for the race, and this they do not even suspect.

What is a consequence? If, as I observed, one cannot detect in it the cause out of which it proceeded, the consequence is merely ridiculous, and he becomes a laughing stock to whom this happens. Now, the fact that the separated halves have found each other ought to be a complete satisfaction and rest for them; and yet the consequence is a new existence. That having found each other should mean a new existence for the lovers, is comprehensible enough; but not, that a new existence for a third being should take its inception from this fact. And yet the resulting consequence is greater than that of which it is the consequence, whereas such an end as the lovers' finding each other ought to be infallible evidence of no other, subsequent, consequence being thinkable.

Does the satisfaction of any other desire show an analogy to this consequence? Quite on the contrary, the satisfaction of desire is in every other case evinced by a period of rest; and even if a *tristitia*[21] does supervene — indicating, by the way, that every satisfaction of an appetite is comical — this *tristitia* is a straightforward consequence, though no *tristitia* so eloquently attests a preceding comical element as does that following love. It is quite another matter with an enormous consequence such as we are dealing with, a consequence of which no one knows whence it comes,

nor whether it will come; whereas, if it does come, it comes as a consequence.

Who is able to grasp this? And yet that which for the initiates of love constitutes the greatest pleasure is also the most important thing for them — so important that they even adopt new names, derived from the consequence thereof which thus, curiously enough, assumes retroactive force. The lover is now called father, his sweetheart, mother; and these names seem to them the most beautiful. And yet there is a being to whom these names are even more beautiful; for what is as beautiful as filial piety? To me it seems the most beautiful of all sentiments; and fortunately I can appreciate the thought underlying it. We are taught that it is seeming in a son to love his father. This I comprehend, I cannot even suspect that there is any contradiction possible here, and I acknowledge infinite satisfaction in being held by the loving bonds of filial piety. I believe it is the greatest debt of all to owe another being one's life. I believe that this debt cannot ever be wiped out, or even fathomed by any calculation, and for this reason I agree with Cicero when he asserts that the son is always in the wrong as against his father; and it is precisely filial piety which teaches me to believe this, teaches me not even to penetrate the hidden, but rather to remain hidden in the father. Quite true, I am glad to be another person's greatest debtor; but as to the opposite, viz., before deciding to make another person my greatest debtor, I want to arrive at greater clarity. For to my conception there is a world of difference between being some person's debtor, and making some person one's debtor to such an extent that he will never be able to clear himself.

What filial piety forbids the son to consider, love bids the father to consider. And here contradiction sets in again. If the son has an immortal soul like his father, what does it mean, then, to be a father? For must I not smile at myself when thinking of myself as a father — whereas the son is

most deeply moved when he reflects on the relation he bears to his father? Very well do I understand Plato when he says that an animal will give birth to an animal of the same species, a plant, to a plant of the same species, and thus also man to man.[22] But this explains nothing, does not satisfy one's thought, and arouses but a dim feeling; for an immortal soul cannot be born. Whenever, then, a father considers his son in the light of his son's immortality — which is, indeed, the essential consideration[23] — he will probably smile at himself, for he cannot, by any means, grasp in their entirety all the beautiful and noble thoughts which his son with filial piety entertains about him. If, on the other hand, he considers his son from the point of view of his animal nature he must smile again, because the conception of fatherhood is too exalted an expression for it.

Finally, if it were thinkable that a father influenced his son in such fashion that his own nature was a condition from which the son's nature could not free itself, then the contradiction would arise in another direction; for in this case nothing more terrible is thinkable than being a father. There is no comparison between killing a person and giving him life — the former decides his fate only in time, the other for all eternity. So there is a contradiction again, and one both to laugh and to weep about. Is paternity then an illusion — even if not in the same sense as is implied in Magdelone's speech to Jeronymus[24] — or is it the most terrible thought imaginable? Is it the greatest benefit conferred on one, or is it the sweetest gratification of one's desire — is it something which just happens, or is it the greatest task of life?

Look you, for this reason have I forsworn all love, for my thought is to me the most essential consideration. So even if love be the most exquisite joy, I renounce it, without wishing either to offend or to envy any one; and even if love be the condition for conferring the greatest benefit imaginable I deny myself the opportunity therefor — but my thought I have not

prostituted. By no means do I lack an eye for what is beautiful, by no means does my heart remain unmoved when I read the songs of the poets, by no means is my soul without sadness when it yields to the beautiful conception of love; but I do not wish to become unfaithful to my thought. And of what avail were it to be, for there is no happiness possible for me except my thought have free sway. If it had not, I would in desperation yearn for my thought, which I may not desert to cleave to a wife, for it is my immortal part and, hence, of more importance than a wife. Well do I comprehend that if any thing is sacred it is love; that if faithlessness in any relation is base, it is doubly so in love; that if any deceit is detestable, it is tenfold more detestable in love. But my soul is innocent of blame. I have never looked at any woman to desire her, neither have I fluttered about aimlessly before blindly plunging, or lapsing, into the most decisive of all relations. If I knew what the lovable were I would know with certainty whether I had offended by tempting any one; but since I do not know, I am certain only of never having had the conscious desire to do so.

Supposing I should yield to love and be made to laugh; or supposing I should be cast down by terror, since I cannot find the narrow path which lovers travel as easily as if it were the broad highway, undisturbed by any doubts, which they surely have bestowed thought on (seeing our times have, indeed, reflected about all[25] and consequently will comprehend me when I assert that to act unreflectingly is nonsense, as one ought to have gone through all possible reflections before acting) — supposing, I say, I should yield to love! Would I not insult past redress my beloved one if I laughed; or irrevocably plunge her into despair if I were overwhelmed by terror? For I understand well enough that a woman cannot be expected to have thought as profoundly about these matters; and a woman who found love comical (as but gods and men can, for which reason woman is a temptation luring them to become ridiculous) would both betray a suspicious amount of

previous experience and understand me least. But a woman who comprehended the terror of love would have lost her loveliness and still fail to understand me — she would be annihilated; which is in nowise my case, so long as my thought saves me.

Is there no one ready to laugh? When I began by wanting to speak about the comical element in love you perhaps expected to be made to laugh, for it is easy to make you laugh, and I myself am a friend of laughter; and still you did not laugh, I believe. The effect of my speech was a different one, and yet precisely this proves that I have spoken about the comical. If there be no one who laughs at my speech — well, then laugh a little at me, dear fellow-banqueters, and I shall not wonder; for I do not understand what I have occasionally heard you say about love. Very probably, though, you are among the initiated as I am not.

Thereupon the Young Person seated himself. He had become more beautiful, almost, than before the meal. Now he sat quietly, looking down before him, unconcerned about the others. John the Seducer desired at once to urge some objections against the Young Person's speech but was interrupted by Constantin who warned against discussions and ruled that on this occasion only speeches were in order. John said if that was the case, he would stipulate that he should be allowed to be the last speaker. This again gave rise to a discussion as to the order in which they were to speak, which Constantin closed by offering to speak forthwith, against their recognizing his authority to appoint the speakers in their turn.

CONSTANTIN'S SPEECH

CONSTANTIN SPOKE AS follows:

There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak,[26] and now it seems to be the time to speak briefly, for our young friend has spoken much and very strangely. His *vis comica*[27] has made us struggle *ancipiti proelio*[28] because his speech was full of doubts, as he himself is, sitting there now — a perplexed man who knows not whether to laugh, or weep, or fall in love. In fact, had I had foreknowledge of his speech, such as he demands one should have of love, I should have forbidden him to speak; but now it is too late. I shall bid you then, dear bellow-banqueters, "gladsome and merry to be," and even if I cannot enforce this I shall ask you to forget each speech so soon as it is made and to wash it down with a single draught.

And now as to woman, about whom I shall speak. I too have pondered about her, and I have finally discovered the category to which she belongs. I too have sought, but I have found, too, and I have made a matchless discovery which I shall now communicate to you. Woman is understood correctly only when placed in the category of "the joke."

It is man's function to be absolute, to act in an absolute fashion, or to give expression to the absolute. Woman's sphere lies in her relativity.[29] Between beings so radically different, no true reciprocal relation can exist. Precisely in this incommensurability lies the joke. And with woman the joke was born into the world. It is to be understood, however, that man must know how to stick to his role of being absolute; for else nothing is seen — that is to say, something exceedingly common is seen, viz., that man and woman fit each other, he as a half man and she as a half man.

The joke is not an æsthetic, but an abortive ethical, category. Its effect on thought is about the same as the impression we receive if a man were

solemnly to begin making a speech, recite a comma or two with his pronouncement, then say “hm!”— “dash” — and then stop. Thus with woman. One tries to cover her with the ethical category, one thinks of human nature, one opens one’s eyes, one fastens one’s glances on the most excellent maiden in question, an effort is made to redeem the claims of the ethical demand; and then one grows ill at ease and says to one’s self: ah, this is undoubtedly a joke! The joke lies, indeed, in applying that category to her and measuring her by it, because it would be idle to expect serious results from her; but just that is the joke. Because if one could demand it of her it would not be a joke at all. A mighty poor joke indeed it would be, to place her under the air-pump and draw the air out of her — indeed it were a shame; but to blow her up to supernatural size and let her imagine herself to have attained all the ideality which a little maiden of sixteen imagines she has, that is the beginning of the game and, indeed, the beginning of a highly entertaining performance. No youth has half so much imaginary ideality as a young girl, but: “We shall soon be even” as says the tailor in the proverb; for her ideality is but an illusion.

If one fails to consider woman from this point of view she may cause irreparable harm; but through my conception of her she becomes harmless and amusing. For a man there is nothing more shocking than to catch himself twaddling. It destroys all true ideality; for one may repent of having been a rascal, and one may feel sorry for not having meant a word of what one said; but to have talked nonsense, sheer nonsense, to have meant all one said and behold! it was all nonsense — that is too disgusting for repentance incarnate to put up with. But this is not the case with woman. She has a prescriptive right to transfigure herself — in less than 24 hours — in the most innocent and pardonable nonsense; for far is it from her ingenuous soul to wish to deceive one! Indeed, she meant all she said, and now she says the precise opposite, but with the same amiable frankness, for now she

is willing to stake everything on what she said last. Now in case a man in all seriousness surrenders to love he may be called fortunate indeed if he succeeds in obtaining an insurance — if, indeed, he is able to obtain it anywhere; for so inflammable a material as woman is most likely to arouse the suspicions of an insurance agent. Just consider for a moment what he has done in thus identifying himself with her! If, some fine New Year's night she goes off like some fireworks he will promptly follow suit; and even if this should not happen he will have many a close call. And what may he not lose! He may lose his all; for there is but one absolute antithesis to the absolute, and that is nonsense. Therefore, let him not seek refuge in some society for morally tainted individuals, for he is not morally tainted — far from it; only, he has been reduced *in absurdum* and beatified in nonsense; that is, has been made a fool of.

This will never happen among men. If a man should sputter off in this fashion I would scorn him. If he should fool me by his cleverness I need but apply the ethical category to him, and the danger is trifling. If things go too far I shall put a bullet through his brain; but to challenge a woman — what is that, if you please? Who does not see that it is a joke, just as when Xerxes had the sea whipped? When Othello murders Desdemona, granting she really had been guilty, he has gained nothing, for he has been duped, and a dupe he remains; for even by his murdering her he only makes a concession with regard to a consequence which originally made him ridiculous; whereas Elvira[30] may be an altogether pathetic figure when arming herself with a dagger to obtain revenge. The fact that Shakespeare has conceived Othello as a tragic figure (even disregarding the calamity that Desdemona is innocent) is to be explained and, indeed, to perfect satisfaction, by the hero being a colored person. For a colored person, dear fellow-banqueters, who cannot be assumed to represent spiritual qualities — a colored person, I say, who therefore becomes green in his face when his ire is aroused (which is a

physiological fact), a colored man may, indeed, become tragic if he is deceived by a woman; just as a woman has all the pathos of tragedy on her side when she is betrayed by a man. A man who flies into a rage may perhaps become tragic; but a man of whom one may expect a developed mentality, he will either not become jealous, or he will become ridiculous if he does; and most of all when he comes running with a dagger in his hand.

A pity that Shakespeare has not presented us with a comedy of this description in which the claim raised by a woman's infidelity is turned down by irony; for not every one who is able to see the comical element in this situation is able also to develop the thought and give it dramatic embodiment. Let one but imagine Socrates surprising Xanthippe in the act — for it would be un-Socratic even to think of Socrates being particularly concerned about his wife's fidelity, or still worse, spying on her — imagine it, and I believe that the fine smile which transformed the ugliest man in Athens into the handsomest, would for the first time have turned into a roar of laughter. It is incomprehensible why Aristophanes, who so frequently made Socrates the butt of his ridicule, neglected to have him run on the stage shouting: "Where is she, where is she, so that I may kill her, i.e., my unfaithful Xanthippe." For really it does not matter greatly whether or no Socrates was made a cuckold, and all that Xanthippe may do in this regard is wasted labor, like snapping one's fingers in one's pocket; for Socrates remains the same intellectual hero, even with a horn on his forehead. But if he had in fact become jealous and had wanted to kill Xanthippe — alas! then would Xanthippe have exerted a power over him such as the entire Greek nation and his sentence of death could not — to make him ridiculous.

A cuckold is comical, then, with respect to his wife; but he may be regarded as becoming tragical with respect to other men. In this fact we may find an explanation of the Spanish conception of honor. But the tragic element resides chiefly in his not being able to obtain redress, and the

anguish of his suffering consists really in its being devoid of meaning — which is terrible enough. To shoot the woman, to challenge her, to despise her, all this would only serve to render the poor man still more ridiculous; for woman is the weaker sex. This consideration enters in everywhere and confuses all. If she performs a great deed she is admired more than man, because it is more than was expected of her. If she is betrayed, all the pathos is on her side; but if a man is deceived one has scant sympathy and little patience while he is present — and laughs at him when his back is turned.

Look you, therefore is it advisable betimes to consider woman as a joke. The entertainment she affords is simply incomparable. Let one consider her a fixed quantity, and one's self a relative one; let one by no means contradict her, for that would simply be helping her; let one never doubt what she says but, rather, believe her every word; let one gallivant about her, with eyes rendered unsteady by unspeakable admiration and blissful intoxication, and with the mincing steps of a worshipper; let one languishingly fall on one's knees, then lift up one's eyes up to her languishingly and heave a breath again; let one do all she bids one, like an obedient slave. And now comes the cream of the joke. We need no proof that woman can speak, i.e., use words. Unfortunately, however, she does not possess sufficient reflection for making sure against her in the long run — which is, at most, eight days — contradicting herself; unless indeed man, by contradicting her, exerts a regulative influence. So the consequence is that within a short time confusion will reign supreme. If one had not done what she told one to, the confusion would pass unnoticed; for she forgets again as quickly as she talks. But since her admirer has done all, and has been at her beck and call in every instance, the confusion is only too glaring.

The more gifted the woman, the more amusing the situation. For the more gifted she is, the more imagination she will possess. Now, the more imagination she possesses, the greater airs she will give herself and the

greater the confusion which is bound to become evident in the next instant. In life, such entertainment is rarely had, because this blind obedience to a woman's whims occurs but seldom. And if it does, in some languishing swain, most likely he is not qualified to see the fun. The fact is, the ideality a little maiden assumes in moments when her imagination is at work is encountered nowhere else, whether in gods or man; but it is all the more entertaining to believe her and to add fuel to the fire.

As I remarked, the fun is simply incomparable — indeed, I know it for a fact, because I have at times not been able to sleep at night with the mere thought of what new confusions I should live to see, through the agency of my sweetheart and my humble zeal to please her. Indeed, no one who gambles in a lottery will meet with more remarkable combinations than he who has a passion for this game. For this is sure, that every woman without exception possesses the same qualifications for being resolved and transfigured in nonsense with a gracefulness, a nonchalance, an assurance such as befits the weaker sex.

Being a right-minded lover one naturally discovers every possible charm in one's beloved. Now, when discovering genius in the above sense, one ought not to let it remain a mere possibility but ought, rather, to develop it into virtuosity. I do not need to be more specific, and more cannot be said in a general way, yet every one will understand me. Just as one may find entertainment in balancing a cane on one's nose, in swinging a tumbler in a circle without spilling a drop, in dancing between eggs, and in other games as amusing and profitable, likewise, and not otherwise, in living with his beloved the lover will have a source of incomparable entertainment and food for most interesting study. In matters pertaining to love let one have absolute belief, not only in her protestations of fidelity — one soon tires of that game — but in all those explosions of inviolable Romanticism by which she would probably perish if one did not contrive a safety-valve

through which the sighs and the smoke, and "the aria of Romanticism[31]" may escape and make her worshipper happy. Let one compare her admiringly to Juliet, the difference being only that no person ever as much as thought of touching a hair on her Romeo's head. With regard to intellectual matters, let one hold her capable of all and, if one has been lucky enough to find the right woman, in a trice one will have a cantankerous authoress, whilst wonderingly shading one's eyes with one's hand and duly admiring what the little black hen may yield besides.[32] It is altogether incomprehensible why Socrates did not choose this course of action instead of bickering with Xanthippe — oh, well! to be sure he wished to acquire practice, like the riding master who, even though he has the best trained horse, yet knows how to tease him in such fashion that there is good reason for breaking him in again.[33]

Let me be a little more concrete, in order to illustrate a particular and highly interesting phenomenon. A great deal has been said about feminine fidelity, but rarely with any discretion.[34] From a purely æsthetic point of view this fidelity is to be regarded as a piece of poetic fiction which steps on the stage to find her lover — a fiction which sits by the spinning wheel and waits for her lover to come; but when she has found him, or he has come, why, then æsthetics is at a loss. Her infidelity, on the other hand, as contrasted with her previous fidelity, is to be judged chiefly with regard to its ethical import, when jealousy will appear as a tragic passion. There are three possibilities, so the case is favorable for woman; for there are two cases of fidelity, as against one of infidelity. Inconceivably great is her fidelity when she is not altogether sure of her cavalier; and ever so inconceivably great is it when he repels her fidelity. The third case would be her infidelity. Now granted one has sufficient intellect and objectivity to make reflections, one will find sufficient justification, in what has been said, for my category of "the joke." Our young friend whose beginning in a

manner deceived me seemed to be on the point of entering into this matter, but backed out again, dismayed at the difficulty. And yet the explanation is not difficult, providing one really sets about it seriously, to make unrequited love and death correspond to one another, and providing one is serious enough to stick to his thought — and so much seriousness one ought to have — for the sake of the joke.

Of course this phrase of unrequited love being death originated either with a woman or a womanish male. Its origin is easily made out, seeing that it is one of those categorical outbursts which, spoken with great bravado, on the spur of the moment, may count on a great and immediate applause; for although this business is said to be a matter of life and death, yet the phrase is meant for immediate consumption — like cream-puffs. Although referring to daily experience it is by no means binding on him who is to die, but only obliges the listener to rush post-haste to the assistance of the dying lover. If a man should take to using such phrases it would not be amusing at all, for he would be too despicable to laugh at. Woman, however, possesses genius, is lovable in the measure she possesses it, and is amusing at all times. Well, then, the languishing lady dies of love — why certainly, for did she not say so herself? In this matter she is pathetic, for woman has enough courage to say what no man would have the courage to do — so then she dies! In saying so I have measured her by ethical standards. Do ye likewise, dear fellow-banqueters, and understand your Aristotle aright, now! He observes very correctly that woman cannot be used in tragedy.[35] And very certainly, her proper sphere is the pathetic and serious divertissement, the half-hour face, not the five-act drama. So then she dies. But should she for that reason not be able to love again? Why not? — that is, if it be possible to restore her to life. Now, having been restored to life, she is of course a new being — another person, that is, and begins afresh and falls in love for the first time: nothing remarkable in that! Ah, death, great is thy power; not

the most violent emetic and not the most powerful laxative could ever have the same purging effect!

The resulting confusion is capital, if one but is attentive and does not forget. A dead man is one of the most amusing characters to be met with in life. Strange that more use is not made of him on the stage, for in life he is seen, now and then. When you come to think of it, even one who has only been seemingly dead is a comical figure; but one who was really dead certainly contributes to our entertainment all one can reasonably expect of a man. All depends on whether one is attentive. I myself had my attention called to it, one day, as I was walking with one of my acquaintances. A couple passed us. I judged from the expression on his face that he knew them and asked whether that was the case. “Why, yes,” he answered, “I know them very well, and especially the lady, for she is my departed one.”— “What departed one?” I asked.— “Why, my departed first love,” he answered. “Indeed, this is a strange affair. She said: I shall die. And that very same moment she departed, naturally enough, by death — else one might have insured her beforehand in the widow’s insurance. Too late! Dead she was and dead she remained; and now I wander about, as says the poet, vainly seeking the grave of my lady-love that I may shed my tears thereon.” Thus this broken-hearted man who remained alone in the world, though it consoled him to find her pretty far along with some other man.

It is a good thing for the girls, thought I, that they don’t have to be buried, every time they die; for if parents have hitherto considered a boy-child to be the more expensive, the girls might become even more so!

A simple case of infidelity is not as amusing, by far. I mean, if a girl should fall in love with some one else and should say to her lover: “I cannot help it, save me from myself!” But to die from sorrow because she cannot endure being separated from her lover by his journey to the West Indies, to have put up with his departure, however, — and then, at his return, be not

only not dead, but attached to some one else for all time — that certainly is a strange fate for a lover to undergo. No wonder, then, that the heart-broken man at times consoled himself with the burthen of an old song which runs: "Hurrah for you and me, I say, we never shall forget that day!"

Now forgive me, dear fellow-banqueters, if I have spoken at too great length; and empty a glass to love and to woman. Beautiful she is and lovely, if she be considered æsthetically. That is undeniable. But, as has often been said, and as I shall say also: one ought not to remain standing here, but should go on.[36] Consider her, then, ethically and you will hardly have begun to do so before the humor of it will become apparent. Even Plato and Aristotle assume that woman is an imperfect form, an irrational quantity, that is, one which might some time, in a better world, be transformed into a man. In this life one must take her as she is. And what this is becomes apparent very soon; for she will not be content with the æsthetic sphere, but goes on, she wants to become emancipated, and she has the courage to say so. Let her wish be fulfilled and the amusement will be simply incomparable.

When Constantin had finished speaking he forthwith ruled Victor Eremita to begin. He spoke as follows:

VICTOR EREMITA'S SPEECH

As will be remembered, Plato offers thanks to the gods for four things. In the fourth place he is grateful for having been permitted to be a contemporary of Socrates. For the three other boons mentioned by him,[37] an earlier Greek philosopher[38] had already thanked the gods, and so I conclude that they are worthy our gratitude. But alas! — even if I wanted to express my gratitude like these Greeks I would not be able to do so for what was denied me. Let me then collect my soul in gratitude for the one good which was conferred on me also — that I was made a man and not a woman.

To be a woman is something so curious, so heterogeneous and composite that no predicate will fully express these qualities; and if I should use many predicates they would contradict one another in such fashion that only a woman would be able to tolerate the result and, what is worse, feel happy about it. The fact that she really signifies less than man — that is not her misfortune, and still less so if she got to know it, for it might be borne with fortitude. No, her misfortune consists in her life's having become devoid of fixed meaning through a romantic conception of things, by virtue of which, now she signifies all, and now, nothing at all; without ever finding out what she really does signify — and even that is not her misfortune but, rather, the fact that, being a woman, she never will be able to find out. As for myself, if I were a woman, I should prefer to be one in the Orient and as a slave; for to be a slave, neither more nor less, is at any rate something, in comparison with being, now heyday, now nothing.

Even if a woman's life did not contain such contrasts, the distinction she enjoys, and which is rightly assumed to be hers as a woman — a distinction she does not share with man — would by itself point to the meaninglessness of her life. The distinction I refer to is that of gallantry. To be gallant to

woman is becoming in men. Now gallantry consists very simply in conceiving in fantastic categories that person to whom one is gallant. To be gallant to a man is, therefore, an insult, for he begs to be excused from the application of fantastic categories to him. For the fair sex, however, gallantry signifies a tribute, a distinction, which is essentially its privilege. Ah me, if only a single cavalier were gallant to them the case would not be so serious. But far from it! At bottom every man is gallant, he is unconsciously so. This signifies, therefore, that it is life itself which has bestowed this perquisite on the fair sex. Woman on her part unconsciously accepts it. Here we have the same trouble again; for if only a single woman did so, another explanation would be necessary. This is life's characteristic irony.

Now if gallantry contained the truth it ought to be reciprocal, i.e., gallantry would be the accepted quotation for the stated difference between beauty on the one hand, and power, astuteness, and strength, on the other. But this is not the case, gallantry is essentially woman's due; and the fact that she unconsciously accepts it may be explained through the solicitude of nature for the weak and those treated in a step-motherly fashion by her, who feel more than recompensed by an illusion. But precisely this illusion is her misfortune. It is not seldom the case that nature comes to the assistance of an afflicted creature by consoling him with the notion that he is the most beautiful. If that is so, why, then we may say that nature made good the deficiency since now the creature is endowed with even more than could be reasonably demanded. But to be beautiful only in one's imagination, and not to be overcome, indeed, by sadness, but to be fooled into an illusion — why, that is still worse mockery. Now, as to being afflicted, woman certainly is far from having been treated in a step-motherly fashion by nature; still she is so in another sense inasmuch as she never can free herself from the illusion with which life has consoled her.

Gathering together one's impressions of a woman's existence, in order to point out its essential features, one is struck by the fact that every woman's life gives one an entirely fantastic impression. In a far more decisive sense than man she may be said to have turning points in her career; for her turning points turn everything upside down. In one of Tieck's[39] Romantic dramas there occurs a person who, having once been king of Mesopotamia, now is a green-grocer in Copenhagen. Exactly as fantastic is every feminine existence. If the girl's name is Juliana, her life is as follows: erstwhile empress in the wide domains of love, and titular queen of all the exaggerations of tomfoolery; now, Mrs. Peterson, corner Bath Street.

When a child, a girl is less highly esteemed than a boy. When a little older, one does not know exactly what to make of her. At last she enters that decisive period in which she holds absolute sway. Worshipfully man approaches her as a suitor. Worshipfully, for so does every suitor, it is not the scheme of a crafty deceiver. Even the executioner, when laying down his *fasces* to go a-wooing, even he bends his knee, although he is willing to offer himself up, within a short time, to domestic executions which he finds so natural that he is far from seeking any excuse for them in the fact that public executions have grown so few. The cultured person behaves in the very same manner. He kneels, he worships, he conceives his lady-love in the most fantastic categories; and then he very quickly forgets his kneeling position — in fact, he knew, full well the while he knelt that it was fantastic to do so.

If I were a woman I would prefer to be sold by my father to the highest bidder, as is the custom in the Orient; for there is at least some sense in such a deal. What misfortune to have been born a woman! Yet her misfortune really consists in her not being able to comprehend it, being a woman. If she does complain, she complains rather about her Oriental, than her Occidental, status. But if I were a woman I would first of all refuse to be

wooed, and resign myself to belong to the weaker sex, if such is the case, and be careful — which is most important if one is proud — of not going beyond the truth. However, that is of but little concern to her. Juliana is in the seventh heaven, and Mrs. Peterson submits to her fate.

Let me, then, thank the gods that I was born a man and not a woman. And still, how much do I forego! For is not all poetry, from the drinking song to the tragedy, a deification of woman? All the worse for her and for him who admires her; for if he does not look out he will, all of a sudden, have to pull a long face. The beautiful, the excellent, all of man's achievement, owes its origin to woman, for she inspires him. Woman is, indeed, the inspiring element in life. How many a love-lorn shepherd has played on this theme, and how many a shepherdess has listened to it! Verily, my soul is without envy and feels only gratitude to the gods; for I would rather be a man, though in humble station, but really so, than be a woman and an indeterminate quantity, rendered happy by a delusion — I would rather be a concrete thing, with a small but definite meaning, than an abstraction which is to mean all.

As I have said, it is through woman that ideality is born into the world and — what were man without her! There is many a man who has become a genius through a woman, many a one a hero, many a one a poet, many a one even a saint; but he did not become a genius through the woman he married, for through her he only became a privy councillor; he did not become a hero through the woman he married, for through her he only became a general; he did not become a poet through the woman he married, for through her he only became a father; he did not become a saint through the woman he married, for he did not marry, and would have married but one — the one whom he did not marry; just as the others became a genius, became a hero, became a poet through the help of the woman they did not marry. If woman's ideality were in itself inspiring, why, then the inspiring

woman would be the one to whom a man is united for life. But life tells a different story. It is only by a negative relation to her that man is rendered productive in his ideal endeavors. In this sense she is inspiring; but to say that she is inspiring, without qualifying one's statement, is to be guilty of a paralogism[40] which one must be a woman to overlook. Or has any one ever heard of any man having become a poet through his wife? So long as man does not possess her she inspires him. It is this truth which gives rise to the illusions entertained in poetry and by women. The fact that he does not possess her signifies, either, that he is still fighting for her — thus has woman inspired many a one and rendered him a knight; but has any one ever heard of any man having been rendered a knight valiant through his wife? Or, the fact that he does not possess her signifies that he cannot obtain her by any manner of means — thus has woman inspired many a one and roused his ideality; that is, if there is anything in him worth while. But a wife, who has things ever so much worth while for her husband, will hardly arouse any ideal strivings in him. Or, again, the fact that he does not possess her signifies that he is pursuing an ideal. Perchance he loves many, but loving many is also a kind of unrequited love; and yet the ideality of his soul is to be seen in this striving and yearning, and not in the small bits of lovableness which make up the sum total of the contributions of all those he loves.

The highest ideality a woman can arouse in a man consists, in fact, in the awakening within him of the consciousness of immortality. The point of this proof lies in what one might call the necessity of a reply. Just as one may remark about some play that it cannot end without this or that person getting in his say, likewise (says ideality) our existence cannot be all over with death: I demand a reply! This proof is frequently furnished, in a positive fashion, in the public advertiser. I hold that to be entirely proper, for if proof is to be made in the public advertiser it must be made in a

positive fashion. Thus: Mrs. Petersen, we learn, has lived a number of years, until in the night of the 24th it pleased Providence, etc. . This produces in Mr. Petersen an attack of reminiscences from his courting days or, to express it quite plainly, nothing but seeing her again will ever console him. For this blissful meeting he prepares himself, in the meanwhile, by taking unto himself another wife; for, to be sure, this marriage is by no means as poetic as the first — still it is a good imitation. This is the proof positive. Mr. Petersen is not satisfied with demanding a reply, no, he wants a meeting again in the hereafter.

As is well known, a base metal will often show the gleam of precious metal. This is the brief silver-gleam. With respect to the base metal this is a tragic moment, for it must once for all resign itself to being a base metal. Not so with Mr. Petersen. The possession of ideality is by rights inherent in every person — and now, if I laugh at Mr. Petersen it is not because he, being in reality of base metal, had but a single silver-gleam; but, rather, because just this silver-gleam betrays his having become a base metal. Thus does the philistine look most ridiculous when, arrayed in ideality, he affords fitting occasion to say, with Holberg: "What! does that cow wear a fine dress, too?[41]"

The case is this: whenever a woman arouses ideality in man, and thereby the consciousness of immortality, she always does so negatively. He who really became a genius, a hero, a poet, a saint through woman, he has by that very fact seized on the essence of immortality. Now if the inspiring element were positively present in woman, why, then a man's wife, and only his wife, ought to awaken in him the consciousness of immortality. But the reverse holds true. That is, if she is really to awaken ideality in her husband she must die. Mr. Petersen, to be sure, is not affected, for all that. But if woman, by her death, does awaken man's ideality, then is she indeed the cause of all the great things poetry attributes to her; but note well: that

which she did in a positive fashion for him in no wise roused his ideality. In fact, her significance in this regard becomes the more doubtful the longer she lives, because she will at length really begin to wish to signify something positive. However, the more positive the proof the less it proves; for then Mr. Petersen's longing will be for some past common experiences whose content was, to all intents and purposes, exhausted when they were had. Most positive of all the proof becomes if the object of his longing concerns their marital spooning — that time when they visited the Deer Park together! In the same way one might suddenly feel a longing for the old pair of slippers one used to be so comfortable in; but that proof is not exactly a proof for the immortality of the soul. On the other hand, the more negative the proof, the better it is; for the negative is higher than the positive, inasmuch as it concerns our immortality, and is thus the only positive value.

Woman's main significance lies in her negative contribution, whereas her positive contributions are as nothing in comparison but, on the contrary, pernicious. It is this truth which life keeps from her, consoling her with an illusion which surpasses all that might arise in any man's brain, and with parental care ordering life in such fashion that both language and everything else confirm her in her illusion. For even if she be conceived as the very opposite of inspiring, and rather as the well-spring of all corruption; whether now we imagine that with her, sin came into the world, or that it is her infidelity which ruined all — our conception of her is always gallant. That is, when hearing such opinions one might readily assume that woman were really able to become infinitely more culpable than man, which would, indeed, amount to an immense acknowledgment of her powers. Alas, alas! the case is entirely different. There is a secret reading of this text which woman cannot comprehend; for, the very next moment, all life owns to the same conception as the state, which makes man responsible for his wife.

One condemns her as man never is condemned (for only a real sentence is passed on him, and there the matter ends), not with her receiving a milder sentence; for in that case not all of her life would be an illusion, but with the case against her being dismissed and the public, i.e., life, having to defray the costs. One moment, woman is supposed to be possessed of all possible wiles, the next moment, one laughs at him whom she deceived, which surely is a contradiction. Even such a case as that of Potiphar's wife does not preclude the possibility of her having really been seduced. Thus has woman an enormous possibility, such as no man has — an enormous possibility; but her reality is in proportion. And most terrible of all is the magic of illusion in which she feels herself happy.

Let Plato then thank the gods for having been born a contemporary of Socrates: I envy him; let him offer thanks for being a Greek: I envy him; but when he is grateful for having been born a man and not a woman I join him with all my heart. If I had been born a woman and could under stand what now I can understand — it were terrible! But if I had been born a woman and therefore could not understand it — that were still more terrible!

But if the case is as I stated it, then it follows that one had better refrain from any positive relation with woman. Wherever she is concerned one has to reckon with that inevitable hiatus which renders her happy as she does not detect the illusion, but which would be a man's undoing if he detected it.

I thank the gods, then, that I was born a man and not a woman; and I thank them, furthermore, that no woman by some life-long attachment holds me in duty bound to be constantly reflecting that it ought not to have been.

Indeed, what a passing strange device is marriage! And what makes it all the stranger is the suggestion that it is to be a step taken without thought. And yet no step is more decisive, for nothing in life is as inexorable and masterful as the marriage tie. And now so important a step as marriage

ought, so we are told, to be taken without reflection! Yet marriage is not something simple but something immensely complex and indeterminate. Just as the meat of the turtle smacks of all kinds of meat, so likewise does marriage have a taste of all manner of things; and just as the turtle is a sluggish animal, likewise is marriage a sluggish thing. Falling in love is, at least, a simple thing, but marriage — ! Is it something heathen or something Christian, something spiritual or something profane, or something civil, or something of all things? Is it an expression of an inexplicable love, the elective affinity of souls in delicate accord with one another; or is it a duty, or a partnership, or a mere convenience, or the custom of certain countries — or is it a duty, or a partnership, or a mere convenience, or the custom of certain countries — or is it a little of all these? Is one to order the music for it from the town musician or the organist, or is one to have a little from both? Is it the minister or the police sergeant who is to make the speech and enroll the names in the book of life — or in the town register? Does marriage blow a tune on a comb, or does it listen to the whisperings "like to those of the fairies from the grottoes of a summer night"?[42]

And now every Darby imagines he performed such a potpourri, such incomparably complex music, in getting married — and imagines that he is still performing it while living a married life! My dear fellow-banqueters, ought we not, in default of a wedding present and congratulations, give each of the conjugal partners a demerit for repeated inattentiveness? It is taxing enough to express a single idea in one's life; but to think something so complicated as marriage and, consequently, bring it under one head; to think something so complicated and yet to do justice to each and every element in it, and have everything present at the same time — verily, he is a great man who can accomplish all this! And still every Benedict accomplishes it — so he does, no doubt; for does he not say that he does it unconsciously? But if this is to be done unconsciously it must be through

some higher form of unconsciousness permeating all one's reflective powers. But not a word is said about this! And to ask any married man about it means just wasting one's time.

He who has once committed a piece of folly will constantly be pursued by its consequences. In the case of marriage the folly consists in one's having gotten into a mess, and the punishment, in recognizing, when it is too late, what one has done. So you will find that the married man, now, becomes chesty, with a bit of pathos, thinking he has done something remarkable in having entered wedlock; now, puts his tail between his legs in dejection; then again, praises marriage in sheer self-defense. But as to a thought-unit which might serve to hold together the *disjecta membra*[43] of the most heterogeneous conceptions of life contained in marriage — for that we shall wait in vain.

Therefore, to be a mere Benedict is humbug, and to be a seducer is humbug, and to wish to experiment with woman for the sake of "the joke" is also humbug. In fact, the two last mentioned methods will be seen to involve concessions to woman on the part of man quite as large as those found in marriage. The seducer wishes to rise in his own estimation by deceiving her; but this very fact that he deceives and wishes to deceive — that he cares to deceive, is also a demonstration of his dependence on woman. And the same holds true of him who wishes to experiment with her.

If I were to imagine any possible relation with woman it would be one so saturated with reflection that it would, for that very reason, no longer be any relation with her at all. To be an excellent husband and yet on the sly seduce every girl; to seem a seducer and yet harbor within one all the ardor of romanticism — there would be something to that, for the concession in the first instance were then annihilated in the second. Certain it is that man finds his true ideality only in such a reduplication. All merely unconscious existence must be obliterated, and its obliteration ever cunningly guarded

by some sham expression. Such a reduplication is incomprehensible to woman, for it removes from her the possibility of expressing man's true nature in one term. If it were, possible for woman to exist in such a reduplication, no erotic relation with her were thinkable. But, her nature being such as we all know it to be, any disturbance of the erotic relation is brought about by man's true nature which ever consists precisely in the annihilation of that in which she has her being.

Am I then preaching the monastic life and rightly called Eremita? By no means. You may as well eliminate the cloister, for after all it is only a direct expression of spirituality and as such but a vain endeavor to express it in direct terms. It makes small difference whether you use gold, or silver, or paper money; but he who does not spend a farthing but is counterfeit, he will comprehend me. He to whom every direct expression is but a fraud, he and he only, is safeguarded better than if he lived in a cloister-cell — he will be a hermit even if he travelled in an omnibus day and night.

Scarcely had Victor finished when the Dressmaker jumped to his feet and threw over a bottle of wine standing before him; then he spoke as follows:

THE DRESSMAKER'S SPEECH

WELL SPOKEN, DEAR fellow-banqueters, well spoken! The longer I hear you speak the more I grow convinced that you are fellow-conspirators — I greet you as such, I understand you as such; for fellow-conspirators one can make out from afar. And yet, what know you? What does your bit of theory to which you wish to give the appearance of experience, your bit of experience which you make over into a theory — what does it amount to? For every now and then you believe her a moment and — are caught in a moment! No, I know woman — from her weak side, that is to say, I know her. I shrink from no means to make sure about what I have learned; for I am a madman, and a madman one must be to understand her, and if one has not been one before, one will become a madman, once one understands her. The robber has his hiding place by the noisy high-road, and the ant-lion his funnel in the loose sand, and the pirate his haunts by the roaring sea: likewise have I may fashion-shop in the very midst of the teeming streets, seductive, irresistible to woman as is the Venusberg to men. There, in a fashion-shop, one learns to know woman, in a practical way and without any theoretical ado.

Now, if fashion meant nothing than that woman in the heat of her desire threw off all her clothing — why, then it would stand for something. But this is not the case, fashion is not plain sensuality, not tolerated debauchery, but an illicit trade in indecency authorized as proper. And, just as in heathen Prussia the marriageable girl wore a bell whose ringing served as a signal to the men, likewise is a woman's existence in fashion a continual bell-ringing, not for debauchees but for lickerish voluptuaries. People hold Fortune to be a woman — ah, yes it is, to be sure, fickle; still, it is fickle in something, as it may also give much; and insofar it is not a woman. No; but

fashion is a woman, for fashion is fickleness in nonsense, and is consistent only in its becoming ever more crazy.

One hour in my shop is worth more than days and years without, if it really be one's desire to learn to know woman; in my shop, for it is the only one in the capital, there is no thought of competition. Who, forsooth, would dare to enter into competition with one who has entirely devoted himself, and is still devoting himself, as high-priest in this idol worship? No, there is not a distinguished assemblage which does not mention my name first and last; and there is not a middle-class gathering where my name, whenever mentioned, does not inspire sacred awe, like that of the king; and there is no dress so idiotic but is accompanied by whispers of admiration when its owner proceeds down the hall — provided it bears my name; and there is not the lady of gentle birth who dares pass my shop by, nor the girl of humble origin but passes it sighing and thinking: if only I could afford it! Well, neither was she deceived. I deceive no one; I furnish the finest goods and the most costly, and at the lowest price, indeed, I sell below cost. The fact is, I do not wish to make a profit. On the contrary, every year I sacrifice large sums. And yet do I mean to win, I mean to, I shall spend my last farthing in order to corrupt, in order to bribe, the tools of fashion so that I may win the game. To me it is a delight beyond compare to unroll the most precious stuffs, to cut them out, to clip pieces from genuine Brussels-lace, in order to make a fool's costume — I sell to the lowest prices, genuine goods and in style.

You believe, perhaps, that woman wants to be dressed fashionably only at certain times? No such thing, she wants to be so all the time and that is her only thought. For a woman does have a mind, only it is employed about as well as is the Prodigal Son's substance; and woman does possess the power of reflection in an incredibly high degree, for there is nothing so holy but she will in no time discover it to be reconcilable with her finery — and

the chiefest expression of finery is fashion. What wonder if she does discover it to be reconcilable; for is not fashion holy to her? And there is nothing so insignificant but she certainly will know how to make it count in her finery — and the most fatuous expression of finery is fashion. And there is nothing, nothing in all her attire, not the least ribbon, of whose relation to fashion she has not a definite conception and concerning which she is not immediately aware whether the lady who just passed by noticed it; because, for whose benefit does she dress, if not for other ladies!

Even in my shop where she comes to be fitted out *à la mode*, even there she is in fashion. Just as there is a special bathing costume and a special riding habit, likewise there is a particular kind of dress which it is the fashion to wear to the dressmaker's shop. That costume is not *insouciant* in the same sense as is the negligée a lady is pleased to be surprised in, earlier in the forenoon, where the point is her belonging to the fair sex and the coquetry lies in her letting herself be surprised. The dressmaker costume, on the other hand, is calculated to be nonchalant and a bit careless without her being embarrassed thereby; because a dressmaker stands in a different relation to her from a cavalier. The coquetry here consists in thus showing herself to a man who, by reason of his station, does not presume to ask for the lady's womanly recognition, but must be content with the perquisites which fall abundantly to his share, without her ever thinking of it; or without it even so much as entering her mind to play the lady before a dressmaker. The point is, therefore, that her being of the opposite sex is, in a certain sense, left out of consideration, and her coquetry invalidated, by the superciliousness of the noble lady who would smile if any one alluded to any relation existing between her and her dressmaker. When visited in her negligée she conceals herself, thus displaying her charms by this very concealment. In my shop she exposes her charms with the utmost nonchalance, for he is only a dressmaker — and she is a woman. Now, her

shawl slips down and bares some part of her body, and if I did not know what that means, and what she expects, my reputation would be gone to the winds. Now, she draws herself up, *a priori* fashion, now she gesticulates *a posteriori*; now, she sways to and fro in her hips; now, she looks at herself in the mirror and sees my admiring phiz behind her in the glass; now, she minces her words; now, she trips along with short steps; now, she hovers; now, she draws her foot after her in a slovenly fashion; now, she lets herself sink softly into an arm-chair, whilst I with humble demeanor offer her a flask of smelling salts and with my adoration assuage her agitation; now, she strikes after me playfully; now, she drops her handkerchief and, without as much as a single motion, lets her relaxed arm remain in its pendent position, whilst I bend down low to pick it up and return it to her, receiving a little patronizing nod as a reward. These are the ways of a lady of fashion when in my shop. Whether Diogenes[44] made any impression on the woman who was praying in a somewhat unbecoming posture, when he asked her whether she did not believe the gods could see her from behind — that I do not know; but this I do know, that if I should say to her ladyship kneeling down in church: “The folds of your gown do not fall according to fashion,” she would be more alarmed than if she had given offense to the gods. Woe to the outcast, the male Cinderella, who has not comprehended this! *Pro dii immortales*,[45] what, pray, is a woman who is not in fashion; *per deos obsecro*,[46] and what when she is in fashion!

Whether all this is true? Well, make trial of it: let the swain, when his beloved one sinks rapturously on his breast, whispering unintelligibly: “thine forever,” and hides her head on his bosom — let him but say to, her: “My sweet Kitty, your coiffure is not at all in fashion.” — Possibly, men don’t give thought to this; but he who knows it, and has the reputation of knowing it, he is the most dangerous man in the kingdom. What blissful hours the lover passes with his sweetheart before marriage I do not know;

but of the blissful hours she spends in my shop he hasn't the slightest inkling, either. Without my special license and sanction a marriage is null and void, anyway — or else an entirely plebeian affair. Let it be the very moment when they are to meet before the altar, let her step forward with the very best conscience in the world that everything was bought in my shop and tried on there — and now, if I were to rush up and exclaim: "But mercy! gracious lady, your myrtle wreath is all awry" — why, the whole ceremony might be postponed, for aught I know. But men do not suspect these things, one must be a dressmaker to know.

So immense is the power of reflection needed to fathom a woman's thought that only a man who dedicates himself wholly to the task will succeed, and even then only if gifted to start with. Happy therefore the man who does not associate with any woman, for she is not his, anyway, even if she be no other man's; for she is possessed by that phantom born of the unnatural intercourse of woman's reflection with itself, fashion. Do you see, for this reason should woman always swear by fashion — then were there some force in her oath; for after all, fashion is the thing she is always thinking of, the only thing she can think together with, and into, everything. For instance, the glad message has gone forth from my shop to all fashionable ladies that fashion decrees the use of a particular kind of head-dress to be worn in church, and that this head-dress, again, must be somewhat different for High Mass and for the afternoon service. Now when the bells are ringing the carriage stops in front of my door. Her ladyship descends (for also this has been decreed, that no one can adjust that head-dress save I, the fashion-dealer), I rush out, making low bows, and lead her into my cabinet. And whilst she languishingly reposes I put everything in order. Now she is ready and has looked at herself in the mirror; quick as any messenger of the gods I hasten in advance, open the door of my cabinet with a bow, then hasten to the door of my shop and lay my arm on my

breast, like some oriental slave; but, encouraged by a gracious courtesy, I even dare to throw her an adoring and admiring kiss — now she is seated in her carriage — oh dear! she left her hymn book behind. I hasten out again and hand it to her through the carriage window, I permit myself once more to remind her to hold her head a trifle more to the right, and herself to arrange things, should her head-dress become a bit disordered when descending. She drives away and is edified.

You believe, perhaps, that it is only great ladies who worship fashion, but far from it! Look at my sempstresses for whose dress I spare no expense, so that the dogmas of fashion may be proclaimed most emphatically from my shop. They form a chorus of half-witted creatures, and I myself lead them on as high-priest, as a shining example, squandering all, solely in order to make all womankind ridiculous. For when a seducer makes the boast that every woman's virtue has its price, I do not believe him; but I do believe that every woman at an early time will be crazed by the maddening and defiling introspection taught her by fashion, which will corrupt her more thoroughly than being seduced. I have made trial more than once. If not able to corrupt her myself I set on her a few of fashion's slaves of her own station; for just as one may train rats to bite rats, likewise is the crazed woman's sting like that of the tarantula. And most especially dangerous is it when some man lends his help.

Whether I serve the Devil or God I do not know; but I am right, I shall be right, I will be, so long as I possess a single farthing, I will be until the blood spurts out of my fingers. The physiologist pictures the shape of woman to show the dreadful effects of wearing a corset, and beside it he draws a picture of her normal figure. That is all entirely correct, but only one of the drawings has the validity of truth: they all wear corsets. Describe, therefore, the miserable, stunted perversity of the fashion-mad woman, describe the insidious introspection devouring her, and then describe the

womanly modesty which least of all knows about itself — do so and you have judged woman, have in very truth passed terrible sentence on her. If ever I discover such a girl who is contented and demure and not yet corrupted by indecent intercourse with women — she shall fall nevertheless. I shall catch her in my toils, already she stands at the sacrificial altar, that is to say, in my shop. With the most scornful glance a haughty nonchalance can assume I measure her appearance, she perishes with fright; a peal of laughter from the adjoining room where sit my trained accomplices annihilates her. And afterwards, when I have gotten her rigged up *à la mode* and she looks crazier than a lunatic, as crazy as one who would not be accepted even in a lunatic asylum, then she leaves me in a state of bliss — no man, not even a god, were able to inspire fear in her; for is she not dressed in fashion?

Do you comprehend me now, do you comprehend why I call you fellow-conspirators, even though in a distant way? Do you now comprehend my conception of woman? Everything in life is a matter of fashion, the fear of God is a matter of fashion, and so are love, and crinolines, and a ring through the nose. To the utmost of my ability will I therefore come to the support of the exalted genius who wishes to laugh at the most ridiculous of all animals. If woman has reduced everything to a matter of fashion, then will I, with the help of fashion, prostitute her, as she deserves to be; I have no peace, I the dressmaker, my soul rages when I think of my task — she will yet be made to wear a ring through her nose. Seek therefore no sweetheart, abandon love as you would the most dangerous neighborhood; for the one whom you love would also be made to go with a ring through her nose.

Thereupon John, called the Seducer, spoke as follows:

THE SPEECH OF JOHN THE SEDUCER

MY DEAR BOON companions, is Satan plaguing you? For, indeed, you speak like so many hired mourners, your eyes are red with tears and not with wine. You almost move me to tears also, for an unhappy lover does have a miserable time of it in life. *Hinc illae lacrimae.*[47] I, however, am a happy lover, and my only wish is to remain so. Very possibly, that is one of the concessions to woman which Victor is so afraid of. Why not? Let it be a concession! Loosening the lead foil of this bottle of champagne also is a concession; letting its foaming contents flow into my glass also is a concession; and so is raising it to my lips — now I drain it — *concedo.*[48] Now, however, it is empty, hence I need no more concessions. Just the same with girls. If some unhappy lover has bought his kiss too dearly, this proves to me only that he does not know, either how to take what is coming to him or how to do it. I never pay too much for this sort of thing — that is a matter for the girls to decide. What this signifies? To me it signifies the most beautiful, the most delicious, and well-nigh the most persuasive, *argumentum ad hominem*; but since every woman, at least once in her life, possesses this argumentative freshness I do not see any reason why I should not let myself be persuaded. Our young friend wishes to make this experience in his thought. Why not buy a cream puff and be content with looking at it? I mean to enjoy. No mere talk for me! Just as an old song has it about a kiss: *es ist kaum zu sehn, es ist nur für Lippen, die genau sich verstehn*[49] — understand each other so exactly that any reflection about the matter is but an impertinence and a folly. He who is twenty and does not grasp the existence of the categorical imperative "enjoy thyself" — he is a fool; and he who does not seize the opportunity is and remains a Christianfelder.[50]

However, you all are unhappy lovers, and that is why you are not satisfied with woman as she is. The gods forbid! As she is she pleases me, just as she is. Even Constantin's category of "the joke" seems to contain a secret desire. I, on the other hand, I am gallant. And why not? Gallantry costs nothing and gives one all and is the condition for all erotic pleasure. Gallantly is the Masonic language of the senses and of voluptuousness, between man and woman. It is a natural language, as love's language in general is. It consists not of sounds but of desires disguised and of ever changing wishes. That an unhappy lover may be ungallant enough to wish to convert his deficit into a draught payable in immortality — that I understand well enough. That is to say, I for my part do not understand it; for to me a woman has sufficient intrinsic value. I assure every woman of this, it is the truth; and at the same time it is certain that I am the only one who is not deceived by this truth. As to whether a despoiled woman is worth less than man — about that I find no information in my price list. I do not pick flowers already broken, I leave them to the married men to use for Shrove-tide decoration. Whether e. g. Edward wishes to consider the matter again, and again fall in love with Cordelia,[51] or simply repeat the affair in his reflection — that is his own business. Why should I concern myself with other peoples' affairs! I explained to her at an earlier time what I thought of her; and, in truth, she convinced me, convinced me to my absolute satisfaction, that my gallantry was well applied.

Concedo. Concessi.[52] If I should meet with another Cordelia, why then I shall enact a comedy "Ring number 2.[53]" But you are unhappy lovers and have conspired together, and are worse deceived than the girls, notwithstanding that you are richly endowed by nature. But decision — the decision of desire, is the most essential thing in life. Our young friend will always remain an onlooker. Victor is an unpractical enthusiast. Constantin has acquired his good sense at too great a cost; and the fashion dealer is a

madman. Stuff and nonsense! With all four of you busy about one girl, nothing would come of it.

Let one have enthusiasm enough to idealize, taste enough to join in the clinking of glasses at the festive board of enjoyment, sense enough to break off — to break off absolutely, as does Death, madness enough to wish to enjoy all over again — if you have all that you will be the favorite of gods and girls.

But of what avail to speak here? I do not intend to make proselytes. Neither is this the place for that. To be sure I love wine, to be sure I love the abundance of a banquet — all that is good; but let a girl be my company, and then I shall be eloquent. Let then Constantin have my thanks for the banquet, and the wine, and the excellent appointments — the speeches, however, were but indifferent. But in order that things shall have a better ending I shall now pronounce a eulogy on woman.

Just as he who is to speak in praise of the divinity must be inspired by the divinity to speak worthily, and must therefore be taught by the divinity as to what he shall say, likewise he who would speak of women. For woman, even less than the divinity, is a mere figment of man's brain, a day-dream, or a notion that occurs to one and which one may argue about pro et contra. Nay, one learns from woman alone what to say of her. And the more teachers one has had, the better. The first time one is a disciple, the next time one is already over the chief difficulties, just as one learns in formal and learned disputations how to use the last opponent's compliments against a new opponent. Nevertheless nothing is lost. For as little as a kiss is a mere sample of good things, and as little as an embrace is an exertion, just as little is this experience exhaustive. In fact it is essentially different from the mathematical proof of a theorem, which remains ever the same, even though other letters be substituted. This method is one befitting mathematics and ghosts, but not love and women, because each is a new

proof, corroborating the truth of the theorem in a different manner. It is my joy that, far from being less perfect than man, the female sex is, on the contrary, the more perfect. I shall, however, clothe my speech in a myth; and I shall exult, on woman's account whom you have so unjustly maligned, if my speech pronounce judgment on your souls, if the enjoyment of her beckon you only to flee you, as did the fruits from Tantalus; because you have fled, and thereby insulted, woman. Only thus, forsooth, may she be insulted, even though she scorn it, and though punishment instantly falls on him who had the audacity. I, however, insult no one. That is but the notion of married men, and a slander; whereas, in reality, I respect her more highly than does the man she is married to.

Originally there was but one sex, so the Greeks relate, and that was man's. Splendidly endowed he was, so he did honor to the gods — so splendidly endowed that the same happened to them as sometimes happens to a poet who has expended all his energy on a poetic invention: they grew jealous of man. Ay, what is worse, they feared that he would not willingly bow under their yoke; they feared, though with small reason, that he might cause their very heaven to totter. Thus they had raised up a power they scarcely held themselves able to curb. Then there was anxiety and alarm in the council of the gods. Much had they lavished in their generosity on the creation of man; but all must be risked now, for reason of bitter necessity; for all was at stake — so the gods believed — and recalled he could not be, as a poet may recall his invention. And by force he could not be subdued, or else the gods themselves could have done so; but precisely of that they despaired. He would have to be caught and subdued, then, by a power weaker than his own and yet stronger — one strong enough to compel him. What a marvelous power this would have to be! However, necessity teaches even the gods to surpass themselves in inventiveness. They sought and they found. That power was woman, the marvel of creation, even in the eyes of

the gods a greater marvel than man — a discovery which the gods in their naïveté could not help but applaud themselves for. What more can be said in her praise than that she was able to accomplish what even the gods did not believe themselves able to do; and what more can be said in her praise than that she did accomplish it! But how marvelous a creation must be hers to have accomplished it.

It was a ruse of the gods. Cunningly the enchantress was fashioned, for no sooner had she bewitched man than she changed and caught him in all the circumstantialities of existence. It was that the gods had desired. But what, pray, can be more delicious, or more entrancing and bewitching, than what the gods themselves contrived, when battling for their supremacy, as the only means of luring man? And most assuredly it is so, for woman is the only, and the most seductive, power in heaven and on earth. When compared with her in this sense man will indeed be found to be exceedingly imperfect.

And the stratagem of the gods was crowned with success; but not always. There have existed at all times some men — a few — who have detected the deception. They perceive well enough woman's loveliness — more keenly, indeed than the others — but they also suspect the real state of affairs. I call them erotic natures and count myself among them. Men call them seducers, woman has no name for them — such persons are to her unnameable. These erotic natures are the truly fortunate ones. They live more luxuriously than do the very gods, for they regale themselves with food more delectable than ambrosia, and they drink what is more delicious than nectar; they eat the most seductive invention of the gods' most ingenious thought, they are ever eating dainties set for a bait — ah, incomparable delight, ah, blissful fare — they are ever eating but the dainties set for a bait; and they are never caught. All other men greedily seize and devour it, like bumpkins eating their cabbage, and are caught.

Only the erotic nature fully appreciates the dainties set out for bait — he prizes them infinitely. Woman divines this, and for that reason there is a secret understanding between him and her. But he knows also that she is a bait, and that secret he keeps to himself.

That nothing more marvelous, nothing more delicious, nothing more seductive, than woman can be devised, for that vouch the gods and their pressing need which heightened their powers of invention; for that vouches also the fact that they risked all, and in shaping her moved heaven and earth.

I now forsake the myth. The conception “man” corresponds to his “idea.” I can therefore, if necessary, think of an individual man as existing. The idea of woman, on the other hand, is so general that no one single woman is able to express it completely. She is not contemporaneous with man (and hence of less noble origin), but a later creation, though more perfect than he. Whether now the gods took some part from him whilst he slept, from fear of waking him by taking too much; or whether they bisected him and made woman out of the one half — at any rate it was man who was partitioned. Hence she is the equal of man only after this partition. She is a delusion and a snarer, but is so only afterwards, and for him who is deluded. She is finiteness incarnate; but in her first stage she is finiteness raised to the highest degree in the deceptive infinitude of all divine and human illusions. Now, the deception does not exist — one instant longer, and one is deceived.

She is finiteness, and as such she is a collective: one woman represents all women. Only the erotic nature comprehends this and therefore knows how to love many without ever being deceived, sipping the while all the delights the cunning gods were able to prepare. For this reason, as I said, woman cannot be fully expressed by one formula, but is, rather, an infinitude of finalities. He who wishes to think her “idea” will have the

same experience as he who gazes on a sea of nebulous shapes which ever form anew, or as he who is dazed by looking over the waves whose foamy crests ever mock one's vision; for her "idea" is but the workshop of possibilities. And to the erotic nature these possibilities are the everlasting reason for his worship.

So the gods created her delicate and ethereal as if out of the mists of the summer night, yet goodly like ripe fruit; light like a bird, though the repository of what attracts all the world — light because the play of the forces is harmoniously balanced in the invisible center of a negative relation;[54] slender in growth, with definite lines, yet her body sinuous with beautiful curves; perfect, yet ever appearing as if completed but now; cool, delicious, and refreshing like new-fallen snow, yet blushing in coy transparency; happy like some pleasantry which makes one forget all one's sorrow; soothing as being the end of desire, and satisfying in herself being the stimulus of desire. And the gods had calculated that man, when first beholding her, would be amazed, as one who sees himself, though familiar with that sight — would stand in amaze as one who sees himself in the splendor of perfection — would stand in amaze as one who beholds what he did never dream he would, yet beholds what, it would seem, ought to have occurred to him before — sees what is essential to life and yet gazes on it as being the very mystery of existence. It is precisely tins contradiction in his admiration which nurses desire to life, while this same admiration urges him ever nearer, so that he cannot desist from gazing, cannot desist from believing himself familiar with the sight, without really daring to approach, even though he cannot desist from desiring.

When the gods had thus planned her form they were seized with fear lest they might not have the wherewithal to give it existence; but what they feared even more was herself. For they dared not let her know how beautiful she was, apprehensive of having some one in the secret who might

spoil their ruse. Then was the crowning touch given to their wondrous creation: they made her faultless; but they concealed all this from her in the nescience of her innocence, and concealed it doubly from her in the impenetrable mystery of her modesty. Now she was perfect, and victory certain. Inviting she had been before, but now doubly so through her shyness, and beseeching through her shrinking, and irresistible through herself offering resistance. The gods were jubilant. And no allurement has ever been devised in the world so great as is woman, and no allurement is as compelling as is innocence, and no temptation is as ensnaring as is modesty, and no deception is as matchless as is woman. She knows of nothing, still her modesty is instinctive divination. She is distinct from man, and the separating wall of modesty parting them is more decisive than Aladdin's sword separating him from Gulnare;[55] and yet, when like Pyramis he puts his head to this dividing wall of modesty, the erotic nature will perceive all pleasures of desire divined within as from afar.

Thus does woman tempt. Men are wont to set forth the most precious things they possess as a delectation for the gods, nothing less will do. Thus is woman a show-bread, the gods knew of naught comparable to her. She exists, she is present, she is with us, close by; and yet she is removed from us to an infinite distance when concealed in her modesty — until she herself betrays her hiding place, she knows not how: it is not she herself, it is life which informs on her. Roguish she is like a child who in playing peeps forth from his hiding place, yet her roguishness is inexplicable, for she does not know of it herself, she is ever mysterious — mysterious when she casts down her eyes, mysterious when she sends forth the messengers of her glance which no thought, let alone any word, is able to follow. And yet is the eye the "interpreter" of the soul! What, then, is the explanation of this mystery if the interpreter too is unintelligible? Calm she is like the hushed stillness of eventide, when not a leaf stirs; calm like a consciousness as yet

unaware of aught. Her heart-beats are as regular as if life were not present; and yet the erotic nature, listening with his stethoscopically practiced ear, detects the dithyrambic pulsing of desire sounding along unbeknown. Careless she is like the blowing of the wind, content like the profound ocean, and yet full of longing like a thing biding its explanation. My friends! My mind is softened, indescribably softened. I comprehend that also my life expresses an idea, even if you do not comprehend me. I too have discovered the secret of existence; I too serve a divine idea — and, assuredly, I do not serve it for nothing. If woman is a ruse of the gods, this means that she is to be seduced; and if woman is not an "idea," the true inference is that the erotic nature wishes to love as many of them as possible.

What luxury it is to relish the ruse without being duped, only the erotic nature comprehends. And how blissful it is to be seduced, woman alone knows. I know that from woman, even though I never yet allowed any one of them time to explain it to me, but re-asserted my independence, serving the idea by a break as sudden as that caused by death; for a bride and a break are to one another like female and male.[56] Only woman is aware of this, and she is aware of it together with her seducer. No married man will ever grasp this. Nor does she ever speak with him about it. She resigns herself to her fate, she knows that it must be so and that she can be seduced only once. For this reason she never really bears malice against the man who seduced her. That is to say, if he really did seduce her and thus expressed the idea. Broken marriage vows and that kind of thing is, of course, nonsense and no seduction. Indeed, it is by no means so great a misfortune for a woman to be seduced. In fact, it is a piece of good fortune for her. An excellently seduced girl may make an excellent wife. If I myself were not fit to be a seducer — however deeply I feel my inferior qualifications in this respect — if I chose to be a married man, I should

always choose a girl already seduced, so that I would not have to begin my marriage by seducing my wife. Marriage, to be sure, also expresses an idea; but in relation to the idea of marriage that quality is altogether immaterial which is the absolutely essential condition for my idea. Therefore, a marriage ought never to be planned to begin as though it were the beginning of a story of seduction. So much is sure: there is a seducer for every woman. Happy is she whose good fortune it is to meet just him.

Through marriage, on the other hand, the gods win their victory. In it the once seduced maiden walks through life by the side of her husband, looking back at times, full of longing, resigned to her fate, until she reaches the goal of life. She dies; but not in the same sense as man dies. She is volatilized and resolved into that mysterious primal element of which the gods formed her — she disappears like a dream, like an impermanent shape whose hour is past. For what is woman but a dream, and the highest reality withal! Thus does the erotic nature comprehend her, leading her, and being led by her in the moment of seduction, beyond time — where she has her true existence, being an illusion. Through her husband, on the other hand, she becomes a creature of this world, and he through her.

Marvelous nature! If I did not admire thee, a woman would teach me; for truly she is the *venerabile* of life. Splendidly didst thou fashion her, but more splendidly still in that thou never didst fashion one woman like another. In man, the essential is the essential, and insofar always alike; but in woman the adventitious is the essential, and is thus an inexhaustible source of differences. Brief is her splendor; but quickly the pain is forgotten, too, when the same splendor is proffered me anew. It is true, I too am aware of the unbeautiful which may appear in her thereafter; but she is not thus with her seducer.

They rose from the table. It needed but a hint from Constantin, for the participants understood each other with military precision whenever there

was a question of face or turn about. With his invisible baton of command, elastic like a divining rod in his hand, Constantin once more touched them in order to call forth in them a fleeting reminiscence of the banquet and the spirit of enjoyment which had prevailed before but was now, in some measure, submerged through the intellectual effort of the speeches — in order that the note of glad festivity which had disappeared might, by way of resonance, return once more among the guests in a brief moment of recollection. He saluted with his full glass as a signal of parting, emptying it, and then flinging it against the door in the rear wall. The others followed his example, consummating this symbolic action with all the solemnity of adepts. Justice was thus done the pleasure of stopping short — that royal pleasure which, though briefer, yet is more liberating than any other pleasure. With a libation this pleasure ought to be entered upon, with the libation of flinging one's glass into destruction and oblivion, and tearing one's self passionately away from every memory, as if it were a danger to one's life: this libation is to the gods of the nether world. One breaks off, and strength is needed to do that, greater strength than to sever a knot by a sword-blow; for the difficulty of the knot tends to arouse one's passion, but the passion required for breaking off must be of one's own making. In a superficial sense the result is, of course, the same; but from an artistic point of view there is a world of difference between something ceasing or simply coming to an end, and it being broken off by one's own free will — whether it is a mere occurrence or a passionate decision; whether it is all over, like a school song, because there is no more to it, or whether it is terminated by the Cæsarian operation of one's own pleasure; whether it is a triviality every one has experienced, or the secret which escapes most.

Constantin's flinging his beaker against the door was intended merely as a symbolic rite; nevertheless, his so doing was, in a way, a decisive act; for when the last glass was shattered the door opened, and just as he who

presumptuously knocked at Death's door and, on its opening, beheld the powers of annihilation, so the banqueters beheld the corps of destruction ready to demolish everything — a memento which in an instant put them to flight from that place, while at the very same moment the entire surroundings had been reduced to the semblance of ruin.

A carriage stood ready at the door. At Constantin's invitation they seated themselves in it and drove away in good spirits; for that tableau of destruction which they left behind had given their souls fresh elasticity. After having covered a distance of several miles a halt was made. Here Constantin took his leave as host, informing them that five carriages were at their disposal — each one was free to suit his own pleasure and drive wherever he wanted, whether alone or in company with whomsoever he pleased. Thus a rocket, propelled by the force of the powder, ascends at a single shot, remains collected for an instant, in order then to spread out to all the winds.

While the horses were being hitched to the carriages the nocturnal banqueters strolled a little way down the road. The fresh air of the morning purified their hot blood with its coolness, and they gave themselves up to it entirely. Their forms, and the groups in which they ranged themselves, made a fantastic impression on me. For when the morning sun shines on field and meadow, and on every creature which in the night found rest and strength to rise up jubilating with the sun — in this there is only a pleasing, mutual understanding; but a nightly company, viewed by the morning light and in smiling surroundings, makes a downright uncanny impression. It makes one think of spooks which have been surprised by daylight, of subterranean spirits which are unable to regain the crevice through which they may vanish, because it is visible only in the dark; of unhappy creatures in whom the difference between day and night has become obliterated through the monotony of their sufferings.

A foot path led them through a small patch of field toward a garden surrounded by a hedge, from behind whose concealment a modest summer-cottage peeped forth. At the end of the garden, toward the field, there was an arbor formed by trees. Becoming aware of people being in the arbor, they all grew curious, and with the spying glances of men bent on observation, the besiegers closed in about that pleasant place of concealment, hiding themselves, and as eager as emissaries of the police about to take some one by surprise. Like emissaries of the police — well, to be sure, their appearance made the misunderstanding possible that it was they whom the minions of the law might be looking for. Each one had occupied a point of vantage for peeping in, when Victor drew back a step and said to his neighbor, “Why, dear me, if that is not Judge William and his wife!”

They were surprised — not the two whom the foliage concealed and who were all too deeply concerned with their domestic enjoyment to be observers. They felt themselves too secure to believe themselves an object of any one’s observation excepting the morning sun’s which took pleasure in looking in to them, whilst a gentle zephyr moved the boughs above them, and the repose-fulness of the countryside, as well as all things around them girded the little arbor about with peace. The happy married couple was not surprised and noticed nothing. That they were a married couple was clear enough; one could perceive that at a glance — alas! if one is something of an observer one’s self. Even if nothing in the wide world, nothing, whether overtly or covertly, if nothing, I say, threatens to interfere with the happiness of lovers, yet they are not thus secure when sitting together. They are in a state of bliss; and yet it is as if there were some power bent on separating them, so firmly they clasp one another; and yet it is as if there were some enemy present against whom they must defend themselves; and yet it is as if they could never become sufficiently reassured. Not thus

married people, and not thus that married couple in the arbor. How long they had been married, however, that was not to be determined with certainty. To be sure, the wife's activity at the tea-table revealed a sureness of hand born of practice, but at the same time such almost childlike interest in her occupation as if she were a newly married woman and in that middle condition when she is not, as yet, sure whether marriage is fun or earnest, whether being a housewife is a calling, or a game, or a pastime. Perhaps she had been married for some longer time but did not generally preside at the tea-table, or perhaps did so only out here in the country, or did it perhaps only that morning which, possibly, had a special significance for them. Who could tell? All calculation is frustrated to a certain degree by the fact that every personality exhibits some originality which keeps time from leaving its marks. When the sun shines in all his summer glory one thinks straightway that there must be some festal occasion at hand — that it cannot be so for every-day use, or that it is the first time, or at least one of the first times; for surely, one thinks, it cannot be repeated for any length of time. Thus would think he who saw it but once, or saw it for the first time; and I saw the wife of the justice for the first time. He who sees the object in question every day may think differently; provided he sees the same thing. But let the judge decide about that!

As I remarked, our amiable housewife was occupied. She poured boiling water into the cups, probably to warm them, emptied them again, set a cup on a platter, poured the tea and served it with sugar and cream — now all was ready; was it fun or earnest? In case a person did not relish tea at other times — he should have sat in the judge's place; for just then that drink seemed most inviting to me, only the inviting air of the lovely woman herself seemed to me more inviting.

It appeared that she had not had time to speak until then. Now she broke the silence and said, while serving him his tea: "Quick, now, dear, and drink

while it is hot, the morning air is quite cool, anyway; and surely the least I can do for you is to be a little careful of you. The least?” the judge answered laconically. “Yes, or the most, or the only thing.” The judge looked at her inquiringly, and whilst he was helping himself she continued: “You interrupted me yesterday when I wished to broach the subject, but I have thought about it again; many times I have thought about it, and now particularly, you know yourself in reference to whom: it is certainly true that if you hadn’t married, you would have been far more successful in your career.” With his cup still on the platter the judge sipped a first mouthful with visible enjoyment, thoroughly refreshed; or was it perchance the joy over his lovely wife; I for my part believe it was the latter. She, however, seemed only to be glad that it tasted so good to him. Then he put down his cup on the table at his side, took out a cigar, and said: “May I light it at your chafing-dish”? “Certainly,” she said, and handed him a live coal on a tea-spoon. He lit his cigar and put his arm about her waist whilst she leaned against his shoulder. He turned his head the other way to blow out the smoke, and then he let his eyes rest on her with a devotion such as only a glance can reveal; yet he smiled, but this glad smile had in it a dash of sad irony. Finally he said: “Do you really believe so, my girl? What do you mean?” she answered. He was silent again, his smile gained the upper hand, but his voice remained quite serious, nevertheless. “Then I pardon you your previous folly, seeing that you yourself have forgotten it so quickly; thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh[57] — what great career should I have had?” His wife seemed embarrassed for a moment by this return, but collected her wits quickly and now explained her meaning with womanly eloquence. The judge looked down before him, without interrupting her; but as she continued he began to drum on the table with the fingers of his right hand, at the same time humming a tune. The words of the song were audible for a moment, just as the pattern of a texture now

becomes visible, now disappears again; and then again they were heard no longer as he hummed the tune of the song: "The goodman he went to the forest, to cut the wands so white." After this melodramatic performance, consisting in the justice's wife explaining herself whilst he hummed his tune, the dialogue set in again. "I am thinking," he remarked, "I am thinking you are ignorant of the fact that the Danish Law permits a man to castigate his wife[58] — a pity only that the law does not indicate on which occasions it is permitted." His wife smiled at his threat and continued: "Now why can I never get you to be serious when I touch on this matter? You do not understand me: believe me, I mean it sincerely, it seems to me a very beautiful thought. Of course, if you weren't my husband I would not dare to entertain it; but now I have done so, for your sake and for my sake; and now be nice and serious, for my sake, and answer me frankly." "No, you can't get me to be serious, and a serious answer you won't get; I must either laugh at you, or make you forget it, as before, or beat you; or else you must stop talking about it, or I shall have to make you keep silent about it some other way. You see, it is a joke, and that is why there are so many ways out." He arose, pressed a kiss on her brow, laid her arm in his, and then disappeared in a leafy walk which led from the arbor.

The arbor was empty; there was nothing else to do, so the hostile corps of occupation withdrew without making any gains. Still, the others were content with uttering some malicious remarks. The company returned but missed Victor. He had rounded the corner and, in walking along the garden, had come up to the country home. The doors of a garden-room facing the lawn were open, and likewise a window. Very probably he had seen something which attracted his attention. He leapt into the window, and leapt out again just as the party were approaching, for they had been looking for him. Triumphantly he held up some papers in his hand and exclaimed: "One of the judge's manuscripts![59] Seeing that I edited his other works it is no

more than my duty that I should edit this one too.” He put it into his pocket; or, rather, he was about to do so; for as he was bending his arm and already had his hand with the manuscript half-way down in his pocket I managed to steal it from him.

But who, then, am I? Let no one ask! If it hasn’t occurred to you before to ask about it I am over the difficulty; for now the worst is behind me. For that matter, I am not worth asking about, for I am the least of all things, people would put me in utter confusion by asking about me. I am pure existence, and therefore smaller, almost, than nothing. I am “pure existence” which is present everywhere but still is never noticed; for I am ever vanishing. I am like the line above which stands the summa summarum — who cares about the line? By my own strength I can accomplish nothing, for even the idea to steal the manuscript from Victor was not my own idea; for this very idea which, as a thief would say, induced me to “borrow” the manuscript, was borrowed from him. And now, when editing this manuscript, I am, again, nothing at all; for it rightly belongs to the judge. And as editor, I am in my nothingness only a kind of nemesis on Victor, who imagined that he had the prescriptive right to do so.

ENDNOTES.

[1]*Cf.* Luke XIV, 19-20.

[2]Words used in the banns.

[3]Which in Latin means both "from the temple" and "at once."

[4]The omission of the negative particle in the original is no doubt unintentional.

[5]Pious wish.

[6]Kings 20, 1; Isaiah 38, 1.

[7]An allusion to the plight of Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposion.*

[8]Haggai 1, 6 (inexact).

[9]May it be fortunate and favorable.

[10]*Symposion*, ch. 9.

[11]This ironic sally refers, not to Descartes' principle of skepsis, but to the numerous Danish followers of Hegel and his "method"; *cf.* Fear and Trembling.

[12]*Symposion*, ch. 24.

[13]*Ibid.*, ch. 15-16.

[14]*Cf.* Matthew 13, 31 etc.

[15]A quotation from Musæus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, III, 219.

[16]The reference is to a situation in Richard Cumberland's (1732-1811) play of "The Jew," known to Copenhagen playgoers in an adaptation.

[17]I relate what I have been told.

[18]A character in the Danish playwright Overskou's vaudeville of "Capriciosa" (Comedies III, 184).

[19]The glutton in Oehlenschlœger's vaudeville of "Sovedrikken."

[20]Supplied by the translator to complete the sense.

[21]Dejection. *Cf.* the maxim: *omne animal post coïtun triste.*

[22]This statement is to be found, rather, in Aristotle's Ethics II, 6.

[23]There is a pun here in the original.

[24]In Holberg's comedy of "Erasmus Montanus," III, 6.

[25]*Cf.* "The Banquet."

[26]Eccles, 3, 7.

[27]Comical power.

[28]In uncertain battle.

[29]According to the development of these terms in Kierkegaard's previous works, the "absolute" belongs to the ethic, the "relative" to the æsthetic sphere.

[30]Heroine of Mozart's "Don Juan."

[31]Quotation from Wessel's famous comedy of "Love without Stockings," III, 3.

[32]Viz besides the eggs she duly furnishes; Holberg, "The Busy-body," II, 1.

[33]This figure is said by Diogenes Lærtios II, 37 to have been used by Socrates himself about his relation to Xanthippe.

[34]The following sentences are not as clear in meaning as is otherwise the case in Kierkegaard.

[35]Poetics, chap. 15.

[36]*Cf.* “The Banquet”

[37]They are, that he had been created a man and not an animal, a man and not a woman, a Greek and not a Barbarian (Lactantius, Instit. Ill, 19, 17).

[38]Thales of Miletos (Diogenes Lærtios I, 33).

[39]German poet of the Romantic School (1773-1853).

[40]Reasoning against the rules of logic.

[41]“The Lying-in Room”, II, 2.

[42]A quotation from Oehlenschläager’s “Aladdin.”

[43]Scattered members.

[44]See Diogenes Lærtios, VI, 37.

[45]By the immortal gods.

[46]I adjure you by the gods.

[47]Therefore those tears.

[48]I concede.

[49]It can hardly be seen, it is but for lips which understand each ether exactly.

[50]Christiansfeld, a town in South Jutland, was the seat of a colony of Herrhutian Pietists.

[51]The reference is to the “Diary of the Seducer” (in “Either-Or,” part I). Edward is the scorned lover of Cordelia who is seduced by John.

[52]I concede. I have conceded.

[53]Reference to a comedy by Farquhar, which enjoyed a moderate popularity in Copenhagen.

[54]i.e., evidently, she docs not exist because of herself; hence she is in a “negative” relation to herself. The center of this relation is “what attracts all the world.”

[55]In Oehlenschläger’s “Aladdin.”

[56]In the Danish, a pun on the homonyms *en brud* and *et brud.*

[57]Job 2, 10.

[58]According to the Jutland Laws (A. D. 1241) a man is permitted to punish his wife, when she has misbehaved, with stick and with rod, but not with weapon. In the Danish Law (1683) this right is restricted to children and servants. S. V.

[59]Containing the second part of “Stages on Life’s Road,” entitled “Reflections on Marriage in Refutation of Objections.”

FEAR AND TREMBLING

INTRODUCTION II

Not only in the world of commerce but also in the world of ideas our age has arranged a regular clearance-sale. Everything may be had at such absurdly low prices that very soon the question will arise whether any one cares to bid. Every waiter with a speculative turn who carefully marks the significant progress of modern philosophy, every lecturer in philosophy, every tutor, student, every sticker-and-quitter of philosophy — they are not content with doubting everything, but "go right on." It might, possibly, be ill-timed and inopportune to ask them whither they are bound; but it is no doubt polite and modest to take it for granted that they have doubted everything — else it were a curious statement for them to make, that they were proceeding onward. So they have, all of them, completed that preliminary operation and, it would seem, with such ease that they do not think it necessary to waste a word about how they did it. The fact is, not even he who looked anxiously and with a troubled spirit for some little point of information, ever found one, nor any instruction, nor even any little dietetic prescription, as to how one is to accomplish this enormous task. "But did not Descartes proceed in this fashion?" Descartes, indeed! that venerable, humble, honest thinker whose writings surely no one can read without deep emotion — Descartes did what he said, and said what he did. Alas, alas! that is a mighty rare thing in our times! But Descartes, as he says frequently enough, never uttered doubts concerning his faith....

In our times, as was remarked, no one is content with faith, but "goes right on." The question as to whither they are proceeding may be a silly question; whereas it is a sign of urbanity and culture to assume that every one has faith, to begin with, for else it were a curious statement for them to make, that they are proceeding further. In the olden days it was different.

Then, faith was a task for a whole life-time because it was held that proficiency in faith was not to be won within a few days or weeks. Hence, when the tried patriarch felt his end approaching, after having fought his battles and preserved his faith, he was still young enough at heart not to have forgotten the fear and trembling which disciplined his youth and which the mature man has under control, but which no one entirely outgrows — except insofar as he succeeds in “going on” as early as possible. The goal which those venerable men reached at last — at that spot every one starts, in our times, in order to “proceed further.”...

PREPARATION

THERE LIVED A man who, when a child, had heard the beautiful Bible story of how God tempted Abraham and how he stood the test, how he maintained his faith and, against his expectations, received his son back again. As this man grew older he read this same story with ever greater admiration; for now life had separated what had been united in the reverent simplicity of the child. And the older he grew, the more frequently his thoughts reverted to that story. His enthusiasm waxed stronger and stronger, and yet the story grew less and less clear to him. Finally he forgot everything else in thinking about it, and his soul contained but one wish, which was, to behold Abraham: and but one longing, which was, to have been witness to that event. His desire was, not to see the beautiful lands of the Orient, and not the splendor of the Promised Land, and not the reverent couple whose old age the Lord had blessed with children, and not the venerable figure of the aged patriarch, and not the god-given vigorous youth of Isaac — it would have been the same to him if the event had come to pass on some barren heath. But his wish was, to have been with Abraham on the three days' journey, when he rode with sorrow before him and with Isaac at his side. His wish was, to have been present at the moment when Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah afar off; to have been present at the moment when he left his asses behind and wended his way up to the mountain alone with Isaac. For the mind of this man was busy, not with the delicate conceits of the imagination, but rather with his shuddering thought.

The man we speak of was no thinker, he felt no desire to go beyond his faith: it seemed to him the most glorious fate to be remembered as the

Father of Faith, and a most enviable lot to be possessed of that faith, even if no one knew it.

The man we speak of was no learned exegetist, he did not even understand Hebrew — who knows but a knowledge of Hebrew might have helped him to understand readily both the story and Abraham.

I

And God tempted Abraham and said unto him: take Isaac, thine only son, whom thou lovest and go to the land Moriah and sacrifice him there on a mountain which I shall show thee.[1]

It was in the early morning, Abraham arose betimes and had his asses saddled. He departed from his tent, and Isaac with him; but Sarah looked out of the window after them until they were out of sight. Silently they rode for three days; but on the fourth morning Abraham said not a word but lifted up his eyes and beheld Mount Moriah in the distance. He left his servants behind and, leading Isaac by the hand, he approached the mountain. But Abraham said to himself: "I shall surely conceal from Isaac whither he is going." He stood still, he laid his hand on Isaac's head to bless him, and Isaac bowed down to receive his blessing. And Abraham's aspect was fatherly, his glance was mild, his speech admonishing. But Isaac understood him not, his soul would not rise to him; he embraced Abraham's knees, he besought him at his feet, he begged for his young life, for his beautiful hopes, he recalled the joy in Abraham's house when he was born, he reminded him of the sorrow and the loneliness that would be after him. Then did Abraham raise up the youth and lead him by his hand, and his words were full of consolation and admonishment. But Isaac understood him not. He ascended Mount Moriah, but Isaac understood him not. Then Abraham averted his face for a moment; but when Isaac looked again, his father's countenance was changed, his glance wild, his aspect terrible, he

seized Isaac and threw him to the ground and said: “Thou foolish lad, believest thou I am thy father? An idol-worshipper am I. Believest thou it is God’s command? Nay, but my pleasure.” Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his fear: “God in heaven, have pity on me, God of Abraham, show mercy to me, I have no father on earth, be thou then my father!” But Abraham said softly to himself: “Father in heaven, I thank thee. Better is it that he believes me inhuman than that he should lose his faith in thee.”

When the child is to be weaned, his mother blackens her breast; for it were a pity if her breast should look sweet to him when he is not to have it. Then the child believes that her breast has changed; but his mother is ever the same, her glance is full of love and as tender as ever. Happy he who needed not worse means to wean his child!

II

It was in the early morning. Abraham arose betimes and embraced Sarah, the bride of his old age. And Sarah kissed Isaac who had taken the shame from her — Isaac, her pride, her hope for all coming generations. Then the twain rode silently along their way, and Abraham’s glance was fastened on the ground before him; until on the fourth day, when he lifted up his eyes and beheld Mount Moriah in the distance; but then his eyes again sought the ground. Without a word he put the fagots in order and bound Isaac, and without a word he unsheathed his knife. Then he beheld the ram God had chosen, and sacrificed him, and wended his way home.... From that day on Abraham, grew old. He could not forget that God had required this of him. Isaac flourished as before; but Abraham’s eye was darkened, he saw happiness no more.

When the child has grown and is to be weaned, his mother will in maidenly fashion conceal her breast. Then the child has a mother no longer. Happy the child who lost not his mother in any other sense!

III

It was in the early morning. Abraham arose betimes; he kissed Sarah, the young mother, and Sarah kissed Isaac, her joy, her delight for all times. And Abraham rode on his way, lost in thought — he was thinking of Hagar and her son whom he had driven out into the wilderness. He ascended Mount Moriah and he drew the knife.

It was a calm evening when Abraham rode out alone, and he rode to Mount Moriah. There he cast himself down on his face and prayed to God to forgive him his sin in that he had been about to sacrifice his son Isaac, and in that the father had forgotten his duty toward his son. And yet oftener he rode on his lonely way, but he found no rest. He could not grasp that it was a sin that he had wanted to sacrifice to God his most precious possession, him for whom he would most gladly have died many times. But, if it was a sin, if he had not loved Isaac thus, then could he not grasp the possibility that he could be forgiven: for what sin more terrible?

When the child is to be weaned, the mother is not without sorrow that she and her child are to be separated more and more, that the child who had first lain under her heart, and afterwards at any rate rested at her breast, is to be so near to her no more. So they sorrow together for that brief while. Happy he who kept his child so near to him and needed not to sorrow more!

IV

It was in the early morning. All was ready for the journey in the house of Abraham. He bade farewell to Sarah; and Eliezer, his faithful servant, accompanied him along the way for a little while. They rode together in peace, Abraham and Isaac, until they came to Mount Moriah. And Abraham prepared everything for the sacrifice, calmly and mildly; but when his father turned aside in order to unsheathe his knife, Isaac saw that Abraham's left

hand was knit in despair and that a trembling shook his frame — but Abraham drew forth the knife.

Then they returned home again, and Sarah hastened to meet them; but Isaac had lost his faith. No one in all the world ever said a word about this, nor did Isaac speak to any man concerning what he had seen, and Abraham suspected not that any one had seen it.

When the child is to be weaned, his mother has the stronger food ready lest the child perish. Happy he who has in readiness this stronger food!

Thus, and in many similar ways, thought the man whom I have mentioned about this event. And every time he returned, after a pilgrimage to Mount Moriah, he sank down in weariness, folding his hands and saying: "No one, in truth, was great as was Abraham, and who can understand him?"

A PANEGYRIC ON ABRAHAM

IF A CONSCIOUSNESS of the eternal were not implanted in man; if the basis of all that exists were but a confusedly fermenting element which, convulsed by obscure passions, produced all, both the great and the insignificant; if under everything there lay a bottomless void never to be filled — what else were life but despair? If it were thus, and if there were no sacred bonds between man and man; if one generation arose after another, as in the forest the leaves of one season succeed the leaves of another, or like the songs of birds which are taken up one after another; if the generations of man passed through the world like a ship passing through the sea and the wind over the desert — a fruitless and a vain thing; if eternal oblivion were ever greedily watching for its prey and there existed no power strong enough to wrest it from its clutches — how empty were life then, and how dismal! And therefore it is not thus; but, just as God created man and woman, he likewise called into being the hero and the poet or orator. The latter cannot perform the deeds of the hero — he can only admire and love him and rejoice in him. And yet he also is happy and not less so; for the hero is, as it were, his better self with which he has fallen in love, and he is glad he is not himself the hero, so that his love can express itself in admiration.

The poet is the genius of memory, and does nothing but recall what has been done, can do nothing but admire what has been done. He adds nothing of his own, but he is jealous of what has been entrusted to him. He obeys the choice of his own heart; but once he has found what he has been seeking, he visits every man's door with his song and with his speech, so that all may admire the hero as he does, and be proud of the hero as he is. This is his achievement, his humble work, this is his faithful service in the

house of the hero. If thus, faithful to his love, he battles day and night against the guile of oblivion which wishes to lure the hero from him, then has he accomplished his task, then is he gathered to his hero who loves him as faithfully; for the poet is at it were the hero's better self, unsubstantial, to be sure, like a mere memory, but also transfigured as is a memory. Therefore shall no one be forgotten who has done great deeds; and even if there be delay, even if the cloud of misunderstanding obscure the hero from our vision, still his lover will come some time; and the more time has passed, the more faithfully will he cleave to him.

No, no one shall be forgotten who was great in this world. But each hero was great in his own way, and each one was eminent in proportion to the great things he loved. For he who loved himself became great through himself, and he who loved others became great through his devotion, but he who loved God became greater than all of these. Everyone of them shall be remembered, but each one became great in proportion to his trust. One became great by hoping for the possible; another, by hoping for the eternal; but he who hoped for the impossible, he became greater than all of these. Every one shall be remembered; but each one was great in proportion to the power with which he strove. For he who strove with the world became great by overcoming himself; but he who strove with God, he became the greatest of them all. Thus there have been struggles in the world, man against man, one against a thousand; but he who struggled with God, he became greatest of them all. Thus there was fighting on this earth, and there was he who conquered everything by his strength, and there was he who conquered God by his weakness. There was he who, trusting in himself, gained all; and there was he who, trusting in his strength sacrificed everything; but he who believed in God was greater than all of these. There was he who was great through his strength, and he who was great through his wisdom, and he who was great through his hopes, and he who was great through his love; but

Abraham was greater than all of these — great through the strength whose power is weakness, great through the wisdom whose secret is folly, great through the hope whose expression is madness, great through the love which is hatred of one's self.

Through the urging of his faith Abraham left the land of his forefathers and became a stranger in the land of promise. Ke left one thing behind and took one thing along: he left his worldly wisdom behind and took with him faith. For else he would not have left the land of his fathers, but would have thought it an unreasonable demand. Through his faith he came to be a stranger in the land of promise, where there was nothing to remind him of all that had been dear to him, but where everything by its newness tempted his soul to longing. And yet was he God's chosen, he in whom the Lord was well pleased! Indeed, had he been one cast off, one thrust out of God's mercy, then might he have comprehended it; but now it seemed like a mockery of him and of his faith. There have been others who lived in exile from the fatherland which they loved. They are not forgotten, nor is the song of lament forgotten in which they mournfully sought and found what they had lost. Of Abraham there exists no song of lamentation. It is human to complain, it is human to weep with the weeping; but it is greater to believe, and more blessed to consider him who has faith.

Through his faith Abraham received the promise that in his seed were to be blessed all races of mankind. Time passed, there was still the possibility of it, and Abraham had faith. Another man there was who also lived in hopes. Time passed, the evening of his life was approaching; neither was he paltry enough to have forgotten his hopes: neither shall he be forgotten by us! Then he sorrowed, and his sorrow did not deceive him, as life had done, but gave him all it could; for in the sweetness of sorrow he became possessed of his disappointed hopes. It is human to sorrow, it is human to

sorrow with the sorrowing; but it is greater to have faith, and more blessed to consider him who has faith.

No song of lamentation has come down to us from Abraham. He did not sadly count the days as time passed; he did not look at Sarah with suspicious eyes, whether she was becoming old; he did not stop the sun's course lest Sarah should grow old and his hope with her; he did not lull her with his songs of lamentation. Abraham grew old, and Sarah became a laughing-stock to the people; and yet was he God's chosen, and heir to the promise that in his seed were to be blessed all races of mankind. Were it, then, not better if he had not been God's chosen? For what is it to be God's chosen? Is it to have denied to one in one's youth all the wishes of youth in order to have them fulfilled after great labor in old age?

But Abraham had faith and steadfastly lived in hope. Had Abraham been less firm in his trust, then would he have given up that hope. He would have said to God: "So it is, perchance, not Thy will, after all, that this shall come to pass. I shall surrender my hope. It was my only one, it was my bliss. I am sincere, I conceal no secret grudge for that Thou didst deny it to me." He would not have remained forgotten, his example would have saved many a one; but he would not have become the Father of Faith. For it is great to surrender one's hope, but greater still to abide by it steadfastly after having surrendered it; for it is great to seize hold of the eternal hope, but greater still to abide steadfastly by one's worldly hopes after having surrendered them.

Then came the fulness of time. If Abraham had not had faith, then Sarah would probably have died of sorrow, and Abraham, dulled by his grief, would not have understood the fulfillment, but would have smiled about it as a dream of his youth. But Abraham had faith, and therefore he remained young; for he who always hopes for the best, him life will deceive, and he will grow old; and he who is always prepared for the worst, he will soon

age; but he who has faith, he will preserve eternal youth. Praise, therefore, be to this story! For Sarah, though advanced in age, was young enough to wish for the pleasures of a mother, and Abraham, though grey of hair, was young enough to wish to become a father. In a superficial sense it may be considered miraculous that what they wished for came to pass, but in a deeper sense the miracle of faith is to be seen in Abraham's and Sarah's being young enough to wish, and their faith having preserved their wish and therewith their youth. The promise he had received was fulfilled, and he accepted it in faith, and it came to pass according to the promise and his faith; whereas Moses smote the rock with his staff but believed not.

There was joy in Abraham's house when Sarah celebrated the day of her Golden Wedding.

But it was not to remain thus; for once more was Abraham to be tempted. He had struggled with that cunning power to which nothing is impossible, with that ever watchful enemy who never sleeps, with that old man who outlives all — he had struggled with Time and had preserved his faith. And now all the terror of that fight was concentrated in one moment. "And God tempted Abraham, saying to him: take now thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee off.[2]"

All was lost, then, and more terribly than if a son had never been given him! The Lord had only mocked Abraham, then! Miraculously he had realized the unreasonable hopes of Abraham; and now he wished to take away what he had given. A foolish hope it had been, but Abraham had not laughed when the promise had been made him. Now all was lost — the trusting hope of seventy years, the brief joy at the fulfillment of his hopes. Who, then, is he that snatches away the old man's staff, who that demands that he himself shall break it in two? Who is he that renders disconsolate the grey hair of old age, who is he that demands that he himself shall do it? Is

there no pity for the venerable old man, and none for the innocent child? And yet was Abraham God's chosen one, and yet was it the Lord that tempted him. And now all was to be lost! The glorious remembrance of him by a whole race, the promise of Abraham's seed — all that was but a whim, a passing fancy of the Lord, which Abraham was now to destroy forever! That glorious treasure, as old as the faith in Abraham's heart, and many, many years older than Isaac, the fruit of Abraham's life, sanctified by prayers, matured in struggles — the blessing on the lips of Abraham: this fruit was now to be plucked before the appointed time, and to remain without significance; for of what significance were it if Isaac was to be sacrificed? That sad and yet blessed hour when Abraham was to take leave from all that was dear to him, the hour when he would once more lift up his venerable head, when his face would shine like the countenance of the Lord, the hour when he would collect his whole soul for a blessing strong enough to render Isaac blessed all the days of his life — that hour was not to come! He was to say farewell to Isaac, to be sure, but in such wise that he himself was to remain behind; death was to part them, but in such wise that Isaac was to die. The old man was not in happiness to lay his hand on Isaac's head when the hour of death came, but, tired of life, to lay violent hands on Isaac. And it was God who tempted him. Woe, woe to the messenger who would have come before Abraham with such a command! Who would have dared to be the messenger of such dread tidings? But it was God that tempted Abraham.

But Abraham had faith, and had faith for this life. Indeed, had his faith been but concerning the life to come, then might he more easily have cast away all, in order to hasten out of this world which was not his....

But Abraham had faith and doubted not, but trusted that the improbable would come to pass. If Abraham had doubted, then would he have undertaken something else, something great and noble; for what could

Abraham have undertaken but was great and noble! He would have proceeded to Mount Moriah, he would have cloven the wood, and fired it, and unsheathed his knife — he would have cried out to God: “Despise not this sacrifice; it is not, indeed, the best I have; for what is an old man against a child foretold of God; but it is the best I can give thee. Let Isaac never know that he must find consolation in his youth.” He would have plunged the steel in his own breast. And he would have been admired throughout the world, and his name would not have been forgotten; but it is one thing to be admired and another, to be a lode-star which guides one troubled in mind.

But Abraham had faith. He prayed not for mercy and that he might prevail upon the Lord: it was only when just retribution was to be visited upon Sodom and Gomorrha that Abraham ventured to beseech Him for mercy.

We read in Scripture: “And God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold here I am.[3]“ You, whom I am now addressing did you do likewise? When you saw the dire dispensations of Providence approach threateningly, did you not then say to the mountains, Fall on me; and to the hills, Cover me?[4] Or, if you were stronger in faith, did not your step linger along the way, longing for the old accustomed paths, as it were? And when the voice called you, did you answer, then, or not at all, and if you did, perchance in a low voice, or whispering? Not thus Abraham, but gladly and cheerfully and trustingly, and with a resonant voice he made answer: “Here am I.” And we read further: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning.[5]“ He made haste as though for some joyous occasion, and early in the morning he was in the appointed place, on Mount Moriah. He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer, his steward; for who would have understood him? Did not his temptation by its very nature demand of him the vow of silence? “He laid the wood in order, and bound

Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.[6]" My listener! Many a father there has been who thought that with his child he lost the dearest of all there was in the world for him; yet assuredly no child ever was in that sense a pledge of God as was Isaac to Abraham. Many a father there has been who lost his child; but then it was God, the unchangeable and inscrutable will of the Almighty and His hand which took it. Not thus with Abraham. For him was reserved a more severe trial, and Isaac's fate was put into Abraham's hand together with the knife. And there he stood, the old man, with his only hope! Yet did he not doubt, nor look anxiously to the left or right, nor challenge Heaven with his prayers. He knew it was God the Almighty who now put him to the test; he knew it was the greatest sacrifice which could be demanded of him; but he knew also that no sacrifice was too great which God demanded — and he drew forth his knife.

Who strengthened Abraham's arm, who supported his right arm that it drooped not powerless? For he who contemplates this scene is unnerved. Who strengthened Abraham's soul so that his eyes grew not too dim to see either Isaac or the ram? For he who contemplates this scene will be struck with blindness. And yet, it is rare enough that one is unnerved or is struck with blindness, and still more rare that one narrates worthily what there did take place between father and son. To be sure, we know well enough — it was but a trial!

If Abraham had doubted, when standing on Mount Moriah; if he had looked about him in perplexity; if he had accidentally discovered the ram before drawing his knife; if God had permitted him to sacrifice it instead of Isaac — then would he have returned home, and all would have been as before, he would have had Sarah and would have kept Isaac; and yet how different all would have been! For then had his return been a flight, his salvation an accident, his reward disgrace; his future, perchance, perdition.

Then would he have borne witness neither to his faith nor to God's mercy, but would have witnessed only to the terror of going to Mount Moriah. Then Abraham would not have been forgotten, nor either Mount Moriah. It would be mentioned, then, not as is Mount Ararat on which the Ark landed, but as a sign of terror, because it was there Abraham doubted.

Venerable patriarch Abraham! When you returned home from Mount Moriah you required no encomiums to console you for what you had lost; for, indeed, you did win all and still kept Isaac, as we all know. And the Lord did no more take him from your side, but you sate gladly at table with him in your tent as in the life to come you will, for all times. Venerable patriarch Abraham! Thousands of years have passed since those times, but still you need no late-born lover to snatch your memory from the power of oblivion, for every language remembers you — and yet do you reward your lover more gloriously than any one, rendering him blessed in your bosom, and taking heart and eyes captive by the marvel of your deed. Venerable patriarch Abraham! Second father of the race! You who first perceived and bore witness to that unbounded passion which has but scorn for the terrible fight with the raging elements and the strength of brute creation, in order to struggle with God; you who first felt that sublimest of all passions, you who found the holy, pure, humble expression for the divine madness which was a marvel to the heathen — forgive him who would speak in your praise, in case he did it not fittingly. He spoke humbly, as if it concerned the desire of his heart; he spoke briefly, as is seemly; but he will never forget that you required a hundred years to obtain a son of your old age, against all expections; that you had to draw the knife before being permitted to keep Isaac; he will never forget that in a hundred and thirty years you never got farther than to faith.

PRELIMINARY EXPECTORATION

AN OLD SAYING, derived from the world of experience, has it that "he who will not work shall not eat.[7]" But, strange to say, this does not hold true in the world where it is thought applicable; for in the world of matter the law of imperfection prevails, and we see, again and again, that he also who will not work has bread to eat — indeed, that he who sleeps has a greater abundance of it than he who works. In the world of matter everything belongs to whosoever happens to possess it; it is thrall to the law of indifference, and he who happens to possess the Ring also has the Spirit of the Ring at his beck and call, whether now he be Noureddin or Aladdin,[8] and he who controls the treasures of this world, controls them, howsoever he managed to do so. It is different in the world of spirit. There, an eternal and divine order obtains, there the rain does not fall on the just and the unjust alike, nor does the sun shine on the good and the evil alike;[9] but there the saying does hold true that he who will not work shall not eat, and only he who was troubled shall find rest, and only he who descends into the nether world shall rescue his beloved, and only he who unsheathes his knife shall be given Isaac again. There, he who will not work shall not eat, but shall be deceived, as the gods deceived Orpheus with an immaterial figure instead of his beloved Euridice,[10] deceived him because he was love-sick and not courageous, deceived him because he was a player on the cithara rather than a man. There, it avails not to have an Abraham for one's father,[11] or to have seventeen ancestors. But in that world the saying about Israel's maidens will hold true of him who will not work: he shall bring forth wind;[12] but he who will work shall give birth to his own father.

There is a kind of learning which would presumptuously introduce into the world of spirit the same law of indifference under which the world of

matter groans. It is thought that to know about great men and great deeds is quite sufficient, and that other exertion is not necessary. And therefore this learning shall not eat, but shall perish of hunger while seeing all things transformed into gold by its touch. And what, forsooth, does this learning really know? There were many thousands of contemporaries, and countless men in after times, who knew all about the triumphs of Miltiades; but there was only one whom they rendered sleepless.[13] There have existed countless generations that knew by heart, word for word, the story of Abraham; but how many has it rendered sleepless?

Now the story of Abraham has the remarkable property of always being glorious, in however limited a sense it is understood; still, here also the point is whether one means to labor and exert one's half. Now people do not care to labor and exert themselves, but wish nevertheless to understand the story. They extol Abraham, but how? By expressing the matter in the most general terms and saying: "the great thing about him was that he loved God so ardently that he was willing to sacrifice to Him his most precious possession." That is very true; but "the most precious possession" is an indefinite expression. As one's thoughts, and one's mouth, run on one assumes, in a very easy fashion, the identity of Isaac and "the most precious possession" — and meanwhile he who is meditating may smoke his pipe, and his audience comfortably stretch out their legs. If the rich youth whom Christ met on his way[14] had sold all his possessions and given all to the poor, we would extol him as we extol all which is great — aye, would not understand even him without labor; and yet would he never have become an Abraham, notwithstanding his sacrificing the most precious possessions he had. That which people generally forget in the story of Abraham is his fear and anxiety; for as regards money, one is not ethically responsible for it, whereas for his son a father has the highest and most sacred responsibility.

However, fear is a dreadful thing for timorous spirits, so they omit it. And yet they wish to speak of Abraham.

So they keep on speaking, and in the course of their speech the two terms Isaac and "the most precious thing" are used alternately, and everything is in the best order. But now suppose that among the audience there was a man who suffered with sleeplessness — and then the most terrible and profound, the most tragic, and at the same time the most comic, misunderstanding is within the range of possibility. That is, suppose this man goes home and wishes to do as did Abraham; for his son is his most precious possession. If a certain preacher learned of this he would, perhaps, go to him, he would gather up all his spiritual dignity and exclaim: "Thou abominable creature, thou scum of humanity, what devil possessed thee to wish to murder thy son?" And this preacher, who had not felt any particular warmth, nor perspired while speaking about Abraham, this preacher would be astonished himself at the earnest wrath with which he poured forth his thunders against that poor wretch; indeed, he would rejoice over himself, for never had he spoken with such power and unction, and he would have said to his wife: "I am an orator, the only thing I have lacked so far was the occasion. Last Sunday, when speaking about Abraham, I did not feel thrilled in the least."

Now, if this same orator had just a bit of sense to spare, I believe he would lose it if the sinner would reply, in a quiet and dignified manner: "Why, it was on this very same matter you preached, last Sunday!" But however could the preacher have entertained such thoughts? Still, such was the case, and the preacher's mistake was merely not knowing what he was talking about. Ah, would that some poet might see his way clear to prefer such a situation to the stuff and nonsense of which novels and comedies are full! For the comic and the tragic here run parallel to infinity. The sermon probably was ridiculous enough in itself, but it became infinitely ridiculous through the very natural consequence it had. Or, suppose now the sinner

was converted by this lecture without daring to raise any objection, and this zealous divine now went home elated, glad in the consciousness of being effective, not only in the pulpit, but chiefly, and with irresistible power, as a spiritual guide, inspiring his congregation on Sunday, whilst on Monday he would place himself like a cherub with flaming sword before the man who by his actions tried to give the lie to the old saying that "the course of the world follows not the priest's word."

If, on the other hand, the sinner were not convinced of his error his position would become tragic. He would probably be executed, or else sent to the lunatic asylum — at any rate, he would become a sufferer in this world; but in another sense I should think that Abraham rendered him happy; for he who labors, he shall not perish.

Now how shall we explain the contradiction contained in that sermon? Is it due to Abraham's having the reputation of being a great man — so that whatever he does is great, but if another should undertake to do the same it is a sin, a heinous sin? If this be the case I prefer not to participate in such thoughtless laudations. If faith cannot make it a sacred thing to wish to sacrifice one's son, then let the same judgment be visited on Abraham as on any other man. And if we perchance lack the courage to drive our thoughts to the logical conclusion and to say that Abraham was a murderer, then it were better to acquire that courage, rather than to waste one's time on undeserved encomiums. The fact is, the ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he wanted to murder Isaac; the religious, that he wanted to sacrifice him. But precisely in this contradiction is contained the fear which may well rob one of one's sleep. And yet Abraham were not Abraham without this fear. Or, again, supposing Abraham did not do what is attributed to him, if his action was an entirely different one, based on conditions of those times, then let us forget him; for what is the use of calling to mind that past which can no longer become a present reality? —

Or, the speaker had perhaps forgotten the essential fact that Isaac was the son. For if faith is eliminated, having been reduced to a mere nothing, then only the brutal fact remains that Abraham wanted to murder Isaac — which is easy for everybody to imitate who has not the faith — the faith, that is, which renders it most difficult for him....

Love has its priests in the poets, and one hears at times a poet's voice which worthily extols it. But not a word does one hear of faith. Who is there to speak in honor of that passion? Philosophy "goes right on." Theology sits at the window with a painted visage and sues for philosophy's favor, offering it her charms. It is said to be difficult to understand the philosophy of Hegel; but to understand Abraham, why, that is an easy matter! To proceed further than Hegel is a wonderful feat, but to proceed further than Abraham, why, nothing is easier! Personally, I have devoted a considerable amount of time to a study of Hegelian philosophy and believe I understand it fairly well; in fact, I am rash enough to say that when, notwithstanding an effort, I am not able to understand him in some passages, it is because he is not entirely clear about the matter himself. All this intellectual effort I perform easily and naturally, and it does not cause my head to ache. On the other hand, whenever I attempt to think about Abraham I am, as it were, overwhelmed. At every moment I am aware of the enormous paradox which forms the content of Abraham's life, at every moment I am repulsed, and my thought, notwithstanding its passionate attempts, cannot penetrate into it, cannot forge on the breadth of a hair. I strain every muscle in order to envisage the problem — and become a paralytic in the same moment.

I am by no means unacquainted with what has been admired as great and noble, my soul feels kinship with it, being satisfied, in all humility, that it was also my cause the hero espoused; and when contemplating his deed I say to myself: "*jam tua causa agitur.*[15]" I am able to identify myself with the hero; but I cannot do so with Abraham, for whenever I have reached his

height I fall down again, since he confronts me as the paradox. It is by no means my intention to maintain that faith is something inferior, but, on the contrary, that it is the highest of all things; also that it is dishonest in philosophy to offer something else instead, and to pour scorn on faith; but it ought to understand its own nature in order to know what it can offer. It should take away nothing; least of all, fool people out of something as if it were of no value. I am not unacquainted with the sufferings and dangers of life, but I do not fear them, and cheerfully go forth to meet them.... But my courage is not, for all that, the courage of faith, and is as nothing compared with it. I cannot carry out the movement of faith: I cannot close my eyes and confidently plunge into the absurd — it is impossible for me; but neither do I boast of it....

Now I wonder if every one of my contemporaries is really able to perform the movements of faith. Unless I am much mistaken they are, rather, inclined to be proud of making what they perhaps think me unable to do, viz., the imperfect movement. It is repugnant to my soul to do what is so often done, to speak inhumanly about great deeds, as if a few thousands of years were an immense space of time. I prefer to speak about them in a human way and as though they had been done but yesterday, to let the great deed itself be the distance which either inspires or condemns me. Now if I, in the capacity of tragic hero — for a higher flight I am unable to take — if I had been summoned to such an extraordinary royal progress as was the one to Mount Moriah, I know very well what I would have done. I would not have been craven enough to remain at home; neither would I have dawdled on the way; nor would I have forgot my knife — just to draw out the end a bit. But I am rather sure that I would have been promptly on the spot, with every thing in order — in fact, would probably have been there before the appointed time, so as to have the business soon over with. But I know also what I would have done besides. In the moment I mounted my

horse I would have said to myself: “Now all is lost, God demands Isaac, I shall sacrifice him, and with him all my joy — but for all that, God is love and will remain so for me; for in this world God and I cannot speak together, we have no language in common.”

Possibly, one or the other of my contemporaries will be stupid enough, and jealous enough of great deeds, to wish to persuade himself and me that if I had acted thus I should have done something even greater than what Abraham did; for my sublime resignation was (he thinks) by far more ideal and poetic than Abraham’s literal-minded action. And yet this is absolutely not so, for my sublime resignation was only a substitute for faith. I could not have made more than the infinite movement (of resignation) to find myself and again repose in myself. Nor would I have loved Isaac as Abraham loved him. The fact that I was resolute enough to resign is sufficient to prove my courage in a human sense, and the fact that I loved him with my whole heart is the very presupposition without which my action would be a crime; but still I did not love as did Abraham, for else I would have hesitated even in the last minute, without, for that matter, arriving too late on Mount Moriah. Also, I would have spoiled the whole business by my behavior; for if I had had Isaac restored to me I would have been embarrassed. That which was an easy matter for Abraham would have been difficult for me, I mean, to rejoice again in Isaac; for he who with all the energy of his soul *proprio motu et propriis auspiciis*[16] has made the infinite movement of resignation and can do no more, he will retain possession of Isaac only in his sorrow.

But what did Abraham? He arrived neither too early nor too late. He mounted his ass and rode slowly on his way. And all the while he had faith, believing that God would not demand Isaac of him, though ready all the while to sacrifice him, should it be demanded of him. He believed this on the strength of the absurd; for there was no question of human calculation

any longer. And the absurdity consisted in God's, who yet made this demand of him, recalling his demand the very next moment. Abraham ascended the mountain and whilst the knife already gleamed in his hand he believed — that God would not demand Isaac of him. He was, to be sure, surprised at the outcome; but by a double movement he had returned at his first state of mind and therefore received Isaac back more gladly than the first time....

On this height, then, stands Abraham. The last stage he loses sight of is that of infinite resignation. He does really proceed further, he arrives at faith. For all these caricatures of faith, wretched lukewarm sloth, which thinks: "Oh, there is no hurry, it is not necessary to worry before the time comes"; and miserable hopefulness, which says: "One cannot know what will happen, there might perhaps — ," all these caricatures belong to the sordid view of life and have already fallen under the infinite scorn of infinite resignation.

Abraham, I am not able to understand; and in a certain sense I can learn nothing from him without being struck with wonder. They who flatter themselves that by merely considering the outcome of Abraham's story they will necessarily arrive at faith, only deceive themselves and wish to cheat God out of the first movement of faith — it were tantamount to deriving worldly wisdom from the paradox. But who knows, one or the other of them may succeed in doing this; for our times are not satisfied with faith, and not even with the miracle of changing water into wine — they "go right on" changing wine into water.

Is it not preferable to remain satisfied with faith, and is it not outrageous that every one wishes to "go right on"? If people in our times decline to be satisfied with love, as is proclaimed from various sides, where will we finally land? In worldly shrewdness, in mean calculation, in paltriness and baseness, in all that which renders man's divine origin doubtful. Were it not

better to stand fast in the faith, and better that he that standeth take heed lest he fall;[17] for the movement of faith must ever be made by virtue of the absurd, but, note well, in such wise that one does not lose the things of this world but wholly and entirely regains them.

As far as I am concerned, I am able to describe most excellently the movements of faith; but I cannot make them myself. When a person wishes to learn how to swim he has himself suspended in a swimming-belt and then goes through the motions; but that does not mean that he can swim. In the same fashion I too can go through the motions of faith; but when I am thrown into the water I swim; to be sure (for I am not a wader in the shallows), but I go through a different set of movements, to-wit, those of infinity; whereas faith does the opposite, to-wit, makes the movements to regain the finite after having made those of infinite resignation. Blessed is he who can make these movements, for he performs a marvelous feat, and I shall never weary of admiring him, whether now it be Abraham himself or the slave in Abraham's house, whether it be a professor of philosophy or a poor servant-girl: it is all the same to me, for I have regard only to the movements. But these movements I watch closely, and I will not be deceived, whether by myself or by any one else. The knights of infinite resignation are easily recognized, for their gait is dancing and bold. But they who possess the jewel of faith frequently deceive one because their bearing is curiously like that of a class of people heartily despised by infinite resignation as well as by faith — the philistines.

Let me admit frankly that I have not in my experience encountered any certain specimen of this type; but I do not refuse to admit that as far as I know, every other person may be such a specimen. At the same time I will say that I have searched vainly for years. It is the custom of scientists to travel around the globe to see rivers and mountains, new stars, gay-colored birds, misshapen fish, ridiculous races of men. They abandon themselves to

a bovine stupor which gapes at existence and believe they have seen something worth while. All this does not interest me; but if I knew where there lived such a knight of faith I would journey to him on foot, for that marvel occupies my thoughts exclusively. Not a moment would I leave him out of sight, but would watch how he makes the movements, and I would consider myself provided for life, and would divide my time between watching him and myself practicing the movements, and would thus use all my time in admiring him.

As I said, I have not met with such a one; but I can easily imagine him. Here he is. I make his acquaintance and am introduced to him. The first moment I lay my eyes on him I push him back, leaping back myself, I hold up my hands in amazement and say to myself: “Good Lord! that person? Is it really he — why, he looks like a parish-beadle!” But it is really he. I become more closely acquainted with him, watching his every movement to see whether some trifling incongruous movement of his has escaped me, some trace, perchance, of a signaling from the infinite, a glance, a look, a gesture, a melancholy air, or a smile, which might betray the presence of infinite resignation contrasting with the finite.

But no! I examine his figure from top to toe to discover whether there be anywhere a chink through which the infinite might be seen to peer forth. But no! he is of a piece, all through. And how about his footing? Vigorous, altogether that of finiteness, no citizen dressed in his very best, prepared to spend his Sunday afternoon in the park, treads the ground more firmly. He belongs altogether to this world, no philistine more so. There is no trace of the somewhat exclusive and haughty demeanor which marks off the knight of infinite resignation. He takes pleasure in all things, is interested in everything, and perseveres in whatever he does with the zest characteristic of persons wholly given to worldly things. He attends to his business, and when one sees him one might think he was a clerk who had lost his soul in

doing double bookkeeping, he is so exact. He takes a day off on Sundays. He goes to church. But no hint of anything supernatural or any other sign of the incommensurable betrays him, and if one did not know him it would be impossible to distinguish him in the congregation, for his brisk and manly singing proves only that he has a pair of good lungs.

In the afternoon he walks out to the forest. He takes delight in all he sees, in the crowds of men and women, the new omnibuses, the Sound — if one met him on the promenade one might think he was some shopkeeper who was having a good time, so simple is his joy; for he is not a poet, and in vain have I tried to lure him into betraying some sign of the poet's detachment. Toward evening he walks home again, with a gait as steady as that of a mail-carrier. On his way he happens to wonder whether his wife will have some little special warm dish ready for him, when he comes home — as she surely has — as, for instance, a roasted lamb's head garnished with greens. And if he met one minded like him he is very likely to continue talking about this dish with him till they reach the East Gate, and to talk about it with a zest befitting a chef. As it happens, he has not four shillings to spare, and yet he firmly believes that his wife surely has that dish ready for him. If she has, it would be an enviable sight for distinguished people, and an inspiring one for common folks, to see him eat, for he has an appetite greater than Esau's. His wife has not prepared it — strange, he remains altogether the same.

Again, on his way he passes a building lot and there meets another man. They fall to talking, and in a trice he erects a building, freely disposing of everything necessary. And the stranger will leave him with the impression that he has been talking with a capitalist — the fact being that the knight of my admiration is busy with the thought that if it really came to the point he would unquestionably have the means wherewithal at his disposal.

Now he is lying on his elbows in the window and looking over the square on which he lives. All that happens there, if it be only a rat creeping into a gutter-hole, or children playing together — everything engages his attention, and yet his mind is at rest as though it were the mind of a girl of sixteen. He smokes his pipe in the evening, and to look at him you would swear it was the green-grocer from across the street who is lounging at the window in the evening twilight. Thus he shows as much unconcern as any worthless happy-go-lucky fellow; and yet, every moment he lives he purchases his leisure at the highest price, for he makes not the least movement except by virtue of the absurd; and yet, yet — indeed, I might become furious with anger, if for no other reason than that of envy — and yet, this man has performed, and is performing every moment, the movement of infinity... He has resigned everything absolutely, and then again seized hold of it all on the strength of the absurd...

But this miracle may so easily deceive one that it will be best if I describe the movements in a given case which may illustrate their aspect in contact with reality; and that is the important point. Suppose, then, a young swain falls in love with a princess, and all his life is bound up in this love. But circumstances are such that it is out of the question to think of marrying her, an impossibility to translate his dreams into reality. The slaves of paltriness, the frogs in the sloughs of life, they will shout, of course: "Such a love is folly, the rich brewer's widow is quite as good and solid a match." Let them but croak. The knight of infinite resignation does not follow their advice, he does not surrender his love, not for all the riches in the world. He is no fool, he first makes sure that this love really is the contents of his life, for his soul is too sound and too proud to waste itself on a mere intoxication. He is no coward, he is not afraid to let his love insinuate itself into his most secret and most remote thoughts, to let it wind itself in innumerable coils about every fiber of his consciousness — if he is

disappointed in his love he will never be able to extricate himself again. He feels a delicious pleasure in letting love thrill his every nerve, and yet his soul is solemn as is that of him who has drained a cup of poison and who now feels the virus mingle with every drop of his blood, poised in that moment between life and death.

Having thus imbibed love, and being wholly absorbed in it, he does not lack the courage to try and dare all. He surveys the whole situation, he calls together his swift thoughts which like tame pigeons obey his every beck, he gives the signal, and they dart in all directions. But when they return, every one bearing a message of sorrow, and explain to him that it is impossible, then he becomes silent, he dismisses them, he remains alone; and then he makes the movement. Now if what I say here is to have any significance, it is of prime importance that the movement be made in a normal fashion. The knight of resignation is supposed to have sufficient energy to concentrate the entire contents of his life and the realization of existing conditions into one single wish. But if one lacks this concentration, this devotion to a single thought; if his soul from the very beginning is scattered on a number of objects, he will never be able to make the movement — he will be as worldly-wise in the conduct of his life as the financier who invests his capital in a number of securities to win on the one if he should lose on the other; that is, he is no knight. Furthermore, the knight is supposed to possess sufficient energy to concentrate all his thought into a single act of consciousness. If he lacks this concentration he will only run errands in life and will never be able to assume the attitude of infinite resignation; for the very minute he approaches it he will suddenly discover that he forgot something so that he must remain behind. The next minute, thinks he, it will be attainable again, and so it is; but such inhibitions will never allow him to make the movement but will, rather, tend to let him sink ever deeper into the mire.

Our knight, then, performs the movement — which movement? Is he intent on forgetting the whole affair, which, too, would presuppose much concentration? No, for the knight does not contradict himself, and it is a contradiction to forget the main contents of one's life and still remain the same person. And he has no desire to become another person; neither does he consider such a desire to smack of greatness. Only lower natures forget themselves and become something different. Thus the butterfly has forgotten that it once was a caterpillar — who knows but it may forget altogether that it once was a butterfly, and turn into a fish! Deeper natures never forget themselves and never change their essential qualities. So the knight remembers all; but precisely this remembrance is painful. Nevertheless, in his infinite resignation he has become reconciled with existence. His love for the princess has become for him the expression of an eternal love, has assumed a religious character, has been transfigured into a love for the eternal being which, to be sure, denied him the fulfillment of his love, yet reconciled him again by presenting him with the abiding consciousness of his love's being preserved in an everlasting form of which no reality can rob him....

Now, he is no longer interested in what the princess may do, and precisely this proves that he has made the movement of infinite resignation correctly. In fact, this is a good criterion for detecting whether a person's movement is sincere or just make-believe. Take a person who believes that he too has resigned, but lo! time passed, the princess did something on her part, for example, married a prince, and then his soul lost the elasticity of its resignation. This ought to show him that he did not make the movement correctly, for he who has resigned absolutely is sufficient unto himself. The knight does not cancel his resignation, but preserves his love as fresh and young as it was at the first moment, he never lets go of it just because his resignation is absolute. Whatever the princess does, cannot disturb him, for

it is only the lower natures who have the law for their actions in some other person, i.e. have the premises of their actions outside of themselves....

Infinite resignation is the last stage which goes before faith, so that every one who has not made the movement of infinite resignation cannot have faith; for only through absolute resignation do I become conscious of my eternal worth, and only then can there arise the problem of again grasping hold of this world by virtue of faith.

We will now suppose the knight of faith in the same case. He does precisely as the other knight, he absolutely resigns the love which is the contents of his life, he is reconciled to the pain; but then the miraculous happens, he makes one more movement, strange beyond comparison, saying: “And still I believe that I shall marry her — marry her by virtue of the absurd, by virtue of the act that to God nothing is impossible.” Now the absurd is not one of the categories which belong to the understanding proper. It is not identical with the improbable, the unforeseen, the unexpected. The very moment our knight resigned himself he made sure of the absolute impossibility, in any human sense, of his love. This was the result reached by his reflections, and he had sufficient energy to make them. In a transcendent sense, however, by his very resignation, the attainment of his end is not impossible; but this very act of again taking possession of his love is at the same time a relinquishment of it. Nevertheless this kind of possession is by no means an absurdity to the intellect; for the intellect all the while continues to be right, as it is aware that in the world of finalities, in which reason rules, his love was and is, an impossibility. The knight of faith realizes this fully as well. Hence the only thing which can save him is recourse to the absurd, and this recourse he has through his faith. That is, he clearly recognizes the impossibility, and in the same moment he believes the absurd; for if he imagined he had faith, without at the same time recognizing, with all the passion his soul is capable of, that his love is

impossible, he would be merely deceiving himself, and his testimony would be of no value, since he had not arrived even at the stage of absolute resignation....

This last movement, the paradoxical movement of faith, I cannot make, whether or no it be my duty, although I desire nothing more ardently than to be able to make it. It must be left to a person's discretion whether he cares to make this confession; and at any rate, it is a matter between him and the Eternal Being, who is the object of his faith, whether an amicable adjustment can be affected. But what every person can do is to make the movement of absolute resignation, and I for my part would not hesitate to declare him a coward who imagines he cannot perform it. It is a different matter with faith. But what no person has a right to, is to delude others into the belief that faith is something of no great significance, or that it is an easy matter, whereas it is the greatest and most difficult of all things.

But the story of Abraham is generally interpreted in a different way. God's mercy is praised which restored Isaac to him — it was but a trial! A trial. This word may mean much or little, and yet the whole of it passes off as quickly as the story is told: one mounts a winged horse, in the same instant one arrives on Mount Moriah, and *presto* one sees the ram. It is not remembered that Abraham only rode on an ass which travels but slowly, that it was a three days' journey for him, and that he required some additional time to collect the firewood, to bind Isaac, and to whet his knife.

And yet one extols Abraham. He who is to preach the sermon may sleep comfortably until a quarter of an hour before he is to preach it, and the listener may comfortably sleep during the sermon, for everything is made easy enough, without much exertion either to preacher or listener. But now suppose a man was present who suffered with sleeplessness and who went home and sat in a corner and reflected as follows: "The whole lasted but a minute, you need only wait a little while, and then the ram will be shown

and the trial will be over." Now if the preacher should find him in this frame of mind, I believe he would confront him in all his dignity and say to him: "Wretch that thou art, to let thy soul lapse into such folly; miracles do not happen, all life is a trial." And as he proceeded he would grow more and more passionate, and would become ever more satisfied with himself; and whereas he had not noticed any congestion in his head whilst preaching about Abraham, he now feels the veins on his forehead swell. Yet who knows but he would stand aghast if the sinner should answer him in a quiet and dignified manner that it was precisely this about which he preached the Sunday before.

Let us then either waive the whole story of Abraham, or else learn to stand in awe of the enormous paradox which constitutes his significance for us, so that we may learn to understand that our age, like every age, may rejoice if it has faith. If the story of Abraham is not a mere nothing, an illusion, or if it is just used for show and as a pastime, the mistake cannot by any means be in the sinner's wishing to do likewise; but it is necessary to find out how great was the deed which Abraham performed, in order that the man may judge for himself whether he has the courage and the mission to do likewise. The comical contradiction in the procedure of the preacher was his reduction of the story of Abraham to insignificance whereas he rebuked the other man for doing the very same thing.

But should we then cease to speak about Abraham? I certainly think not. But if I were to speak about him I would first of all describe the terrors of his trial. To that end leech-like I would suck all the suffering and distress out of the anguish of a father, in order to be able to describe what Abraham suffered whilst yet preserving his faith. I would remind the hearer that the journey lasted three days and a goodly part of the fourth — in fact, these three and a half days ought to become infinitely longer than the few thousand years which separate me from Abraham. I would remind him, as I

think right, that every person is still permitted to turn about-before trying his strength on this formidable task; in fact, that he may return every instant in repentance. Provided this is done, I fear for nothing. Nor do I fear to awaken great desire among people to attempt to emulate Abraham. But to get out a cheap edition of Abraham and yet forbid every one to do as he did, that I call ridiculous.[18]

ENDNOTES.

[1]Freely afetr Genesis 22.

[2]Genesis 20, 11 f.

[3]Genesis 22, 1.

[4]Luke 23, 30.

[5]Genesis 22, 3.

[6]Genesis 22, 9.

[7]*Cf.* Thessalonians 3, 10.

[8]In *Aladdin*, Oehlenschläger's famous dramatic poem, Aladdin, "the cheerful son of nature," is contrasted with Noureddin, representing the gloom of doubt and night.

[9]Matthew 5, 45.

[10]*Cf.* not the legend but Plato's *Symposion.*

[11]Matthew 3, 9.

[12]Isaiah 26, 18.

[13]Themistocles, that is; see Plutarch, Lives.

[14]Matthew 19, 16f.

[15]Your cause, too, is at stake.

[16]By his own impulse and on his own responsibility.

[17]*Cf.* I Cor. 10, 12.

[18]The above, with the omissions indicated, constitutes about one-third of “Fear and Trembling.”

PREPARATION FOR A CHRISTIAN LIFE

I[1]

"Come hither unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11, 28.)

THE INVITATION

"COME HITHER!" — It is not at all strange if he who is in danger and needs help — speedy, immediate help, perhaps — it is not strange if he cries out: "come hither"! Nor it is strange that a quack cries his wares: "come hither, I cure all maladies"; alas, for in the case of the quack it is only too true that it is the physician who has need of the sick. "Come hither all ye who at extortionate prices can pay for the cure — or at any rate for the medicine; here is physic for everybody — who can pay; come hither!"

In all other cases, however, it is generally true that he who can help must be sought; and, when found, may be difficult of access; and, if access is had, his help may have to be implored a long time; and when his help has been implored a long time, he may be moved only with difficulty, that is, he sets a high price on his services; and sometimes, precisely when he refuses payment or generously asks for none, it is only an expression of how infinitely high he values his services. On the other hand, he[2] who sacrificed himself, he sacrifices himself, here too; it is indeed he who seeks those in need of help, is himself the one who goes about and calls, almost imploringly: "come hither!" He, the only one who can help, and help with what alone is indispensable, and can save from the one truly mortal disease, he does not wait for people to come to him, but comes himself, without having been called; for it is he who calls out to them, it is he who holds out help — and what help! Indeed, that simple sage of antiquity[3] was as infinitely right as the majority who do the opposite are wrong, in setting no great price, whether on himself or his instruction; even if he thus in a certain sense proudly expressed the utter difference in kind between payment and his services. But he was not so solicitous as to beg any one to come to him, notwithstanding — or shall I say because? — he was not

altogether sure what his help signified; for the more sure one is that his help is the only one obtainable, the more reason has he, in a human sense, to ask a great price for it; and the less sure one is, the more reason has he to offer freely the possible help he has, in order to do at least something for others. But he who calls himself the Savior, and knows that he is, he calls out solicitously: “come hither unto me!”

“Come hither all ye!” — Strange! For if he who, when it comes to the point, perhaps cannot help a single one — if such a one should boastfully invite everybody, that would not seem so very strange, man’s nature being such as it is. But if a man is absolutely sure of being able to help, and at the same time willing to help, willing to devote his all in doing so, and with all sacrifices, then he generally makes at least one reservation; which is, to make a choice among those he means to help. That is, however willing one may be, still it is not everybody one cares to help; one does not care to sacrifice one’s self to that extent. But he, the only one who can really help, and really help everybody — the only one, therefore, who really can invite everybody — he makes no conditions whatever; but utters the invitation which, from the beginning of the world, seems to have been reserved for him: “Come hither all ye!” Ah, human self-sacrifice, even when thou art most beautiful and noble, when we admire thee most: this is a sacrifice still greater, which is, to sacrifice every provision for one’s own self, so that in one’s willingness to help there is not even the least partiality. Ah, the love that sets no price on one’s self, that makes one forget altogether that he is the helper, and makes one altogether blind as to who it is one helps, but infinitely careful only that he be a sufferer, whatever else he may be; and thus willing unconditionally to help everybody — different, alas! in this from everybody!

“Come hither unto me!” Strange! For human compassion also, and willingly, does something for them that labor and are heavy laden; one

feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, makes charitable gifts, builds charitable institutions, and if the compassion be heartfelt, perhaps even visits those that labor and are heavy laden. But to invite them to come to one, that will never do, because then all one's household and manner of living would have to be changed. For a man cannot himself live in abundance, or at any rate in well-being and happiness, and at the same time dwell in one and the same house together with, and in daily intercourse with, the poor and miserable, with them that labor and are heavy laden! In order to be able to invite them in such wise, a man must himself live altogether in the same way, as poor as the poorest, as lowly as the lowliest, familiar with the sorrows and sufferings of life, and altogether belonging to the same station as they whom he invites, that is, they who labor and are heavy laden. If he wishes to invite a sufferer, he must either change his own condition to be like that of the sufferer, or else change that of the sufferer to be like his own; for if this is not done the difference will stand out only the more by contrast. And if you wish to invite all those who suffer — for you may make an exception with one of them and change his condition — it can be done only in one way, which is, to change your condition so as to live as they do; provided your life be not already lived thus, as was the case with Him who said: "Come hither unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden!" Thus said he; and they who lived with him saw him, and behold! there was not even the least thing in his manner of life to contradict it. With the silent and truthful eloquence of actual performance his life expresses — even though he had never in his life said these words — his life expresses: "Come hither, unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden"! He abides by his word, or he himself is the word; he is what he says, and also in this sense he is the Word.[4]

"All ye that labor and are heavy laden." Strange! His only concern is lest there be a single one who labors and is heavy laden who does not hear this

invitation. Neither does he fear that too many will come. Ah, heart-room makes house-room; but where wilt thou find heart-room, if not in his heart? He leaves it to each one how to understand his invitation: he has a clear conscience about it, for he has invited all those that labor and are heavy laden.

But what means it, then, to labor and be heavy laden? Why does he not offer a clearer explanation so that one may know exactly whom he means, and why is he so chary of his words? Ah, thou narrow-minded one, he is so chary of his words, lest he be narrow-minded; and thou narrow-hearted one, he is so chary of his words lest he be narrow-hearted. For such is his love — and love has regard to all — as to prevent any one from troubling and searching his heart whether he too be among those invited. And he who would insist on a more definite explanation, is he not likely to be some self-loving person who is calculating whether this explanation does not particularly fit himself; one who does not consider that the more of such exact explanations are offered, the more certainly some few would be left in doubt as to whether they were invited? Ah man, why does thine eye see only thyself, why is it evil because he is good?[5] The invitation to all men opens the arms of him who invites, and thus he stands of aspect everlasting; but no sooner is a closer explanation attempted which might help one or the other to another kind of certainty, than his aspect would be transformed and, as it were, a shadow of change would pass over his countenance.

"I will give you rest." Strange! For then the words "come hither unto me" must be understood to mean: stay with me, I am rest; or, it is rest to remain with me. It is not, then, as in other cases where he who helps and says "come hither" must afterwards say: "now depart again," explaining to each one where the help he needs is to be found, where the healing herb grows which will cure him, or where the quiet spot is found where he may rest from labor, or where the happier continent exists where one is not

heavy laden. But no, he who opens his arms, inviting every one — ah, if all, all they that labor and are heavy laden came to him, he would fold them all to his heart, saying: “stay with me now; for to stay with me is rest.” The helper himself is the help. Ah, strange, he who invites everybody and wishes to help everybody, his manner of treating the sick is as if calculated for every sick man, and as if every sick man who comes to him were his only patient. For otherwise a physician divides his time among many patients who, however great their number, still are far, far from being all mankind. He will prescribe the medicine, he will say what is to be done, and how it is to be used, and then he will go — to some other patient; or, in case the patient should visit him, he will let him depart. The physician cannot remain sitting all day with one patient, and still less can he have all his patients about him in his home, and yet sit all day with one patient without neglecting the others. For this reason the helper and his help are not one and the same thing. The help which the physician prescribes is kept with him by the patient all day so that he may constantly use it, whilst the physician visits him now and again; or he visits the physician now and again. But if the helper is also the help, why, then he will stay with the sick man all day, or the sick man with him — ah, strange that it is just this helper who invites all men!

II

COME HITHER ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.

What enormous multiplicity, what an almost boundless diversity, of people invited; for a man, a lowly man, may, indeed, try to enumerate only a few of these diversities — but he who invites must invite all men, even if every one specially and individually.

The invitation goes forth, then — along the highways and the byways, and along the loneliest paths; aye, goes forth where there is a path so lonely that one man only, and no one else, knows of it, and goes forth where there is but one track, the track of the wretched one who fled along that path with his misery, that and no other track; goes forth even where there is no path to show how one may return: even there the invitation penetrates and by itself easily and surely finds its way back — most easily, indeed, when it brings the fugitive along to him that issued the invitation. Come hither, come hither all ye, also thou, and thou, and thou, too, thou loneliest of all fugitives!

Thus the invitation goes forth and remains standing, wheresoever there is a parting of the ways, in order to call out. Ah, just as the trumpet call of the soldiers is directed to the four quarters of the globe, likewise does this invitation sound wherever there is a meeting of roads; with no uncertain sound — for who would then come? — but with the certitude of eternity.

It stands by the parting of the ways where worldly and earthly sufferings have set down their crosses, and calls out: Come hither, all ye poor and wretched ones, ye who in poverty must slave in order to assure yourselves, not of a care-free, but of a toilsome, future; ah, bitter contradiction, to have to slave for — assuring one's self of that under which one groans, of that which one flees! Ye despised and overlooked ones, about whose existence no one, aye, no one is concerned, not so much even as about some domestic animal which is of greater value! Ye sick, and halt, and blind, and deaf, and crippled, come hither! — Ye bed-ridden, aye, come hither, ye too; for the invitation makes bold to invite even the bed-ridden — to come! Ye lepers; for the invitation breaks down all differences in order to unite all, it wishes to make good the hardship caused by the difference in men, the difference which seats one as a ruler over millions, in possession of all gifts of fortune, and drives another one out into the wilderness — and why? (ah, the cruelty

of it!) because (ah, the cruel human inference!) because he is wretched, indescribably wretched. Why then? Because he stands in need of help, or at any rate, of compassion. And why, then? Because human compassion is a wretched thing which is cruel when there is the greatest need of being compassionate, and compassionate only when, at bottom, it is not true compassion! Ye sick of heart, ye who only through your anguish learned to know that a man's heart and an animal's heart are two different things, and what it means to be sick at heart — what it means when the physician may be right in declaring one sound of heart and yet heart-sick; ye whom faithlessness deceived and whom human sympathy — for the sympathy of man is rarely late in coming — whom human sympathy made a target for mockery; all ye wronged and aggrieved and ill-used; all ye noble ones who, as any and everybody will be able to tell you, deservedly reap the reward of ingratitude (for why were ye simple enough to be noble, why foolish enough to be kindly, and disinterested, and faithful) — all ye victims of cunning, of deceit, of backbiting, of envy, whom baseness chose as its victim and cowardice left in the lurch, whether now ye be sacrificed in remote and lonely places, after having crept away in order to die, or whether ye be trampled underfoot in the thronging crowds where no one asks what rights ye have, and no one, what wrongs ye suffer, and no one, where ye smart or how ye smart, whilst the crowd with brute force tramples you into the dust — come ye hither!

The invitation stands at the parting of the ways, where death parts death and life. Come hither all ye that sorrow and ye that vainly labor! For indeed there is rest in the grave; but to sit by a grave, or to stand by a grave, or to visit a grave, all that is far from lying in the grave; and to read to one's self again and again one's own words which one knows by heart, the epitaph which one devised one's self and understands best, namely, who it is that lies buried here, all that is not the same as to lie buried one's self. In the

grave there Is rest, but by the grave there is no rest; for it is said: so far and no farther, and so you may as well go home again. But however often, whether in your thoughts or in fact, you return to that grave — you will never get any farther, you will not get away from the spot, and this is very trying and is by no means rest. Come ye hither, therefore: here is the way by which one may go farther, here is rest by the grave, rest from the sorrow over loss, or rest in the sorrow of loss — through him who everlastingly re-unites those that are parted, and more firmly than nature unites parents with their children, and children with their parents — for, alas! they were parted; and more closely than the minister unites husband and wife — for, alas! their separation did come to pass; and more indissolubly than the bond of friendship unites friend with friend — for, alas! it was broken. Separation penetrated everywhere and brought with it sorrow and unrest; but here is rest! — Come hither also ye who had your abodes assigned to you among the graves, ye who are considered dead to human society, but neither missed nor mourned — not buried and yet dead; that is, belonging neither to life nor to death; ye, alas! to whom human society cruelly closed its doors and for whom no grave has as yet opened itself in pity — come hither, ye also, here is rest, and here is life!

The invitation stands at the parting of the ways, where the road of sin turns away from the inclosure of innocence — ah, come hither, ye are so close to him; but a single step in the opposite direction, and ye are infinitely far from him. Very possibly ye do not yet stand in need of rest, nor grasp fully what that means; but still follow the invitation, so that he who invites may save you from a predicament out of which it is so difficult and dangerous to be saved; and so that, being saved, ye may stay with him who is the Savior of all, likewise of innocence. For even if it were possible that innocence be found somewhere, and altogether pure: why should not innocence also need a savior to keep it safe from evil? — The invitation

stands at the parting of the ways, where the road of sin turns away to enter more deeply into sin. Come hither all ye who have strayed and have been lost, whatever may have been your error and sin: whether one more pardonable in the sight of man and nevertheless perhaps more frightful, or one more terrible in the sight of man and yet, perchance, more pardonable; whether it be one which became known here on earth or one which, though hidden, yet is known in heaven — and even if ye found pardon here on earth without finding rest in your souls, or found no pardon because ye did not seek it, or because ye sought it in vain: ah, return and come hither, here is rest!

The invitation stands at the parting of the ways, where the road of sin turns away for the last time and to the eye is lost in perdition. Ah, return, return, and come hither! Do not shrink from the difficulties of the retreat, however great; do not fear the irksome way of conversion, however laboriously it may lead to salvation; whereas sin with winged speed and growing pace leads forward or — downward, so easily, so indescribably easy — as easily, in fact, as when a horse, altogether freed from having to pull, cannot even with all his might stop the vehicle which pushes him into the abyss. Do not despair over each relapse which the God of patience has patience enough to pardon, and which a sinner should surely have patience enough to humble himself under. Nay, fear nothing and despair not: he that sayeth “come hither,” he is with you on the way, from him come help and pardon on that way of conversion which leads to him; and with him is rest.

Come hither all, all ye — with him is rest; and he will raise no difficulties, he does but one thing: he opens his arms. He will not first ask you, you sufferer — as righteous men, alas, are accustomed to, even when willing to help— “Are you not perhaps yourself the cause of your misfortune, have you nothing with which to reproach yourself?” It is so easy to fall into this very human error, and from appearances to judge a

man’s success or failure: for instance, if a man is a cripple, or deformed, or has an unprepossessing appearance, to infer that therefore he is a bad man; or, when a man is unfortunate enough to suffer reverses so as to be ruined or so as to go down in the world, to infer that therefore he is a vicious man. Ah, and this is such an exquisitely cruel pleasure, this being conscious of one’s own righteousness as against the sufferer — explaining his afflictions as God’s punishment, so that one does not even — dare to help him; or asking him that question which condemns him and flatters our own righteousness, before helping him. But he will not ask you thus, will not in such cruel fashion be your benefactor. And if you are yourself conscious of your sin he will not ask about it, will not break still further the bent reed, but raise you up, if you will but join him. He will not point you out by way of contrast, and place you outside of himself, so that your sin will stand out as still more terrible, but he will grant you a hiding place within him; and hidden within him your sins will be hidden. For he is the friend of sinners. Let him but behold a sinner, and he not only stands still, opening his arms and saying “come hither,” nay, but he stands — and waits, as did the father of the prodigal son; or he does not merely remain standing and waiting, but goes out to search, as the shepherd went forth to search for the strayed sheep, or as the woman went to search for the lost piece of silver. He goes — nay, he has gone, but an infinitely longer way than any shepherd or any woman, for did he not go the infinitely long way from being God to becoming man, which he did to seek sinners?

III

COME HITHER UNTO ME ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.

“Come hither!” For he supposes that they that labor and are heavy laden feel their burden and their labor, and that they stand there now, perplexed

and sighing — one casting about with his eyes to discover whether there is help in sight anywhere; another with his eyes fixed on the ground, because he can see no consolation; and a third with his eyes staring heavenward, as though help was bound to come from heaven — but all seeking. Therefore he sayeth: “come hither!” But he invites not him who has ceased to seek and to sorrow.— “Come hither!” For he who invites knows that it is a mark of true suffering, if one walks alone and broods in silent disconsolateness, without courage to confide in any one, and with even less self-confidence to dare to hope for help. Alas, not only he whom we read about was possessed of a dumb devil.[6] No suffering which does not first of all render the sufferer dumb is of much significance, no more than the love which does not render one silent; for those sufferers who run on about their afflictions neither labor nor are heavy laden. Behold, therefore the inviter will not wait till they that labor and are heavy laden come to him, but calls them lovingly; for all his willingness to help might, perhaps, be of no avail if he did not say these words and thereby take the first step; for in the call of these words: “come hither unto me!” he comes himself to them. Ah, human compassion — sometimes, perhaps, it is indeed praiseworthy self-restraint, sometimes, perhaps, even true compassion, which may cause you to refrain from questioning him whom you suppose to be brooding over a hidden affliction; but also, how often indeed is this compassion but worldly wisdom which does not care to know too much! Ah, human’compassion — how often was it not pure curiosity, and not compassion, which prompted you to venture into the secret of one afflicted; and how burdensome it was — almost like a punishment of your curiosity — when he accepted your invitation and came to you! But he who sayeth these redeeming words “Come hither!” he is not deceiving himself in saying these words, nor will he deceive you when you come to him in order to find rest by throwing your burden on him. He follows the promptings of his heart in saying these words, and his heart

follows his words; if you then follow these words, they will follow you back again to his heart. This follows as a matter of course — ah, will you not follow the invitation?— “Come hither!” For he supposes that they that labor and are heavy laden are so worn out and overtaxed, and so near swooning that they have forgotten, as though in a stupor, that there is such a thing as consolation. Alas, or he knows for sure that there is no consolation and no help unless it is sought from him; and therefore must he call out to them “Come hither!”

“Come hither!” For is it not so that every society has some symbol or token which is worn by those who belong to it? When a young girl is adorned in a certain manner one knows that she is going to the dance: Come hither all ye that labor and are heavy laden — come hither! You need not carry an external and visible badge; come but with your head anointed and your face washed, if only you labor in your heart and are heavy laden.

“Come hither!” Ah, do not stand still and consider; nay, consider, consider that with every moment you stand still after having heard the invitation you will hear the call more faintly and thus withdraw from it, even though you are standing still.— “Come hither!” Ah, however weary and faint you be from work, or from the long, long and yet hitherto fruitless search for help and salvation, and even though you may feel as if you could not take one more step, and not wait one more moment, without dropping to the ground: ah, but this one step and here is rest!— “Come hither!” But if, alas, there be one who is so wretched that he cannot come? — Ah, a sigh is sufficient; your mere sighing or him is also to come hither.

THE PAUSE

COME HITHER UNTO ME ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I SHALL GIVE YOU REST.

PAUSE NOW! BUT what is there to give pause? That which in the same instant makes all undergo an absolute change — so that, instead of seeing an immense throng ofthem that labor and are heavy laden following the invitation, you will in the end behold the very opposite, that is, an immense throng of men who flee back shudderingly, scrambling to get away, trampling all down before them; so that, if one were to infer the sense of what had been said from the result it produced, one would have to infer that the words had been "*procul o procul este profani*," rather than "come hither" — that gives pause which is infinitely more important and infinitely more decisive: THE PERSON OF HIM WHO INVITES. Not in the sense that he is not the man to do what he has said, or not God, to keep what he has promised; no, in a very different sense.

Pause is given by the fact that he who invites is, and insists on being, the definite historic person he was 1800 years ago, and that he as this definite person, and living under the conditions then obtaining, spoke these words of invitation. — He is not, and does not wish to be, one about whom one may simply know something from history (i.e. world history, history proper, as against Sacred History); for from history one cannot "learn" anything about him, the simple reason being that nothing can be "known" about him. — He does not wish to be judged in a human way, from the results of his life; that is, he is and wishes to be, a rock of offense and the object of faith. To judge him after the consequences of his life is a blasphemy, for being God, his

life, and the very fact that he was then living and really did live, is infinitely more important than all the consequences of it in history.

A. Who spoke these words of invitation?

He that invites. Who is he? Jesus Christ. Which Jesus Christ? He that sits in glory on the right side of his Father? No. From his seat of glory he spoke not a single word. Therefore it is Jesus Christ in his lowliness, and in the condition of lowliness, who spoke these words.

Is then Jesus Christ not the same? Yes, verily, he is today, and was yesterday, and 1800 years ago, the same who abased himself, assuming the form of a servant — the Jesus Christ who spake these words of invitation. It is also he who hath said that he would return again in glory. In his return in glory he is, again, the same Jesus Christ; but this has not yet come to pass.

Is he then not in glory now? Assuredly, that the Christian believes. But it was in his lowly condition that he spoke these words; he did not speak them from his glory. And about his return in glory nothing can be known, for this can in the strictest sense be a matter of belief only. But a believer one cannot become except by having gone to him in his lowly condition — to him, the rock of offense and the object of faith. In other shape he does not exist, for only thus did he exist. That he will return in glory is indeed expected, but can be expected and believed only by him who believes, and has believed, in him as he was here on earth.

Jesus Christ is, then, the same; yet lived he 1800 years ago in debasement, and is transfigured only at his return. As yet he has not returned; therefore he is still the one in lowly guise about whom we believe that he will return in glory. Whatever he said and taught, every word he spoke, becomes *eo ipso* untrue if we give it the appearance of having been spoken by Christ in his glory. Nay, he is silent. It is the lowly Christ who speaks. The space of time between (i.e. between his debasement and his return in glory) which is at present about 1800 years, and will possibly

become many times 1800 — this space of time, or else what this space of time tries to make of Christ, the worldly information about him furnished by world history or church history, as to who Christ was, as to who it was who really spoke these words — all this does not concern us, is neither here nor there, but only serves to corrupt our conception of him, arid thereby renders untrue these words of invitation.

It is untruthful of me to impute to a person words which he never used. But it is likewise untruthful, and the words he used likewise become untruthful, or it becomes untrue that he used them, if I assign to him a nature essentially unlike the one he had when he did use them. Essentially unlike; for an untruth concerning this or the other trifling circumstance will not make it untrue that "he" said them. And therefore, if it please God to walk on earth in such strict incognito as only one all-powerful can assume, in guise impenetrable to all men; if it please him — and why he does it, for what purpose, that he knows best himself; but whatever the reason and the purpose, it is certain that the incognito is of essential significance — I say, if it please God to walk on earth in the guise of a servant and, to judge from his appearance, exactly like any other man; if it please him to teach men in this guise — if, now, any one repeats his very words, but gives the saying the appearance that it was God that spoke these words: then it is untruthful; for it is untrue that h e said these words.

B. Can one from history[7] learn to know anything about Christ?

No. And why not? Because one cannot "know" anything at all about "Christ"; for he is the paradox, the object of faith, and exists only for faith. But all historic information is communication of "knowledge." Therefore one cannot learn anything about Christ from history. For whether now one learn little or much about him, it will not represent what he was in reality. Hence one learns something else about him than what is strictly true, and therefore learns nothing about him, or gets to know something wrong about him; that is, one is deceived. History makes Christ look different from what he looked in truth, and thus one learns much from history about — Christ? No, not about Christ; because about him nothing can be "known," he can only be believed.

C. Can one prove from history that Christ was God?

LET ME FIRST ask another question: is any more absurd contradiction thinkable than wishing to prove (no matter, for the present, whether one wishes to do so from history, or from whatever else in the wide world one wishes to prove it) that a certain person is God? To maintain that a certain person is God — that is, professes to be God — is indeed a stumbling block in the purest sense. But what is the nature of a stumbling block? It is an assertion which is at variance with all (human) reason. Now think of proving that! But to prove something is to render it reasonable and real. Is it possible, then, to render reasonable and real what is at variance with all reason? Scarcely; unless one wishes to contradict one's self. One can prove only that it is at variance with all reason. The proofs for the divinity of Christ given in Scripture, such as the miracles and his resurrection from the grave exist, too, only for faith; that is, they are no "proofs," for they are not meant to prove that all this agrees with reason but, on the contrary, are meant to prove that it is at variance with reason and therefore a matter of faith.

First, then, let us take up the proofs from history. "Is it not 1800 years ago now that Christ lived, is not his name proclaimed and reverenced throughout the world, has not his teaching (Christianity) changed the aspect of the world, having victoriously affected all affairs: has then history not sufficiently, or more than sufficiently, made good its claim as to who he was, and that he was — God?" No, indeed, history has by no means sufficiently, or more than sufficiently, made good its claim, and in fact history cannot accomplish this in all eternity. However, as to the first part of the statement, it is true enough that his name is proclaimed throughout the world — as to whether it is reverenced, that I do not presume to decide.

Also, it is true enough that Christianity has transformed the aspect of the world, having victoriously affected all affairs, so victoriously indeed, that everybody now claims to be a Christian.

But what does this prove? It proves, at most, that Jesus Christ was a great man, the greatest, perhaps, who ever lived. But that he was God — stop now, that conclusion shall with God's help fall to the ground.

Now, if one intends to introduce this conclusion by assuming that Jesus Christ was a man, and then considers the 1800 years of history (i.e. the consequences of his life), one may indeed conclude with a constantly rising superlative: he was great, greater, the greatest, extraordinarily and astonishingly the greatest man who ever lived. If one begins, on the other hand, with the assumption (of faith) that he was God, one has by so doing stricken out and car celled the 1800 years as not making the slightest difference, one way or the other, because the certainty of faith is on an infinitely higher plane. And one course or the other one must take; but we shall arrive at sensible conclusions only if we take the latter.

If one takes the former course one will find it impossible — unless by committing the logical error of passing over into a different category — one will find it impossible in the conclusion suddenly to arrive at the new category "God"; that is, one cannot make the consequence, or consequences, of — a man's life suddenly prove at a certain point in the argument that this man was God. If such a procedure were correct one ought to be able to answer satisfactorily a question like this: what must the consequence be, how great the effects, how many centuries must elapse, in order to infer from the consequences of a man's life — for such was the assumption — that he was God; or whether it is really the case that in the year 300 Christ had not yet been entirely proved to be God, though certainly the most extraordinarily, astonishingly, greatest man who had ever lived, but that a few more centuries would be necessary to prove that he was God. In

that case we would be obliged to infer that people in the fourth century did not look upon Christ as God, and still less they who lived in the first century; whereas the certainty that he was God would grow with every century. Also, that in our century this certainty would be greater than it had ever been, a certainty in comparison with which the first centuries hardly so much as glimpsed his divinity. You may answer this question or not, it does not matter.

In general, is it at all possible by the consideration of the gradually unfolding consequences of something to arrive at a conclusion different in quality from what we started with? Is it not sheer insanity (providing man is sane) to let one's judgment become so altogether confused as to land in the wrong category? And if one begins with such a mistake, then how will one be able, at any subsequent point, to infer from the consequences of something, that one has to deal with an altogether different, in fact, infinitely different, category? A foot-print certainly is the consequence of some creature having made it. Now I may mistake the track for that of, let us say, a bird; whereas by nearer inspection, and by following it for some distance, I may make sure that it was made by some other animal. Very good; but there was no infinite difference in quality between my first assumption and my later conclusion. But can I, on further consideration and following the track still further, arrive at the conclusion: therefore it was a spirit — a spirit that leaves no tracks? Precisely the same holds true of the argument that from the consequences of a human life — for that was the assumption — we may infer that therefore it was God.

Is God then so like man, is there so little difference between the two that, while in possession of my right senses, I may begin with the assumption that Christ was human? And, for that matter, has not Christ himself affirmed that he was God? On the other hand, if God and man resemble each other so closely, and are related to each other to such a degree — that is, essentially

belong to the same category of beings, then the conclusion "therefore he was God" is nevertheless just humbug, because if that is all there is to being God, then God does not exist at all. But if God does exist and, therefore, belongs to a category infinitely different from man, why, then neither I nor any one else can start with the assumption that Christ was human and end with the conclusion that therefore he was God. Any one with a bit of logical sense will easily recognize that the whole question about the consequences of Christ's life on earth is incommensurable with the decision that he is God. In fact, this decision is to be made on an altogether different plane: man must decide for himself whether he will believe Christ to be what he himself affirmed he was, that is, God, or whether he will not believe so.

What has been said — mind you, providing one will take the time to understand it — is sufficient to make a logical mind stop drawing any inferences from the consequences of Christ's life: that therefore he was God. But faith in its own right protests against every attempt to approach Jesus Christ by the help of historical information about the consequences of his life. Faith contends that this whole attempt is — blasphemous. Faith contends that the only proof left unimpaired by unbelief when it did away with all the other proofs of the truth of Christianity, the proof which — indeed, this is complicated business — I say, which unbelief invented in order to prove the truth of Christianity — the proof about which so excessively much ado has been made in Christendom, the proof of 1800 years: as to this, faith contends that it is — blasphemy.

With regard to a man it is true that the consequences of his life are more important than his life. If one, then, in order to find out who Christ was, and in order to find out by some inference, considers the consequences of his life: why, then one changes him into a man by this very act — a man who, like other men, is to pass his examination in history, and history is in this case as mediocre an examiner as any half-baked teacher in Latin.

But strange! By the help of history, that is, by considering the consequences of his life, one wishes to arrive at the conclusion that therefore, therefore he was God; and faith makes the exactly opposite contention that he who even begins with this syllogism is guilty of blasphemy. Nor does the blasphemy consist in assuming hypothetically that Christ was a man. No, the blasphemy consists in the thought which lies at the bottom of the whole business, the thought without which one would never start it, and of whose validity one is fully and firmly assured that it will hold also with regard to Christ — the thought that the consequences of his life are more important than his life; in other words, that he is a man. The hypothesis is: let us assume that Christ was a man; but at the bottom of this hypothesis, which is not blasphemy as yet, there lies the assumption that, the consequences of a man's life being more important than his life, this will hold true also of Christ. Unless this is assumed one must admit that one's whole argument is absurd, must admit it before beginning — so why begin at all? But once it is assumed, and the argument is started, we have the blasphemy. And the more one becomes absorbed in the consequences of Christ's life, with the aim of being able to make sure whether or no he was God, the more blasphemous is one's conduct; and it remains blasphemous so long as this consideration is persisted in.

Curious coincidence: one tries to make it appear that, providing one but thoroughly considers the consequences of Christ's life, this "therefore" will surely be arrived at — and faith condemns the very beginning of this attempt as blasphemy, and hence the continuance in it as a worse blasphemy.

"History," says faith, "has nothing to do with Christ." With regard to him we have only Sacred History (which is different in kind from general history), Sacred History which tells of his life and career when in debasement, and tells also that he affirmed himself to be God. He is the

paradox which history never will be able to digest or convert into a general syllogism. He is in his debasement the same as he is in his exaltation — but the 1800 years, or let it be 18,000 years, have nothing whatsoever to do with this. The brilliant consequences in the history of the world which are sufficient, almost, to convince even a professor of history that he was God, these brilliant consequences surely do not represent his return in glory! Forsooth, in that case it were imagined rather meanly! The same thing over again: Christ is thought to be a man whose return in glory can be, and can become, nothing else than the consequences of his life in history — whereas Christ's return in glory is something absolutely different and a matter of faith. He abased himself and was swathed in rags — he will return in glory; but the brilliant consequences in history, especially when examined a little more closely, are too shabby a glory — at any rate a glory of an altogether incongruous nature, of which faith therefore never speaks, when speaking about his glory. History is a very respectable science indeed, only it must not become so conceited as to take upon itself what the Father will do, and clothe Christ in his glory, dressing him up with the brilliant garments of the consequences of his life, as if that constituted his return. That he was God in his debasement and that he will return in glory, all this is far beyond the comprehension of history; nor can all this be got from history, excepting by an incomparable lack of logic, and however incomparable one's view of history may be otherwise.

How strange, then, that one ever wished to use history in order to prove Christ divine.

D. Are the consequences of Christ's life more important than his life?

NO, BY NO means, but rather the opposite; for else Christ were but a man.

There is really nothing remarkable in a man having lived. There have certainly lived millions upon millions of men. If the fact is remarkable, there must have been something remarkable in a man's life. In other words, there is nothing remarkable in his having lived, but his life was remarkable for this or that. The remarkable thing may, among other matters, also be what he accomplished; that is, the consequences of his life.

But that God lived here on earth in human form, that is infinitely remarkable. No matter if his life had had no consequences at all — it remains equally remarkable, infinitely remarkable, infinitely more remarkable than all possible consequences. Just try to introduce that which is remarkable as something secondary and you will straightway see the absurdity of doing so: now, if you please, whatever remarkable is there in God's life having had remarkable consequences? To speak in this fashion is merely twaddling.

No, that God lived here on earth, that is what is infinitely remarkable, that which is remarkable in itself. Assuming that Christ's life had had no consequences whatsoever — if any one then undertook to say that therefore his life was not remarkable it would be blasphemy. For it would be remarkable all the same; and if a secondary remarkable characteristic had to be introduced it would consist in the remarkable fact that his life had no consequences. But if one should say that Christ's life was remarkable because of its consequences, then this again were a blasphemy; for it is his life which in itself is the remarkable thing.

There is nothing very remarkable in a man’s having lived, but it is infinitely remarkable that God has lived. God alone can lay so much emphasis on himself that the fact of his having lived becomes infinitely more important than all the consequences which may flow therefrom and which then become a matter of history.

E. A comparison between Christ and a man who in his life endured the same treatment by his times as Christ endured.

Let us imagine a man, one of the exalted spirits, one who was wronged by his times, but whom history later reinstated in his rights by proving by the consequences of his life who he was. I do not deny, by the way, that all this business of proving from the consequences is a course well suited to "a world which ever wishes to be deceived." For he who was contemporary with him and did not understand who he was, he really only imagines that he understands when he has got to know it by help of the consequences of the noble one's life. Still, I do not wish to insist on this point, for with regard to a man it certainly holds true that the consequences of his life are more important than the fact of his having lived.

Let us imagine one of these exalted spirits. He lives among his contemporaries without being understood, his significance is not recognized — he is misunderstood, and then mocked, persecuted, and finally put to death like a common evil-doer. But the consequences of his life make it plain who he was; history which keeps a record of these consequences reinstates him in his rightful position, and now he is named in one century after another as the great and the noble spirit, and the circumstances of his debasement are almost completely forgotten. It was blindness on the part of his contemporaries which prevented them from comprehending his true nature, and wickedness which made them mock him and deride him, and finally put him to death. But be no more concerned about this; for only after his death did he really become what he was, through the consequences of his life which, after all, are by far more important than his life.

Now is it not possible that the same holds true with regard to Christ? It was blindness and wickedness on the part of those times[8] — but be no more

concerned about this, history has now re-instated him, from history we know now who Jesus Christ was, and thus justice is done him.

Ah, wicked thoughtlessness which thus interprets Sacred History like profane history, which makes Christ a man! But can one, then, learn anything from history about Jesus? (*cf. B*) No, nothing. Jesus Christ is the object of faith — one either believes in him or is offended by him; for "to know" means precisely that such knowledge does not pertain to him. History can therefore, to be sure, give one knowledge in abundance; but "knowledge" annihilates Jesus Christ.

Again — ah, the impious thoughtlessness! — for one to presume to say about Christ's abasement: "Let us be concerned no more about his abasement." Surely, Christ's abasement was not something which merely happened to him — even if it was the sin of that generation to crucify him; was surely not something that simply happened to him and, perhaps, would not have happened to him in better times. Christ himself wished to be abased and lowly. His abasement (that is, his walking on earth in humble guise, though being God) is therefore a condition of his own making, something he wished to be knotted together, a dialectic knot which no one shall presume to untie, and which no one will untie, for that matter, until he himself shall untie it when returning in his glory.

His case is, therefore, not the same as that of a man who, through the injustice inflicted on him by his times, was not allowed to be himself or to be valued at his worth, while history revealed who he was; for Christ himself wished to be abased — it is precisely this condition which he desired. Therefore, let history not trouble itself to do him justice, and let us not in impious thoughtlessness presumptuously imagine that we as a matter of course know who he was. For that no one knows; and he who believes it must become contemporaneous with him in his abasement. When God chooses to let himself be born in lowliness, when he who holds all

possibilities in his hand assumes the form of a humble servant, when he fares about defenseless, letting people do with him what they list: he surely knows what he does and why he does it; for it is at all events he who has power over men, and not men who have power over him — so let not history be so impertinent as to wish to reveal who he was.

Lastly — ah the blasphemy! — if one should presume to say that the percussion which Christ suffered expresses something accidental! If a man is persecuted by his generation it does not follow that he has the right to say that this would happen to him in every age. Insofar there is reason in what posterity says about letting bygones be bygones. But it is different with Christ! It is not he who by letting himself be born, and by appearing in Palestine, is being examined by history; but it is he who examines, his life is the examination, not only of that generation, but of mankind. Woe unto the generation that would presumptuously dare to say: “let bygones be bygones, and forget what he suffered, for history has now revealed who he was and has done justice by him.”

If one assumes that history is really able to do this, then the abasement of Christ bears an accidental relation to him; that is to say, he thereby is made a man, an extraordinary man to whom this happened through the wickedness of that generation — a fate which he was far from wishing to suffer, for he would gladly (as is human) have become a great man; whereas Christ voluntarily chose to be the lowly one and, although it was his purpose to save the world, wished also to give expression to what the “truth” suffered then, and must suffer in every generation. But if this is his strongest desire, and if he will show himself in his glory only at his return, and if he has not returned as yet; and if no generation may be without repentance, but on the contrary every generation must consider itself a partner in the guilt of that generation: then woe to him who presumes to deprive him of his lowliness, or to cause what he suffered to be forgotten,

and to clothe him in the fabled human glory of the historic consequences of his life, which is neither here nor there.

F. The Misfortune of Christendom

But precisely this is the misfortune, and has been the misfortune, in Christendom that Christ is neither the one nor the other — neither the one he was when living on earth, nor he who will return in glory, but rather one about whom we have learned to know something in an inadmissible way from history — that he was somebody or other of great account. In an inadmissible and unlawful way we have learned to know him; whereas to believe in him is the only permissible mode of approach. Men have mutually confirmed one another in the opinion that the sum total of information about him is available if they but consider the result of his life and the following 1800 years, i.e. the consequences. Gradually, as this became accepted as the truth, all pith and strength was distilled out of Christianity; the paradox was relaxed, one became a Christian without noticing it, without noticing in the least the possibility of being offended by him. One took over Christ's teachings, turned them inside out and smoothed them down — he himself guaranteeing them, of course, the man whose life had had such immense consequences in history! All became plain as day — very naturally, since Christianity in this fashion became heathendom.

There is in Christendom an incessant twaddling on Sundays about the glorious and invaluable truths of Christianity, its mild consolation. But it is indeed evident that Christ lived 1800 years ago; for the rock of offense and object of faith has become a most charming fairy-story character, a kind of divine good old man.[9] People have not the remotest idea of what it means to be offended by him, and still less, what it means to worship. The qualities for which Christ is magnified are precisely those which would have most enraged one, if one had been contemporaneous with him; whereas now one feels altogether secure, placing implicit confidence in the result and, relying

altogether on the verdict of history that he was the great man, concludes therefore that it is correct to do so. That is to say, it is the correct, arid the noble, and the exalted, and the true, thing — if it is he who does it; which is to say, again, that one does not in any deeper sense take the pains to understand what it is he does, and that one tries even less, to the best of one's ability and with the help of God, to be like him in acting rightly and nobly, and in an exalted manner, and truthfully. For, not really fathoming it in any deeper sense, one may, in the exigency of a contemporaneous situation, judge him in exactly the opposite way. One is satisfied with admiring and extolling and is, perhaps, as was said of a translator who rendered his original word for word and therefore without making sense, "too conscientious," — one is, perhaps, also too cowardly and too weak to wish to understand his real meaning.

Christendom has done away with Christianity, without being aware of it. Therefore, if anything is to be done about it, the attempt must be made to re-introduce Christianity.

II

He who invites is, then, Jesus Christ in his abasement, it is he who spoke these words of invitation. It is not from his glory that they are spoken. If that were the case, then Christianity were heathendom and the name of Christ taken in vain, and for this reason it cannot be so. But if it were the case that he who is enthroned in glory had said these words: Come hither — as though it were so altogether easy a matter to be clasped in the arms of glory — well, what wonder, then, if crowds of men ran to him! But they who thus throng to him merely go on a wild goose chase, imagining they know who Christ is. But that no one knows; and in order to believe in him one has to begin with his abasement.

He who invites and speaks these words, that is, he whose words they are — whereas the same words if spoken by some one else are, as we have seen, an historic falsification — he is the same lowly Jesus Christ, the humble man, born of a despised maiden, whose father is a carpenter, related to other simple folk of the very lowest class, the lowly man who at the same time (which, to be sure, is like oil poured on the fire) affirms himself to be God.

It is the lowly Jesus Christ who spoke these words. And no word of Christ, not a single one, have you permission to appropriate to yourself, you have not the least share in him, are not in any way of his company, if you have not become his contemporary in lowliness in such fashion that you have become aware, precisely like his contemporaries, of his warning: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.[10]" You have no right to accept Christ's words, and then lie him away; you have no right to accept Christ's words, and then in a fantastic manner, and with the aid of history, utterly change the nature of Christ; for the chatter of history about him is literally not worth a fig.

It is Jesus Christ in his lowliness who is the speaker. It is historically true that h e said these words; but so soon as one makes a change in his historic status, it is false to say that these words were spoken by him.

This poor and lowly man, then, with twelve poor fellows as his disciples, all from the lowest class of society, for some time an object of curiosity, but later on in company only with sinners, publicans, lepers, and madmen; for one risked honor, life, and property, or at any rate (and that we know for sure) exclusion from the synagogue, by even letting one's self be helped by him — come hither now, all ye that labor and are heavy laden! Ah, my friend, even if you were deaf and blind and lame and leprous, if you, which has never been seen or heard before, united all human miseries in your misery — and if he wished to help you by a miracle: it is possible that (as is

human) you would fear more than all your sufferings the punishment which was set on accepting aid from him, the punishment of being cast out from the society of other men, of being ridiculed and mocked, day after day, and perhaps of losing your life. It is human (and it is characteristic of being human) were you to think as follows: “no, thank you, in that case I prefer to remain deaf and blind and lame and leprous, rather than accept aid under such conditions.”

“Come hither, come hither, all, ye that labor and are heavy laden, ah, come hither,” lo! he invites you and opens his arms. Ah, when a gentlemanly man clad in a silken gown says this in a pleasant, harmonious voice so that the words pleasantly resound in the handsome vaulted church, a man in silk who radiates honor and respect on all who listen to him; ah, when a king in purple and velvet says this, with the Christmas tree in the background on which are hanging all the splendid gifts he intends to distribute, why, then of course there is some meaning in these words! But whatever meaning you may attach to them, so much is sure that it is not Christianity, but the exact opposite, something as diametrically opposed to Christianity as may well be; for remember who it is that invites!

And now judge for yourself — for that you have a right to do; whereas men really do not have a right to do what is so often done, viz. to deceive themselves. That a man of such appearance, a man whose company every one shuns who has the least bit of sense in his head, or the least bit to lose in the world, that he — well, this is the absurdest and maddest thing of all, one hardly knows whether to laugh or to weep about it — that he — indeed, that is the very last word one would expect to issue from his mouth; for if he had said: “Come hither and help me,” or: “Leave me alone,” or: “Spare me,” or proudly: “I despise you all,” we could understand that perfectly — but that such a man says: “Come hither to me!” why, I declare, that looks inviting indeed! And still further: “All ye that labor and are heavy laden” —

as though such folk were not burdened enough with troubles, as though they now, to cap all, should be exposed to the consequences of associating with him. And then, finally: “I shall give you rest.” What’s that? — he help them? Ah, I am sure even the most good-natured joker who was contemporary with him would have to say: “Surely, that was the thing he should have undertaken last of all — to wish to help others, being in that condition himself! Why, it is about the same as if a beggar were to inform the police that he had been robbed. For it is a contradiction that one who has nothing, and has had nothing, informs us that he has been robbed; and likewise, to wish to help others when one’s self needs help most.” Indeed it is, humanly speaking, the most harebrained contradiction, that he who literally “hath not where to lay his head,” that he about whom it was spoken truly, in a human sense, “Behold the man!” — that he should say: “Come hither unto me all ye that suffer — I shall help!”

Now examine yourself — for that you have a right to do. You have a right to examine yourself, but you really do not have a right to let yourself without self-examination be deluded by “the others” into the belief, or to delude yourself into the belief, that you are a Christian — therefore examine yourself: supposing you were contemporary with him! True enough he — alas! he affirmed himself to be God! But many another madman has made that claim — and his times gave it as their opinion that he uttered blasphemy. Why, was not that precisely the reason why a punishment was threatened for allowing one’s self to be aided by him? It was the godly care for their souls entertained by the existing order and by public opinion, lest any one should be led astray: it was this godly care that led them to persecute him in this fashion. Therefore, before any one resolves to be helped by him, let him consider that he must not only expect the antagonism of men, but — consider it well! — even if you could bear the consequences of that step — but consider well, that the punishment

meted out by men is supposed to be God's punishment of him, "the blasphemer" — of him who invites!

Come hither now all ye that labor and are heavy laden!

How now? Surely this is nothing to run after — some little pause is given, which is most fittingly used to go around about by way of another street. And even if you should not thus sneak out in some way — always providing you feel yourself to be contemporary with him — or sneak into being some kind of Christian by belonging to Christendom: yet there will be a tremendous pause given, the pause which is the very condition that faith may arise: you are given pause by the possibility of being offended in him.

But in order to make it entirely clear, and bring it home to our minds, that the pause is given by him who invites, that it is he who gives us pause and renders it by no means an easy, but a peculiarly difficult, matter to follow his invitation, because one has no right to accept it without accepting also him who invites — in order to make this entirely clear I shall briefly review his life under two aspects which, to be sure, show some difference though both essentially pertain to his abasement. For it is always an abasement for God to become man, even if he were to be an emperor of emperors; and therefore he is not essentially more abased because he is a poor, lowly man, mocked, and as Scripture adds,[11] spat upon.

THE FIRST PHASE OF HIS LIFE

AND NOW LET us speak about him in a homely fashion, just as his contemporaries spoke about him, and as one speaks about some contemporary — let him be a man of the same kind as we are, whom one meets on the street in passing, of whom one knows where he lives and in what story, what his business is, who his parents are, his family, how he looks and how he dresses, with whom he associates, "and there is nothing extraordinary about him, he looks as men generally look"; in short, let us speak of him as one speaks of some contemporary about whom one does not make a great ado; for in living life together with these thousands upon thousands of real people there is no room for a fine distinction like this: "Possibly, this man will be remembered in centuries to come," and "at the same time he is really only a clerk in some shop who is no whit better than his fellows." Therefore, let us speak about him as contemporaries speak about some contemporary. I know very well what I am doing; and I want you to believe that the canting and indolent world-historic habit we have of always reverently speaking about Christ (since one has learned all about it from history, and has heard so much about his having been something very extraordinary, indeed, or something of that kind) — that reverent habit, I assure you, is not worth a row of pins but is, rather, sheer thoughtlessness, hypocrisy, and as such blasphemy; for it is blasphemy to reverence thoughtlessly him whom one is either to believe in or to be offended in.

It is the lowly Jesus Christ, a humble man, born of a maiden of low degree, whose father is a carpenter. To be sure, his appearance is made under conditions which are bound to attract attention to him. The small nation among whom he appears, God's Chosen People as they call themselves, live in anticipation of a Messiah who is to bring a golden period

to land and people. You must grant that the form in which he appears is as different as possible from what most people would have expected. On the other hand, his appearance corresponds more to the ancient prophecies with which the people are thought to have been familiar. Thus he presents himself. A predecessor has called attention to him, and he himself fastens attention very decidedly on himself by signs and wonders which are noised abroad in all the land — and he is the hero of the hour, surrounded by unnumbered multitudes of people wheresoever he fares. The sensation aroused by him is enormous, every one's eyes are fastened on him, every one who can go about, aye even those who can only crawl, must see the wonder — and every one must have some opinion about him, so that the purveyors of ready-made opinions are put to it because the demand is so furious and the contradictions so confusing. And yet he, the worker of miracles, ever remains the humble man who literally hath not where to lay his head.

And let us not forget: signs and wonders as contemporary events have a markedly greater elasticity in repelling or attracting than the tame stories generally re-hashed by the priests, or the still tamer stories about signs and wonders that happened — 1800 years ago! Signs and wonders as contemporary events are something plaguy and importunate, something which in a highly embarrassing manner almost compels one to have an opinion, something which, if one does not happen to be disposed to believe, may exasperate one excessively by thus forcing one to be contemporaneous with it. Indeed, it renders existence too complicated, and the more so, the more thoughtful, developed, and cultured one is. It is a peculiarly ticklish matter, this having to assume that a man who is contemporaneous with one really performs signs and wonders; but when he is at some distance from one, when the consequences of his life stimulate the imagination a bit, then it is not so hard to imagine, in a fashion, that one believes it.

As I said, then, the people are carried away with him; they follow him jubilantly, and see signs and wonders, both those which he performs and those which he does not perform, and they are glad in their hope that the golden age will begin, once he is king. But the crowd rarely have a clear reason for their opinions, they think one thing today and another tomorrow. Therefore the wise and the critical will not at once participate. Let us see now what the wise and the critical must think, so soon as the first impression of astonishment and surprise has subsided.

The shrewd and critical man would probably say: "Even assuming that this person is what he claims to be, that is, something extraordinary — for as to his affirming himself to be God I can, of course, not consider that as anything but an exaggeration for which I willingly make allowances, and pardon him, if I really considered him to be something extraordinary; for I am not a pedant — assuming then, which I hesitate to do, for it is a matter on which I shall at any rate suspend my judgment — assuming then that he is really performing miracles: is it not an inexplicable mystery that this person can be so foolish, so weak-minded, so altogether devoid of worldly wisdom, so feeble, or so good-naturedly vain, or whatever else you please to call it — that he behaves in this fashion and almost forces his benefactions on men? Instead of proudly and commandingly keeping people away from himself at a distance marked by their profoundest submission, whenever he does allow himself to be seen, at rare occasions: instead of doing so, think of his being accessible to every one, or rather himself going to every one, of having intercourse with everybody, almost as if being the extraordinary person consisted in his being everybody's servant,[12] as if the extraordinary person he claims to be were marked by his being concerned only lest men should fail to be benefited by him — in short as if being an extraordinary person consisted in being the most solicitous of all persons. The whole business is inexplicable to me — what he wants,

what his purpose is, what end he has in mind, what he expects to accomplish; in a word, what the meaning of it all is. He who by so many a wise saying reveals so profound an insight into the human heart, he must certainly know what I, using but half of my wits, can predict for him, viz. that in such fashion one gets nowhere in the world — unless, indeed, despising prudence, one consistently, aims to make a fool of one's self or, perchance, goes so far in sincerity as to prefer being put to death; but anyone, one desiring that must certainly be crazy. Having such profound knowledge of the human heart he certainly ought to know that the thing to do is to deceive people and then to give one's deception the appearance of being a benefaction conferred on the whole race. By doing so one reaps all advantages, even the one whose enjoyment is the sweetest of all, which is, to be called by one's contemporaries a benefactor of the human race — for, once in your grave, you may snap your fingers at what posterity may have to say about you. But to surrender one's self altogether, as he does, and not to think the least of one's self — in fact, almost to beg people to accept these benefactions: no, I would not dream of joining his company. And, of course, neither does he invite me; for, indeed, he invites only them that labor and are heavy laden."

Or he would reason as follows: "His life is simply a fantastic dream. In fact, that is the mildest expression one can use about it; for, when judging him in this fashion, one is good-natured enough to forget altogether the evidence of sheer madness in his claim to be God. This is wildly fantastical. One may possibly live a few years of one's youth in such fashion. But he is now past thirty years. And he is literally nothing. Still further, in a very short time he will necessarily lose all the respect and reputation he has gained among the people, the only thing, you may say, he has gained for himself. One who wishes to keep in the good graces of the people — the riskiest chance imaginable, I will admit — he must act differently. Not

many months will pass before the crowd will grow tired of one who is so altogether at their service. He will be regarded as a ruined person, a kind of outcast, who ought to be glad to end his days in a corner, the world forgetting, by the world forgot; providing he does not, by continuing his previous behavior, prefer to maintain his present attitude and be fantastic enough to wish to be put to death, which is the unavoidable consequence of persevering in that course. What has he done for his future? Nothing. Has he any assured position? No. What expectations has he? None. Even this trifling matter: what will he do to pass the time when he grows older, the long winter nights, what will he do to make them pass — why, he cannot even play cards! He is now enjoying a bit of popular favor — in truth, of all movable property the most movable — which in a trice may turn into an enormous popular hatred of him. — Join his company? No, thank you, I am still, thank God, in my right mind."

Or he may reason as follows: "That there is something extraordinary about this person — even if one reserves the right, both one's own and that of common sense, to refrain from venturing any opinion as to his claim of being God — about that there is really little doubt. Rather, one might be indignant at Providence's having entrusted such a person with these powers — a person who does the very opposite of what he himself bids us do: that we shall not cast our pearls before the swine; for which reason he will, as he himself predicts, come to grief by their turning about and trampling him under their feet. One may always expect this of swine; but, on the other hand, one would not expect that he who had himself called attention to this likelihood, himself would do precisely[13] what he knows one should not do. If only there were some means of cleverly stealing his wisdom — for I shall gladly leave him in undisputed possession of that very peculiar thought of his that he is God — if one could but rob his wisdom without, at the same time, becoming his disciple! If one could only steal up to him at night and

lure it from him; for I am more than equal to editing and publishing it, and better than he, if you please. I undertake to astonish the whole world by getting something altogether different out of it; for I clearly see there is something wondrously profound in what he says, and the misfortune is only that he is the man he is. But perhaps, who knows, perhaps it is feasible, anyway, to fool him out of it. Perhaps in that respect too he is good-natured and simple enough to communicate it quite freely to me. It is not impossible; for it seems to me that the wisdom he unquestionably possesses, evidently has been entrusted to a fool, seeing there is so much contradiction in his life. — But as to joining his company and becoming his disciple — no, indeed, that would be the same as becoming'a fool oneself." Or he might reason as follows: "If this person does indeed mean to further what is good and true (I do not venture to decide this), he is helpful at least, in this respect, to youths and inexperienced people. For they will be benefited, in this serious life of ours, by learning, the sooner the better, and very thoroughly — he opens the eyes even of the blindest to this — that all this pretense of wishing to live only for goodness and truth contains a considerable admixture of the ridiculous. He proves how right the poets of our times are when they let truth and goodness be represented by some half-witted fellow, one who is so stupid that you can knock down a wall with him. The idea of exerting one's self, as this man does, of renouncing everything but pains and trouble, to be at beck and call all day long, more eager than the busiest family physician — and pray why? Because he makes a living by it? No, not in the very least; it has never occurred to him, as far as I can see, to want something in return. Does he earn any money by it? No, not a red cent — he has not a red cent to his name, and if he did he would forthwith give it away. Does he, then, aspire to a position of honor and dignity in the state? On the contrary, he loathes all worldly honor. And he who, as I said, condemns all worldly honor, and practices the art of

living on nothing; he who, if any one, seems best fitted to pass his life in a most comfortable *dolce far niente* — which is not such a bad thing — : he lives under a greater strain than any government official who is rewarded by honor and dignity, lives under a greater strain than any business man who earns money like sand. Why does he exert himself thus, or (why this question about a matter not open to question?) why should any one exert himself thus — in order to attain to the happiness of being ridiculed, mocked, and so forth? To be sure, a peculiar kind of pleasure! That one should push one's way through a crowd to reach the spot where money, honor, and glory are distributed — why, that is perfectly understandable; but to push forward to be whipped: how exalted, how Christian, how stupid!"

Or he will reason as follows: "One hears so many rash opinions about this person from people who understand nothing — and worship him; and so many severe condemnations of him by those who, perhaps, misunderstand him after all. As for me, I am not going to allow myself to be accused of venturing a hasty opinion. I shall keep entirely cool and calm; in fact, which counts for still more, I am conscious of being as reasonable and moderate with him as is possible. Grant now — which, to be sure. I do only to a certain extent — grant even that one's reason is impressed by this person. What, then, is my opinion about him? My opinion is, that for the present, I can form no opinion about him. I do not mean about his claim of being God; for about that I can never in all eternity have an opinion. No, I mean about him as a man. Only by the consequences of his life shall we be able to decide whether he was an extraordinary person or whether, deceived by his imagination, he applied too high a standard, not only to himself, but also to humanity in general. More I cannot do for him, try as I may — if he were my only friend, my own child, I could not judge him more leniently, nor differently, either. It follows from this, to be sure, that in all probability,

and for good reasons, I shall not ever be able to have any opinion about him. For in order to be able to form an opinion I must first see the consequences of his life, including his very last moments; that is, he must be dead. Then, and perhaps not even then, may I form an opinion of him. And even granting this, it is not really an opinion about him, for he is then no more. No more is needed to say why it is impossible for me to join him while he is living. The authority he is said to show in his teaching can have no decisive influence in my case; for it is surely easy to see that his thought moves in a circle. He quotes as authority that which he is to prove, which in its turn can be proved only by the consequences of his life; provided, of course, it is not connected with that fixed idea of his about being God, because if it is therefore he has this authority (because he is God) the answer must be: yes — if! So much, however, I may admit, that if I could imagine myself self living in some later age, and if the consequences of his life as shown in history had made it plain that he was the extraordinary person he in a former age claimed to be, then it might very well be — in fact, I might come very near, becoming his disciple."

An ecclesiastic would reason as follows: "For an impostor and demagogue he has, to say the truth, a remarkable air of honesty about him; for which reason he cannot be so absolutely dangerous, either, even though the situation looks dangerous enough while the squall is at its height, and even though the situation looks dangerous enough with his enormous popularity — until the squall has passed over and the people — yes, precisely the people — overthrow him again. The honest thing about him is his claim to be the Messiah when he resembles him so little as he does. That is honest, just as if some one in preparing bogus paper-money made the bills so poorly that every one who knows the least about it cannot fail to detect the fraud. — True enough, we all look forward to a Messiah, but surely no one with any sense expects God himself to come, and every

religious person shudders at the blasphemous attitude of this person. We look forward to a Messiah, we are all agreed on that. But the governance of the world does not go forward tumultuously, by leaps and bounds; the development of the world, as is indicated by the very fact that it is a development, proceeds by evolution, not by revolution. The true Messiah will therefore look quite different, and will arrive as the most glorious flower, and the highest development, of that which already exists. Thus will the true Messiah come, and he will proceed in an entirely different fashion: he will recognize the existing order as the basis of things, he will summon all the clergy to council and present to them the results accomplished by him, as well as his credentials — and then, if he obtain the majority of the votes when the ballot is cast, he will be received and saluted as the extraordinary person, as the one he is: the Messiah.[14]

"However, there is a duplicity in this man's behavior; he assumes too much the role of judge. It seems as if he wished to be, at one and the same time, both the judge who passes sentence on the existing order of things, and the Messiah. If he does not wish to play the role of the judge, then why his absolute isolation, his keeping at a distance from all which has to do with the existing order of things? And if he does not wish to be the judge, then why his fantastic flight from reality to join the ignorant crowd, then why with the haughtiness of a revolutionary does he despise all the intelligence and efficiency to be found in the existing order of things? And why does he begin afresh altogether, and absolutely from the bottom up, by the help of — fishermen and artisans? May not the fact that he is an illegitimate child fitly characterize his entire relation to the existing order of things? On the other hand, if he wishes to be only the Messiah, why then his warning about putting a piece of new cloth unto an old garment.[15] For these words are precisely the watchwords of every revolution since they are expressive of a person's discontent with the existing order and of his wish

to destroy it. That is, these words reveal his desire to remove existing conditions, rather than to build on them and better them, if one is a reformer, or to develop them to their highest possibility, if one is indeed the Messiah. This is duplicity. In fact, it is not feasible to be both judge and Messiah. Such duplicity will surely result in his downfall.[16] The climax in the life of a judge is his death by violence, and so the poet pictures it correctly; but the climax in the life of the Messiah cannot possibly be his death. Or else, by that very fact, he would not be the Messiah, that is, he whom the existing order expects in order to deify him. This duplicity has not as yet been recognized by the people, who see in him their Messiah; but the existing order of things cannot by any manner of means recognize him as such. The people, the idle and loafing crowd, can do so only because they represent nothing less than the existing order of things. But as soon as the duplicity becomes evident to them, his doom is sealed. Why, in this respect his predecessor was a far more definitely marked personality, for he was but one thing, the judge. But what confusion and thoughtlessness, to wish to be both, and what still worse confusion, to acknowledge his predecessor as the judge — that is, in other words, precisely to make the existing order of things receptive and ripe for the Messiah who is to come after the judge, and yet not wish to associate himself with the existing order of things!"

And the philosopher would reason as follows: "Such dreadful or, rather, insane vanity, that a single individual claims to be God, is a thing hitherto unheard of. Never before have we been witness to such an excess of pure subjectivity and sheer negation. He has no doctrines, no system of philosophy, he knows really nothing, he simply keeps on repeating, and making variations on, some unconnected aphoristic sentences, some few maxims, and a couple of parables by which he dazzles the crowd for whom he also performs signs and wonders; so that they, instead of learning

something, or being improved, come to believe in one who in a most brazen way constantly forces his subjective views on us. There is nothing objective or positive whatever in him and in what he says. Indeed, from a philosophical point of view, he does not need to fear destruction for he has perished already, since it is inherent in the nature of subjectivity to perish. One may in all fairness admit that his subjectivity is remarkable and that, be it as it may with the other miracles, he constantly repeats his miracle with the five small loaves,[17] viz., by means of a few lyric utterances and some aphorisms he rouses the whole country. But even if one were inclined to overlook his insane notion of affirming himself to be God, it is an incomprehensible mistake, which, to be sure, demonstrates a lack of philosophic training, to believe that God could reveal himself in the form of an individual. The race, the universal, the total, is God; but the race surely is not an individual! Generally speaking, that is the impudent assumption of subjectivity, which claims that the individual is something extraordinary. But sheer insanity is shown in the claim of an individual to be God. Because if the insane thing were possible, viz. that an individual might be God, why, then this individual would have to be worshipped, and a more beastly philosophic stupidity is not conceivable."

The astute statesman would reason as follows: "That at present this person wields great power is undeniable — entirely disregarding, of course, this notion of his that he is God. Foibles like these, being idiosyncrasies, do not count against a man and concern no one, least of all a statesman. A statesman is concerned only with what power a man wields; and that he does wield great power cannot, as I have remarked, be denied. But what he intends to do, what his aim is, I cannot make out at all. If this be calculation it must be of an entirely new and peculiar order, not so altogether unlike what is otherwise called madness. He possesses points of considerable strength; but he seems to defeat, rather than to use, it; he expends it without

himself getting any returns. I consider him a phenomenon with which — as ought to be one's rule with all phenomena — a wise man should not have anything to do, since it is impossible to calculate him or the catastrophe threatening his life. It is possible that he will be made king. It is possible, I say; but it is not impossible, or rather, it is just as possible, that he may end on the gallows. He lacks earnestness in all his endeavors. With all his enormous stretch of wings he only hovers and gets nowhere. He does not seem to have any definite plan of procedure, but just hovers. Is it for his nationality he is fighting, or does he aim at a communistic revolution? Does he wish to establish a republic or a kingdom? With which party does he affiliate himself to combat which party, or does he wish to fight all parties?

"I have anything to do with him? — No, that would be the very last thing to enter my mind. In fact, I take all possible precautions to avoid him. I keep quiet, undertake nothing, act as if I did not exist; for one cannot even calculate how he might interfere with one's undertakings, be they ever so unimportant, or at any rate, how one might become involved in the vortex of his activities. Dangerous, in a certain sense enormously dangerous, is this man. But I calculate that I may ensnare him precisely by doing nothing. For overthrown he must be. And this is done most; safely by letting him do it himself, by letting him stumble over himself. I have, at least at this moment, not sufficient power to bring about his fall; in fact, I know no one who has. To undertake the least thing against him now, means to be crushed one's self. No, my plan is constantly to exert only negative resistance to him, that is, to do nothing, and he will probably involve himself in the enormous consequences he draws after him, till in the end he will tread on his own train, as it were, and thus fall."

And the steady citizen would reason as follows (which would then become the opinion of his family): "Now, let us be human, everything is good when done in moderation, too little and too much spoil everything,

and as a French saying has it which I once heard a traveling salesman use: every power which exceeds itself comes to a fall — and as to this person, his fall is certainly sure enough. I have earnestly spoken to my son and warned and admonished him not to drift into evil ways and join that person. And why? Because all people are running after him. That is to say, what sort of people? Idlers and loafers, street-walkers and tramps, who run after everything. But mightily few of the men who have house and property, and nobody who is wise and respected, none after whom I set my clock, neither councillor Johnson, nor senator Anderson, nor the wealthy broker Nelson — oh no! they know what's what. And as to the ministry who ought to know most about such matters — ah, they will have none of him. What was it pastor Green said in the club the other evening? 'That man will yet come to a terrible end,' he said. And Green, he can do more than preach, you oughtn't to hear him Sundays in church so much as Mondays in the club — I just wished I had half his knowledge of affairs! He said quite correctly, and as if spoken out of my own heart: 'Only idlers and loafers are running after that man.' And why do they run after him? Because he performs some miracles. But who is sure they are miracles, or that he can confer the same power on his disciples? And, in any case, a miracle is something mightily uncertain, whereas the certain is the certain. Every serious father who has grown-up children must be truly alarmed lest his sons be seduced and join that man together with the desperate characters who follow him — desperate characters who have nothing to lose. And even these, how does he help them? Why, one must be mad to wish to be helped in this fashion. Even the poorest beggar is brought to a worse estate than his former one, is brought to a pass he could have escaped by remaining what he was, that is, a beggar and no more."

And the mocker, not the one hated on account of his malice, but the one who is admired for his wit and liked for his good nature, he would reason as

follows: "It is, after all, a rich idea which is going to prove useful to all of us, that an individual who is in no wise different from us claims to be God. If that is not being a benefactor of the race then I don't know what charity and beneficence are. If we assume that the characteristic of being God — well, who in all the world would have hit on that idea? How true that such an idea could not have entered into the heart of man[18] — but if we assume that it consists in looking in no wise different from the rest of us, and in nothing else: why, then we are all gods. Q. E. D. Three cheers for him, the inventor of a discovery so extraordinarily important for mankind! Tomorrow I, the undersigned, shall proclaim that I am God, and the discoverer at least will not be able to contradict me without contradicting himself. At night all cats are gray; and if to be God consists in looking like the rest of us, absolutely and altogether like the rest of mankind: why, then it is night and we all are..., or what is it I wanted to say: we all are God, every one of us, and no one has a right to say he isn't as well off as his neighbor. This is the most ridiculous situation imaginable, the contradiction here being the greatest imaginable, and a contradiction always making for a comical effect. But this is in no wise my discovery, but solely that of the discoverer: this idea that a man of exactly the same appearance as the rest of us, only not half so well dressed as the average man, that is, a poorly dressed person who, rather than being God, seems to invite the attention of the society for the relief of the poor — that he is God! I am only sorry for the director of the charitable society that he will not get a raise from this general advancement of the human race but that he will, rather, lose his job on account of this, etc."

Ah, my friend, I know well what I am doing, I know my responsibility, and my soul is altogether assured of the correctness of my procedure. Now then, imagine yourself a contemporary of him who invites. Imagine yourself to be a sufferer, but consider well to what you expose yourself in becoming

his disciple and following him. You expose yourself to losing practically everything in the eyes of all wise and sensible and respected men. He who invites demands of you that you surrender all, give up everything; but the common sense of your own times and of your contemporaries will not give you up, but will judge that to join him is madness. And mockery will descend cruelly upon you; for while it will almost spare him, out of compassion, you will be thought madder than a march-hare for becoming his disciple. People will say: “That h e is a wrong-headed enthusiast, that can’t be helped. Well and good; but to become — in all seriousness — his disciple, that is the greatest piece of madness imaginable. There surely is but one possibility of being madder than a madman, which is the higher madness of joining a madman in all seriousness and regarding him as a sage.”

Do not say that the whole presentation above is exaggerated. Ah, you know (but, possibly, have not fully realized it) that among all the respectable men, among all the enlightened and sensible men, there was but one — though it is easily possible that one or the other of them, impelled by curiosity, entered into conversation with him — that there was but one among them who sought him in all seriousness.[19] And he came to him — in the night! And as you know, in the night one walks on forbidden paths, one chooses the night to go to places of which one does not like to be known as a frequenter. Consider the opinion of the inviter implied in this — it was a disgrace to visit him, something no man of honor could afford to do, as little as to pay a nightly visit to — but no, I do not care to say in so many words what would follow this “as little as.”

Come hither to me now all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE SECOND PHASE OF HIS LIFE

HIS END WAS what all the wise and the sensible, the statesmen and the citizens and the mockers, etc., predicted it would be. And as was later spoken to him, in a moment when, it would seem, the most hardened ought to have been moved to sympathy, and the very stones to tears: "He saved others; let him save himself,[20]" and as it has been repeated thousands upon thousands of times, by thousands upon thousands: "What was it he spoke of before, saying his hour was not yet come[21] — is it come now, perchance?" — It has been repeated, alas, the while the single individual, the believer, shudders whenever considering — while yet unable to refrain from gazing into the depth of what to men is a meaningless absurdity — shudders when considering that God in human guise, that his divine teaching, that these signs and wonders which might have made a very Sodom and Gomorrha reform its ways, in reality produced the exact opposite, and caused the teacher to be shunned, hated, despised.

Who he is, one can recognize more easily now when the powerful ones and the respected ones, and all the precautionary measures of those upholding the existing order, have corrected any wrong conception one might have entertained about him at first — now when the people have lost their patience to wait for a Messiah, seeing that his life, instead of rising in dignity, lapsed into ever greater degradation. Who, pray, does not recognize that a man is judged according to the society in which he moves — and now, think of his society! Indeed, his society one might well designate as equivalent to being expelled from "human society"; for his society are the lowest classes of the people, with sinners and publicans among them, people whom everybody with the slightest self-respect shuns for the sake of his good name and reputation — and a good name and reputation surely are

about the least one can wish to preserve. In his company there are, furthermore, lepers whom every one flees, madmen who can only inspire terror, invalids and wretches — squalor and misery. Who, then, is this person that, though followed by such a company, still is the object of the persecution of the mighty ones? He is one despised as a seducer of men, an impostor, a blasphemer! And if any one enjoying a good reputation refrains from expressing contempt of him, it is really only a kind of compassion; for to fear him is, to be sure, something different.

Such, then, is his appearance; for take care not to be influenced by anything that you may have learned after the event — as, how his exalted spirit, with an almost divine majesty, never was so markedly manifest as just them. Ah, my friend, if you were the contemporary of one who is not only himself "excluded from the synagogue" but, as you will remember, whose very help meant being "excluded from the synagogue" — I say, if you were the contemporary of an outcast, who in every respect answers to that term, (for everything has two sides): then you will scarcely be the man to explain all this in terms directly contrary to appearances;[22] or, which is the same thing, you will not be the "single individual" which, as you well know, no one wants to be, and to be which is regarded as a ridiculous oddity, perhaps even as a crime.

And now — for they are his society chiefly — as to his apostles! What absurdity; though not — what new absurdity, for it is quite in keeping with the rest — his apostles are some fishermen, ignorant people who but the other day followed their trade. And tomorrow, to pile one absurdity on the other, they are to go out into the wide world and transform its aspect. And it is he who claims to be God, and these are his duly appointed apostles! Now, is he to make his apostles respected, or are perhaps the apostles to make him respected? Is he, the inviter, is he an absurd dreamer? Indeed, his procession would make it seem so; no poet could have hit on a better idea.

A teacher, a sage, or whatever you please to call him, a kind of stranded genius, who affirms himself to be God — surrounded by a jubilant mob, himself accompanied by some publicans, criminals, and lepers; nearest to him a chosen few, his apostles. And these judges so excellently competent as to what truth is, these fishermen, tailors, and shoe-makers, they do not only admire him, their teacher and master, whose every word is wisdom and truth: they do not only see what no one else can see, his exaltedness and holiness, nay, but they see God in him and worship him. Certainly, no poet could invent a better situation, and it is doubtful if the poet would not forget the additional item that this same person is feared by the mighty ones and that they are scheming to destroy him. His death alone can reassure and satisfy them. They have set an ignominious punishment on joining his company, on merely accepting aid from him; and yet they do not feel secure, and cannot feel altogether reassured that the whole thing is mere wrong-headed enthusiasm and absurdity. Thus the mighty ones. The populace who had Idolized him, the populace have pretty nearly given him up, only in moments does their old conception of him blaze forth again. In all his existence there is not a shred the most envious of the envious might envy him to have. Nor do the mighty ones envy his life. They demand his death for safety's sake, so that they may have peace again, when all has returned to the accustomed ways, peace having been made still more secure by the warning example of his death.

These are the two phases of his life. It began with the people's idolizing him, whereas all who were identified with the existing order of things, all who had power and influence, vengefully, but in a cowardly and hidden manner, laid their snares for him — in which he was caught, then? Yes, but he perceived it well. Finally the people discover that they had been deceived in him, that the fulfillment he would bring them answered least of all to their expectations of wonders and mountains of gold. So the people

deserted him and the mighty ones drew the snare about him — in which he was caught, then? Yes, but he perceived it well. The mighty ones drew the snare together about him — and thereupon the people, who then saw themselves completely deceived, turned against him in hatred and rage.

And — to include that too — compassion would say; or, among the compassionate ones — for compassion is sociable, and likes to assemble together, and you will find spitefulness and envy keeping company with whining soft-headedness: since, as a heathen philosopher observed long ago, no one is so ready to sympathize as an envious person — among the compassionate ones the verdict would be: it is really too bad that this good-hearted fellow is to come to such an end. For he was really a good sort of fellow. Granting it was an exaggeration to claim to be God, he really was good to the poor and the needy, even if in an odd manner, by becoming one of them and going about in the company of beggars. But there is something touching in it all, and one can't help but feel sorry for the poor fellow who is to suffer such a miserable death. For you may say what you will, and condemn him as strongly as you will, I cannot help feeling pity for him. I am not so heard-hearted as not to feel compassion.

We have arrived at the last phase, not of Sacred History, as handed down by the apostles and disciples who believed in Christ, but of profane history, its counterpart.

Come hither now, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; that is, if you feel the need, even if you are of all sufferers the most miserable — if you feel the need of being helped in this fashion, that is, to fall into still greater suffering, then come hither, he will help you.

III

THE INVITATION AND THE INVITER

LET US FORGET for a little while what, in the strictest sense, constitutes the "offense"; which is, that the inviter claims to be God. Let us assume that he did not claim to be more than a man, and let us then consider the inviter and his invitation.

The invitation is surely inviting enough. How, then, shall one explain the bad relation which did exist, this terribly wrong relation, that no one, or practically no one, accepted the invitation; that, on the contrary, all, or practically all — alas! and was it not precisely all who were invited? — that practically all were at one in offering resistance to the inviter, in wishing to put him to death, and in setting a punishment on accepting aid from him? Should one not expect that after an invitation such as he issued all, all who suffered, would come crowding to him, and that all they who were not suffering would crowd to him, touched by the thought of such compassion and mercy, and that thus the whole race would be at one in admiring and extolling the inviter? How is the opposite to be explained? For that this was the outcome is certain enough; and the fact that it all happened in those remote times is surely no proof that the generation then living was worse than other generations! How could any one be so thoughtless as to believe that? For whoever gives any thought to the matter will easily see that it happened in that generation only because they chanced to be contemporaneous with him. How then explain that it happened — that all came to that terribly wrong end, so opposite to what ought to have been expected?

Well, in the first place, if the inviter had looked the figure which purely human compassion would have him be; and, in the second place, if he had

entertained the purely human conception of what constitutes man’s misery — why, then it would probably not have happened.

In the first place: According to this human conception of him he should have been a most generous and sympathetic person, and at the same time possessed of all qualifications requisite for being able to help in all troubles of this world, ennobling the help thus extended by a profound and heartfelt human compassion. Withal (so they would imagine him) he should also have been a man of some distinction and not without a certain amount of human self-assertion — the consequence of which would be, however, that he would neither have been able, in his compassion, to reach down to all sufferers, nor yet to have comprehended fully what constitutes the misery of man and of mankind.

But divine compassion, the infinite unconcern which takes thought only of those that suffer, and not in the least of one’s self, and which with absolute unconcern takes thought of all that suffer: that will always seem to men only a kind of madness, and they will ever be puzzled whether to laugh or to weep about it. Even if nothing else had militated against the inviter, this alone would have been sufficient to make his lot hard in the world.

Let a man but try a little while to practice divine compassion, that is, to be somewhat unconcerned in his compassion, and you will at once perceive what the opinion of mankind would be. For example: let one who could occupy some higher rank in society, let him not (preserving all the while the distinction of his position) lavishly give to the poor, and philanthropically (i.e. in a superior fashion) visit the poor and the sick and the wretched — no, let him give up altogether the distinction of his position and in all earnest choose the company of the poor and the lowly, let him live altogether with the people, with workmen, hodmen, mortar-mixers, and the like! Ah, in a quiet moment, when not actually beholding him, most of us will be moved to tears by the mere thought of it; but no sooner would they

see him in this company — him who might have attained to honor and dignity in the world — see him walking along in such goodly company, with a bricklayer's apprentice on his right side and a cobbler's boy on his left, but — well, what then? First they would devise a thousand explanations to explain that it is because of queer notions, or obstinacy, or pride, or vanity that he chooses this mode of life. And even if they would refrain from attributing to him these evil motives they will never be reconciled with the sight of him — in this company. The noblest person in the world will be tempted to laugh, the moment he sees it.

And if all the clergymen in the world, whether in velvet or in silk or in broadcloth or in satin, contradicted me I would say: "You lie, you only deceive people with your Sunday sermons. Because it will always be possible for a contemporary to say about one so compassionate (who, it is to be kept in mind, is our contemporary): I believe he is actuated by vanity, and that is why I laugh and mock at him; but if he were truly compassionate, or had I been contemporary with him, the noble one — why then!" And now, as to those exalted ones "who were not understood by men" — to speak in the fashion of the usual run of sermons — why, sure enough, they are dead. In this fashion these people succeed in playing hide and seek. You simply assume that every contemporary who ventures out so far is actuated only by vanity; and as to the departed, you assume that they are dead and that they, therefore, were among the glorious ones.

It must be remembered, to be sure, that every person wishes to maintain his own level in life, and this fixed point, this steady endeavor, is one of the causes which limit human compassion to a certain sphere. The cheese-monger will think that to live like the inmate of a poorhouse is going too far in expressing one's sympathy; for the sympathy of the cheese-monger is biased in one regard which is, his regard of the opinion of other cheese-mongers and of the saloon-keepers. His compassion is therefore not without

its limitations. And thus with every class — and the journalists, living as they do on the pennies of the poor, under the pretense of asserting and defending their rights, they would be the first to heap ridicule on this unlimited compassion.

To identify one's self wholly and literally with him who is most miserable (and this, only this, is divine compassion), that is to men the "too much" by which one is moved to tears, in a quiet Sunday hour, and about which one unconsciously bursts into laughter when one sees it in reality. The fact is, it is too exalted a sight for daily use; one must have it at some distance to be able to support it. Men are not so familiar with exalted virtue to believe it at once. The contradiction seen here is, therefore, that this exalted virtue manifests itself in — reality, in daily life, quite literally the daily life. When the poet or the orator illustrates this exalted virtue, that is, pictures it in a poetical distance from real life, men are moved; but to see this exalted virtue in reality, the reality of daily life, here in Copenhagen, on the Market Square, in the midst of busy every-day life — ! And when the poet or the orator does touch people it is only for a short time, and just so long are men able to believe, almost, in this exalted virtue. But to see it in real life every day — ! To be sure, there is an enormous contradiction in the statement that the most exalted of all has become the most every-day occurrence!

Insofar, then, it was certain in advance what would be the inviter's fate, even if nothing else had contributed to his doom. The absolute,[23] or all which makes for an absolute standard, becomes by that very fact the victim. For men are willing enough to practice sympathy and self-denial, are willing enough to strive for wisdom, etc.; but they wish themselves to determine the standard and to have that read: "to a certain degree." They do not wish to do away with all these splendid virtues. On the contrary, they want — at a bargain and in all comfort — to have the appearance and the

name of practicing them. Truly divine compassion is therefore necessarily the victim so soon as it shows itself in this world. It descends on earth out of compassion for mankind, and yet it is mankind who trample upon it. And whilst it is wandering about among them, scarcely even the sufferer dares to flee to it, for fear of mankind. The fact is, it is most important for the world to keep up the appearance of being compassionate; but this it made out by divine compassion to be a falsehood — and therefore: away with divine compassion!

But now the inviter represented precisely this divine compassion — and therefore he was sacrificed, and therefore even those that suffered fled from him; for they comprehended (and, humanly speaking, very exactly), what is true of most human infirmities, that one is better off to remain what one is than to be helped by him.

In the second place: the inviter likewise had an other, and altogether different, conception than the purely human one as to what constitutes man's misery. And in this sense only he was intent on helping; for he had with him neither money, nor medicine, nor anything else of this kind.

Indeed, the inviter's appearance is so altogether different from what human compassion wold imagine it that he is a downright offense to men. In a purely human sense there is something positively cruel — something outrageous, something so exasperating as to make one wish to kill that person — in the fact of his inviting to him the poor and the sick and the suffering, and then not being able to do anything for them, except to promise them remission of their sins. "Let us be human, man is no spirit. And when a person is about to die of starvation and you say to him: I promise you the gracious remission of your sins — that is revolting cruelty. In fact it is ridiculous, though too serious a matter to laugh about."

Well (for in quoting these sentiments I wish merely to let offended man discover the contradiction and exaggerate it — it is not I who wish to

exaggerate), well then, the real intention of the inviter was to point out that sin is the destruction of mankind. Behold now, that makes room, as the invitation also made room, almost as if he had said *procul, o procul este profani*, or as if, even though he had not said it, a voice had been heard which thus interpreted the “come hither” of the invitation. There surely are not many sufferers who will follow the invitation. And even if there were one who, although aware that from this inviter no actual wordily help was to be expected, nevertheless had sought refuge with him, touched by his compassion: now even he will flee from him. For is it not almost a bit of sharp practice to profess to be here out of compassion, and then to speak about sin?

Indeed, it is a piece of cunning, unless you are altogether certain that you are a sinner. If it is tooth-ache which bothers you, or if your house is burned to the ground, but if it has escaped you that you are a sinner — why, then it was cunning on his part. It is a bit of sharp practice of him to assert: “I heal all manner of disease,” in order to say, when one approaches him: “the fact is, I recognize only one disease, which is sin — of that I shall cure all them ‘that labor and are heavy laden,’ all them that labor to work themselves free of the power of sin, that labor to resist the evil, and to vanquish their weakness, but succeed only in being laden.” Of this malady he cures “all” persons; even if there were but a single one who turned to him because of this malady: he heals all persons. But to come to him on account of any other disease, and only because of that, is about as useful as to look up an eye-doctor when you have fractured your leg.

CHRISTIANITY AS THE ABSOLUTE; CONTEMPORANEOUSNESS WITH CHRIST

WITH ITS INVITATION to all “that labor and are heavy laden” Christianity has entered the world, not — as the clergy whimperingly and falsely introduce it — as a shining paragon of mild grounds of consolation; but as the absolute. God wills it so because of His love, but it is God who wills it, and He wills it as He wills it. He does not choose to have His nature changed by man and become a nice, that is to say, humane, God; but He chooses to change the nature of man because of His love for them. Neither does He care to hear any human impertinence concerning the why and wherefore of Christianity, and why it entered the world: it is, and is to be, the absolute. Therefore all the relative explanations which may have been ventured as to its why and wherefore are entirely beside the point. Possibly, these explanations were suggested by a kind of human compassion which believes it necessary to haggle a bit — God very likely does not know the nature of man very well, His demands are a bit exorbitant, and therefore the clergymen must haggle and beat Him down a bit.[24] Maybe the clergy hit upon that idea in order to stand well with men and reap some advantage from preaching the gospel; for if its demands are reduced to the purely human, to the demands which arise in man’s heart, why, then men will of course think well of it, and of course also of the amiable preacher who knows how to make Christianity so mild — if the Apostles had been able to do that the world would have esteemed them highly also in their time. However, all this is the absolute. But what is it good for, then — is it not a downright torment? Why, yes, you may say so: from the standpoint of the relative, the absolute is the greatest torment. In his dull, languid, sluggish moments, when man is dominated by his sensual nature, Christianity is an

absurdity to him since it is not commensurable with any definite "wherefore?" But of what use is it, then? Answer: peace! it is the absolute. And thus it must be represented; that is, in a fashion which makes it appear as an absurdity to the sensual nature of man. And therefore is it, ah, so true and, in still another sense, so true when the worldly-wise man who is contemporaneous with Christ condemns him with the words: "he is literally nothing" — quite true, for he is the absolute. And, being absolute, Christianity has come in the world, not as a consolation in the human sense: in fact, quite on the contrary, it is ever reminding one how the Christian must suffer in order to become, or to remain, a Christian — sufferings which he may, if you please, escape by not electing to be a Christian.

There is, indeed, an unbridgeable gulf fixed between God and man. It therefore became plain to those contemporary with Christ that the process of becoming a Christian (that is, being changed into the likeness of God) is, in a human sense, a greater torment and wretchedness and pain than the greatest conceivable human suffering, and moreover a crime in the eyes of one's contemporaries. And thus will it always be; that is, if becoming a Christian in reality means becoming contemporaneous with Christ. And if becoming a Christian does not have that meaning, then all your chatter about becoming a Christian is a vanity, a delusion and a snare, and likewise a blasphemy and a sin against the Holy Ghost.

For with regard to the absolute there is but one time, viz. the present. He who is not contemporaneous with the absolute, for him it does not exist at all. And since Christ is the absolute, it is evident that in respect of him there is but one situation: contemporaneousness. The three, or seven, or fifteen, or seventeen, or eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since his death do not make the least difference, one way or the other. They neither change him nor reveal, either, who he was; for his real nature is revealed only to faith.

Christ, let me say so with the utmost seriousness, is not an actor; neither is he a merely historical personage since, being the paradox, he is an extremely unhistorical personage. But precisely this is the difference between poetry and reality: contemporaneousness.[25] The difference between poetry and history is no doubt this, that history is what has really happened, and poetry, what is possible, the action which is supposed to have taken place, the life which has taken form in the poet's imagination. But that which really happened (the past) is not necessarily reality, except in a certain sense, viz., in contrast with poetry. There is still lacking in it the criterion of truth (as inwardness) and of all religion, there is still lacking the criterion: the truth FOR YOU. That which is past is not a reality — for me, but only my time is. That which you are contemporaneous with, that is reality — for you. Thus every person has the choice to be contemporaneous with the age in which he is living — and also with one other period, with that of Christ's life here on earth; for Christ's life on earth, or Sacred History, stands by itself, outside of history.

History you may read and hear about as a matter of the past. Within its realm you can, if you so care, judge actions by their results. But in Christ's life here on earth there is nothing past. It did not wait for the assistance of any subsequent results in its own time, 1800 years ago; neither does it now. Historic Christianity is sheer moonshine and un-Christian muddle-headedness. For those true Christians who in every generation live a life contemporaneous with that of Christ have nothing whatsoever to do with Christians of the preceding generation, but all the more with their contemporary, Christ. His life here on earth attends every generation, and every generation severally, as Sacred History; his life on earth is eternal contemporaneousness. For this reason all learned lecturing about Christianity, which has its haunt and hiding-place in the assumption that Christianity is something which belongs to the past and to the 1800 years of

history, this lecturing is the most un-Christian of heresies, as every one would readily recognize if he but tried to imagine the generation contemporaneous with Christ as — lecturing! No, we must ever keep in mind that every generation (of the faithful) is contemporaneous with him.

If you cannot master yourself so as to make yourself contemporaneous with him and thus become a Christian; or if he cannot, as your contemporary, draw you to himself, then you will never be a Christian. You may, if you please, honor, praise, thank, and with all worldly goods reward, him who deludes you into thinking that you are a Christian; nevertheless — he deceives you. You may count yourself happy that you were not contemporaneous with one who dared to assert this; or you may be exasperated to madness by the torment, like that of the "gadfly,[26]" of being contemporaneous with one who says this to your face: in the first case you are deceived, whereas in the second you have at least had a chance to hear the truth.

If you cannot bear this contemporaneousness, and not bear to see this sight in reality — if you cannot prevail upon yourself to go out into the street — and behold! it is God in that loathsome procession; and if you cannot bear to think that this will be your condition also if you kneel and worship him: then you are not essentially a Christian. In that case, what you will have to do is to admit the fact unconditionally to yourself, so that you may, above all, preserve humility, and fear and trembling, when contemplating what it means really to be a Christian. For that way you must proceed, in order to learn and to practice how to flee to grace, so that you will not seek it in vain; but do not, for God's sake, go to any one to be "consoled." For to be sure it is written: "blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see,[27]" which word the priests have on the tips of their tongues — curiously enough; at times, perhaps, even to defend a worldly finery which, if contemporary with Christ, would be rather incongruous —

as if these words had not been said solely about those contemporaries of his who believed. If his exaltation had been evident to the eyes so that every one without any trouble could have beheld it, why then it would be incorrect to say that Christ abased himself and assumed the guise of a servant, and it would be superfluous to warn against being offended in him; for why in the world should one take offense in an exalted one arrayed in glory? And how in the world will you explain it that Christ fared so ill and that everybody failed to rush up admiringly to behold what was so plain? Ah no, "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53, 2[28]); and there was to all appearances nothing remarkable about him who in lowly guise, and by performing signs and wonders, constantly presented the possibility of offense, who claimed to be God — in lowly guise; which therefore expresses: in the first place, what God means by compassion, and by one's self needing to be humble and poor if one wishes to be compassionate; and in the second place, what God means by the misery of mankind. Which, again, in both instances is extremely different from what men mean by these things and which every generation, to the end of time, has to learn over again from the beginning, and beginning in every respect at the same point where those who were contemporary with Christ had to start; that is, to practice these things as contemporaries of Christ. Human impatience and unruliness is, of course, of no avail whatsoever. No man will be able to tell you in how far you may succeed in becoming essentially a Christian. But neither will anxiety and fear and despair help one. Sincerity toward God is the first and the last condition, sincerity in confessing to one's self just where one stands, sincerity before God in ever aiming at one's task. However slowly one may proceed, and if it be but crawling — one is, at any rate, in the right position and is not misled and deceived by the trick of changing the nature of Christ who, instead of being God, is thereby made to

represent that sentimental compassion which is man’s own invention; by which men instead of being lifted up to heaven by Christianity, are delayed on their way and remain human and no more.

THE MORAL

"AND WHAT, THEN, does all this signify?" It signifies that every one, in silent inwardness before God, is to feel humility before what it means to be in the strictest sense a Christian; is to confess sincerely before God what his position is, so that he may worthily partake of the grace which is offered to every one who is not perfect, that is, to every one. And it means no more than that. For the rest let him attend to his work and find joy in it, let him love his wife, rejoicing in her, let him raise his children to be a joy to him, and let him love his fellow-men and enjoy life. God will surely let him know if more is demanded of him, and will also help him to accomplish it; for in the terrifying language of the law this sounds so terrible because it would seem as if man by his own strength were to hold fast to Christ, whereas in the language of love it is Christ that holds fast to him. As was said, then, God will surely let him know if more is demanded of him. But what is demanded of every one is that he humble himself in the presence of God under the demands of ideality. And therefore these demands should be heard, and heard again and again in all their absoluteness. To be a Christian has become a matter of no importance whatever — a mummery, something one is anyway, or something one acquires more readily than a trick. In very truth, it is high time that the demands of ideality were heard.

"But if being a Christian is something so terrifying and awesome, how in all the world can a man get it into his head to wish to accept Christianity?" Very simply and, if you so wish, quite according to Luther: only the consciousness of sin, if I may express myself so, can force one — from the other side, grace exerts the attraction — can force one into this terror. And in the same instant the Christian ideal is transformed, and is sheer mildness, grace, love, and pity. Looking at it any other way, however, Christianity is,

and shall ever be, the greatest absurdity, or else the greatest terror. Approach is had only through the consciousness of sin, and to desire to enter by any other way amounts to a crime of lèse-majesté against Christianity.

But sin, or the fact that you and I, individually, are sinners, has at present either been done away with, or else the demands have been lowered in an unjustifiable manner, both in life — the domestic, the civic, as well as the ecclesiastic — and in science which has invented the new doctrine of sin in general. As an equivalent, one has hit upon the device of helping men into Christianity, and keeping them in it, by the aid of a knowledge of world-historic events, of that mild teaching, the exalted and profound spirit of it, about Christ as a friend, etc., etc. — all of which Luther would have called stuff and nonsense and which is really blasphemy, aiming as it does at fraternizing impudently with God and with Christ.

Only the consciousness of being a sinner can inspire one with absolute respect for Christianity. And just because Christianity demands absolute respect it must and shall, to any other way of looking at it, seem absurdity or terror; just because only thereby can the qualitative and absolute emphasis fall on the fact that it is only the consciousness of being a sinner which will procure entrance into it, and at the same time give the vision which, being absolute respect, enables one to see the mildness and love and compassion of Christianity.

The poor in spirit who acknowledge themselves to be sinners, they do not need to know the least thing about the difficulties which appear when one is neither simple nor humble-minded. But when this humble consciousness of one's self, i. e., the individual's, being a sinner is lacking — aye, even though one possessed all human ingenuity and wisdom, and had all accomplishments possible to man: it will profit him little. Christianity will in the same degree rise terrifying before him and transform

itself into absurdity or terror; until he learns, either to renounce it, or else, by the help of what is nothing less than scientific propædeutics, apologetics, etc., that is, through the torments of a contrite heart, to enter into Christianity by the narrow path, through the consciousness of sin.

ENDNOTES.

[1]First Part; comprising about one-fourth of the whole book.

[2]I. e. Christ; *cf.* Introduction p. 41 for the use of small letters.

[3]Socrates.

[4]John I, 1.

[5]Matthew 20, 15.

[6]Luke 11, 14.

[7]Kierkegaard's note: by history we mean here profane history, world history, history as such, as against Sacred History.

[8]*Cf.* the claim of the Pharisees, Matth. 23, 30: "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."

[9]One is here irresistibly reminded of passages in Ibsen's "Brand," e. g., Brand's conversation with Einar, in Act I. *Cf.* also "The invitation and the inviter" and Introduction.

[10]Matthew 11, 6.

[11]Luke 18, 32.

[12]Matthew 20, 27f.

[13]The original here does not agree with the sense of the passage.

[14]Björnson's play of "Beyond Human Power," Part I, Act 2, reads like an elaboration of these views.

[15]Matthew 9, 16.

[16]The following passage is capable of different interpretations in the original..

[17]Matthew 14, 17.

[18]*Cf.* 1 Cor. 2, 9.

[19]John 3, 1f.

[20]Luke 23, 35.

[21]John 2, 4, etc.

[22]The passage is not quite clear. Probably, you will not be the man to explain this phenomenon in the very opposite terms, viz., as the divinity himself.

[23]Here, the unreserved identification with human suffering above referred to.

[24]*Cf.* Footnote 8, in "The Misfortune of Christendom."

[25]As my friend, H. M. Jones, points out, the following passage is essentially Aristotelian: "The true difference is that one (history) relates what has happened, the other (poetry) what may happen"; "Poetics," Chap. IX.

[26]*Cf.* Plato's "Apologia" where Socrates is made to say of himself that he is inflicted on the Athenians like a gadfly on a horse, in order to keep them awake.

[27]Luke 10, 23.

[28]Kierkegaard's own note.

THE PRESENT MOMENT[1]

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION (No. I, 1)

PLATO SAYS SOMEWHERE in his “Republic” that things will go well only when those men shall govern the state who do not desire to govern. The idea is probably that, assuming the necessary capability, a man’s reluctance to govern affords a good guarantee that he will govern well and efficiently; whereas a man desirous of governing may very easily either abuse his power and become a tyrant, or by his desire to govern be brought into an unforeseen situation of dependence on the people he is to rule, so that his government really becomes an illusion.

This observation applies also to other relations where much depends on taking things seriously: assuming there is ability in a man, it is best that he show reluctance to meddle with them. To be sure, as the proverb has it: “where there is a will there is a way”; but true seriousness appears only when a man fully equal to his task is forced, against his will, to undertake it — against his will, but fully equal to the task.

In this sense I may say of myself that I bear a correct relation to the task in hand: to work in the present moment; for God knows that nothing is more distasteful to me.

Authorship — well, I confess that I find it pleasant; and I may as well admit that I have dearly loved to write — in the manner, to be sure, which suits me. And what I have loved to do is precisely the opposite of working in the present moment. What I have loved is precisely remoteness from the present moment — that remoteness in which, like a lover, I may dwell on my thoughts and, like an artist in love with his instrument, entertain myself with language and lure from it the expressions demanded by my thoughts — ah blissful entertainment! In an eternity I should not weary of this occupation.

To contend with men — well, I do like it in a certain sense; for I have by nature a temperament so polemic that I feel in my element only when surrounded by men's mediocrity and meanness. But only on one condition, viz., that I be permitted to scorn them in silence and to satisfy the master passion of my soul: scorn — opportunity for which my career as an author has often enough given me.

I am therefore a man of whom it may be said truthfully that he is not in the least desirous to work in the present moment — very probably I have been called to do so for that very reason.

Now that I am to work in the present moment I must, alas! say farewell to thee, beloved remoteness, where there was no necessity to hurry, but always plenty of time, where I could wait for hours and days and weeks for the proper expression to occur to me; whereas now I must break with all such regards of tender love.[2] And now that I am to work in the present moment I find that there will be not a few persons whom I must oblige by paying my respects to all the insignificant things which mediocrity with great self-importance will lecture about; to all the nonsense which mediocre people, by interpreting into my words their own mediocrity, will find in all I shall write; and to all the lies and calumnies to which a man is exposed against whom those two great powers in society: envy and stupidity, must of necessity conspire.

Why, then, do I wish to work in the present moment? Because I should forever repent of not having done so, and forever repent of having been discouraged by the consideration that the generation now living would find a representation of the essential truths of Christianity interesting and curious reading, at most; having accomplished which they will calmly remain where they are; that is, in the illusion that they are Christians and that the clergy's toying with Christianity really is Christianity.

A PANEGYRIC ON THE HUMAN RACE OR PROOF THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT IS NO LONGER TRUE. (No. II, 5)

IN THE NEW Testament the Savior of the World, our Lord Jesus Christ, represents the matter in this way: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.[3]"

— Now, however, just to confine ourselves to Denmark, the way is as broad as a road can possibly be; in fact, the broadest in Denmark, for it is the road we all travel. At the same time it is in all respects a comfortable way, and the gate as wide as it is possible for a gate to be; for certainly a gate cannot be wider than to let all men pass through *en masse*:

Therefore, the New Testament is no longer true.

All credit is due to the human race! For thou, oh Savior of the World, thou didst entertain too low an estimate of the human race, so that thou didst not foresee the exalted plan which, in its perfectibility, it may reach by steadily continued endeavor!

To such an extent, then, is the New Testament no longer true: the way is the broadest possible, the gate the widest possible, and we are all Christians. In fact, I may venture still further — I am enthusiastic about it, for you see I am writing a panegyric on the human race — I venture to assert that the average Jew living among us is, to a certain degree, a Christian just as well as we others: to such an extent are we all Christians, and to such an extent is the New Testament no longer true.

And, since the point is to find out all which may be adduced to extol the human race, one ought — while having a care not to mention anything which is not true — one ought to watch that nothing, nothing escape one which in this connection may serve as a proof or even as a suggestion. So I venture still further — without wishing to be too positive, as I lack definite

information on this subject and would like, therefore, to refer the matter to specialists in this line to decide — : whether there are not present among our domestic animals, or at any rate the nobler ones, such as the horse, the dog and the cow, indications of a Christian spirit. It is not improbable. Consider what it means to live in a Christian state, among a Christian people, where everything is Christian and everybody is a Christian and where one, turn where one may, sees nothing but Christians and Christianity, truth and martyrs for the truth — it is not at all unlikely that this exerts an influence on the nobler domestic animals and thereby again — which is ever of the utmost importance, according to the opinion both of veterinarians and of clergymen — an influence on their progeny. We have all read of Jacob's ruse, how in order to obtain spotted lambs he put party-colored twigs into the watering troughs, so that the ewes saw nothing but mottled things and then brought forth spotted lambs. Hence it is not improbable — although I do not wish to be positive, since I do not belong to the profession, but would rather have this passed on by a committee composed of both clergymen and veterinarians — I say, it is not improbable that the result will finally be that the domestic animals living in a Christian nation will produce a Christian progeny. The thought almost takes away my breath. To be sure, in that case the New Testament will to the greatest possible extent have ceased to be true.

Ah, Thou Savior of the World, when Thou saidst with great concern: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find Faith on the earth?[4]" — and when Thou didst bow Thy head in death, then didst Thou least of all think that Thy expectations were to be exceeded to such a degree, and that the human race would in such a pretty and touching way render the New Testament no longer true, and Thy significance almost doubtful; for such nice creatures certainly also needed a Savior![5]

IF WE ARE REALLY CHRISTIANS — THEN WHAT IS GOD? (No. II, 8)

IF IT IS not so — that all we mean by being "Christians" is a delusion — that all this machinery, with a State Church and thousands of spiritual-worldly councillors of chancery, etc., is a stupendous delusion which will not be of the least help to us in the life everlasting but, on the contrary, will be turned into an accusation against us — if this is not so; for if it is, then let us, for the sake of life everlasting, get rid of it, the sooner the better —

If it is not so, and if what we understand by being a Christian really is to be a Christian: then what is God in Heaven?

He is the most ridiculous being that ever existed, His Word is the most ridiculous book which has ever appeared; for to move heaven and earth, as He does in his Word, and to threaten with hell and everlasting damnation — in order to obtain as His result what we understand by being Christians (and our assumption was that we are true Christians) — well, now, has anything so ridiculous ever been seen before? Imagine that a fellow with a loaded pistol in his hand held up a person and said to him, "I shall shoot you"; or imagine, what is still more terrible, that he said, "I shall seize you and torture you to death in the most horrible manner, if" — now watch, here's the point— "if you do not render your life here on earth as profitable and as enjoyable as you can": would not that be utterly ridiculous? For to obtain that effect it certainly is not necessary to threaten one with a loaded pistol and the most painful torture; in fact, it is possible that neither the loaded pistol nor the most painful torture would be able to deter him from making his life as comfortable as he can. And the same is true when, by fear of eternal punishment (terrible threat!), and by hope of eternal salvation, He wishes to bring about — well, to make us what we are (for what we call

Christian is, as we have seen, really being Christian), to make us — well, to make us what we are; that is, make men live as they please; for to abstain from committing crimes is nothing but common prudence!

The most terrible blasphemy is the one of which “Christianity” is guilty, which is, to transform the God of the Spirit into — a ridiculous piece of nonsense. And the stupidest kind of worship, more stupid than any idolatry ever was among the heathen, and more stupid than to worship as a god some stone, or an ox, or an insect — more stupid than anything, is to adore as god — a fool!

DIAGNOSIS (No. IV, 1)

I

EVERY PHYSICIAN WILL admit that by the correct diagnosis of a malady more than half the fight against it is won; also, that if a correct diagnosis has not been made, all skill and all care and attention will be of little avail.

The same is true with regard to religion.

We are agreed to let stand the claim that in "Christendom" we are Christians, every one of us; and then we have laid and, perhaps, will lay, emphasis now on this, now on that, side of the teachings of the Scriptures.

But the truth is: we are not only not Christians — no, we are not even the heathen to whom Christianity may be taught without misgivings, and what is worse, we are prevented through a delusion, an enormous delusion (viz. "Christendom," the Christian state, a Christian country, a Christian world) from becoming Christians.

And then the suggestion is made to one to continue untouched and unchanged this delusion and, rather, to furnish a new presentation of the teachings of Christ.[6]

This has been suggested; and, in a certain sense, it is altogether fitting. Just because one lives in a delusion (not to speak even of being interested in keeping up the delusion), one is bound to desire that which will feed the malady — a common enough observation this — the sick man desiring precisely those things which feed his malady.

II

Imagine a hospital. The patients are dying off like so many flies. The methods are changed, now this way, now that: of no avail! What may be the

cause? The cause lies in the building — the whole building is tainted. The patients are put down as having died, the one of this, the other of that, disease, but strictly speaking this is not true; for they all died from the taint which is in the building.

The same is true in religion. That religious conditions are wretched, and that people in respect of their religion are in a wretched condition, nothing is more certain. So one ventures the opinion that if we could but have a new hymn-book; and another, if we could but have a new service-book; and a third, if we could but have a musical service, etc., etc. — that then matters would mend.

In vain; for the fault lies in the edifice. The whole ramshackle pile of a State Church which has not been aired, spiritually speaking, in times out of mind — the air in it has developed a taint. And therefore religious life has become diseased or has died out; alas, for precisely that which the worldly mind regards as health is, in a Christian sense, disease — just as, vice versa, that which is healthy in a Christian sense, is regarded as diseased from a worldly point of view.

Then let the ramshackle pile collapse, get it out of the way, close all these shops and booths which are the only ones which are excepted from the strict Sunday regulations, forbid this official double-dealing, put them out of commission, and provide for them, for all these quacks: — even though it is true that the royally attested physician is the acceptable one, and he who is not so attested is a quack: in Christianity it is just the reverse; that is, the royally attested teacher is the quack, is a quack by the very fact that he is royally attested — and let us worship God again in simplicity, instead of making a fool of him in splendid edifices; let us be in earnest again and stop playing; for a Christianity preached by royal officials who are payed and insured by the state and who use the police against the others, such a Christianity bears about the same relation to the Christianity of the New

Testament as swimming with the help of a cork-belt or a bladder does to swimming alone — it is mere play.

Yes, let that come about. What Christianity needs is not the stifling protection of the state — ah no, it needs fresh air, it needs persecution and — the protection of God. The state does only mischief in averting persecution and surely is not the medium through which God's protection can be conducted. Whatever you do, save Christianity from the state, for with its protection it overlies Christianity like a fat woman overlying her child with her carcass, beside teaching Christianity the most abominable bad habits — as, e.g., to use the police force and to call that Christianity.

III

A person is growing thinner every day and is wasting away. What may the trouble be? For surely he is not suffering want! "No, sure enough," says the doctor, "that is not the trouble. The trouble is precisely with his eating, with his eating in season and out of season, with his eating without being hungry, with his using stimulants to produce an appetite, and in this manner ruining his digestion, so that he is wasting away as if he suffered want."

The same is true in religion. The worst of all is to satisfy a craving which has not as yet made its appearance, to anticipate it, or — worse still — by the help of stimulants to produce something which looks like a craving, which then is promptly satisfied. Ah, the shame of it! And yet this is exactly what is being done in religion where people are in very truth fooled out of the real meaning of life and helped to waste their lives. That is in very truth, the effect of this whole machinery of a state church and a thousand royal officials who, under the pretense of being spiritual guides for the people, trick them out of the highest thing in life, which is, the solicitude about one's self, and the need which would surely of itself find a teacher or minister after its own mind; whereas now the need — and it is just the

growth of this sense, of a need which gives life its highest significance — whereas now this need does not arise at all, but on the contrary is forestalled by being satisfied long before it can arise. And this is the way, they claim, this is the way to continue the work which the Savior of Mankind did begin — stunting the human race as they do. And why is this so? Because there happen to be a thousand and one royal officials who have to support their families by furnishing what is called — spiritual guidance for men's souls!

THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT; THE CHRISITANITY OF "CHRISTENDOM." (No. V, 4)

THE INTENTION OF Christianity was: to change everything.

The result, the Christianity of "Christendom" is: everything, literally everything, remained as it had been, with just the difference that to everything was affixed the attribute "Christian" — and for the rest (strike up, fiddlers!) we live in Heathendom — so merrily, so merrily the dance goes around; or, rather, we live in a Heathendom made more refined by the help of Life Everlasting and by help of the thought that, after all, it is all Christian!

Try it, point to what you will, and you shall see that I am right in my assertion.

If what Christianity demanded was chastity, then away with brothels! But the change is that the brothels have remained just as they did in Heathendom, and the proportion of prostitutes remained the same, too; to be sure, they became "Christian" brothels! A brothel-keeper is a "Christian" brothel-keeper, he is a Christian as well as we others. Exclude him from church membership? "Why, for goodness sake," the clergyman will say, "what would things come to if we excluded a single paying member?" The brothel-keeper dies and gets a funeral oration with a panegyric in proportion to the amount he pays. And after having earned his money in a manner which, from a Christian point of view, is as filthy and base as can be (for, from a Christian point of view it would be more honorable if he had stolen it) the clergyman returns home. He is in a hurry, for he is to go to church in order to deliver an oration or, as Bishop Martensen would say, "bear witness."

But if Christianity demanded honesty and uprightness, and doing away with this swindle, the change which really came about was this: the swindling has remained just as in Heathendom, “every one (every Christian) is a thief in his own line”; only, the swindling has taken, on the predicate “Christian.” So we now have “Christian” swindling — and the “clergyman” bestows his blessing on this Christian community, this Christian state, in which one cheats just as one did in Heathendom, at the same time that one pays the “clergyman,” that is, the biggest swindler of them all, and thus cheats one’s self into Christianity.

And if Christianity demanded seriousness in life and doing away with the praise and approbation of vanity — why, everything has remained as before, with just this difference that it has assumed the predicate “Christian.” Thus the trumpery business with decorations, titles, and rank, etc. has become Christian — and the clergyman (that most indecent of all indecencies, that most ridiculous of all ridiculous hodgepodges), he is as pleased as Punch to be decorated himself — with the “cross.” The cross? Why, certainly; for in the Christianity of “Christendom” has not the cross become something like a child’s hobby-horse and tin-trumpet?

And so with everything. There is implanted in man no stronger instinct, after that of self-preservation, than the instinct of reproduction; for which reason Christianity seeks to reduce its strength, teaching that it is better not to marry; “but if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.” But in Christendom the propagation of the race has become the serious business of life and of Christianity; and the clergyman — that quint-essence of nonsense done up in long clothes — the clergyman, the teacher of Christianity, of the Christianity of the New Testament, has his income adjusted to the fact that the human race is active in propagating the race, and gets a little something for each child!

As I said, look about you and you will find that everything is as I told you: the change from Heathendom consists in everything remaining unchanged but having assumed the predicate “Christian.”

MODERN RELIGIOUS GUARANTEES (No. V, 8)

In times long, long past people looked at matters in this fashion: it was demanded of him who would be a teacher of Christianity that his life should be a guarantee for the teachings he proclaimed.

This idea was abandoned long ago, the world having become wiser and more serious. It has learned to set little store by these illiberal and sickly notions of personal responsibility, having learned to look for purely objective ends. The demand is made now of the teacher that his life should guarantee that what he has to say is entertaining and dramatic stuff, amusing, and purely objective.

Some examples. Suppose you wanted to speak about Christianity, that is, the Christianity of the New Testament which expresses preference for the single state — and suppose you yourself are unmarried: why, my dear man! you ought not to speak on this subject, because your congregation might think that you meant what you said and become disquieted, or it might feel insulted that you thus, very improperly, mixed in your own affairs. No, dear sir, it will take a little longer before you are entitled to speak seriously on this matter so as really to satisfy the congregation. Wait till you have buried your first wife and are well along with your second wife: then it will be time for you to stand before your congregation to preach and "bear witness" that Christianity prefers the single state — then you will satisfy them altogether; for your life will furnish the guarantee that it is all tomfoolery and great fun, or that what you say is — interesting. Indeed, how interesting! For just as, to make it interesting, the husband must be unfaithful to his wife and the wife to her husband, likewise truth becomes interesting, intensely interesting, only when one lets one's self be carried away by one's feelings, be fascinated by them — but of course does the

precise opposite and thus in an underhand manner is re-assured in persisting in one's ways.

Do you wish to speak about Christianity's teaching contempt for titles and decorations and all the follies of fame — and should you happen to be neither a person of rank nor anything of the kind: Why, my dear sir! You ought not to undertake to speak on this subject. Why, your congregation might think you were in earnest, or feel insulted by such a lack of tact in forcing your personality on their notice. No, indeed, you ought to wait till you have a lot of decorations, the more the merrier; you ought to wait till you drag along with a rigmarole of titles, so many that you hardly know yourself what you are called: then is your time come to stand before your congregation to preach and "bear witness" — and you will undoubtedly satisfy them; for your life will then furnish the guarantee that it is but a dramatic divertissement, an interesting forenoon entertainment.

Is it your intention to preach Christianity in poverty, and insist that only thus it is taught in truth — and you happen to be very literally a poor devil: Why, my dear sir! You ought not to venture to speak on this subject. Why, your congregation might think you were in earnest, they might become afraid and lose their good humor, and they might be very unpleasantly affected by thus having poverty-thrust in on them. No indeed, first get yourself some fat living, and when you have had it so long that your promotion to one still fatter is to be expected: then is your time come to stand before your congregation and to preach and "bear witness" — and you will satisfy them; for your life then furnishes the guarantee that it is just a joke, such as serious men like to indulge in, now and then, in theatre or in church, as a sort of recreation to gather new strength — for making money.

And that is the way they honor God in the churches! And then these silk and velvet orators weep, they sob, their voice is drowned in tears! Ah, if it be true (and it is, since God Himself has said so), if it be true that He counts

the tears of the afflicted and puts them into His bottle,[7] then woe to these orators, if God has counted also their Sunday tears and put them into His bottle! And woe to us all if God really heeds these Sunday tears — especially those of the speakers, but also those of the listeners! For a Sunday preacher would indeed be right if he said — and, oratorically, this would have a splendid effect, especially if accompanied by his own tears and suppressed sobs — he would be right if he said to his audience: I shall count all the futile tears you have shed in church, and with them I shall step accusingly before you on the Day of Judgment — indeed, he is right; only please not to forget that, after all, the speaker's own dramatic tears are by far more dreadful than the thoughtless tears of his listeners.

WHAT SAYS THE FIRE-MARSHAL (No. VI, 5)

THAT A MAN who in some fashion or other has what one calls a "cause," something he seriously purposes to accomplish — and there are other persons who make it their business to counteract, and antagonize, and hurt him — that he must take measures against these his enemies, this will be evident to every one. But that there is a well-intentioned kindness by far more dangerous, perhaps, and one that seems calculated to prevent the serious accomplishment of his mission, this will not at once be clear to every one.

When a person suddenly falls ill, kindly-intentioned folk will straightway rush to his help, and one will suggest this, another that — and if all those about him had a chance to have their way it would certainly result in the sick man's death; seeing that even one person's well-meaning advice may be dangerous enough. And even if nothing is done, and the advice of neither the assembled and well-meaning crowd nor of any one person is taken, yet their busy and flurried presence may be harmful, nevertheless, inasmuch as they are in the way of the physician.

Likewise at a fire. Scarcely has the alarm of fire been sounded but a great crowd of people will rush to the spot, good and kindly and sympathetic, helpful people, the one with a bucket, the other with a basin, still another with a hand-squirt — all of them goodly, kindly, sympathetic, helpful persons who want to do all they can to extinguish the fire.

But what says the fire-marshal? The fire-marshal, he says — well, at other times the fire-marshal is a very pleasant and refined man; but at a fire he does use coarse language — he says or, rather, he roars out: "Oh, go to hell with your buckets and hand-squirts!" And then, when these well-meaning people feel insulted, perhaps, and think it highly improper to be

treated in this fashion, and would like at least to be treated respectfully — what says the fire-marshal then? Well, at other times the fire-marshal is a very pleasant and refined gentleman who will show every one the respect due him; but at a fire he is somewhat different — he says: “Where the devil is the police?” And when the policemen arrive he says to them: “Rid me of these damn people with their buckets and hand-squirts; and if they won’t clear out, then club them on their heads, so that we get rid of them and — can get at the fire!”

That is to say, in the case of a fire the whole way of looking at things is a very different one from that of quiet every-day life. The qualities which in quiet every-day life render one well-liked, viz., good-nature and kindly well-meaning, all this is repaid, in the case of a fire, with abusive language and finally with a crack on the head.

And this is just as it should be. For a conflagration is a serious business; and wherever we have to deal with a serious business this well-intentioned kindness won’t do at all. Indeed, any serious business enforces a very different mode of behavior which is: either-or. Either you are able really to do something, and really have something to do here; or else, if that be not the case, then the serious business demands precisely that you take yourself away. And if you will not comprehend that, the fire-marshal proposes to have the police hammer it into your head; which may do you a great deal of good, as it may help to render you a little serious, as is befitting so serious a business as a fire.

But what is true in the case of a fire holds true also in matters of the spirit. Wherever a cause is to be promoted, or an enterprise to be seen through, or an idea to be served — you may be sure that when he who really is the man to do it, the right man, he who, in a higher sense has and ought to have command, he who is in earnest and can make the matter the serious business it really is — you may be sure that when he arrives at the

spot, so to say, he will find there a nice company of easy-going, addle-pated twaddlers who pretending to be engaged in serious business, dabble in wishing to serve this cause, to further that enterprise, to promote that idea — a company of addle-pated fools who will of course consider one's unwillingness to make common cause with them (which unwillingness precisely proves one's seriousness) — will of course consider that a sure proof of the man's lack of seriousness. I say, when the right man arrives he will find this; but I might also look at it in this fashion: the very question as to whether he is the right man is most properly decided by his attitude to that crowd of fools. If he thinks they may help him, and that he will add to his strength by joining them, then he is *eo ipso* not the right man. The right man will understand at once, as did the fire-marshal, that the crowd must be got out of the way; in fact, that their presence and puttering around is the most dangerous ally the fire could have. Only, that in matters of the spirit it is not as in the case of the conflagration, where the fire-marshal needs but to say to the police: rid me of these people!

Thus in matters of the spirit, and likewise in matters of religion. History has frequently been compared to what the chemists call a "process." The figure is quite suggestive, providing it is correctly understood. For instance, in the "process of filtration" water is run through a filter and by this process loses its impurities. In a totally different sense history is a process. The idea is given utterance — and then enters into the process of history. But unfortunately this process (how ridiculous a supposition!) consists not in purifying the idea, which never is purer than at its inception; oh no, it consists in gradually and increasingly botching, bungling, and making a mess of, the idea, in using up the idea, in — indeed, is not this the opposite of filtering? — adding the impurer elements which it originally lacked: until at last, by the enthusiastic and mutually appreciative efforts of successive generations, the idea has absolutely disappeared and the very opposite of

the original idea is now called the idea, which is then asserted to have arisen through a historic process by which the idea is purified and elevated.

When finally the right man arrives, he who in the highest sense is called to the task — for all we know, chosen early and slowly educated for this business — which is, to throw light on the matter, to set fire to this jungle which is a refuge for all kinds of foolish talk and delusions and rascally tricks — when he comes he will always find a nice company of addle-pated fools and twaddlers who, surely enough, do think that, perhaps, things are wrong and that "something must be done about it"; or who have taken the position, and talk a good deal about it, that it is preposterous to be self-important and talk about it. Now if he, the right man, is deceived but a single instant and thinks that it is this company who are to aid him, then it is clear he is not the right man. If he is deceived and has dealings with that company, then providence will at once take its hand off him, as not fit. But the right man will see at a glance, as the fire-marshal does, that the crowd who in the kindness of their hearts mean to help in extinguishing a conflagration by buckets and hand-squirts — the right man will see that the same crowd who here, when there is a question, not of extinguishing a fire, but rather of setting something on fire, will in the kindness of their hearts wish to help, with a sulphur match sans fire or a wet spill — he will see that this crowd must be got rid of, that he must not have the least thing in common with this crowd, that he will be! obliged to use the coarsest possible language against them — he who perhaps at other times is anything but coarse. But the thing of supreme importance is to be rid of the crowd; for the effect of the crowd is to hamstring the whole cause by robbing it of its seriousness while heartfelt sympathy is pretended. Of course the crowd will then rage against him, against his incredible arrogance and so forth. This ought not to count with him, whether for or against. In all truly serious business the law of: either — or, prevails. Either,

I am the man whose serious business this is, I am called to it, and am willing to take a decisive risk; or, if this be not the case, then the seriousness of the business demands that I do not meddle with it at all. Nothing is more detestable and mean, and nothing discloses and effects a deeper demoralization, than this lackadaisical wishing to enter "somewhat" into matters which demand an *aut — aut, aut Cæsar aut nihil*,[8] this taking just a little part in something, to be so wretchedly lukewarm, to twaddle about the business, and then by twaddling to usurp through a lie the attitude of being better than they who wish not to have anything whatever to do with the whole business — to usurp through a lie the attitude of being better, and thus to render doubly difficult the task of him whose business it really is.

CONFIRMATION AND WEDDING CEREMONY; CHRISTIAN — COMEDY — OR WORSE STILL. (No. VII, 6)

PRICKS OF CONSCIENCE (insofar as they may be assumed in this connection) — pricks of conscience seem to have convinced "Christendom" that it was, after all, going too far, and that it would not do — this beastly farce of becoming a Christian by the simple method of letting a royal official give the infant a sprinkle of water over his head, which is the occasion for a family gathering with a banquet to celebrate the day.

This won't do, was the opinion of "Christendom," for the opportunity ought to be given the baptized individual to indorse personally his baptismal vows.

For this purpose the rite of confirmation was devised — a splendid invention, providing we take two things for granted: in the first place, that the idea of divine worship is to make God ridiculous; and in the second place, that its purpose is to give occasion for family celebrations, parties, a jolly evening, a banquet which is different from other banquets in that it — ah, exquisite — in that it, "at the same time" has a religious significance.

"The tender child," thus Christendom, "can of course not assume the baptismal vow personally, for this requires a real personality." Consequently there was chosen — is this a stroke of genius or just ingenious? — there was chosen the age of 14 or 15 year's, the schoolboy age. This real personality — that is all right, if you please — he is equal to the task of personally assuming responsibility for the baptismal vow taken in behalf of the infant.

A boy of fifteen! Now, if it were a matter of 10 dollars, his father would probably say: "No, my boy, I can't let you have all that money, you are still

too green for that." But for a matter touching his eternal salvation where the point is to assume, with all the seriousness one's personality is capable of, and as a personality, responsibility for what certainly could not in any profounder sense be called serious — when a child is bound by a vow: for that the age of fifteen is excellently fitting.

Excellently fitting. Oh yes if, as was remarked above, divine worship serves a double purpose, viz., to render God ridiculous in a very adroit manner — if you may call it so — and to furnish the occasion for graceful family celebrations. In that case it is indeed excellently fitting, as everything is on that occasion; as is, likewise, the customary biblical lesson for the day which, you will remember, begins: "Then the same day at evening, when the doors were shut[9]" — and this text is particularly suitable to a Confirmation Sunday. One is truly edified when hearing a clergyman read it on a Confirmation Sunday.

As is easily perceived, then, the confirmation ceremony is still worse nonsense than the baptism of infants, just because confirmation pretends to supply what was lacking at the baptism, viz., a real personality capable of making a vow in a matter touching one's eternal salvation. In another sense this nonsense is, to be sure, ingenious enough, as serving the self-interest of the clergy who understand full well that if the decision concerning a man's religion were reserved until he had reached maturity (which were the only Christian, as well as the only sensible, way), many might possess character enough to refuse to become Christians by an act of hypocrisy. For this reason "the clergyman" seeks to gain control of men in their infancy and their youth, so that they would find it difficult, upon reaching a more mature age, to break a "sacred" vow dating, to be sure, from one's boyhood, but which would, perhaps, still be a serious enough matter to many a one. Hence the clergy take hold of the infants, the youths, and receive sacred promises and the like from them. And what that man of God, "the

clergyman," does, why, that is, of course, a God-fearing action. Else, analogy might, perhaps, demand that to the ordinance forbidding the sale of spirituous liquors to minors there should be added one forbidding the taking of solemn vows concerning one's eternal salvation from — boys; which ordinance would look toward preventing the clergy, who themselves are perjurers, from working — in order to salve their own consciences — from working toward the greatest conceivable shipwreck which is, to make all society become perjured; for letting boys of fifteen bind themselves in a matter touching their eternal salvation is a measure which is precisely calculated to have that effect.

The ceremony of confirmation is, then, in itself a worse piece of nonsense than the baptism of infants. But in order to miss nothing which might, in any conceivable manner, contribute to render confirmation the exact opposite of what it purports to be, this ceremony has been connected with all manner of worldly and civil affairs, so that the significance of confirmation lies chiefly in the — certificate of character which the minister makes out; without which certificate no boy or girl will be able to get on at all in life.[10]

The whole thing is a comedy; and perhaps something might be done to add greater dramatic illusion to the solemnity; as e.g., passing an ordinance forbidding any one to be confirmed in a jacket, as not becoming a real personality; likewise, a regulation ordering male candidates for confirmation to wear a beard during the ceremony, which beard might, of course, be taken off for the family celebration in the evening, or be used in fun and merrymaking.

I am not now attacking the community — they are led astray; they cannot be blamed for liking this kind of divine worship, seeing that they are left to their own devices and deceived by their clergyman who has sworn an oath on the New Testament. But woe to these clergymen, woe to them,

these sworn liars! I know there have been mockers at religion, and I know how much they would have given to be able to do what I do; but they were not able to, because God was not with them. It is different with me. Originally as well disposed to the clergy as few have been, and very ready to help them. I have undergone a change of heart in the opposite direction, owing to their attitude. And the Almighty is with me, and He knows how the whip is to be handled so that the blows take effect, and that laughter must be that whip, handled with fear and trembling — therefore am I used.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

TRUE WORSHIP OF God consists, very simply, in doing God's will.

But that kind of divine service has never suited man's wishes. That which occupies man's mind at all times, that which gives rise to science[11] and makes science spread into many, many sciences, and into interminable detail; that of which, and for which, thousands of clergymen and professors live, that which forms the contents of the history of Christendom, by the study of which the clergyman or the professor is to be trained — is to get a different kind of worship arranged, the main point of which would be: to do what one pleases, but in such fashion that the name of God and the invocation of God be brought into connection therewith; by which arrangement man imagines himself safeguarded against ungodliness — whereas, alas! just this procedure is the most unqualified ungodliness.

For example: a man has the intention to make his living by killing people. To be sure, he knows from the Word of God that this is not permissible, that God's will is: thou shalt not kill! "All right," thinks he, "but this way of serving God will not serve my purposes — at the same time I don't care to be among the ungodly ones, either." So what does he do but get hold of some priest who in God's name blesses his dagger. Ah, *c'est bien autre chose!*

In the Scriptures the single state is recommended. "But," says man, "that kind of worship really does not serve my purposes — and surely, you can't say that I am an ungodly person; and such an important step as marriage (which *nota bene* God counsels against, His opinion being, in fact, that the important thing is not to take "this important step") — should I take such an important step without making sure of God's blessing?" Bravo! "That is what we have the priest for, that man of God, he will bestow the blessing on

this important step (*nota bene* concerning which the most important thing was not to take it at all) and so it will be acceptable to God" — and so I have my own way; and my own way becomes the way of worshipping God; and the priest has his own way and gets his ten dollars, which are not earned in such a simple way as, for example, by brushing people's clothes, or by serving out beer and brandy — oh no! Was he not active on behalf of God? To earn ten dollars in this fashion is: serving God. Bravissimo!

What depth of nonsense and abomination! If something is not pleasing to God, does it perhaps become pleasing to Him by having — why, that is aggravating the mischief! — by having a clergyman along who — why, that is aggravating the mischief still more! — who gets ten dollars for declaring it pleasant to God?

Let us consider the marriage ceremony still further! In His word God recommends the single state. Now suppose two young people want to be married. To be sure, they ought certainly to know, themselves, what Christianity is, seeing that they call themselves Christians; but never mind that now. The lovers then apply to — the clergyman; and the clergyman is, we remember, pledged by his oath on the New Testament (which *nota bene* recommends the single state). Now, if he is not a liar and a perjurer who makes his money in the very shabbiest fashion, he would be bound to take the following course: at most he could, with human compassion for this human condition of being in love, say to them: "Dear children, I am the one to whom you should turn last of all; to turn to me on this occasion is, indeed, as strange as if one should turn to the chief of police and ask him how best to steal. My duty is to employ all means to restrain you. At most, I can say, with the words of the Apostle (for they are not the words of Our Lord), I can say to you: well, if it must be, and you cannot contain, why, then find some way of getting together; for fit is better to marry than to burn.'[12] I know very well that you will be likely to shudder when I speak in

this manner about what you think is the most beautiful thing in life; but I must do my duty. And it is therefore I said to you that to me you should have applied last of all."

It is different in "Christendom." The priest — oh dear me! — if there are but two to clap together, why certainly! Indeed, if the persons concerned turned to a midwife they would perhaps not be as sure to be confirmed in their conviction that their intention is pleasing to God.

And so they are married; i.e. man has his own way, and this having his own way strategically serves at the same time as divine worship, God's name being connected with it. They are married — by the priest! Ah, for having the clergyman along is just what reassures one — the man who, to be sure, is pledged by his oath to preach the New Testament, but who for a consideration of ten dollars is the pleasantest company one could desire — that man he guarantees that this act is true worship of God.

In a Christian sense one ought to say: precisely the fact that a priest is in it, precisely that is the worst thing about the whole business. If you want to be married you ought, rather, be married by a smith; for then — if it were admissible to speak in this fashion — then it might possibly escape God's attention; whereas, if there is a priest along it can certainly not escape His attention. Precisely the fact of the clergyman's being there makes it as criminal an affair as possible — call to mind what was said to a man who in a storm at sea invoked the gods: "By all means do not let the gods notice that you are aboard!" Thus one might say here also: By all means try to avoid calling in a priest. The others, the smith and the lovers, have not pledged themselves by an oath on the New Testament, so matters are not as bad — if it be admissible to speak in this fashion — as when the priest assists with his — holy presence.

AN ETERNITY TO REPENT IN! (No. VIII, 3)

LET ME RELATE a story. I did not read it in a book of devotion but in what is generally called light reading. Yet I do not hesitate to make use of it, and indicate its source only lest any one be disturbed if he should happen to be acquainted with it, or find out at some later time where it is from — lest he be disturbed that I had been silent about this.

Once upon a time there lived somewhere in the East a poor old couple. Utterly poor they were, and anxiety about the future naturally grew when they thought of old age approaching. They did not, indeed, constantly assail heaven with their prayers, they were too God-fearing to do that; but still they were ever praying to God for help.

Then one morning it happened that the old woman found an exceeding large jewel on the hearth-stone, which she forthwith showed to her husband, who recognized its value and easily perceived that now their poverty was at an end.

What a bright future for these old people, and what gladness! But frugal and pious as they were they decided not to sell the jewel just yet, since they had enough wherewithal to live still one more day. But on the morrow they would sell it, and then a new life was to begin for them.

In the following night the woman dreamed that she was transported to Paradise. An angel showed her about the splendors which only an Oriental imagination can devise. He showed her a hall in which there stood long rows of arm-chairs gemmed all over with precious stones and pearls. These, so the angel explained, were the seats of the pious. And last of all he pointed out to her the one destined for herself. When regarding it more closely she discovered that a very large jewel was lacking in the back of the chair, and she asked the angel how that might be. He — ah, watch now, for

here is the point! The angel answered: “That was the jewel which you found on your hearth-stone. It was given you ahead of time, and it cannot be put in again.”

In the morning the woman told her husband this dream. And she was of the opinion that it was better, perhaps, to endure in poverty the few years still left to them to live, rather than to be without that jewel in all eternity. And her pious husband was of the same opinion.

So in the evening they laid the jewel on the hearth-stone and prayed to God to take it away again. And next morning it had disappeared, for certain; and what had become of it the old folks well knew: it was in its right place again.

This man was in truth happily married, and his wife a sensible woman. But even if it were true, as is maintained so often, that it is men’s wives who cause them to lose sight of eternal values: even if all men remained unmarried, there would still be in every one of us an impulse, more ingenious and more pressing and more unremitting than a woman, which will cause him to use a wrong measure and to think a couple of years, or ten years, or forty years, so enormous a length of time that even eternity were quite brief in comparison; instead of these years being as nothing when compared with the infinite duration of eternity.

Therefore, heed this well! You may by worldly wisdom escape perhaps what it has pleased God to unite with the condition of one’s being a Christian, that is, sufferings and tribulations; you may, and to your own destruction, by cleverly avoiding the difficulties, perhaps, gain what God has forever made incompatible with being a Christian, that is, the enjoyment of pleasures and all earthly goods; you may, fooled by your own worldly wisdom, perhaps, finally perish altogether, in the illusion that you are on the right way because you have gained happiness in this world: and then — you will have an eternity to repent in! An eternity to repent in; to

repent that you did not employ your time in doing what might be remembered in all eternity; that is, in truth to love God, with the consequence that you suffer the persecution of men in this life.

Therefore, do not deceive yourself, and of all deceivers fear most yourself! Even if it were possible for one, with regard to eternity, to take something ahead of time, you would still deceive yourself just by having something ahead of time — and then an eternity to repent in!

A DOSE OF DISGUST WITH LIFE (No. IX, 3)

JUST AS MAN — as is natural — desires that which tends to nourish and revive his love of life, likewise he who wishes to live with eternity in mind needs a constant dose of disgust with life lest he become foolishly enamored of this world and, still more, in order that he may learn thoroughly to be disgusted and bored and sickened with the folly and lies of this wretched world. Here is a dose of it:

God Incarnate is betrayed, mocked, deserted by absolutely all men; not a single one, literally not a single one, remains faithful to him — and then, afterwards, afterwards, — oh yes, afterwards, there were millions of men who on their knees made pilgrimage to the places where many hundred years ago His feet, perhaps, trod the ground; afterwards, afterwards — oh yes, afterwards, millions worshipped a splinter of the cross on which He was crucified!

And so it was always when men were contemporary with the great; but afterwards, afterwards — oh yes, afterwards!

Must one then not loathe being human?

And again, must one not loathe being human? For these millions who on their knees made pilgrimage to His grave, this throng of people which no power on earth was able to overcome: but one thing were necessary, Christ's return — and all these millions would quickly regain their feet to run their way, so that the whole throng were as if blown away; or would, in a mass, and erect enough, rush upon Christ in order to kill him.

That which Christ and the Apostles and every martyr desires, and desires as the only thing: that we should follow in His footsteps, just that is the thing which mankind does not like or does not find pleasure in.

No, take away the danger — so that it is but play, and then the battallions of the human race will (ah, disgusting!) will perform astonishing feats in aping Him; and then instead of an imitation of Christ we get (ah, disgusting!), we get that sacred buffoonery — under guidance and command (ah, disgusting!) of sworn clergymen who do service as sergeants, lieutenants, etc. — ordained men who therefore have the Holy Spirit's special assistance in this serious business.

ENDNOTES.

[1]Selections.

[2]The following sentence is not clear in the original.

[3]Matthew 7, 14.

[4]Luke 18, 8.

[5]The last line of this piece of bloody irony is not clear in the original (S. V. XIII, 128). It will make better sense if one substitutes “da” for the first “de.”

[6]This suggestion had actually been made to Kierkegaard in the course of his attacks on Martensen.

[7]Allusion to Psalm 56, 9; also, to a passage in one of Bishop Mynster’s sermons (S. V.).

[8]Either-or; either Cæsar or nothing (Cesare Borgia’s slogan).

[9]“John 20, 19 — where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them. Peace be unto you.”

[10]This was, until very recently, the universal rule in Protestant Scandinavia and Germany.

[11]“It is to be borne in mind that Danish *videnskab*, like German *Wissenschaft*, embraces the humanities and theology as well.”

[12]I Cor. 7, 9.

The Autobiography

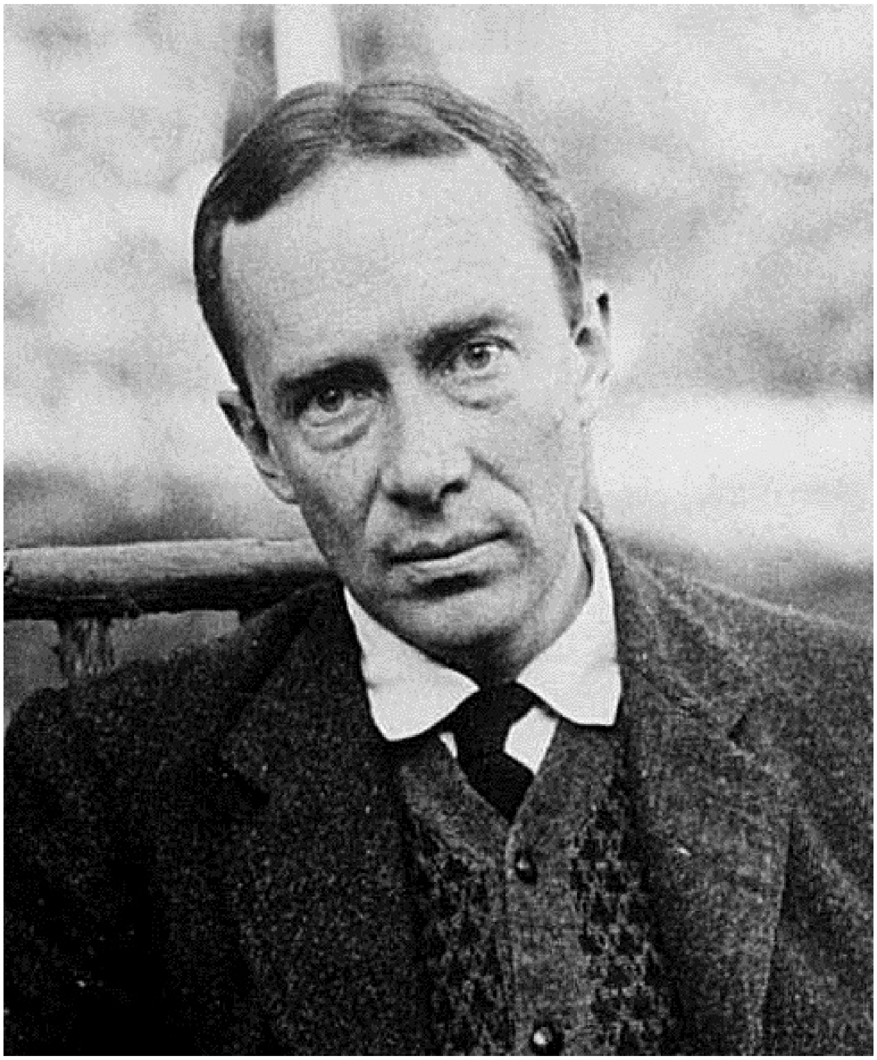
Rosenborggade 9, Copenhagen — Kierkegaard lived at No. 7 from 1848 to 1850. Here he wrote 'The Sickness unto Death'.

The Point of View for my Work as an Author (1851)

A DIRECT COMMUNICATION, REPORT TO HISTORY

Translated by Walter Lowrie, 1939

This autobiographical account was written in 1848 and published in part in 1851 (as *On my Work as an Author*), before being published in full posthumously in 1859. It explains Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings and his personal attachment to those works. The Kierkegaardian scholar and translator Walter Lowrie described this work as an autobiography "so unique that it has no parallel in the whole literature of the world." As a spiritual autobiography, it stands among such great works as Augustine's *Confessions* and Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. However, *The Point of View for my Work as an Author* is neither a confession nor a defense; it is an author's story of a lifetime of writing and his understanding of the complex varied works that make up his oeuvre.



Walter Lowrie (1868-1959) was a celebrated Kierkegaardian theologian and translator.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY WALTER LOWRIE

THE POINT OF VIEW FOR MY WORK AS AN AUTHOR

INTRODUCTION
PART ONE
PART TWO
CHAPTER I
CONCLUSION
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
EPILOGUE
CONCLUSION

‘THE INDIVIDUAL’: TWO ‘NOTES’ CONCERNING MY WORK AS AN AUTHOR

PREFACE
NO. 1. CONCERNING THE DEDICATION TO ‘THE INDIVIDUAL’
1846
NO. 2. A WORD ABOUT THE RELATION OF MY LITERARY ACTIVITY TO ‘THE INDIVIDUAL’
REGARDING THE ‘TWO NOTES’

MY ACTIVITY AS A WRITER

THE ACCOUNTING

SUPPLEMENT. MY POSITION AS A RELIGIOUS WRITER IN ‘CHRISTENDOM’ AND MY TACTICS

TWO FRAGMENTS FROM KIERKEGAARD’S JOURNAL

INTRODUCTION BY WALTER LOWRIE

CONSIDERING THE CANDOUR of the author's self-revelation, the ardour of his effort to make himself understood, and the pains he took to understand himself, *The Point of View* clearly belongs to the distinctive category of Christian writings which was first represented by the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. And yet it cannot aptly be called a confession, for S. K. refers to his *vita ante acta* only to exclude it from the report. His aim was to reveal the significance of his works, and he revealed himself only in so far as this aim required him to do so. And though we may compare this work with Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua,* we must beware of calling it an apology, even in the Latin sense of the word; for this is a description S. K. repudiates in these pages. It is true that, mindful of Xenophon's *Apology*, he first thought of using this title; but he promptly rejected it when he remembered that Socrates himself refused to use the apology a friendly orator had prepared for him. When he essayed for the first time to explain the purpose and purport of his works by describing his 'position as a Christian writer in Christendom', he proposed to entitle it 'Armed Neutrality'; but even the word 'neutrality' does not suffice to make this title sound pacific.

Moreover, this work, though it is profoundly autobiographical and is of inestimable value to a biographer of S. K., falls far short of being a biography and (in addition to the three longer notes in the Appendix) a brief sketch of his life may here be of use.

S. K. was born in Copenhagen on 5 May 1813, the youngest child of an elderly father who, coming as a poor peasant boy to the city, had acquired considerable wealth as a merchant and had retired from business to brood

over his sins. The father was a man of strong character, with considerable intellectual ability, who brought up his children sternly in the fear of God.

In The Point of View S. K. says enough about his ‘crazy upbringing’ as a child. But the period of his youth, and the ten years passed in the university, he barely refers to as his vita ante acta, with the mere hint that he walked, alas, ‘even in the path of perdition’. In fact, he lived for several years a disorderly life, in revolt against his father and against God. A gradual return in the direction of ‘his old home’ (i.e. the Christian position) culminated, on his twenty-fifth birthday, 5 May 1837 (when according to Danish law he attained majority), in a thorough reconciliation with his father, which was followed a few days later (19 May at 10.30 a.m.) by a very striking and effectual experience of conversion, which he speaks of in his *Journal* as an ‘indescribable joy’. His father died soon after, leaving him a considerable fortune. Thereupon, largely out of deference to his father’s wish, he began to apply himself seriously to the study of theology, the faculty in which he had long been inscribed, and two years later he passed his examination *cum laude.* He never became a pastor, yet almost to the end of his life he thought of this as a possibility and cherished it as an ideal.

No sooner had he taken his examination than he began to woo Regina Olsen (see note A in the Appendix). But during the tragic period of his engagement he was still a student in the university, working for the degree of Master of Arts (corresponding then to the doctorate in philosophy), and he won this degree on 29 September 1841, by his able dissertation on ‘The Concept of Irony’. Twelve days later occurred the final breach with Regina, and to escape the scandal of it he retreated to Berlin to pursue his studies in philosophy. What really absorbed him, however, was an irresistible impulse to write. Regina, he said, had made him a poet. From that moment begins his tireless activity as an author. The documents here translated give a sufficient account of the period of authorship down to the end of the year

1848. During this period the only external events which affected him profoundly were the affair of the *Corsair* (see note B), which is often alluded to in these documents, and the political events of 1848 (see note C).

After S. K. had written this 'Explanation' of his life and work he had only six more years to live. These years were marked by intense insistence upon his religious aims of 'introducing Christianity into Christendom', culminating in the violent pamphleteering attack upon established Christianity, 'especially in Protestantism, and more especially in Denmark'. In the midst of this he was stricken with paralysis and died in a public hospital, wellnigh penniless, but with the consoling assurance that at last he had had the courage to live and die as a 'witness for the truth'. He had no more need to protest, as he does in *The Point of View,* that he was a religious writer, for it had become only too evident that he was that and nothing else.

I do not propose to explain here the characteristic expressions S. K. uses in these documents to express his original thoughts. I have taken pains to explain them in the Appendix of my work on *Kierkegaard*, but I recognize that they will not be adequately explained until many students have been enlisted in this effort. Not all of his most characteristic terms appear in these documents, for here he is solely intent upon emphasizing the religious categories: the contrast between the 'aesthetic' (eudaimonistic) and the religious points of view; the concept of the individual; the notion of divine providence; indirect communication (which he defends here lamely because he had already detected the daimonia which lurks in it); the absoluteness of the Christian claim, &c., &c. So here he all but ignores the profound psychological concepts which he had presented in his pseudonymous works. The 'Explanation' therefore, is very far from being an explanation of the Works as a whole.

THE POINT OF VIEW FOR MY WORK AS AN AUTHOR

A REPORT TO HISTORY

By

S. KIERKEGAARD *Written in 1848*

Published in Copenhagen in 1859 (four years after the author's death) by his brother P. Chr. Kierkegaard.

In everything the purpose must weigh with the folly.
SHAKESPEARE: Henry IV, Part II, ii. 2

What shall I say? My words alone
Do not express my duty.
O God, how great thy wisdom is,
Thy goodness, might and beauty.

BRORSON.

INTRODUCTION

IN MY CAREER as an author, a point has now been reached where it is permissible to do what I feel a strong impulse to do and so regard as my duty — namely, to explain once for all, as directly and frankly as possible, what is what: what I as an author declare myself to be. The moment (however unpropitious it may be in another sense) is now appropriate; partly because (as I have said) this point has been reached, and partly because I am about to encounter for the second time in the literary field my first production, *Either/Or*, in its second edition, which I was not willing to have published earlier.

There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. So long as I considered the strictest silence my religious duty I strove in every way to preserve it. I have not hesitated to counteract, in a *finite* sense, my own effort by the enigmatic mystery and *double entente* which silence favours. What I have done in that way has been misunderstood, has been explained as pride, arrogance, and God knows what. So long as I considered silence my religious duty I would not do the least thing to obviate such a misunderstanding. But the reason I considered silence my duty was that the authorship was not yet at hand in so complete a form that the understanding of it could be anything but misunderstanding.

The contents of this little book affirm, then, what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem 'of becoming a Christian', with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom, or against the illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort.

I would beg of every one who has the cause of Christianity at heart — and I beg the more urgently the more seriously he takes it to heart — that he make himself acquainted with this little book, not curiously, but devoutly, as one would read a religious work. How far a so-called aesthetic public has found or may find enjoyment in reading, attentively or casually, the productions of an aesthetic character, which are an incognito and a deceit in the service of Christianity, is naturally a matter of indifference to me; for I am a religious writer. Supposing that such a reader understands perfectly and appraises critically the individual aesthetic productions, he will nevertheless totally misunderstand me, inasmuch as he does not understand, the religious totality in my whole work as an author. Suppose, then, that another understands my works in the totality of their religious reference, but does not understand a single one of the aesthetic productions contained in them — I would say that this lack of understanding is not an essential lack.

What I write here is for orientation. It is a public attestation; not a defence or an apology. In this respect, truly, if in no other, I believe that I have something in common with Socrates. For when he was accused, and was about to be judged by 'the crowd', his daemon forbade him to *defend* himself. Indeed, if he had done that, how unseemly it would have been, and how self-contradictory! Likewise there is something in me, and in the dialectical position I occupy, which makes it impossible for me, and impossible in itself, to conduct a defence for my work as an author. I have put up with a great deal, and I hope to put up with more without suffering the loss of my self — but who knows? perhaps the future will deal more gently with me than the past. The only thing I cannot put up with — cannot do so without suffering the loss of my self and of the dialectical character of my position (which is just what I cannot put up with) — this only thing is to *defend* myself *qua* author. That would be a falsehood, which, even though it were to help me finitely to gain the whole world, would eternally be my

destruction. With humility before God, and also before men, I well know wherein I personally may have offended; but I know also with God that this very work of mine as an author was the prompting of an irresistible inward impulse, a melancholy man's only possibility, the honest effort on the part of a soul deeply humbled and penitent to do something by way of compensation, without shunning any sacrifice or labour in the service of truth. Therefore I know also with God, in whose eyes this undertaking found favour and still finds it, as it rejoices also in His assistance, that with regard to my authorship it is not I that need to defend myself before my contemporaries; for, if in this case I have any part, it is not as counsel for the defence but as prosecutor.

Yet I do not indict my contemporaries, seeing that I have religiously understood it as my duty thus to serve the truth in self-denial, and as my task to do everything to prevent myself becoming esteemed and idolized. Only the man who knows in his own experience what true self-denial is can solve my riddle and perceive that it is self-denial. For the man who in himself has no experience of it must rather call my behaviour self-love, pride, eccentricity, madness — for which opinion it would be unreasonable of me to indict him, since I myself in the service of the truth have contributed to form it. There is one thing unconditionally which cannot be understood either by a noisy assembly, or by a 'highly esteemed public', or in half an hour — and that one thing is the character of true Christian self-denial. To understand this requires fear and trembling, silent solitude, and a long interval of time.

That I have understood the truth which I deliver to others, of that I am eternally certain. And I am just as certain that my contemporaries, in so far as they do not understand it, will be compelled, whether by fair means or foul, to understand it some time, in eternity, when they are exempted from many distracting cares and troubles, from which I have been exempted. I

have suffered under much misunderstanding; and the fact that I voluntarily exposed myself to it does not indicate that I am insensible to *real* suffering. As well deny the reality of all Christian suffering, for the mark of it is that it is voluntary. Neither does it follow as a matter of course and as a direct inference that ‘the others’ have no blame, seeing that it is in the service of truth I suffer this. But however much I have suffered from misunderstanding, I cannot but thank God for what is of infinite importance to me, that He has granted me understanding of the truth.

And then only one thing more. It goes without saying that I cannot explain my work as an author wholly, i.e. with the purely personal inwardness in which I possess the explanation of it. And this in part because I cannot make public my God-relationship. It is neither more nor less than the generic human inwardness which every man may have, without regarding it as an official distinction which it were a crime to hide and a duty to proclaim, or which I could appeal to as my legitimation. In part because I cannot wish (and no one can desire that I might) to obtrude upon any one what concerns only my private person — though naturally there is much in this which for me serves to explain my work as an author.

PART ONE

A

THE AMBIGUITY OR DUPLICITY IN THE WHOLE AUTHORSHIP: AS TO WHETHER THE AUTHOR IS AN AESTHETIC OR A RELIGIOUS AUTHOR

IT remains, then, to be shown that there is such a duplicity from first to last. This is not an instance of the common case where the assumed duplicity is discovered by some one else and the person concerned is obliged to prove that it *does not exist*. Not that at all, but quite the contrary. In case the reader should not be sufficiently observant of the duplicity, it is the business of the author to make as evident as possible the fact that it is there. That is to say, the duplicity, the ambiguity, is a conscious one, something the author knows more about than anybody else; it is the essential dialectical distinction of the whole authorship, and has therefore a deeper reason.

But is this a fact, is there such a pervading duplicity? May one not explain the phenomenon in another way, by supposing that there is an author who first was an aesthetic author, and then in the course of years changed and became a religious author? I will not dwell upon the consideration that, if this were the case, the author would not have written such a book as the present one, and surely would hardly have undertaken to give a survey of the whole work — least of all would he have chosen the moment which coincides with the republication of his first book. Neither will I dwell upon the fact that it would be strange if such a change were to be accomplished in the course of only a few years. In other instances where an author originally aesthetic becomes a religious author, it is usual for

many years to elapse, so that the hypothesis which explains the change by pointing to the fact that he has actually become considerably older does not lack plausibility. But this I will not dwell upon; for though it might seem strange and almost inexplicable, though it might prompt one to seek and find any other explanation, nevertheless it would not be absolutely impossible for such a change to occur in the space of only three years. I will show rather that it is impossible to explain the phenomenon in this way. For when one looks closer it will be seen that nothing like three years elapsed before the change occurred, but that the change is simultaneous with the beginning — that is, the duplicity dates from the very start. For the Two Edifying Discourses are contemporaneous with Either Or. The duplicity in the deeper sense, that is, in the sense of the authorship as a whole, is not at all what was a subject of comment in its time, viz. the contrast between the two parts of *Either/Or.* No, the duplicity is discovered by comparing *Either Or* and the *Two Edifying Discourses.*

The religious is present from the beginning. Conversely, the aesthetic is present again at the last moment. After two years, during which religious works only were published, there follows a little aesthetic article. Hence assurance was provided both first and last against an interpretation of the phenomenon which supposes an aesthetic author who with the lapse of time has changed and become a religious author. Just as the *Two Edifying Discourses* came out between two and three months after *Either/Or,* so this little aesthetic article came out between two and three months after the purely religious writings of the two years. The *Two Edifying Discourses* and the little article correspond to one another conversely and prove conversely that the duplicity is both first and last. Although *Either/Or* attracted all the attention, and nobody noticed the *Two Edifying Discourses*, this book betokened, nevertheless, that the edifying was precisely what must come to the fore, that the author was a religious author, who for this reason has

never written anything aesthetic, but has employed pseudonyms for all the aesthetic works, whereas the *Two Edifying Discourses* were by Magister Kierkegaard. Conversely, although the purely edifying works produced during the two years have possibly attracted the notice of others, no one, perhaps, in a deeper sense, has remarked upon the significance of the little article, which indicates that now the whole dialectical structure of the authorship is completed. The little article serves as a testimony in the confrontation of witnesses, in order to make it impossible at the end (as the *Two Edifying Discourses* did at the beginning) to explain the phenomenon by supposing that there was an author who first was an aesthetic author and later *changed* and became subsequently a religious author — for he was a religious author from the beginning and was aesthetically productive even at the last moment.

The first group of writings represents aesthetic productivity, the last group is exclusively religious: between them, as the turning-point, lies the *Concluding Postscript.* This work concerns itself with and sets 'the Problem', which is the problem of the whole authorship: how to become a Christian. So it takes cognizance of the pseudonymous work, and of the eighteen edifying discourses as well, showing that all of this serves to illuminate the Problem — without, however, affirming that this was the aim of the foregoing production, which indeed could not have been affirmed by a pseudonym, a third person, incapable of knowing anything about the aim of a work which was not his own. The *Concluding Postscript* is not an aesthetic work, but neither is it in the strictest sense religious. Hence it is by a pseudonym, though I add my name as editor — a thing I did not do in the case of any purely aesthetic work. This is a hint for him who is concerned about such things and has a flair for them. Then came the two years during which nothing but religious works came out, all bearing my name. The period of the pseudonyms was past, the religious author had developed

himself out of the aesthetic disguise — and then, as a testimony and as a precaution, came the little aesthetic article by a pseudonym, *Inter et Inter.* This is calculated to make one conscious all at once of the authorship as a whole. As I have remarked, it reminds one inversely of the *Two Edifying Discourses*.

B

THE EXPLANATION

That the Author is and was a Religious Author

IT might seem that a mere protestation to this effect on the part of the author himself would be more than enough; for surely he knows best what is meant. For my part, however, I have little confidence in protestations with respect to literary productions and am inclined to take an objective view of my own works. If as a third person, in the role of a reader, I cannot substantiate the fact that what I affirm is so, and that it could not but be so, it would not occur to me to wish to win a cause which I regard as lost. If I were to begin *qua* author to protest, I might easily bring to confusion the whole work, which from first to last is dialectical.

So I cannot make any protestation — not at least before I have gone about in another way to make the explanation so evident that a protestation of the sort here contemplated would be entirely superfluous. When that has been accomplished, a protestation might be *permissible* as a lyrical satisfaction to me, in case I were to feel an impulse to make it, and it might be *required* as a religious duty. For *qua* man I may be justified in protesting, and it may be my religious duty to make a protestation. But this must not be confounded with authorship: *qua* author it does not avail much that I protest *qua* man that I have intended this or that. But everybody will admit that when one is able to show with respect to a phenomenon that it cannot be

explained in any other way, and that in this particular way it can be explained in every detail, or that the explanation fits at every point, then this explanation is substantiated as evidently as it is ever possible to establish the correctness of an explanation.

But is there not a contradiction here? It was established in the foregoing section that the ambiguity was present up to the last, and in so far as this was successfully proved, it becomes impossible to prove what the explanation is; so that a declaration, a protestation, seems in this case to be the only means of releasing the dialectical tension and untying the knot. This reasoning appears to be *acute,* but really it is *sophistical*. In case a sophistical person should find it necessary in a given contingency to resort to a mystification, it would be perfectly natural for him to do it in such a way that the comical situation results that he can’t get himself out of it. But this, too, is due to a lack of seriousness, which prompts him to fall in love with mystification for its own sake, instead of using it for a purpose. Hence when a mystification, a dialectical reduplication, is used in the service of a serious purpose, it will be so used as merely to obviate a misunderstanding, or an over-hasty understanding, whereas all the while the true explanation is at hand and ready to be found by him who honestly seeks it. To take the highest example: the whole life of Christ on earth would have been mere play if He had been incognito to such a degree that He went through life totally unnoticed — and yet in a true sense He was incognito.

So it is in the case of a dialectical reduplication; and the mark of a dialectical reduplication is that the ambiguity is maintained. As soon as the requisite seriousness grasps it, it is able also to release it, but always in such a way that seriousness itself vouches for the fact of it. For as a woman’s coyness has a reference to the true lover and yields when he appears, but only then, so, too, dialectical reduplication has a reference to true seriousness. To one less serious the explanation cannot be imparted, for the

elasticity of the dialectical reduplication is too great for him to grasp: it takes the explanation away from him again and makes it doubtful to him whether it really is the explanation.

Let the attempt be made. Let us try to explain the whole of this literary production on the assumption that it was written by an aesthetic author. It is easy to perceive that from the beginning it is incongruous with this explanation, which breaks down when it encounters the *Two Edifying Discourses.* If, on the contrary, one will experiment with the assumption that it is a religious author, one will perceive that, step by step, the assumption corresponds at every point. The only thing that remains inexplicable is how it could occur to a religious author to employ aesthetics in such a way. That is to say, we are confronted again by the ambiguity or the dialectical reduplication. Only the difference now is that the assumption of his being a religious author will have taken firm hold, and it remains only to explain the ambiguity. How far it may be possible for a third person to do this I do not venture to determine; but the explanation is that contained in the Second Part of this little book.

Here only one thing more — a thing which, as I have said, may be a lyrical satisfaction to me qua man, and qua man is my religious duty; namely, a direct protestation that the author is and was a religious author. When I began Either/Or (of which, be it said parenthetically, there existed beforehand literally only about a page, viz. a few Diapsalmata, whereas the whole book was written in the space of eleven months, and the Second Part first) I was potentially as deeply under the influence of religion as ever I have been. I was so deeply shaken that I understood perfectly well that I could not possibly succeed in striking the comforting and secure *via media* in which most people pass their lives: I had either to cast myself into perdition and sensuality, or to choose the religious absolutely as the only thing — either the world in a measure that would be dreadful, or the

cloister. That it was the second I would and must choose was at bottom already determined: the eccentricity of the first movement was merely the expression for the intensity of the second; it expressed the fact that I had become thoroughly aware how impossible it would be for me to be religious only up to a certain point. Here is the place of *Either /Or.* It was a poetical catharsis, which does not, however, go farther than the ethical. Personally, I was very far from wishing to summon the course of existence to return comfortingly to the situation of marriage for my sake, who religiously was already in the cloister — a thought which lies concealed in the pseudonym *Victor — Eremita.*

Such is the situation; strictly speaking, *Either/Or* was written in a monastery, and I can assure the reader (the assurance being especially addressed, if it should chance to fall under his eyes, to him who has no capacity or leisure to survey such a productivity as mine, yet has possibly been disturbed by the strange amalgamation of the religious and the aesthetic in my writings) — I can assure the reader that the author of *Either/Or* devoted a definite time every day, regularly and with monastic precision, to reading for his own sake edifying books, and that in fear and in much trembling he reflected upon his responsibility. Among other things, he reflected especially (how wonderful!) upon 'The Diary of the Seducer. And then what occurred? The book had an immense success — especially (how wonderful!) 'The Diary of the Seducer'. The world opened its arms in an extraordinary way to the admired author, whom all this, however, did not 'seduce' — for he was an eternity too old for that.

Then followed *Two Edifying Discourses* — things of the most vital importance often seem insignificant. The big work, *Either/Or,* which was 'much read and more discussed' — and then the *Two Edifying Discourses*, dedicated to my deceased father, published on my birthday (May 5th), 'a little flower hidden in the great forest, not sought out either for its beauty, or

for its scent, or because it was nourishing'. No one took serious notice of the two discourses or concerned himself about them. Indeed I remember even that one of my acquaintances came to me with the complaint that in good faith he had gone and bought the book with the notion that, since it was by me, it must be something witty and clever. I remember, too, that I promised him, that if he wished, he should get his money back. I held out *Either/Or* to the world in my left hand, and in my right the *Two Edifying Discourses*; but all, or as good as all, grasped with their right what I held in my left.

I had made up my mind before God what I should do: I staked my case on the *Two Edifying Discourses*: but I understood perfectly that only very few understood them. And here for the first time comes in the category 'that *individual* whom with joy and gratitude I call *my* reader', a stereotyped formula which was repeated in the Preface to every collection of Edifying Discourses. No one can justly lay it to my charge that I have changed, that perhaps at a later moment, perhaps for the reason that I was not in the good graces of the public, I judged differently about this matter than I had before. No. If ever I stood in the good graces of the public, it was two or three months after the publication of *Either Or.* And this very situation, which to many perhaps would be a temptation, I regarded as the one favourable moment for doing what I had to do to assert my position, and I employed it in the service of the truth to introduce my category 'the individual' — it was then that I broke with the public, not out of pride and arrogance, &c. (and certainly not because at that moment the public was unfavourable to me, since on the contrary it was entirely favourable), but because I was conscious of being a religious author and as such was concerned with 'the individual' ('the individual' — in contrast to 'the public'), a thought in which is contained an entire philosophy of life and of the world.

From now on, that is, as early as the publication of Fear and Trembling, the serious observer who himself disposes of religious presuppositions, the serious observer to whom it is possible to make oneself intelligible at a distance, and to whom one can talk in silence (cf. the pseudonym Johannes — de silentio), was in a position to discern that this, after all, was a very singular sort of aesthetic production. And this was justly emphasized by the most reverend signature Kts., which delighted me greatly. *[Note by the translator*: ‘Kts.’ was the signature which Bishop Mynster, the Primate of Denmark, commonly attached to his critical articles in the press.]

PART TWO

The Whole Work of Authorship construed from the point of view that the author is a religious author

CHAPTER I

A. THE AESTHETIC WORKS

Why the beginning of the work was aesthetic, or what this signifies, understood in relation to the whole

§1

That ‘Christendom’ is a prodigious illusion.

EVERY one with some capacity for observation, who seriously considers what is called Christendom, or the conditions in a so-called Christian country, must surely be assailed by profound misgivings. What does it mean that all these thousands and thousands call themselves Christians as a matter of course? These many, many men, of whom the greater part, so far as one can judge, live in categories quite foreign to Christianity! Any one can convince himself of it by the simplest observation. People who perhaps never once enter a church, never think about God, never mention His name except in oaths! People upon whom it has never dawned that they might have any obligation to God, people who either regard it as a maximum to be guiltless of transgressing the criminal law, or do not count even this quite necessary! Yet all these people, even those who assert that no God exists, are all of them Christians, call themselves Christians, are recognized as Christians by the State, are buried as Christians by the Church, are certified as Christians for eternity!

That at the bottom of this there must be a tremendous confusion, a frightful illusion, there surely can be no doubt. But to stir up such a question! Yes, I know the objections well. For there are those who understand what I mean, but would say with a good-natured slap on the

back, ‘My dear fellow, you are still rather young to want to embark on such an undertaking, an undertaking which, if it is to have any success at all, will require at least half a score of well-trained missionaries; an undertaking which means neither more nor less than proposing to reintroduce Christianity... into Christendom. No, my dear fellow, let us be men; such an undertaking is beyond your powers and mine. It is just as madly ambitious as wanting to reform the “crowd”, with which no sensible person wants to mix. To start such a thing is certain ruin.’ Perhaps; but though ruin were certain, it is certain also that no one has learnt this objection from Christianity; for when Christianity came into the world it was still more definitely ‘certain ruin’ to start such a thing — and yet it was started. And it is certain, too, that no one learnt this objection from Socrates; for he mixed with the ‘crowd’ and wanted to reform it.

This is roughly how the case stands. Once in a while a parson causes a little hubbub from the pulpit, about there being something wrong somewhere with all these numerous Christians — but all those *to* whom he is speaking are Christians, and those he speaks *about* are not present. This is most appropriately described as a feigned emotion. Once in a while there appears a religious enthusiast: he storms against Christendom, he vociferates and makes a loud noise, denouncing almost all as not being Christians — and accomplishes nothing. He takes no heed of the fact that an illusion is not an easy thing to dispel. Supposing now it is a fact that most people, when they call themselves Christians, are under an illusion — how do they defend themselves against an enthusiast? First and foremost, they do not bother about him at all, they do not so much as look at his book, they immediately lay it aside, *ad acta;* or, if he employs the living word, they go round by another street and do not hear him. As the next step, they spirit him out of the way by carefully defining the whole concept, and settle themselves securely in their illusion: they make him a fanatic, his

Christianity an exaggeration — in the end he remains the only one, or one of the few, who is not seriously a Christian (for exaggeration is surely a lack of seriousness), whereas the others are all serious Christians.

No, an illusion can never be destroyed directly, and only by indirect means can it be radically removed. If it is an illusion that all are Christians — and if there is anything to be done about it, it must be done indirectly, not by one who vociferously proclaims himself an extraordinary Christian, but by one who, better instructed, is ready to declare that he is not a Christian at all. [One may recall the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the author of which, Johannes Climacus, declares expressly that he himself is not a Christian.] That is, one must approach from behind the person who is under an illusion. Instead of wishing to have the advantage of being oneself that rare thing, a Christian, one must let the prospective captive enjoy the advantage of being the Christian, and for one's own part have resignation enough to be the one who is far behind him — otherwise one will certainly not get the man out of his illusion, a thing which is difficult enough in any case.

If then, according to our assumption, the greater number of people in Christendom only imagine themselves to be Christians, in what categories do they live? They live in aesthetic, or, at the most, in aesthetic-ethical categories.

Supposing then that a religious writer has become profoundly attentive to this illusion, Christendom, and has resolved to attack it with all the might at his disposal (with God's aid, be it noted) — what then is he to do? First and foremost, no impatience. If he becomes impatient, he will rush headlong against it and accomplish nothing. A direct attack only strengthens a person in his illusion, and at the same time embitters him. There is nothing that requires such gentle handling as an illusion, if one wishes to dispel it. If anything prompts the prospective captive to set his

will in opposition, all is lost. And this is what a direct attack achieves, and it implies moreover the presumption of requiring a man to make to another person, or in his presence, an admission which he can make most profitably to himself privately. This is what is achieved by the indirect method, which, loving and serving the truth, arranges everything dialectically for the prospective captive, and then shyly withdraws (for love is always shy), so as not to witness the admission which he makes to himself alone before God — that he has lived hitherto in an illusion.

The religious writer must therefore, first get into touch with men. That is, he must begin with aesthetic achievement. This is earnest-money. The more brilliant the achievement, the better for him. Moreover he must be sure of himself, or (and this is the one and only security) he must relate himself to God in fear and trembling, lest the event most opposite to his intentions should come to pass, and instead of setting the others in motion, the others acquire power over him, so that he ends by being bogged in the aesthetic. Therefore, he must have everything in readiness, though without impatience, with a view to bringing forward the religious promptly, as soon as he perceives that he has his readers with him, so that with the momentum gained by devotion to the aesthetic they rush headlong into contact with the religious.

It is important that religion should not be introduced either too soon or too late. If too long a time elapses, the illusion gains ground that the aesthetic writer has become older and hence religious. If it comes too soon, the effect is not violent enough.

Assuming that there is a prodigious illusion in the case of these many men who call themselves Christians and are regarded as Christians, the way of encountering it which is here suggested involves no condemnation or denunciation. It is a truly Christian invention, which cannot be employed without fear and trembling, or without real self-denial. The one who is

disposed to help bears all the responsibility and makes all the effort. But for that reason such a line of action possesses intrinsic value. Generally speaking, a method has value only in relation to the result attained. Some one condemns and denounces, vociferates and makes a great noise — all this has no intrinsic value, though one counts upon accomplishing much by it. It is otherwise with the line of action here contemplated. Suppose that a man had dedicated himself to the use of it, suppose that he used it his whole life long — and suppose that he accomplished nothing: he has nevertheless by no means lived in vain, for his life was true self-denial.

§ 2

That if real success is to attend the effort to bring a man to a definite position, one must first of all take pains to find HIM where he is and begin there.

This is the secret of the art of helping others. Any one who has not mastered this is himself deluded when he proposes to help others. In order to help another effectively I must understand more than he — yet first of all surely I must understand what he understands. If I do not know that, my greater understanding will be of no help to him. If, however, I am disposed to plume myself on my greater understanding, it is because I am vain or proud, so that at bottom, instead of benefiting him, I want to be admired. But all true effort to help begins with self-humiliation: the helper must first humble himself under him he would help, and therewith must understand that to help does not mean to be a sovereign but to be a servant, that to help does not mean to be ambitious but to be patient, that to help means to endure for the time being the imputation that one is in the wrong and does not understand what the other understands.

Take the case of a man who is passionately angry, and let us assume that he is really in the wrong. Unless you can begin with him by making it seem

as if it were he that had to instruct you, and unless you can do it in such a way that the angry man, who was too impatient to listen to a word of yours, is glad to discover in you a complaisant and attentive listener — if you cannot do that, you cannot help him at all. Or take the case of a lover who has been unhappy in love, and suppose that the way he yields to his passion is really unreasonable, impious, unchristian. In case you cannot begin with him in such a way that he finds genuine relief in talking to you about his suffering and is able to enrich his mind with the poetical interpretations you suggest for it, notwithstanding you have no share in this passion and want to free him from it — if you cannot do that, then you cannot help him at all; he shuts himself away from you, he retires within himself... and then you only prate to him. Perhaps by the power of your personality you may be able to coerce him to acknowledge that he is at fault. Ah! my dear, the next moment he steals away by a hidden path for a rendezvous with his hidden passion, for which he longs all the more ardently, and is almost fearful lest it might have lost something of its seductive warmth; for now by your behaviour you have helped him to fall in love all over again, in love now with his unhappy passion itself... and you only prate to him!

So it is with respect to what it means to become a Christian — assuming that the many who call themselves Christians are under an illusion. Denounce the magical charm of aesthetics — well, there have indeed been times when you might have succeeded in coercing people. But with what result? With the result that privately, with secret passion, they love that magic. No, let it come out. And remember, serious and stern as you are, that if you cannot humble yourself, you are not genuinely serious. Be the amazed listener who sits and hears what the other finds the more delight in telling you because you listen with amazement. But above all do not forget one thing, the purpose you have in mind, the fact that it is the religious you must bring forward. If you are capable of it, present the aesthetic with all its

fascinating magic, enthral if possible the other man, present it with the sort of passion which exactly suits him, merrily for the merry, in a minor key for the melancholy, wittily for the witty, &c. But above all do not forget one thing, the purpose you have to bring forward... the religious. By all means do this, and fear not to do it; for truly it cannot be done without fear and trembling.

If you can do that, if you can find exactly the place where the other is and begin there, you may perhaps have the luck to lead him to the place where you are.

For to be a teacher does not mean simply to affirm that such a thing is so, or to deliver a lecture, &c. No, to be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner.

Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands and in the way he understands it, in case you have not understood it before. Or if you have understood it before, you allow him to subject you to an examination so that he may be sure you know your part. This is the introduction. Then the beginning can be made in another sense.

An objection I have constantly raised in my own mind against a class of the orthodox here at home is that they shut themselves up in little groups and confirm one another in the belief that they are the only Christians — and therefore know of nothing else to do about Christendom as a whole but to vociferate that the others are not Christians. If it is true that there really are so very few Christians in Christendom, these orthodox people are *eo ipso* under obligation to be missionaries, although a missionary in Christendom will always look rather different from a missionary to the heathen. It will easily be perceived that this objection of mine attacks our orthodox in correct fashion, from behind; for it proceeds upon the

admission, or the assumption, that they really are true Christians, the only true Christians in Christendom.

So then the religious writer, whose all-absorbing thought is how one is to become a Christian, starts off rightly in Christendom as an aesthetic writer. For a moment let it remain undetermined whether Christendom is a monstrous illusion, whether it is a vain conceit for the many to call themselves Christians; let the opposite rather be assumed. Well then, this beginning is a superfluity, counting upon a situation which does not exist — yet it does no harm. The harm is much greater, or rather the only harm is, when one who is not a Christian pretends to be one. On the other hand, when one who is a Christian gives the impression that he is not, the harm is not great. Assuming that all are Christians, this deception can at the most confirm them more and more in being such.

§ 3

The illusion that religion and Christianity are something one first has recourse to when one grows older.

The aesthetical always overrates youth and this brief instant of eternity. It cannot reconcile itself to the seriousness of age, let alone the seriousness of eternity. Hence the aesthete is always suspicious of the religious person, supposing either that he never had any feeling for aesthetics, or else that essentially he would have preferred to remain in the enjoyment of it, but that time exercised its debilitating influence, and he became older and took refuge in religion. Life is divided into two parts: the period of youth belongs to the aesthetical; the later age to religion — but, speaking honestly, we all would prefer to remain young.

How *may* this illusion be dispelled? I say ‘may’, for whether the effort actually succeeds is another question; but it may be dispelled by the

simultaneous achievement of aesthetic and religious production. In this case no room is left for doubt, for the aesthetic production attests the fact of youth — and so the simultaneous achievement in the religious sphere cannot be explained upon any accidental ground.

Assuming that Christendom is a prodigious illusion, that it is a vain conceit for the many to call themselves Christians, there seems to be every probability that the illusion we are now talking about is exceedingly common. But this illusion is still farther aggravated by the conceit that one is a Christian. One lives in aesthetic categories, and if once in a while thoughts about Christianity occur, the question is deferred till one becomes older. 'For', one says to oneself, 'in fact I am essentially a Christian.' It certainly cannot be denied that in Christendom there are those who live just as sensually as ever any heathen did; yes, even more sensually, because they have this disastrous sense of security that essentially they are Christians. But the decision to become a Christian one shirks as long as possible; indeed one encounters an additional hindrance in the fact that one takes pride in being young as long as possible (and only when one grows old does one have recourse to Christianity and religiousness). Then one will be compelled to make the admission that one has become old — but only when one becomes old will one have recourse to Christianity and religiousness.

If one could always remain young, one would not have the least need either of Christianity or religion.

This is an error most pernicious to all true religiousness. It is rooted in the fact that people confuse the notion of growing older in the sense of time with that of growing older in the sense of eternity. It cannot indeed be denied that one not infrequently sees the unedifying spectacle of a youth who was the hot and passionate spokesman of aesthetics transformed into a type of religiousness which has all the faults of old age, in one sense feeble, in another too highly strung. It cannot be denied that many who represent

the religious do so too sternly and too crabbedly, for fear of not being serious enough. This and much else may contribute to make the illusion more general and to establish it more firmly. But what help is there for it? The only help is what will help to dispel this illusion.

So if a religious author wishes to deal with this illusion, he must be at the same time an aesthetic and a religious author. But one thing above all he must not forget, the intention of the whole undertaking, that what must come decisively to the fore is the religious. The aesthetic works remain only a means of communication; and for those who possibly may need it (and on the assumption that Christendom is a prodigious illusion these must be many) it serves as a proof that it is impossible to explain the religious production by the notion that the author has become older; for it is in fact simultaneous, and surely one has not grown older simultaneously.

Perhaps success may not attend such an effort — perhaps, but at all events no great harm is done. The harm is, at the most, that some will not believe in the religiousness of such a communicator. All right then! A communicator of the religious may very often be over-anxious on his own behalf to be regarded as religious. If such be the case, it shows clearly that he is not truly a religious character. It is like the case of a teacher who is too much concerned about the judgement his pupils may pass upon his instruction, his knowledge, &c. Such a teacher when he tries to teach is unable to move hand or foot. Suppose, for example, he thought it best for his pupils' sake to say of something he understood quite well that he did not understand it. Good gracious! This he could not venture to do, for fear the pupils might really believe that he did not understand it. That is to say, he is not fit to be a teacher — though he calls himself a teacher, he is so far from being such a thing that he actually aspires to be cited for commendation... by his pupils. Or as in the case of a preacher of repentance who, when he wants to chastise the vices of the age, is much concerned about what the age

thinks of him. He is so far from being a preacher of repentance that he resembles rather a New Year's visitor who comes with congratulations. He merely makes himself a bit interesting in a costume which is rather queer for a New Year's visitor. And so it is with the religious character who, if worse come to worst, cannot endure to be regarded as the only person who is not religious. For to be able to endure this is, in the sphere of reflection, the most accurate definition of essential religiousness.

§4

That even if a man will not follow where one endeavours to lead him, one thing it is still possible to do for him — compel him to take notice.

One man may have the good fortune to do much for another, he may have the good fortune to lead him whither he wishes, and (to stick to the subject which here is our constant and essential interest) he may have the good fortune to help him to become a Christian. But this result is not in my power; it depends upon so many things, and above all it depends upon whether he will or no. In all eternity it is impossible for me to compel a person to accept an opinion, a conviction, a belief. But one thing I can do: I can compel him to take notice. In one sense this is the first thing; for it is the condition antecedent to the next thing, i.e. the acceptance of an opinion, a conviction, a belief. In another sense it is the last — if, that is he will not take the next step.

That this is a charitable act there can be no dispute, but it also must not be forgotten that it is a rash act. By obliging a man to take notice I achieve the aim of obliging him to judge. Now he is about to judge — but how he judges is not under my control. Perhaps he judges in the very opposite sense to that which I desire. Moreover, the fact that he was compelled to judge may perhaps have embittered him, furiously embittered him, against the cause and against me. And perhaps I am the victim of my rash act.

Compelling people to take notice and to judge is the characteristic of genuine martyrdom. A genuine martyr never used his might but strove by the aid of impotence. He compelled people to take notice. God knows, they took notice — they put him to death. But with that he was well content. He did not count that his death put a stop to his work; he understood that his death was a part of it, indeed that his work first gained headway by means of his death. For verily those who put him to death took notice in their turn; they were compelled to consider the cause again, and to an entirely different effect. What the living man was unable to do, the dead man could — he won for his cause those who had taken notice.

There is an objection I have raised again and again in my own mind against the preachers we ordinarily find preaching Christianity in Christendom. Surrounded as they are by too much illusion and rendered secure by it, they have not the courage to make men take notice. That is to say, they are not sufficiently self-denying in view of their cause. They are glad to win adherents, but they want to win them for the sake of strengthening their cause, and so they do not inquire any too carefully whether they truly are adherents. Again, this means that in a deeper sense they have no cause. Their cause is one to which they are selfishly attached. Hence they do not venture to go out among men in a real sense, or to let go of the illusion for the sake of imparting an impression of the pure idea. They have an obscure apprehension that it is a dangerous thing to compel people in truth to take notice. In untruth to make people take notice — that is, to bow and scrape before them, to flatter them, to implore their attention and their indulgent judgement, to refer (the truth!) to the ballot — this indeed is not attended by any danger, at least not here on earth, where on the contrary it is attended with advantages of every sort. And yet perhaps it is also attended with the danger that some day, in eternity, one may be ‘plucked’.

And now with reference to the assumption that it is a vain conceit on the part of the many who call themselves Christians. If a man lives in this conceit, lives, that is to say, in categories entirely foreign to Christianity, in purely aesthetic categories, and if some one is capable of winning and captivating him with aesthetic works, and then knows how to introduce the religious so promptly that with the momentum of his abandonment to the aesthetic the man rushes straight into the most decisive definitions of the religious — what then? Why, then, he must take notice. What follows after this, however, no one can tell beforehand. But at least he is compelled to take notice. Possibly he may come to his senses and realize what is implied in calling himself a Christian. Possibly he may be furious with the person who has taken this liberty with him; but at least he has begun to take notice, he is on the point of expressing a judgement. Possibly, in order to protect his retreat, he may express the judgement that the other is a hypocrite, a deceiver, a dunce — but there is no help for it, he must judge, he has begun to take notice.

Normally one reverses the relationship; and it was indeed reversed when Christianity dealt with paganism. But the fact that the situation was entirely altered by the notion of Christendom, which transposes everything into the sphere of reflection, is completely overlooked. In Christendom, the man who endeavours to lead people to become Christians normally gives every sort of assurance that he himself is a Christian. He protests and protests. But he fails to observe that from the very beginning there has been a terrible confusion at this point; for in fact the people he addresses are already Christians. But if it is Christians he is addressing, what can be the sense of getting them to become Christians? If, on the contrary, they are not Christians, in his opinion, although they call themselves such, the very fact that they call themselves Christians shows that here we have to do with a

situation which demands reflection, and with that the tactics must be entirely reversed.

Here I cannot develop further the pressing need Christendom has of an entirely new military science permeated through and through by reflection. In several of my books I have furnished suggestions about the principal factors of such a science. The gist of it all can be expressed in *one* word: the method must be indirect. But the development of this method may require the labour of years, alert attention every hour of the day, daily practice of the scales, or patient finger-exercise in the dialectical, not to speak of a never-slumbering fear and trembling. In the communication of Christianity, where the situation is qualified by Christendom, there is no direct or straightforward relationship, inasmuch as a vain conceit has first to be disposed of. All the old military science, all the apologetic and whatever goes with it, serves rather — candidly speaking — to betray the cause of Christianity. At every instant and at every point the tactics must be adapted to a fight which is waged against a conceit, an illusion.

So then when a religious author in Christendom whose all-absorbing thought is the task of becoming a Christian would do all that he possibly can to make people take notice (for whether he succeeds or not is another question), he must begin as an aesthetic writer and up to a definite point he must maintain this role. But there is necessarily a limit; for the aim of it is to make people take notice. And one thing the author must not forget, namely, his purpose, the distinction between this and that, between the religious as the decisive thing and the aesthetic incognito — lest the criss-cross of dialectics end in twaddle.

§5

That the whole of the aesthetic work, viewed in relation to the work as a whole, is a deception — understanding this word, however, in a special

sense.

Any one who considers the aesthetic work as the whole and then considers the religious part from this point of view, could only consider it as a falling away, a falling off. I have shown in the foregoing that the assumption upon which this point of view is based is not tenable. There it was established that from the very beginning, and simultaneously with the pseudonymous work, certain signals, displaying my name, gave telegraphic notice of the religious.

But from the point of view of my whole activity as an author, integrally conceived, the aesthetic work is a deception, and herein is to be found the deeper significance of the use of pseudonyms. A deception, however, is a rather ugly thing. To this I would make answer: One must not let oneself be deceived by the word ‘deception’. One can deceive a person for the truth’s sake, and (to recall old Socrates) one can deceive a person into the truth. Indeed, it is only by this means, i.e. by deceiving him, that it is possible to bring into the truth one who is in an illusion. Whoever rejects this opinion betrays the fact that he is not over-well versed in dialectics, and that is precisely what is especially needed when operating in this field. For there is an immense difference, a dialectical difference, between these two cases: the case of a man who is ignorant and is to have a piece of knowledge imparted to him, so that he is like an empty vessel which is to be filled or a blank sheet of paper upon which something is to be written; and the case of a man who is under an illusion and must first be delivered from that. Likewise there is a difference between writing on a blank sheet of paper and bringing to light by the application of a caustic fluid a text which is hidden under another text. Assuming then that a person is the victim of an illusion, and that in order to communicate the truth to him the first task, rightly understood, is to remove the illusion — if I do not begin by deceiving him, I must begin with direct communication. But direct communication

presupposes that the receiver's ability to receive is undisturbed. But here such is not the case; an illusion stands in the way. That is to say, one must first of all use the caustic fluid. But this caustic means is negativity, and negativity understood in relation to the communication of the truth is precisely the same as deception.

What then does it mean, 'to deceive'? It means that one does not begin directly with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money. So (to stick to the theme with which this work especially deals) one does not begin thus: I am a Christian you are not a Christian. Nor does one begin thus: It is Christianity I am proclaiming: and you are living in purely aesthetic categories. No one begins thus: Let us talk about aesthetics. The deception consists in the fact that one talks thus merely to get to the religious theme. But, on our assumption, the other man is under the illusion that the aesthetic is Christianity; for, he thinks. I am a Christian, and yet he lives in aesthetic categories.

Although ever so many parsons were to consider this method unjustifiable, and just as many were unable to get it into their heads (in spite of the fact that they all of them, according to their own assertion, are accustomed to use the Socratic method), I for my part tranquilly adhere to Socrates. It is true, he was not a Christian; that I know, and yet I am thoroughly convinced that he has become one. But he was a dialectician, he conceived everything in terms of reflection.

And the question which concerns us here is a purely dialectical one, it is the question of the use of reflection in Christendom. We are reckoning here with two qualitatively different magnitudes, but in a formal sense I can very well call Socrates my teacher — whereas I have only believed, and only believe, in One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. THE *CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPT*

Constitutes, as I have already said, the turning-point in my whole work as an author. It presents the 'Problem', that of becoming a Christian. Having THE POINT OF VIEW this means, i.e. by deceiving him, that it is possible to bring into the truth one who is in an illusion. Whoever rejects this opinion betrays the fact that he is not over-well versed in dialectics, and that is precisely what is especially needed when operating in this field. For there is an immense difference, a dialectical difference, between these two cases: the case of a man who is ignorant and is to have a piece of knowledge imparted to him, so that he is like an empty vessel which is to be filled or a blank sheet of paper upon which something is to be written; and the case of a man who is under an illusion and must first be delivered from that. Likewise there is a difference between writing on a blank sheet of paper and bringing to light by the application of a caustic fluid a text which is hidden under another text. Assuming then that a person is the victim of an illusion, and that in order to communicate the truth to him the first task, rightly understood, is to remove the illusion — if I do not begin by deceiving him, I must begin with direct communication. But direct communication presupposes that the receiver's ability to receive is undisturbed. But here such is not the case; an illusion stands in the way. That is to say, one must first of all use the caustic fluid. But this caustic means is negativity, and negativity understood in relation to the communication of the truth is precisely the same as deception.

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that one talks thus merely to get to the religious theme. But, on our assumption, the other man is under the illusion that the aesthetic is Christianity; for, he thinks, I am a Christian, and yet he lives in aesthetic categories.

Although ever so many parsons were to consider this method unjustifiable, and just as many were unable to get it into their heads (in spite of the fact that they all of them, according to their own assertion, are accustomed to use the Socratic method), I for my part tranquilly adhere to Socrates. It is true, he was not a Christian; that I know, and yet I am thoroughly convinced that he has become one. But he was a dialectician, he conceived everything in terms of reflection.

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Constitutes, as I have already said, the turning-point in my whole work as an author. It presents the 'Problem', that of becoming a Christian, Having appropriated the whole pseudonymous, aesthetic work as the description of one way a person may take to become a Christian (viz. away from the aesthetical in order to become a Christian), it undertakes to describe the other way (viz. *away* from the System, from speculation, &c., in order to become a Christian).

C. THE RELIGIOUS WORK

I could express myself very briefly even with regard to the *Concluding Postscript*, since that book does not present any difficulties when the point of view for the literary work as a whole is that the author is a religious author. The only thing that required explanation was the question how, on

this assumption, the aesthetic work was to be conceived. And what, on this assumption, requires no explanation at all is the last section, the purely religious work, which of course establishes the point of view.

CONCLUSION

WHAT DOES ALL this come to, when the reader puts together the points dwelt upon in the foregoing paragraphs? It means that this is a literary work in which the whole thought is the task of becoming a Christian. But it is a literary work which understood from the very first and consistently followed out the implication of the fact that the situation is Christendom — a reflective modification — and hence transformed into reflection all the relationships of Christianity. To become a Christian in Christendom means either to become what one is (the inwardness of reflection to become inward through reflection), or it means that the first thing is to be disengaged from the toils of one's illusion, which again is a reflective modification. Here there is no room for vacillation or ambiguity of the sort one commonly experiences elsewhere when one does not know and cannot make out whether one is situated in paganism, whether the parson is a missionary in that sense, or whereabouts one is. Here one does not miss what is generally lacking, viz, a decisive categorical definition and a decisive expression for the situation: to preach Christianity... in Christendom. Everything is put in terms of reflection. The communication is qualified by reflection, hence it is indirect communication. The communicator is characterized by reflection, therefore he is negative — not one who says that he himself is a Christian in an extraordinary degree, or even lays claim to revelations (all of which answers to immediacy and direct communication); but, on the contrary, one who even affirms that he is not a Christian. That is to say, the communicator stands behind the other man, helping him negatively — for whether he actually succeeds in helping some one is another question. The problem itself is a problem of reflection: to become a Christian... when one is a Christian of a sort.

CHAPTER II

THE DIFFERENCE IN MY PERSONAL MODE OF EXISTENCE CORRESPONDING TO THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE IN THE WORKS

IN THIS AGE, and indeed for many ages past, people have quite lost sight of the fact that authorship is and ought to be a serious calling implying an appropriate mode of personal existence. They do not realize that the press in general, as an expression of the abstract and impersonal communication of ideas, and the daily press in particular, because of its formal indifference to the question whether what it reports is true or false, contributes enormously to the general demoralization, for the reason that the impersonal, which for the most part is irresponsible and incapable of repentance, is essentially demoralizing. They do not realize that anonymity, as the most absolute expression for the impersonal, the irresponsible, the unrepentant, is a fundamental source of the modern demoralization. On the other hand, they do not reflect that anonymity would be counteracted in the simplest possible way, and that a wholesome corrective would be furnished for the abstractness of printed communication, if people would but turn back again to antiquity and learn what it means to be a single individual man, neither more nor less — which surely even an author is too, neither more nor less. This is perfectly obvious. But in our age, which reckons as wisdom that which is truly the mystery of unrighteousness, viz. that one need not inquire about the communicator, but only about the communication, the objective only — in our age what is an author? An author is often merely an x, even when his name is signed, something quite impersonal, which addresses itself abstractly, by the aid of printing, to thousands and thousands, while

remaining itself unseen and unknown, living a life as hidden, as anonymous, as it is possible for a life to be, in order, presumably, not to reveal the too obvious and striking contradiction between the prodigious means of communication employed and the fact that the author is only a single individual — perhaps also for fear of the control which in practical life must always be exercised over every one who wishes to teach others, to see whether his personal existence comports with his communication. But all this, which deserves the most serious attention on the part of one who would study the demoralization of the modern state — all this I cannot enter into more particularly here.

A. THE PERSONAL MODE OF EXISTENCE IN RELATION TO THE AESTHETIC WORKS

I come now to the first period of my authorship and my mode of existence. Here was a religious author, but one who began as an aesthetic author; and this first stage was one of incognito and deceit. Initiated as I was very early and very thoroughly into the secret that *Mundus vult decipi*, I was not in the position of being able to wish to follow such tactics. Quite the contrary. With me it was a question of deceiving inversely on the greatest possible scale, employing every bit of knowledge I had about men and their weaknesses and their stupidities, not to profit thereby, but to annihilate myself and weaken the impression I made. The secret of the deceit which suits the world which wants to be deceived consists partly in forming a coterie and all that goes with that, in joining one or another of those societies for mutual admiration, whose members support one another with tongue and pen in the pursuit of worldly advantage; and it consists partly in hiding oneself from the human crowd, never being seen, so as to produce a fantastic effect. So I had to do exactly the opposite. I had to exist in absolute isolation and guard my solitude, but at the same time take pains to be seen

every hour of the day, living as it were upon the street, in company with Tom, Dick, and Harry, and in the most fortuitous situations. This is truth's way of deceiving, the everlastingly sure way of weakening, in a worldly sense, the impression one makes. It was, moreover, the way followed by men of a very different calibre from mine to make people take notice. Those reputable persons, the deceivers who want the communication to serve them instead of serving the communication, are on the look-out only to win repute for themselves. Those despised persons, the 'witnesses for the truth', who deceive inversely, have ever been wont to suffer themselves to be set at naught in a worldly sense and be counted as nothing — in spite of the fact that they labour day and night, and suffer besides from having no support whatever in the illusion that the work they perform is their career and their 'living'.

So this had to be done, and it was done, not now and then, but every day. I am convinced that one-sixth of Either! Or, together with a bit of coterie, and then an author who was never to be seen — especially if this was carried on for a considerable time — must make a much more extraordinary effect. I, however, had made myself sure of being able to work as laboriously as I pleased and as the spirit prompted me, without having to fear that I might get too much renown. For in a certain sense I was working as laboriously in another direction — against myself. Only an author will be able to understand what a task it is to work qua author, i.e. with mind and pen, and yet be at the beck and call of everybody. Although this mode of existence enriched me immensely with observations of human life, it is a standard of conduct which would bring most men to despair. For it means the effort to dispel every illusion and to present the idea in all its purity — and verily, it is not truth that rules the world but illusions. Even if a literary achievement were more illustrious than any that has yet been seen — if only the author were to live as is here suggested, he would in a brief time

have insured himself against worldly renown and the crowd's brutish adulation. For the crowd possesses no idealism, and hence no power of retaining impressions in spite of contrary appearances. It is always the victim of appearances. To be seen again and again, and to be seen in the most fortuitous situations, is enough to make the crowd forget its first impression of the man and become soon sick and tired of him. And, after all, to keep oneself perpetually in view does not consume a great deal of time, if only one employs one's time shrewdly (i.e. in a worldly sense insanely) and to the best effect, by going back and forth past the same spot, and that the most frequented spot in the city. Every one who husbands his reputation, in a worldly sense, will not return by the same way he went, even if it is the most convenient way. He will avoid being seen twice in so short a time, for fear people might suppose he had nothing to do, whereas if he sat in his room at home three-quarters of the day and was idle, such a thought would never occur to anybody. On the other hand, an hour well spent, in a godly sense, an hour lived for eternity and spent by going back and forth among the common people... is not such a small thing after all. And verily it is well pleasing to God that the truth should be served in this way. His Spirit witnesseth mightily with my spirit that it has the full consent of His Divine Majesty. All the witnesses of the truth indicate their approval, recognizing that one is disposed to serve the truth, the idea, and not to betray the truth and profit by the illusion. I experienced a real Christian satisfaction in venturing to perform on Monday a little bit of that which one weeps about on Sunday (when the parson prates about it and weeps too)... and on Monday one is ready to laugh about. I had real Christian satisfaction in the thought that, if there were no other, there was definitely one man in Copenhagen whom every poor man could freely accost and converse with on the street; that, if there were no other, there was one man who, whatever the society he more commonly frequented, did not shun contact with the

poor, but greeted every maidservant he was acquainted with, every manservant, every common labourer. I felt a real Christian satisfaction in the fact that, if there were no other, there was one man who (several years before existence set the race another lesson to learn) made a practical effort on a small scale to learn the lesson of loving one’s neighbour and alas! got at the same time a frightful insight into what an illusion Christendom is, and (a little later, to be sure) an insight also into what a situation the simpler classes suffered themselves to be seduced by paltry newspaper-writers, whose struggle or fight for equality (since it is in the service of a lie) cannot lead to any other result but to prompt the privileged classes in self-defence to stand proudly aloof from the common man, and to make the common man insolent in his forwardness.

The description of my personal existence cannot be carried out here in greater detail; but I am convinced that seldom has any author employed so much cunning, intrigue, and shrewdness to win honour and reputation in the world with a view to deceiving it, as I displayed in order to deceive it inversely in the interest of truth. On how great a scale this was carried out I shall attempt to show by one single instance, known to my friend Giodwad, the proof-reader of Either/Or. I was so busy when I was reading the proofs of Either/Or that it was impossible to spend the usual time sauntering back and forth on the street. I did not get through the work till late in the evening, and then I hastened to the theatre, where I remained literally only from five to ten minutes. And why did I do this? Because I feared the big book would create for me too great a reputation. And why did I do this? Because I knew human nature, especially in Copenhagen. To be seen every night for five minutes by several hundred people sufficed to substantiate the opinion: He hasn’t the least thing in the world to do; he is a mere idler.

Such was the existence I led by way of seconding my aesthetic work. Incidentally it involved a breach with all coteries. And I formed the

polemical resolution to regard every eulogy as an attack, and every attack as a thing unworthy of notice. Such was my public mode of existence. I almost never made a visit, and at home the rule was strictly observed to receive no one except the poor who came to seek help. For I had no time to receive visitors at home, and any one who entered my home as a visitor might easily get a presentiment of a situation about which he should have no presentiment. Thus I existed. If Copenhagen ever has been of one opinion about anybody, I venture to say that it was of one opinion about me, that I was an idler, a dawdler, a *flâneur*, a frivolous bird, intelligent, perhaps brilliant, witty, &c. — but as for 'seriousness', I lacked it utterly. I represented a worldly irony, *joie de vivre,* the subtlest form of pleasure-seeking — without a trace of 'seriousness and positivity'; on the other hand, I was prodigiously witty and interesting.

When I look back upon that time, I am almost tempted to make some sort of apology to the people of importance and repute in the community. For true enough, I knew perfectly well what I was doing, yet from their standpoint they were right in finding fault with me, because by thus impairing my own prestige I contributed to the movement which was impairing power and renown in general — notwithstanding that I have always been conservative in this respect, and have found joy in paying to the eminent and distinguished the deference, awe, and admiration which are due to them. Yet my conservative disposition did not involve a desire to have this sort of distinction for myself. And just because the eminent and distinguished members of the community have shown me in so many ways not only sympathy but partiality, have sought in so many ways to draw me to their side (which certainly was honest and well-meant on their part) — just for this reason I feel impelled to make them an apology, although naturally I cannot regret what I have done, since I served my idea. People of distinction have always proved more consistent in their treatment of me

than the simpler classes, who even from their own standpoint did not behave rightly, since they too (according to the foregoing account) attacked me... because I was not superior enough to hold myself aloof — which is very queer and ridiculous of the simpler classes.

This is the first period: by my personal mode of existence I endeavoured to support the pseudonyms, the aesthetic work as a whole. Melancholy, incurably melancholy as I was, suffering prodigious griefs in my inmost soul, having broken in desperation from the world and all that is of the world, strictly brought up from my very childhood in the apprehension that the truth must suffer and be mocked and derided, spending a definite time every day in prayer and devout meditation, and being myself personally a penitent — in short, being what I was, I found (I do not deny it) a certain sort of satisfaction in this life, in this inverse deception, a satisfaction in observing that the deception succeeded so extraordinarily, that the public and I were on the most confidential terms, that I was quite in the fashion as the preacher of a gospel of worldliness, that though I was not in possession of the sort of distinction which can only be earned by an entirely different mode of life, yet in secret (and hence the more heartily loved) I was the darling of the public, regarded by every one as prodigiously interesting and witty. This satisfaction, which was my secret and which sometimes put me into an ecstasy, might have been a dangerous temptation. Not as though the world and such things could tempt me with their flattery and adulation. No, on that side I was safe. If I was to have been capsized, it would have to have been by this thought raised to a higher power, an obsession almost of ecstasy at the thought of how the deception was succeeding. This was an indescribable alleviation to a sense of resentment which smouldered in me from my childhood; because, long before I had seen it with my own eyes, I had been taught that falsehood, pettiness, and injustice ruled the world. — I

often had to think of these words in *Either/Or:* 'If ye but knew what it is ye laugh at' — if ye but knew with whom ye have to do, who this *flâneur* is!

B. THE PERSONAL MODE OF EXISTENCE IN RELATION TO THE RELIGIOUS WORKS

In the month of December 1845 the manuscript of the *Concluding Postscript* was completely finished, and, as my custom was, I had delivered the whole of it at once to Luno [the printer] — which the suspicious do not have to believe on my word, since Luno's account-book is there to prove it. This work constitutes the turning-point in my whole activity as an author, inasmuch as it presents the 'problem', how to become a Christian. With this began the transition to the series of purely religious writings.

I perceived at once that my personal mode of existence must be remodelled to correspond with this change, or that I must try to give my contemporaries a different notion of my personal mode of existence. So I myself had already become aware of what must be done, when there occurred in the most opportune way a little incident in which I perceived a hint of Providence to help me to act decisively in that direction.

However, I cannot proceed farther with this subject until I have recalled to the reader's recollection the situation in Copenhagen at that juncture — by a description which perhaps now will stand out in sharper relief by contrast with the present warlike situation. At that time there developed little by little the rather remarkable phenomenon that the entire population of Copenhagen became ironical — and just so much the more ironical in proportion as the people were more ignorant and uneducated. It was irony here and irony there, from one end to the other. If the case were not so serious, and if I could venture to contemplate it with a purely aesthetic interest, I do not deny that it is the most ludicrous thing I have ever beheld, and I really believe that one might travel far and still be lucky to encounter anything so fundamentally comical. The entire population of a city, with all

the unemployed on the streets and alleys well in the lead, down to school-urchins and apprentices; all the legions of those classes which in our day are the only really privileged classes, those, namely, who amount to nothing, they become... (what they become) en masse; the entire population of a city, guilds, corporations, business men, persons of rank, they become (very much like a bourgeois sauntering out to the 'Deer Park'), they become... en famille; these thousands and thousands become... just about the one thing I would venture to assert it is impossible for them to become (especially en masse and en famille) they become ironical, by the help of a sheet, which in turn (ironically enough) leads the fashion by the help of editorial blackguards, and the fashion it sets is... irony. It is impossible, I believe, to think of anything more ludicrous. For irony implies a specific intellectual culture, such as is very rare in any generation — and this *cohue* and rabble were adepts in irony. Irony is absolutely unsocial; an irony which is in the majority is eo ipso not irony. Nothing is more certain than this, for it is implied in the very concept. Irony tends essentially towards one person as its limit, as is so justly stated in the Aristotelian saying, that the ironical man does all 'for his own sake' (εαυτόν ενεκα) — and here was an immense public, arm in arm, in bona caritate, become as ironical as the devil. But the case was too serious. This irony was of course sheer vulgarity. For even if the real instigator possessed a talent by no means insignificant, it could not but become vulgarity in passing over to these thousands and thousands; and unfortunately vulgarity is always popular. So there was a demoralization which only too dreadfully recalls the punishment with which the Prophet of old in the name of the Lord threatened the Jews as the worst of all punishments, 'Children shall rule over you' [Isa. iii. 4]. It was a demoralization which, considering the proportions of the little land, actually threatened it with complete moral disintegration. To form a conception of the danger one must see at close

range how even good-natured and worthy people, so soon as they become a 'crowd', turn into quite different beings. One must see at close range the want of character exhibited by otherwise upright people, who say, It is a shame, it is shocking for any one to do or to utter anything of the sort — and then they themselves contribute their little share to envelop the city in a snow-flurry of chatter and town-gossip. One must witness the hardness of heart which otherwise kindly people display in their capacity as 'the public', thinking that their intervention or non-intervention is a trifling thing — a trifling thing indeed which by the contributions of the many becomes a monster. One must see how laughter is feared above all other sorts of attack, how even a man who had boldly encountered mortal peril for a cause that did not concern him, would hardly hesitate to betray father and mother in case the danger were laughter. For an attack of this sort isolates a man as no other does, and at no point does it offer him the support of pathos, while frivolity and curiosity and sensuality grin, and the nervous cowardice which itself shuns such an attack incessantly cries, 'It is nothing', and the contemptible cowardice which buys itself off from attack by bribery or by currying favour with the person concerned, it too says, 'It is nothing', and even sympathy says, 'It is nothing'. It is terrible when in a little land chattering and grinning become a menace on becoming 'public opinion'. Denmark was on the point of being absorbed in Copenhagen, and Copenhagen was just in the act of becoming a mere provincial town. It is only too easy to bring this about, especially with the help of the press; and when this is accomplished it will require perhaps a generation to live it down.

But enough of this. It was important for me to alter my personal mode of existence to correspond with the fact that I was making the transition to the statement of religious problems. I must have an existence-form corresponding with this sort of authorship. The time, as I have said, was the

month of December, and it was desirable that everything should be in readiness by the time the Concluding Postscript would come out. So the step was taken within this month of December. With the knowledge I possessed of the situation I readily perceived that it was enough to address two words to that organ of irony, which in a sense (i.e. if I had not been the man I am) had rather adroitly venerated and immortalized me — that two words would be enough to reverse dialectically my whole existence-relationship, by getting all that interminable public of ironical adepts to take aim at me, so that I should become the target of the irony of all men. Alas for me, the Magister of Irony!

The command was issued, and in order that it might not be exploited as a newly invented and highly piquant form of irony, a pretty strong dose of the ethical was added by my requisition that I be made an object of the gross abuse of the loathsome organ of loathsome irony. That hydra of innumerable ironical heads naturally thought that I was crazy. The individuals who saw deeper into the affair beheld, not without a shudder, the leap which I made, or (because they thought only of what in a worldly sense is understood by worldliness and did not bethink them of what in a godly sense is understood by it) they found it beneath my dignity to take notice of such a thing, whereas I should have counted it beneath my dignity to have lived as a contemporary of such a demoralization without having acted decisively, content with the cheap virtue of behaving like ‘the others’, that is to say, shirking as far as possible all action, while journalistic vileness on a scale so disproportionately great was doubtless bringing people to their graves, mortifying and embittering, perhaps not always the direct objects of the attack, yet at all events their wives and children, their relatives and closest friends, penetrating defilingly into every place, even into the privacy of school-life, even into the sanctuary of the Church, spitting out lies, gossip, insolence, and urchin-pranks — all in the service of

pernicious passion and paltry greed of money... and for all this a blackguard was 'responsible'! That in the service of my idea this course which I took was the right one I understood perfectly, and I did not vacillate. The consequences thereof, of which certainly no one at the moment was envious, I now lay historic claim to as my lawful property, the value of which in perspective my mind easily discerns.

I had now reckoned out that dialectically the situation would be appropriate for recovering the use of indirect communication. While I was occupied solely with religious productions I could count upon the negative support of these daily douches of vulgarity, which would be cooling enough in its effect to ensure that the religious communication would not be too direct, or too directly create for me adherents. The reader could not relate himself directly to me; for now, instead of the incognito of the aesthetical, I had erected the danger of laughter and grins, by which most people are scared away. And he even who was not scared by this would be upset by the next obstacle by the thought that I had voluntarily exposed myself to all this, giving proof of a sort of lunacy. Ah, yes! so did the contemporaries doubtless judge of the Roman knight who made the immortal leap to save his country! Ah, yes! and again, ah yes! for it was dialectically the precise expression for Christian self-denial — and I, poor wretch, the Magister of Irony, became the pitiable target for the laughter of a 'highly esteemed public'.

The costume was correct. Every religious author is eo ipso polemical; for the world is not good that the religious man can assume that he has triumphed or is in the party of the majority. A victorious religious author who is in the world is eo ipso not? religious author. The essentially religious author is always polemical, and hence he suffers under or suffers from the opposition which corresponds Jo whatever in his age must be regarded as the specific evil. If it be kings and emperors, popes and bishops... and

powers that constitute the Evil, the religious author must be recognizable by the fact that he is the object of their attack. If it is the crowd — and prating and the public — and the beastly grin which is the Evil, he must be recognizable by the fact that he is the object of that sort of attack and persecution. And the essentially religious author has but one fulcrum for his lever, namely, a miraculous syllogism. When any one asks him on what he bases the claim that he is right and that it is the truth he utters, his answer is: I prove it by the fact that I am persecuted; this is the truth, and I. can prove it by the fact that I am derided. That is, he does not substantiate the truth or the righteousness of his cause by appealing to the honour, reputation, &c., which he enjoys, but he does quite the contrary; for the essentially religious man is always polemical. Every religious writer, or speaker, or teacher, who absents himself from danger and is not present where it is, and where the Evil has its stronghold, is a deceiver, and that will eventually become apparent. For every one who comes to the gates of death and its doors open for him has to lay aside from him all the pomp and grandeur and wealth and worldly reputation, and the stars of knightly orders and other tokens of honour — whether they were distributed by kings and emperors or by the crowd and the public — has to lay them all aside as things which are entirely inappropriate and superfluous. Only one exception is made, and that is with reference to the man who in his lifetime has been a religious writer or teacher or speaker. If he is found in possession of any such things, he is not allowed to lay them aside. No, they are packed up in a bundle and returned to him, and he is compelled to keep them and carry them, as a thief may be compelled to carry his stolen goods. And with that bundle he must enter the place where he is to be judged. Having been a religious teacher, he will be judged by the true religious teachers, who all of them so long as they lived were mocked, persecuted, derided, scorned, and spat upon. Ah! how frightful it is for the natural man to stand here on earth and be derided,

mocked, and spat upon! More frightful still to stand in eternity with this bundle under his arm, or attired in his... finery!

The costume was correct. In a grinning age, such as that was of which I speak (and, in my opinion at least, the ‘war’ has in this respect been a fortunate thing for Denmark), the religious author must, for God’s sake! see well to it that he be derided above all others. If it is from the crowd the Evil proceeds, the contemporary religious author must, for God’s sake! see well to it that he become the object of its persecution, and that in this respect he be found in the front line. And the estimate I formed of the crowd, which at one time even the more perspicacious may perhaps have considered a little exaggerated, now, in 1848, now, by the help of the wild gesticulations of a real emergency (which are more effective than the weak voice of an individual and are like the raging of the elements), now the objection might rather be that I did not put it strongly enough. And that category, ‘the individual’, which was regarded as an oddity, the invention of an odd person — which in fact it is, for was not he who in a sense was the inventor of it, namely Socrates, called in his day ‘the oddest’ (ἀτοποτατο?)? — the credit for having brought that category to notice in its time I would not exchange for a kingdom. If the crowd is the Evil, if chaos is what threatens us there is salvation only in one thing, in becoming a single individual, in the thought of ‘that individual’ as an essential category. One triumph I have experienced, and one only, but that satisfies me absolutely, so that as a thinker I demand nothing more in this world. The revolutionary world-historical events of the past few months brought forward unripe, visionary men as the bewildered spokesmen of bewildering thoughts, and brought on the other hand to silence all that had hitherto in divers ways presumed to guide opinion — brought it either to silence or to the embarrassment of having to manufacture for itself in the greatest haste an entirely new dress. Every system was shattered — shattered as completely in the course of a

few months as if between the present and the immediate past a whole generation had intervened. During this catastrophe I sat and read the proofs of a book (*Christan Discourses)* which, consequently, was written before it. Not one single word was added or subtracted; it expressed the view which I, ‘the odd thinker’, had already for several years been propounding. One who reads it will get the impression that the book was written after the catastrophe. Such a world-historical catastrophe, which ranks so high that not even the dissolution of the ancient world was so imposing, constitutes for every one who *then* was an author the absolute *tentamen rigorosum.* I experienced the triumph of not needing to modify or alter one tittle of what I had written, the triumph, indeed, of seeing that what I had written before the event will be, if any one now reads it, far, far more intelligible than when it was written. And now only one thing more. When some day my lover comes, he will easily perceive that at the time I was regarded as ironical the irony was by no means to be found where ‘the highly esteemed public’ thought. It was to be found — and this goes without saying, for my lover cannot possibly be so foolish as to assume that a public can understand irony, which is just as impossible as to be an individual *en masse* — he will perceive that the irony lay precisely in the fact that within this aesthetic author, under this worldly appearance, was concealed the religious author, who just at that time was consuming quite as much religiousness as commonly suffices for the provision of an entire household. Moreover, my lover will perceive that irony appeared again in relation to the next period, and is to be discovered precisely in the fact which ‘the highly esteemed public’ regarded as lunacy. In an ironical generation (that great aggregation of fools) there remains nothing else for the ironical man to do but to invert the relationship and himself become the target for the irony of all men. My lover will perceive how it all fitted to a nicety, how my existence-relationship was transformed in precise correspondence with the

requirement of my productivity. If I had not had an eye for this or courage enough for it, if I had altered the productivity but not the existence-relationship, the situation would have been undialectic and confused.

CHAPTER III

THE SHARE DIVINE GOVERNANCE HAD IN MY AUTHORSHIP

WHAT I HAVE written up to this point has in a sense been neither agreeable nor pleasant to write. There is something painful in being obliged to talk so much about oneself. Would to God I might have ventured to hold my peace even longer than I have, yea, even to die in silence about a subject which, like my labour and my literary work, has occupied me day and night. But now, thank God, now I breathe freely, now I actually feel an urge to speak, now I have come to the theme which I find inconceivably pleasant to think about and to talk about. This God-relationship of mine is the 'happy love' in a life which has been in many ways troubled and unhappy. And although the story of this love affair (if I dare call it such) has the essential marks of a true love story, in the fact that only one can completely understand it, and there is no absolute joy but in relating it to one only, namely, the beloved, who in this instance is the Person by whom one is loved, [Perhaps now the reader may be ready to recognize how it is that what has been the misfortune, humanly speaking, of the whole productivity', what has more and more caused it to stand apart as a superfluity, instead of actually coming to grips with the situation, is the fact that it is too religious, or that the author's existence is too religious, that the author *qua* author has been absolutely weak, and therefore has been absolutely in need of God. If the author had been less weak, that is to say, in a human sense stronger (that is, less religious), he would as a matter of course have laid claim to the authorship as his own, he would presumably have acquired a number of confidants and friends, he would have made known beforehand to others what he proposed, would have taken counsel

with them and asked their assistance; and they in turn, acting as godfathers, would have enlisted others, so that the authorship would have been interrelated with the instant and effective in the instant — instead of being a superfluity... such as God himself is in sooth, more than everything else and everybody else. — Perhaps now the reader may be ready to recognize why I have laboured with so much effort and sacrifice, day in and day out, to prevent falsehood from emerging, a falsehood, it is true, which (as it always does) would have brought me money, honour, reputation, applause, &c., the falsehood that what I had to deliver was 'what the age demands', that it is presented to the indulgent judgement of 'a highly respected public', *item* that it owes its success to the support and acclamation of this same highly respected public. In exact opposition to this, in the fear and love of God, I had to watch sleeplessly to ensure that the truth be expressed: that it was God's aid alone I relied on, that I owed nothing either to the public or to the age, except the wrong it has done me. I had to be on the watch to ensure that the truth might be expressed by the rousing epigram upon this age that at a time when everything was general assemblies and societies and committees, their appointment, continuation, and dissolution, whereas all the while nothing was done, that at this time there was bestowed upon a weakly and solitary man the talent to work on a scale so great that any one might suppose it was more than the labour of a committee. In short, it was my duty to give expression, both in my personal existence and in my author-existence, to the fact that I every day ascertained and convinced myself anew that a God exists. — Perhaps now the reader may be ready to recognize why it was I found myself compelled to counteract in a finite sense my own effort, for the sake of ensuring that the responsibility should be all my own. I must in any case be quite alone, absolutely alone, yes, I must even reject assistance, lest my responsibility be too light. Given but one friend and one fellow worker, responsibility becomes a fraction — not

to speak of getting a whole generation to come to one's aid. But in the service of truth the point for me was that if I were to go astray, if I were to become presumptuous, if what I said was untrue, Governance might have an absolutely sure hold on me, and that in the possibility of this examination which every instant hung over me I might be kept alert, attentive, obedient.] yet there is a joy also in talking about it to others.

As for the fact that I have needed God's love, and how constantly I have needed it, day after day, year after year — to recall this to my mind and to report it exactly, I do not need the aid of memory or recollection, or of journals or diaries, nor do I need to check the one by the other, so vividly, so feelingly do I live it over again in this very instant. What could not this pen produce if it were a question of hardihood, of enthusiasm, of fervour to the verge of madness! And now that I am to talk about my God-relationship, about what every day is repeated in my prayer of thanksgiving for the indescribable things He has done for me, so infinitely much more than ever I could have expected, about the experience which has taught me to be amazed, amazed at God, at His love and at what a man's impotence is capable of with His aid, about what has taught me to long for eternity and not to fear that I might find it tiresome, since it is exactly the situation I need so as to have nothing else to do but to give thanks. Now that I am to talk about this there awakens in my soul a poetic impatience. More resolutely than that king who cried, 'My kingdom for a horse', and blessedly resolute as he was not, I would give all, and along with that my life, to be able to find what thought has more blessedness in finding than a lover in finding the beloved — to find the 'expression', and then to die with this expression on my lips. And lo! it presents itself — thoughts as enchanting as the fruits in the garden of a fairy-tale, so rich and warm and heartfelt; expressions so soothing to the urge of gratitude within me, so cooling to my hot longing — it seems to me as if, had I a winged pen, yes,

ten of them, I still could not follow fast enough to keep pace with the wealth which presents itself. But no sooner have I taken pen in hand, at that very instant I am incapable of moving it, as we say of one that he cannot move hand or foot. In that situation not a line concerning this relationship gets put down on paper. It seems to me as if I heard a voice saying to me: Silly fellow, what does he imagine? Does he not know that obedience is dearer to God than the fat of rams? Then I become perfectly quiet, then there is time enough to write each letter with my slow pen almost painfully. And if that poetic impatience awakes in me again for an instant, it seems as though I heard a voice speaking to me as a teacher speaks to a boy when he says: Now hold the pen right, and form each letter with equal precision. And then I can do it, then I dare not do otherwise, then I write every word, every line, almost without knowing what the next word or the next line is to be. And afterwards when I read it over it satisfies me in quite a different way. For though it may be that one or another glowing expression escapes me, yet the production is quite a different one: it is the outcome, not of the poet's or the thinker's passion, but of godly fear, and for me it is a divine worship.

But what now at this instant I am living over again, or just now have been, is something I have experienced time and again during my whole activity as an author. It is said of the 'poet' that he invokes the muse to supply him with thoughts. This indeed has never been my case, my individuality prohibits me even from understanding it; but on the contrary I have needed God every day to shield me from too great a wealth of thoughts. Give a person such a productive talent, and along with that such feeble health, and verily he will learn to pray. I have been able at any instant to perform this prodigy, and I can do it still: I could sit down and continue to write for a day and a night, and again for a day and a night; for there was wealth sufficient for it. If I had done it, I should have been broken. Oh, even the least dietetic indiscretion, and I am in mortal danger. When I learn

obedience, as I have described above, when I do the work as if it were a sternly prescribed task, hold the pen as I ought, write each letter with pains, then I can do it. And thus, many and many a time, I have had more joy in the relation of obedience to God than in thoughts that I produced. This, it can readily be perceived, is the expression of the fact that I can lay no claim to an immediate relationship with God, that I cannot and dare not say that it is He who immediately inserts the thoughts in me, but that my relationship to God is a reflection-relationship, is inwardness in reflection, as in general the distinguishing trait of my individuality is reflection, so that even in prayer my *forte* is thanksgiving.

Thus it is that in the course of my whole activity as an author I have constantly needed God's aid so as to be able to do the work simply as a prescribed task to which definite hours every day were allotted, outside of which it was not permissible to work. And if only once that rule was transgressed, I had to pay for it dearly. Nothing is less like my procedure than the stormy entrance of genius upon the scene, and then its tumultuous finale. Substantially I have lived like a clerk in his comptoir. From the very beginning I have been as it were under arrest and every instant have sensed the fact that it was not I that played the part of master, but that another was Master. I have sensed that fact with fear and trembling when He let me feel His omnipotence and my nothingness; have sensed it with indescribable bliss when I turned to Him and did my work in unconditional obedience. The dialectical factor in this is that whatever extraordinary gift may have been entrusted to me, it was entrusted as a precautionary measure with such elasticity that, if I were not to obey, it would strike me dead. It is as if a father were to say to his child: You are allowed to take the whole thing, it is yours; but if you will not be obedient and use it as I wish — very well, I shall not punish you by taking it from you; no, take it as yours... it will smash you. Without God I am too strong for myself, and perhaps in the

most agonizing of all ways am broken. Since I became an author I have never for a single day had the experience I hear others complain of, namely, a lack of thoughts or their failure to present themselves. If that were to happen to me, it would rather be an occasion for joy, that finally I had obtained a day that was really free. But many a time I have had the experience of being overwhelmed with riches, and every instant I bethought me with horror of the frightful torture of starving in the midst of abundance — if I do not instantly learn obedience, allow God to help me, and produce in the same fashion, as quietly and placidly as one performs a prescribed task.

But in still another sense I have needed God's aid, time and again, day after day, year after year, in the whole course of my activity as a writer. For He has been my one confidant, and only in reliance upon His cognizance have I dared to venture what I have ventured, and to endure what I have endured, and have found bliss in the experience of being literally alone; in the whole vast world, alone because wherever I was, whether in the presence of all, or in the presence of a familiar friend, I was always clad in the costume of my deceit, so that I was then as much alone as in the darkness of the night; alone, not in the forests of America with their terrors and their perils, but alone in the company of the most terrible *possibilities*, which transform even the most frightful *actuality* into a refreshment and relief; alone, almost with human speech against me; alone with torments which have taught me more than one new annotation to the text about the thorn in the flesh; alone with decisions in which one had need of the support of friends, the whole race if possible; alone in dialectical tensions which (without God) would drive any man with my imagination to madness; alone in anguish unto death; alone in the face of the meaninglessness of existence, without being able, even if I would, to make myself intelligible to a single soul — but what am I saying, 'to a single soul'? — nay, there were times

when it could not be said in the common phrase, '*that* alone was lacking', times when I could not make myself intelligible to myself. When now I reflect that years were passed in this manner, I shudder. When but for a single instant I see amiss, I sink in deep waters. But when I see aright and find repose in the assurance of God's cognizance, blessedness returns again.

And now for details. It would be in vain for me to attempt to relate how I have sensed God's present aid. As in the inexplicable occurrence which often was repeated, that when I did something without knowing why or even thinking to ask why, when as a simple person I followed the prompting of my natural inclination, that then this which for me had a purely personal significance verging on the accidental, that this then proved to have an entirely different and a purely ideal significance when it was viewed later in relation to the authorship as a whole; that, strangely enough, much I had done personally was exactly what I should have done *qua* author. It has been inexplicable to me that trivial and, as it seemed, accidental circumstances in my life (which, it must be said, were made to loom large by my imagination) brought me into a definite situation where I did not understand myself and became melancholy — and, lo! there developed from this a mood, and precisely the mood I had use for in relation to the work I was then occupied with, and precisely at the right place. For the productivity has never suffered the least check; what was needed for use was always at hand, just at the instant it was needed. The whole productivity has had in a certain sense an uninterruptedly even course, as if I had had nothing else to do but to copy daily a definite portion of a printed book.

However, in this accounting I must make a more precise reckoning of the share Governance had in the authorship. For in case I were to affirm out and out that from the very first instant I had a survey of the whole authorship, or that at every moment, stage by stage, I had by anticipation so far exhausted

the possibilities that later reflection had not taught me anything, not even this other thing, that though what I had done was surely right, yet only afterwards was I in a position to understand thoroughly that this was so — if I were to do this, it would be a denial of God and dishonesty towards Him. No, I must say truly that I cannot understand the whole, just because to the merest insignificant detail I understand the whole, but what I cannot understand is that now I can understand it and yet cannot by any means say that at the instant of commencing it I understood it so precisely — though it is I that have carried it out and made every step with reflection. In the parlance of pure bosh one could easily explain this by saying, as some one has said of me, without having any conception of my literary work as a totality, that I had a genius for reflection. But just because I acknowledge the justice of ascribing to me reflection — I am verily too reflective not to perceive that this juxtaposition of reflection and genius explains nothing. For just so far forth as one has genius, he has not reflection, and vice versa, inasmuch as reflection is precisely the negation of immediacy.

Were I now to express with the utmost categorical precision the share Governance had in my whole activity as a writer, I know no more suggestive or decisive expression than this: it is Governance that has educated me, and the education is reflected in the process of the productivity. In view of this it must be admitted that what I set forth above about the whole aesthetic production being a deceit is not quite true, for this expression assumes a little too much in the way of consciousness. At the same time, however, it is not altogether false, for I have been conscious of being under instruction, and that from the very first. The process is this: a poetic and philosophic nature is put aside in order to become a Christian. But the unusual feature is that the two movements begin simultaneously, and hence this is a conscious process, one is able to perceive how it comes about, the second movement does not supervene after a series of years

which separate it from the first. So the aesthetic production is certainly a deceit, yet in another sense it is a necessary elimination. The religious is present from the very first instant and has a decisive predominance, but for awhile it waits patiently to give the poet leave to talk himself out, yet all the time on the watch with Argus eyes to make sure the poet does not fool it.

It is from this point of view, I take it, that the significance my authorship has for this age is to be seen to most advantage. If with one word I were to express my judgement of this age, I would say that it lacks religious education (understanding this word in the broadest and deepest sense). The thing of her coming and of being a Christian is now a triviality. The aesthetical has plainly got the upper hand. By 'going farther' than the mere thing of being a Christian (which every one is as a matter of course) one has got back again to or into a refined aesthetic and intellectual paganism with the admixture of a dash of Christianity. The task which has to be proposed to the majority of people in Christendom is: Away from the 'poet'! or away from having a relation to or from having one's life in that which the poet declaims: Away from speculation! from the fantastic conceit (which is at the same time an impossibility) of having one's life in that (instead of existing) — and to become a Christian! The first movement (away from the poetical) constitutes the total significance of the aesthetic production within the totality of the authorship. The second movement (away from speculation) is that of the *Concluding Postscript*, which, while it draws or edits the whole aesthetic production to its own advantage by way of illuminating its problem, which is the problem of 'becoming a Christian', makes the same movement in another sphere: Away from speculation! from the System, &c. — to become a Christian. The movement is, Back! And although it is all done without 'authority', there is, nevertheless, something in the accent which recalls a policeman when he faces a riot and says, Back! Hence also

more than one of the pseudonyms applies this expression to himself, saying that he is a policeman, a member of the detective force.

And now as for me, the author, what, according to my opinion, is my relation to the age? Am I perhaps the 'Apostle'? Abominable! I have never given an occasion for such a judgement. I am a poor insignificant person. Am I then the teacher, the educator? No, not that at all; I am he who himself has been educated, or whose authorship expresses what it is to be educated to the point of becoming a Christian. In the fact that education is pressed upon me, and in the measure that it is pressed, I press in turn upon this age; but I am not a teacher, only a fellow student.

To illuminate farther the share of Governance in the authorship, it is necessary to explain, so far as I have an explanation at my disposal, how it was I became an author.

About my vita ante acta (i.e. from childhood until I became an author) I cannot expatiate here at any length, however remarkable, as it seems to me, was the way I was predisposed from my earliest childhood, and step by step through the whole development, to become exactly the sort of author I became. For the sake of what follows I must allude, however, to a few traits of my earlier life, which I do with the diffidence a person surely must always feel when he has to speak quite personally about himself.

From a child I was under the sway of a prodigious measure in the equally prodigious dexterity I possessed of hiding it under an apparent gaiety and joie de vivre. So far back as I can barely remember, my one joy was that nobody could discover how unhappy I felt. This proportion (the equally great magnitude of melancholy and of the art of dissimulation) signifies that I was relegated to myself and to a relationship with God. As a child I was sternly and seriously brought up in Christianity. Humanly speaking, it was a crazy upbringing. Already in my earliest childhood I broke down under the grave impression which the melancholy old man who

laid it upon me himself sank under. A child — what a crazy thing! — travestied as an old man! Frightful! What wonder then that there were times when Christianity appeared to me the most inhuman cruelty — although never, even when I was farthest from it, did I cease to revere it, with a firm determination that (especially if I did not myself make the choice of becoming a Christian) I would never initiate any one into the difficulties which I knew and which, so far as I have read and heard, no one else has alluded to. But I have never definitely broken with Christianity nor renounced it. To attack it has never been my thought. No, from the time when there could be any question of the employment of my powers, I was firmly determined to employ them all to defend Christianity, or in any case to present it in its true form. For very early indeed, by the help of my upbringing, I was in a position to ascertain for myself how seldom Christianity is presented in its true form, how they who defend it most commonly betray it, and how seldom its opponents really hit the mark — although, in my opinion at least, they often squarely hit established Christendom, which might rather be called the caricature of true Christianity, or a monstrous amount of misunderstanding, illusion, &c., mixed with a sparing little dose of true Christianity. So I loved Christianity in a way: to me it was venerable — it had, to be sure, humanly speaking, rendered me exceedingly unhappy. This corresponds to my relationship with my father, the person whom I loved most deeply. And what is the meaning of this? The point precisely is that he made me unhappy — but out of love. His error did not consist in lack of love, but in mistaking a child for an old man. To love him who makes one happy, is to a reflective mind an inadequate definition of what love is; to love him who made one unhappy out of malice, is virtue; but to love him who out of love, though by a misunderstanding, yet out of love, made one unhappy — that is the formula

never yet enunciated, so far as I know, but nevertheless the normal formula in reflection for what it is to love.

So I went forth into life, favoured in every way, so far as intellectual gifts go and outward circumstances. Everything was done and continued to be done to develop my mind as richly as possible. Self-confident — yet with a decided sympathy or predilection for suffering, or for whatever in any way is suffering or oppressed. In a certain sense I may say that I went out into life with a proud and almost foolhardy bearing. I have never at any instant in my life been deserted by the faith that one can do what one will — only one thing excepted, all else unconditionally, but one thing not, the throwing off of the melancholy in whose power I was. What I am saying will seem to others a vain conceit, but so it was with me in truth, as truly as what I tell next, which to others again will seem a conceit. I say that it never remotely occurred to me that in my generation there lived or was to be born a man who had the upper hand of me — and in my inmost self I was the most wretched of all men. It never remotely occurred to me that, even if I were to attempt the most foolhardy enterprise, I should not be victorious — only one thing excepted, all else absolutely, but one thing not, the throwing off of the melancholy from which and from its attendant suffering I was never entirely free even for a day. This, however, must be understood in connexion with the fact that I was very early initiated into the thought that to conquer means to conquer in an infinite sense, which in a finite sense means to suffer. So this corresponded with my melancholy's inward apprehension that, in a finite sense, I was utterly good for nothing. What reconciled me with my fate and with my sufferings was that I, the so unhappy, so much tortured prisoner, had obtained this unlimited freedom of being able to deceive, so that I was allowed to be absolutely alone with my pain. It goes without saying that this was quite enough to render all my other abilities anything but merry for me. When this is given (i.e. such a

pain and such a close reserve), it depends upon the personal characteristics of the individual whether this lonesome inward torment finds its expression and satisfaction in hating men and cursing God, or in the very reverse. The latter was my situation. As far back as I can remember I was in agreement with myself about one thing, that for me there was no comfort or help to be looked for in others. Sated with the many other things bestowed upon me, filled as a man with longing after death, as a spirit desirous of the longest possible life, my thought was, as the expression of a melancholy love for men, to be helpful to them, to find comfort for them, above all clearness of thinking, and that especially about Christianity. The thought goes very far back in my recollection that in every generation there are two or three who are sacrificed for the others, are led by frightful sufferings to discover what redounds to the good of others. So it was that in my melancholy I understood myself as singled out for such a fate.

So I fared forth into life — initiated into all possible enjoyments, yet never really enjoying, but rather (to indulge the one pleasure I had in connexion with the pain of melancholy) labouring to produce the impression that I enjoyed. I fared forth into acquaintance with all sorts of men, yet it never occurred to me that I had a confidant in any of them, and certainly it never occurred to any one of them that he was my confidant. That is to say, I was constrained to be and was an observer. By such a life, as an observer and as spirit, I was extraordinarily enriched by experiences, got to see quite near at hand that aggregation of pleasures, passions, dispositions, feelings, &c., got practice in seeing a man through and through and also in imitating him. My imagination and my dialectic constantly had material enough to operate with, and time enough, free from all bustle, to be idle. For long periods I have been employed with nothing else but the performance of dialectical exercises with an adjunct of imagination, trying out my mind as one tunes an instrument — but I was not really living. I was

tossed about in life, tempted by many and the most various things, unfortunately also by errors, and, alas! also by the path of perdition. So I was in my twenty-fifth year, to myself an enigmatically developed and extraordinary possibility, the significance of which and its character I did not understand, in spite of the most eminent reflection which if possible understood everything. I understood one thing, that my life would be most properly employed in doing penance; but in the proper, sense of the word I had not lived, except in the character of spirit; a man I had never been, and child or youth even less.

Then my father died. The powerful religious impressions of my childhood acquired a renewed power over me, now softened by reflection. Also I had now become so much older that I fitted better to my upbringing, which has just this misfortune, that it does not turn out completely to my advantage until I am forty years old. For my misfortune (almost I might say from my birth, completed by my upbringing) was... not to be a man. But when one is a child — and the other children play or jest or whatever else they do; ah! and when one is a youth — and the other young people make love and dance or whatever else they do — and then, in spite of the fact that one is a child or a youth, then to be a spirit! Frightful torture! Even more frightful if one by the help of imagination knows how to perform the trick of appearing to be the youngest of all. But this misfortune is already diminished when one is forty years old, and in eternity it does not exist. I have never had any immediacy, and therefore, in the ordinary human sense of the word, I have never lived. I began at once with reflection; it is not as though in later years I had amassed a little reflection, but I am reflection from first to last. In the two ages of immediacy (childhood and youth) I, with the dexterity reflection always possesses, helped myself out, as I was compelled to do, by some sort of counterfeit, and not being quite clear myself about the talents bestowed upon me, I suffered the pain of not being

like the others — which naturally at that period I would have given everything to be able to be, if only for a short time. A spirit can very well put up with not being like the others — indeed that is precisely the negative definition of spirit. But childhood and youth stand in a close relation to the generic qualification expressed in the species, the race; and just for this reason it is the greatest torment of that period not to be like the others, or, as in my case, so strangely topsy-turvy as to begin at that point where a few in every generation end, whereas the majority, who live merely in the factors of the soulish-bodily synthesis, never reach it — that is to say, the qualification spirit. But for this same reason I have my life now before me, in a sense very different from the ordinary meaning of that phrase. Nothing is more completely unknown and foreign to me than that wistful longing for childhood and youth. I thank my God that all this is through with, and I feel happier with every day I grow older — yet only blessed in the thought of eternity, for the temporal never is and never will be the element of spirit, but in a sense it must mean suffering for it.

An observer will perceive how everything was set in motion and how dialectically: I had a thorn in the flesh, intellectual gifts (especially imagination and dialectic) and culture in superabundance, an enormous development as an observer, a Christian upbringing that was certainly very unusual, a dialectical relationship to Christianity which was peculiarly my own, and in addition to this I had from childhood a training in obedience, obedience absolute, and I was armed with an almost foolhardy faith that I was able to do anything, only one thing excepted, to be a free bird, though but for one whole day, or to slip out of the fetters of melancholy in which another power held me bound. Finally, in my own eyes I was a penitent. The impression this now makes upon me is as if there were a Power which from the first instant had been observant of this and said, as a fisherman says of a fish, Let it run awhile, it is not yet the moment to pull it in. And

strangely enough there is something that reaches far back in my recollection, impossible as it is for me to say when I began this practice or why such a thing ever occurred to me: I prayed to God regularly, i.e. every day, that He would give me zeal and patience to perform the work He would assign me.

Thus I became an author.

Before my real activity as an author began there was an occurrence, or rather a fact (*factum* — to use a word which etymologically implies that I had an active part to play), since presumably an occurrence would not have been sufficient, for I had to be the active agent in the affair. I cannot elucidate this *factum* more particularly, telling in what it consisted, how terribly dialectical it was in its combination (although in another sense it was quite simple), or what really constituted the collision. I can only beg the reader not to think of revelations or anything of that sort, for with me everything is dialectical. On the other hand, I shall describe the consequence of this *factum* in so far as it serves to illuminate the authorship. It was a duplex *factum*. However much I had lived and experienced in another sense, I had, in a human sense, leapt over the stages of childhood and youth; and this lack, I suppose, must (in the opinion of Governance) be somehow made up for: instead of having been young, I became a poet, which is a second youth. I became a poet; but with my predisposition for religion, or rather, I may say, with my decided religiousness, this *factum* was for me at the same time a religious awakening, so that I came to understand myself in the most decisive sense in the experience of religion, or in religiousness, to which, however, I had already put myself into relation as a possibility. The *factum* made me a poet. Had I not been the man I was, and the occurrence, on the other hand, what it was, and if I had not taken the active part I did take, it would have amounted to nothing more: I should have become a poet, and then perhaps after the lapse of many years should

have come into relation with the religious. But just because I was so religiously developed as I was, the *factum* took far deeper hold of me and, in a sense, nullified what I had become, namely, the poet. It nullified it, or at least I was led simultaneously to begin in the same moment at two points, yet in such a way that this thing of being a poet was essentially irrelevant to me, something I had become by means of another person — on the other hand the religious awakening, though it was certainly not a thing I had experienced by means of myself, yet it was in accordance with myself, that is to say, in this thing of becoming a poet I did not recognize myself in a deeper sense, but rather in the religious awakening.

Here the reader can easily perceive the explanation of all the difficulty of the authorship, but he must note that the author was at the same time conscious of this. What was to be done? Well, obviously the poetical had to be evacuated, anything else was impossible for me. But the whole aesthetic production was put under arrest by the religious. The religious agreed to this elimination but incessantly spurred it on, as though it were saying, Are you not now through with that?

While the poetical works were being produced the author was living under strict religious rules.

In a certain sense it was not at all my original intention to become a religious author. My intention was to evacuate as hastily as possible the poetical — and then go out to a country parish. By this compass I steered. I felt myself foreign to the whole poetical production, but I could do no other. It was not my original intention, as I have said, to become a religious *author*. I had reflected that the most vigorous expression of the fact that I had been a religious man and that the pseudonyms were something foreign to me was the abrupt transition — to go immediately out in the country to seek a cure as a country parson.

However, the urge of productivity in me was so great that I could not do otherwise; I let the *Two Edifying Discourses* come out, and I came to an understanding with Governance. There was allowed me again a period for poetical production, but always under the arrest of the religious, which was on the watch, as if it said, Will you not soon be through with that? And I found a way to satisfy the religious by becoming a religious author.

Governance had me now securely bound. Like a suspicious character perhaps, I have been put on a very spare diet. I have been accustomed so to live that the maximum time I expect to have left is a year — sometimes, and not seldom, when a special tension is required, I live with the prospect of a week, yes, even of a day. And Governance had put checks upon me in every sense. So far as the aesthetic production was concerned, I was unable to escape from Governance by way of leading my life in the aesthetical. For even if the religious had not been in the background, that thorn in the flesh would have prevented any such thing. And in relation to the religious production, Governance had a check on me in the fact that I did not arrogate anything to myself because I understood myself to be in too great a debt.

And now I come to an expression about myself which I am accustomed to use of myself when I talk to myself, an expression which is relative to the inverse procedure of the whole productivity (that I did not begin by saying whither I designed to go), and relative to me also in my capacity as observer, along with my consciousness of being one who himself is in need of upbringing. The expression I use is, that in relation to the intellectual and religious fields, and with a view to the concept of existence, and hence to the concept of Christianity, I am like a spy in a higher service, the service of the idea. I have nothing new to proclaim; I am without authority, being myself hidden in a deceit; I do not go to work straightforwardly but with indirect cunning; I am not a holy man; in short, I am a spy who in his spying, in learning to know all about questionable conduct and illusions and

suspicious characters, all the while he is making inspection is himself under the closest inspection. Observe that this is the sort of people the police make use of. They will hardly select for their purposes the sort of people whose life was always highly honest; all that they take into account is that they are experienced, cunning, intriguing, shrewd people who can nose anything out, always follow a clue and bring things to light. Hence the police are far from disinclined to have under their thumb a person who by reason of his *vita ante acta* they can compel to put up with everything, to obey, and to make no fuss about his personal dignity. So, too, it is with Governance, only that there is this endless difference between it and the civil police, that Governance, being merciful love, employs such a person just for love's sake, saves him and educates him all the while he is employing his shrewdness, which is thus sanctified and consecrated. But such a person, as one who himself stands in need of betterment, understands that he is bound to the most unconditional obedience. It is certain that of every man God can require all, that man must put up with everything, but it is also certain that the consciousness of earlier errors helps considerably to encourage promptness and nimbleness in this respect.

But in any case this surely is evident, that with respect to reflection and shrewdness Christendom has exceeded all limits. Immediate pathos is of no avail — even if in immediate pathos one were to sacrifice his life. The age has at its disposal too much reflection and shrewdness not to be able to reduce his significance to zero. Even for a martyr to accomplish anything in these times he must possess reflection, in order to so intrigue the age that it cleaves to him even when it puts him to death — that thus the awakening may follow.

So it is I understand myself in my activity as an author. It makes the illusion of Christendom evident and opens the eyes to what it is to become a Christian. Whether there exist such a high grade of religiousness that in its

eyes the whole aesthetic production cannot be regarded as a necessary elimination, or as a deceit, but is simply something that must be repented of, I do not know. I have never understood it thus, and surely such a thought will not occur to any one before I utter it. But since with me everything is reflection, it is a matter of course that this thought has not escaped my notice. I can imagine this objection made from the point of view of a scrupulous and pusillanimous notion of the duty of telling the truth, a notion which consistently leads to being always mute for fear of saying something false; and since silence may be a falsehood, it consistently leads to the false dilemma: Do it or don't do it; be silent or speak out; both are equally futile. But timorousness to the verge of lunacy is hardly to be regarded as a higher form of religiousness. Teleological suspension in relation to the communication of truth (i.e. to suppress something for the time being in order that the truth may become truer) is a plain duty to the truth and is comprised in the responsibility a man has before God for a proper use of the reflection bestowed upon him.

Well acquainted as I was with the suffering of inwardness in relation to the task of becoming a Christian, and strictly brought up as I was in this apprehension, the other side of the matter almost escaped me. Here Governance came to my help, and helped me in such wise that the consequence of what I did turned out truly to my advantage and to the advantage of my cause. If one may compare intellectual talents with a stringed instrument, I may say that not only was I not put out of tune, but I acquired an extra string to my instrument. This was the fruit of the more complete experimental education in what it means to become a Christian. For at the decisive instant when I was radically altering my existence-relationship on account of the *Concluding Postscript,* I had opportunity to observe what one will never believe until he has experienced it, namely, this Christian truth that love is hated. Verily nothing has ever been farther from

me than pretension to social superiority (*Fornemhed*). Being myself of humble origin, I have loved the common people, or what is spoken of as the simple classes. So indeed I did, as I well know, for in that I found a melancholy joy — and yet it was precisely they who were incited against me and made to believe that I gave myself airs of superiority. If I had really been superior *(foment),* this would never have happened to me. Observe that here we have precisely the Christian proportions, and on a scale so great that it enabled me to illuminate Christianity from this side. The complaint which might have been brought against my mode of life (if the merely human were to be the judge, and not Christianity) can only be expressed thus: that I have not shown sufficient regard for my personal dignity, have not been 'superior'; that humanly speaking I have in a light-minded way (Christianly understood, a God-fearing way) made sport of worldly honour and prestige, that by impairing possibly my own worldly prestige I have at the same time contributed to impair worldly prestige in general. As I have said, I should regard it as perfectly natural if in consideration of this the people who are in the enjoyment of superior place and reputation had shown themselves a bit hostile, and hence I am the more grateful for the fact that exactly the opposite is and has been the case. But the fact that, because I have lived as I have, I am exposed to the hatred of the common people — that is to say, because I have not been 'superior' enough, I have therefore been attacked — that is lunacy... and the Christian proportion.

Thus it is that the whole literary activity turns upon the problem of becoming a Christian in Christendom; and this is the expression of the share Governance had in the authorship, that it is the author himself who has been educated, yet with consciousness of this from the very first.

EPILOGUE

'BUT WHAT HAVE you done now?' I hear somebody say. 'Do you not perceive what you have lost in the eyes of the world by making this explanation and public acknowledgement?' To be sure, I perceive it very clearly. I have lost thereby what in a Christian sense it is a loss to possess, namely, every worldly form of the interesting. I lose the interesting distinction of proclaiming the seductive craftiness of pleasure, the glad report of life's most subtle enjoyments, and the insolence of derision. I lose the interesting distinction of being an interesting possibility, suggestive of the query whether it might not after all be the case that he who represented the ethical with warmth and enthusiasm — whether he might not after all be exactly the opposite, *either* in one way *or* another, since it is (so interestingly) impossible to say which he is. I lose the interesting distinction of being an enigma, seeing it is impossible to know whether this thoroughgoing defence of Christianity is not a covert attack most cunningly conceived. This interesting distinction I lose, and for it is substituted, at the farthest remove from the interesting, the *direct communication* that the problem was, and is, how to become a Christian. The interesting is what I have lost in the eyes of the crowd, in the world's eyes — if indeed I get off so easily as to lose only that, and the world does not become enraged at the fact that a man has presumed to be so crafty.

True enough, things are going backward with me, Return now in a sense — though in a Christian sense it is forward. As an author I began with the tremendous advantage of being regarded privately as not much better than a scoundrel — but naturally all the more likeable on that account, especially as I was so interesting and witty. This was needed in order to get the 'crowd' of Christians a little bit on my side. Even if one were a saint, one

could not begin with holiness without losing the game in advance. For in the age of reflection in which we live people are prompt to parry, and even the death of the saint is of no avail. No, in the sphere of reflection everything must be done inversely. Thus it was I began. At that time I stood at the pinnacle of favour with the human crowd, and (since we live in Christendom where all are Christians) with the Christian crowd also, all the novel-readers of both sexes, the aesthetically refined, the clever wits, all of whom are at the same time Christians.

This was the beginning. As time went on and I got farther ahead, and the great public became aware or had a suspicion (ah! this was going backward with a vengeance!), had a suspicion that I really was not so bad after all, the public fell away more and more, and I began to be included under the tiresome category of the good. And in the meanwhile, I of the edifying, discourses, keeping pace with the aesthetic production, perceived with joy that that single individual whom I with joy and gladness call *my* reader' became more than one, became a rather larger figure, yet certainly not anything like a public. And then when I performed a decisive act which had a little bit of

Christian flavour about it, an act which at the same time I was conscious of performing as a benefaction to little Denmark, and an act which will give me unconditional joy at my hour of death — that is to say, when I cast myself as a sacrifice before the insurrection of vulgarity — then I was regarded by the public as crazy and queer, condemned almost as a criminal. Naturally enough, for there was not the least trace of the scoundrel or the rascal in what I did. How perfectly this all fits together! I do not see how more could be required of a spy.

And now — now I am no longer interesting. That the problem of becoming a Christian, that this really should be the fundamental thought in my whole activity as an author — how tiresome! And this thing of The

Seducer's Diary, [Psychologically it is quite remarkable, and worthy perhaps to be recorded, that a person to whose name I will concede a place here in order to take him with me — that Herr P. L. Moller quite rightly regarded 'The Diary of the Seducer' as the central point in the whole authorship. That reminds me so vividly of the motto to The Stages on Life's Road — precisely the work which he, from the point of view of 'The Diary of the Seducer', fell foul of and foully fell over — which motto I therefore reminded him of in a little lesson I gave him, but it may be appropriate to repeat it here since it is well adapted as an epigram to preserve a pious memory of Herr P. L. Moller's aesthetical and critical services on behalf of my authorship: 'Such works are mirrors: when an ape peers into them, no Apostle can be seen looking out.'] this tremendously witty production! Why, it seems now that even this belonged to the plan! If any one asks me in a purely aesthetic interest what my judgement is about the aesthetic production, I will not make any attempt to conceal the fact that I know perfectly well what has been accomplished, but I will add that for me even the aesthetic value of the accomplishment consists in a deeper sense in the indication it furnishes of how momentous the decision to become a Christian is. In the sphere of immediacy it is a perfectly straightforward thing to become a Christian; but the truth and inwardness of the reflective expression for becoming a Christian is measured by the value of the thing which reflection is bound to reject. For one does not become a Christian by means of reflection, but to become a Christian in reflection means that there is another thing to be rejected; one does not reflect oneself into being a Christian, but out of another thing in order to become a Christian; and this is more especially the case in Christendom, where one must reflect oneself out of the semblance of being a Christian. The nature of the other thing decides how deep, how significant, the movement of reflection is. What precisely characterizes the nature of the reflection is the fact that from a

distance, and from how great a distance, one reaches the point of becoming a Christian. The reflection is defined by the difficulty, which is greater just in proportion to the value of the thing left behind.

Thus it is, as I believe, that I have rendered a service to the cause of Christianity while I myself have been educated by the process. He who was regarded with astonishment as about the shrewdest fellow (and this was attained with *Either/Or),* he to whom the place of ‘the interesting man’ was willingly conceded (and this was attained with *Either/Or*) — precisely he, as it turned out, was engaged in the service of Christianity, had consecrated himself to this from the very instant he began that pseudonymous activity, he, personally and as an author, was striving to bring out this simple thing about becoming a Christian. The movement is not from the simple to the interesting, but from the interesting to the simple, the thing of becoming a Christian, which is the place where the *Concluding Postscript* comes in, the ‘turning-point’, as I have called it, of the whole authorship, which states the ‘Problem’ and at the same time, by indirect attack and Socratic dialectic, inflicts upon the System a mortal wound... from behind, fighting the System and Speculation in order to show that ‘the way’ is not from the simple to the System and Speculation, but from the System and Speculation back again to the simple thing of becoming a Christian, fighting for this cause and vigorously slashing through to find the way back.

So we have not to do here with a one-time aesthetic author who subsequently turns away from the world and the world’s wisdom; he may rightly be said to have had from the earliest time quite exceptional predispositions for becoming a Christian, but they were all dialectical. Nor does he feel at this instant any impulse to go farther than becoming a Christian. With his conception of this task, and with the consciousness he has how far he is from being perfect, he feels only an impulse to go farther in becoming a Christian.

In case the benevolent reader has read this little book, he now knows what sort of an author I am. So it is I represent myself. Should it prove that the present age will not understand me — very well then, I belong to history, knowing assuredly that I shall find a place there and what place it will be. Humble as I am before God, I also know this — and at the same time I know it as my duty definitely not to suppress this in silence; for if pride and arrogancy in claiming something for oneself is an abomination to God, so too, and just as much so, is the cowardly fear of men which depreciates itself with mendacious modesty — I also know *who* (humanly speaking) I was (the past tense because it is in God's power, every day, and even to-day, to alter it), that (in respect to genius) extraordinary gifts were bestowed upon me.

With this present little book, which itself belongs to a bygone time, I conclude the whole authorship, and then as the author (not an author simply, but the author of this whole 'authorship') I advance to meet the future. What may betide me in the immediate future I know not; how it will be in the following age when I have passed into history, that I know. But whatever it be that I know in this respect, it would be of no comfort to me, were I not in faith and confidence, though in humility and also in penitence, advancing to meet that future which is nearest of all and at every instant equally near — eternity. Suppose that, if I should live longer, time will deprive me of all, and suppose that the following age will make the fullest reparation — how can that really harm me, or how can it profit? The former does not harm me if I merely take care to be absent, and the latter will not profit me, since then I shall have become in the solemn sense of the word an 'absent one'.

CONCLUSION

I HAVE NOTHING further to say, but in conclusion I will let another speak, my poet, who when he comes will assign me a place among those who have suffered for the sake of an idea, and he will say:

‘The martyrdom this author suffered may be briefly described thus: He suffered from being a genius in a provincial town. The standard he applied in relation to talents, industry, disinterestedness, devotedness, definition of thought, &c., was on the average far too great for his contemporaries; it raised the price on them too terribly, and reduced their price too terribly; it almost made it seem as if the provincial town and the majority in it did not possess *dominium absolutum*, but that there was a God in existence. So for a while, at the first, people entertained one another mutually with voluble discussions about how under the sun he got such extraordinary talents, why he should have independent means and at the same time be able to be so industrious — that they disputed about for so long a time (while at the same time they took offence at one or another singularity in his mode of living, which, however, was not singular but very singularly calculated to serve the purpose of his life) — so long they disputed, that in the end it came to this: “It is his pride, everything can be explained by his pride.” Thereupon they went farther, from disputation to action. Since it is his pride, they said, every insidious opposition, every insolence towards him or maltreatment of him is not only permissible but is a duty to God — it is his pride that should be punished. O priceless market town! How inestimable thou art when attired in thy comical dressing-gown and in the way of becoming holy, when abandonment to every disgusting inclination of envy, rudeness, and vulgarity becomes an expression of the worship of God! But how about his pride? Did the pride consist in the great talents? That would be like

reproaching the golden sparrow by saying that it was its pride or because of its pride that it wears its golden finery. Or was it his diligence, &c.? If a child who had been very strictly brought up were to study in a class together with others, would it not be strange to say that his diligence, &c., was pride, even if it were the case that the others could not keep up with him? But such a case seldom occurs, for then the child is moved up to a higher class. But, unfortunately, for one who is in many ways developed for eternity's class there exists only one class, that of the temporal order, where perhaps he must remain a long while.

'This was the martyrdom. But therefore I, his poet, perceive also the epigram, the satire (not the one or the other which he wrote, but that which his whole life expressed) in the fact that now when all the "real" men with whom he (especially when legs are the criterion — not for what it is to be a beast, *animal*, but for what it is to be a man) could not stand any comparison, that now when their legs like his are mouldering in their graves, and he has arrived in eternity (where, in parenthesis be it said, legs do not decide anything, neither their thinness nor their thickness) where (in parenthesis be it said) he is for ever dispensed, praise God, from being in company with bestiality, I see all these real men united heartily in one chorus, singing the peerless song of a provincial town which discourses only about what it understands, namely, his trousers which became "what the age requires", or, more precious still, a chorus which ironizes... the ironizer — I have only to think of this, and I cannot but burst out laughing. But in eternity it consoles him that he has suffered this, that he had exposed himself voluntarily to it, that he had not bolstered up his cause by any illusion, did not hide behind any illusion, but with God-fearing shrewdness transmuted his sufferings into a treasure for eternity: the memory of sufferings endured, and of fidelity to himself and to his first love, beside whom he has loved only them that have suffered in this world. Humble as

he is, he will not with shame of face advance to meet those glorious ones who enjoy their reward in eternity — not with shame of face, as he would have approached them had his earthly life expressed the conviction that their life must have been either a casual happening, or a falsehood, or a proof of immaturity, since he by serving the truth had gained great honour and reputation, had everywhere encountered spiritual affinity and understanding, whereas they on the contrary encountered almost everywhere bestiality and misunderstanding.

'Yet it is true that he found also here on earth what he sought. He himself was "that individual", if no one else was, and he became that more and more. It was the cause of Christianity he served, his life from childhood on being marvellously fitted for such a service. Thus he carried to completion the work of reflection, the task of translating completely into terms of reflection what Christianity is, what it means to become a Christian. His purity of heart was to will only one thing. What his contemporaries complained of during his lifetime, that he would not abate the price, would not give in, this very thing is the eulogy pronounced upon him by after ages, that he did not abate the price, did not give in. But the grand enterprise he undertook did not infatuate him. Whereas as author he had dialectically a survey of the whole, he understood Christianly that the whole signified his own education in Christianity. The dialectical structure he brought to completion, of which the several parts are whole works, he could not ascribe to any man, least of all would he ascribe it to himself; if he were to ascribe it to any one, it would be to Governance, to whom it was in fact ascribed, day after day and year after year, by the author, who historically died of a mortal disease, but poetically died of longing for eternity, where uninterruptedly he would have nothing else to do but to thank God.'

‘THE INDIVIDUAL’: TWO ‘NOTES’ CONCERNING MY WORK AS AN AUTHOR

*B*Y S. KIERKEGAARD *Published in 1859 along with* ‘*The Point of View*’

PREFACE

IN THESE TIMES politics is everything. Between this and the religious view the difference is heaven-wide (*toto caelo*), as also the point of departure and the ultimate aim differ from it *toto caelo*, since politics begins on earth and remains on earth, whereas religion, deriving its beginning from above, seeks to explain and transfigure and thereby exalt the earthly to heaven.

An impatient politician who hurriedly peeps into these pages will find little to edify him; so be it. Yet I am convinced that even he, if only he would be so kind as to bestow upon himself a little patience, will become aware, by merely the brief suggestions communicated in these pages, that the religious is the transfigured rendering of that which the politician has thought of in his happiest moment, if so be that he truly loves what it is to be a man, and loves people really, although he is inclined to regard religion as too lofty and ideal to be practical.

This judgement cannot discompose the religious man, who knows well that Christianity is and is commonly called the practical religion, and knows too that the 'Pattern', and all the relative patterns constantly being formed in correspondence with it, each of them individually, attained, at the cost of many years of exertion, of labour, of disinterestedness, the end of becoming as nothing in this world, of being derided, mocked, &c., which to a politician may seem the highest degree of unpracticality, whereas even a pagan, and precisely that 'practical philosopher' of antiquity, was one who declared himself head over heels in love with *this* unpracticality.

But 'unpractical' as he is, the religious man is nevertheless the transfigured rendering of the politician's fairest dream. No politics ever has, no politics ever can, no worldliness ever has, no worldliness ever can, think

through or realize to its last consequences the thought of human equality (Menneske-Lighed). To realize complete equality in the medium of worldliness (‘Verds-Lighed’), i.e. to realize it in the medium the very nature of which implies differences, and to realize it in a worldly *(‘verds-ligt*’) way, i.e. by positing differences — such a thing is for ever impossible, as is apparent from the categories. For if complete equality were to be attained, worldliness would be at an end. But is it not a sort of obsession on the part of worldliness that it has got into its head the notion of wanting to enforce complete equality, and to enforce it by worldly means... in a worldly medium? It is only religion that can, with the help of eternity, carry human equality to the utmost limit — the godly, the essential, the non-worldly, the true, the only possible human equality. And therefore (be it said to its honour and glory) religion is the true humanity.

And one word more, if that be allowed me. What the age demands — who would ever get through with reckoning that out, seeing that now worldliness has caught fire by spontaneous combustion due to the friction of worldliness against worldliness? What, however, the age *needs* in the deepest sense can be said fully and completely with one single word: it needs... eternity. The misfortune of our time is just this, that it has become simply nothing else but ‘time’, the temporal, which is impatient of hearing anything about eternity; and so (with the best of intentions or furiously) would make eternity quite superfluous by means of a cunningly devised counterfeit, which, however, in all eternity will not succeed; for the more one thinks oneself to be able, or hardens oneself to be able, to get along without the eternal, the more one feels the essential need of it.

S. K.

NO. 1. CONCERNING THE DEDICATION TO 'THE INDIVIDUAL' 1846

MY DEAR, ACCEPT, I pray, this homage. I make it blindfold as it were, but therefore sincerely, undisturbed by respect of persons. Who thou art I know not, where thou art I know not, what thy name is I know not. Yet thou art my hope, my joy, my pride; although unknown thou art an honour to me.

It comforts me that the favourable occasion now presents itself to thee, which is what I sincerely intended during my labour and by it. For not then, when it had become the fashion, if such a thing were possible, for people to read what I write, or at least to make out that they had read it for the sake of gaining something in the world, not then would be the favourable occasion, then rather would misunderstanding triumph, and it would have deceived me also, if I had not striven to prevent such a thing from happening.

This, in part, is a possible change in me — something I welcome — attributable to a disposition of mind and soul which claims to be neither more than this nor less than this, but instead an admission: in part, it is a well-thought-out view of 'Life', of 'the Truth', and of 'the Way'

There is a view of life which conceives that where the crowd is, there also is the truth, and that in truth itself there is need of having the crowd on its side. There is another view of life which conceives that wherever there is a crowd there is untruth, so that (to consider for a moment the extreme case), even if every individual, each for himself in private, were to be in possession of the truth, yet in case they were all to get together in a crowd — a crowd to which any sort of *decisive* significance is attributed, a voting, noisy, audible crowd — untruth would at once be in evidence.

For a ‘crowd’ is the untruth. In a godly sense it is true, eternally, Christianly, as St. Paul says, that

‘only one attains the goal’ — which is not meant in a comparative sense, for comparison takes others into account. It means that every man can be that one, God helping him therein — but only one attains the goal. And again this means that every man should be chary about having to do with ‘the others’, and essentially should talk only with God and with himself — for only one attains the goal. And again this means that man, or to be a man, is akin to deity. — In a worldly and temporal sense, it will be said by the man of bustle, sociability, and amicableness, ‘How unreasonable that only one attains the goal; for it is far more likely that many, by the strength of united effort, should attain the goal; and when we are many success is more certain and it is easier for each man severally.’ True enough, it is far more *likely*; and it is true also with respect to all earthly and material goods. If it is allowed to have its way, this becomes the only true point of view, for it does away with God and eternity and with man’s kinship with deity. It does away with it or transforms it into a fable, and puts in its place the modern (or, we might rather say, the old pagan) notion that to be a man is to belong to a race endowed with reason, to belong to it as a specimen, so that the race or species is higher than the individual, which is to say that there are no more individuals but only specimens. But eternity which arches over and high above the temporal, tranquil as the starry vault at night, and God in heaven who in the bliss of that sublime tranquillity holds in survey, without the least sense of dizziness at such a height, these countless multitudes of men and knows each single individual by name — He, the great Examiner, says that only one attains the goal. That means, every one can and every one should be this *one* — but only one attains the goal. Hence where there is a multitude, a crowd, or where decisive significance is attached to the fact that there is a multitude, *there* it is sure that no one is working, living,

striving for the highest aim, but only for one or another earthly aim; since to work for the eternal decisive aim is possible only where there is one, and to be this one which all can be is to let God be the helper — the ‘crowd’ is the untruth.

A crowd — not this crowd or that, the crowd now living or the crowd long deceased, a crowd of humble people or of superior people, of rich or of poor, &c. — a crowd in its very concept [The reader will also remember that here the word ‘crowd’ is understood in a purely formal sense, not in the sense one commonly attaches to ‘the crowd’ when it is meant as an invidious qualification, the distinction which human selfishness irreligiously erects between ‘the crowd’ and superior persons, &c. Good God! How could a religious man hit upon such an inhuman equality! No, ‘crowd’ stands for number, the numerical, a number of noblemen, millionaires, high dignitaries, &c. — as soon as the numerical is involved it is ‘crowd’, ‘the crowd’.] is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction. Observe that there was not one single soldier that dared lay hands upon Caius Marius — this was an instance of truth. But given merely three or four women with the consciousness or the impression that they were a crowd, and with hope of a sort in the possibility that no one could say definitely who was doing it or who began it — then they had courage for it. What a falsehood! The falsehood first of all is the notion that the crowd does what in fact only the *individual* in the crowd does, though it be every *individual.* For ‘crowd’ is an abstraction and has no hands: but each individual has ordinarily two hands, and so when an individual lays his two hands upon Caius Marius they are the two hands of the individual, certainly not those of his neighbour, and still less those of the... crowd which has no hands. In the next place, the falsehood is that the crowd had the ‘courage’ for it, for no

one of the individuals was ever so cowardly as the crowd always is. For every individual who flees for refuge into the crowd, and so flees in cowardice from being an individual (who had not the courage to lay his hands upon Caius Marius, nor even to admit that he had it not), such a man contributes his share of cowardliness to the cowardliness which we know as the ‘crowd’. — Take the highest example, think of Christ — and the whole human race, all the men that ever were born or are to be born. But let the situation be one that challenges the individual, requiring each one for himself to be alone with Him in a solitary place and as an individual to step up to Him and spit upon Him — the man never was born and never will be born with courage or insolence enough to do such a thing. This is untruth.

The crowd is untruth. Hence none has more contempt for what it is to be a man than they who make it their profession to lead the crowd. Let some one approach a person of this sort, some individual — that is an affair far too small for his attention, and he proudly repels him. There must be hundreds at the least. And when there are thousands, he defers to the crowd, bowing and scraping to them. What untruth! No, when it is a question of a single individual man, then is the time to give expression to the truth by showing one’s respect for what it is to be a man; and if perhaps it was, as it is cruelly said, a poor wretch of a man, then the thing to do is to invite him into the best room, and one who possesses several voices should use the kindest and most friendly. That is truth. If on the other hand there were an assemblage of thousands or more and the truth was to be decided by ballot, then this is what one should do (unless one were to prefer to utter silently the petition of the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Deliver us from evil’): one should in godly fear give expression to the fact that the crowd, regarded as a judge over ethical and religious matters, is untruth, whereas it is eternally true that every man can be the *one*. This is truth.

The crowd is untruth. Therefore was Christ crucified, because, although He addressed himself to all, He would have no dealings with the crowd, because He would not permit the crowd to aid him in any way, because in this regard He repelled people absolutely, would not found a party, did not permit balloting, but would be what He is, the Truth, which relates itself to the individual. — And hence every one who truly would serve the truth is eo ipso, in one way or another, a martyr. If it were possible for a person in his mother's womb to make the decision to will to serve the truth truly, then, whatever his martyrdom turns out to be, he is eo ipso from his mother's womb a martyr. For it is not so great a trick to win the crowd. All that is needed is some talent, a certain dose of falsehood, and a little acquaintance with human passions. But no witness for the truth (ah! and that is what every man should be, including you and me) — no witness for the truth dare become engaged with the crowd. The witness for the truth — who naturally has nothing to do with politics and must above everything else be most vigilantly on the watch not to be confounded with the politician — the God-fearing work of the witness to the truth is to engage himself if possible with all, but always individually, talking to every one severally on the streets and lanes... in order to disintegrate the crowd, or to talk even to the crowd, though not with the intent of forming a crowd, but rather with the hope that one or another individual might return from this assemblage and become a single individual. On the other hand the 'crowd', when it is treated as an authority and its judgement regarded as the final judgement, is detested by the witness for the truth more heartily than a maiden of good morals detests the public dance-floor; and he who addresses the crowd as the supreme authority is regarded by him as the tool of the untruth. For (to repeat what I have said) that which in politics or in similar fields may be justifiable, wholly or in part, becomes untruth when it is transferred to the intellectual, the spiritual, the religious fields. And one

thing more I would say, perhaps with a cautiousness which is exaggerated. By ‘truth’ I mean always ‘eternal truth’. But politics, &c., have nothing to do with ‘eternal truth’. A policy which in the proper sense of ‘eternal truth’ were to make serious work of introducing ‘eternal truth’ into real life would show itself in that very same second to be in the most eminent degree the most ‘impolitic’ thing that can be imagined.

A crowd is untruth. And I could weep, or at least I could learn to long for eternity, at thinking of the misery of our age, in comparison even with the greatest misery of bygone ages, owing to the fact that the daily press with its anonymity makes the situation madder still with the help of the public, this abstraction which claims to be the judge in matters of ‘truth’. For in reality assemblies which make this claim do not now take place. The fact that an anonymous author by the help of the press can day by day find occasion to say (even about intellectual, moral, and religious matters) whatever he pleases to say, and what perhaps he would be very far from having the courage to say as an individual; that every time he opens his mouth (or shall we say his abysmal gullet?) he at once is addressing thousands of thousands; that he can get ten thousand times ten thousand to repeat after him what he has said — and with all this nobody has any responsibility, so that it is not as in ancient times the relatively unrepentant crowd which possesses omnipotence, but the absolutely unrepentant thing, a nobody, an anonymity, who is the producer (*auctor*), and another anonymity, the public, sometimes even anonymous subscribers, and with all this, nobody, nobody! Good God! And yet our states call themselves Christian states! Let no one say that in this case it is possible for ‘truth’ in its turn by the help of the press to get the better of lies and errors. O thou who speakest thus, dost thou venture to maintain that men regarded as a crowd are just as quick to seize upon truth which is not always palatable as upon falsehood which always is prepared delicately to give delight? — not

to mention the fact that acceptance of the truth is made the more difficult by the necessity of admitting that one has been deceived! Or dost thou venture even to maintain that 'truth' can just as quickly be understood as falsehood, which requires no preliminary knowledge, no schooling, no discipline, no abstinence, no self-denial, no honest concern about oneself, no patient labour?

Nay, truth — which abhors also this untruth of aspiring after broad dissemination as the one aim — is not nimble on its feet. In the first place it cannot work by means of the fantastical means of the press, which is the untruth; the communicator of the truth can only be a single individual. And again the communication of it can only be addressed to the individual; for the truth consists precisely in that conception of life which is expressed by the individual. The truth can neither be communicated nor be received except as it were under God's eyes, not without God's help, not without God's being involved as the middle term, He himself being the Truth. It can therefore only be communicated by and received by 'the individual', which as a matter of fact can be every living man. The mark which distinguishes such a man is merely that of the truth, in contrast to the abstract, the fantastical, the impersonal, the crowd — the public which excludes God as the middle term (for the *personal* God cannot be a middle term in an *impersonal* relationship), and thereby excludes also the truth, for God is at once the Truth and the middle term which renders it intelligible.

And to honour every man, absolutely every man, is the truth, and this is what it is to fear God and love one's 'neighbour'. But from an ethico-religious point of view, to recognize the 'crowd' as the court of last resort is to deny God, and it cannot exactly mean to love the 'neighbour'. And the 'neighbour' is the absolutely true expression for human equality. In case every one were in truth to love his neighbour as himself, complete human equality would be attained. Every one who loves his neighbour in truth,

expresses unconditionally human equality. Every one who, like me, admits that his effort is weak and imperfect, yet is aware that the task is to love one's neighbour, is also aware of what human equality is. But never have I read in Holy Scripture the commandment, Thou shalt love the crowd — and still less, Thou shalt recognize, ethico-religiously, in the crowd the supreme authority in matters of 'truth'. But the thing is simple enough: this thing of loving one's neighbour is self-denial; that of loving the crowd, or of pretending to love it, of making it the authority in matters of truth, is the way to material power, the way to temporal and earthly advantages of all sorts — at the same time it is the untruth, for a crowd is the untruth.

But he who acknowledges the truth of this view, which is seldom presented (for it often happens that a man thinks that the crowd is the untruth, but when it — the crowd — accepts his opinion *en masse*, everything is all right again), admits for himself that he is weak and impotent; for how could it be possible for an individual to make a stand against the crowd which possesses the power! And he could not wish to get the crowd on his side for the sake of ensuring that his view would prevail, the crowd, ethico-religiously regarded, being the untruth — that would be mocking himself. But although from the first this view involves an admission of weakness and impotence, and seems therefore far from inviting, and for this reason perhaps is so seldom heard, yet it has the good feature that it is even-handed, that it offends no one, not a single person, that it is no respecter of persons, not a single one. The crowd, in fact, is composed of individuals; it must therefore be in every man's power to become what he is, an individual. From becoming an individual no one, no one at all, is excluded, except he who excludes himself by becoming a crowd. To become a crowd, to collect a crowd about one, is on the contrary to affirm the distinctions of human life. The most well-meaning person who talks about these distinctions can easily offend an individual. But then it is not the crowd

which possesses power, influence, repute, and mastery over men, but it is the invidious distinctions of human life which despotically ignore the single individual as the weak and impotent, which in a temporal and worldly interest ignore the eternal truth — the single individual.

NOTE. The reader will recall that the foregoing (the beginning of which bears the impress of that instant when I voluntarily exposed myself to the rough treatment of literary vulgarity) was originally written in 1846, although later it was revised and considerably enlarged. Since that time actual events, almighty as they are, have cast light also upon this thesis, that the crowd, ethico-religiously regarded as the supreme authority, is the untruth. Verily, this accrues to my advantage. For my own part, I have been helped by it to secure my own position and to understand myself; and at the same time I am sure now to be very much better understood than at that time when my weak and solitary voice was heard as a ludicrous exaggeration — whereas now it is hardly to be heard at all by reason of the loud tones with which actual events speak to the same effect.

NO. 2. A WORD ABOUT THE RELATION OF MY LITERARY ACTIVITY TO 'THE INDIVIDUAL'

A TRIFLE IS condemned to lead a despised and neglected life, as everybody knows — but it takes its revenge. For what is it but a trifle that lies at the bottom of every misunderstanding, especially if it is passionate and ill tempered? Otherwise it would not be a misunderstanding at all, but an essential disagreement. What constitutes a misunderstanding is the fact that what one party regards as significant the other regards as insignificant, and this by reason of the fact that at bottom they are separated by a trifle, that the parties who are in disagreement through a misunderstanding have not taken the time to understand one another at the start. For at the bottom of all real disagreement there is an understanding. The *groundlessness* of 'misunderstanding' is due to the lack of a preliminary understanding, without which both agreement and disagreement are alike a misunderstanding. Therefore it is possible for misunderstanding to be removed and become agreement and understanding; but it is possible also for it to be removed and to become real disagreement. For there is no misunderstanding involved in the fact that two persons really disagree. They really disagree just because they understand one another.

I am surely not far at fault when I assume that what has occasioned and still continues to occasion disagreement between certain of my contemporaries and me with respect to my activity as an author is in part 'that individual'. No doubt several of them would read my works if it were not for this, and the crowd would leave me entirely at peace if it were not for this.

If this matter of 'that individual' were a trifle to me, I could let it drop; indeed, I should be delighted to do so and should be ashamed if I were not

willing to do it with the most obliging alacrity. But such is far from being the case. For me — not personally, but as a thinker — this matter of the individual is the most decisive thing. So then the only possibility left is to remove the misunderstanding. If I could succeed in making it evident to the individuals that it truly is no trifle, then in that case the disagreement also would be removed. For what occasions the confusion is the fact that people regard it as a trifle — and then are indignant that I should attach so much importance to a trifle. One of two things therefore: either the others are right about its being a trifle, and I ought to give it up; or it is, as I understand it, something very essential, and so there is no ground for complaining that I attach so much importance to something that is essentially important. On the contrary there is good ground for a little serious reflection about its importance. What I, for my part, ought not to have neglected to do I did not neglect. Once upon a time (in a little article by Frater Taciturnus in the *Fatherland)* I let the thing be carried as far as possible in, the direction of singularity — verily not out of queer singularity on my part. On the contrary, the significance of what I did was clear to me in the highest degree, and I acted responsibly, with a full sense of my responsibility for doing what it would have been irresponsible of me not to do. I let that be done (and had it printed in a newspaper, moreover, and in an article moreover which touched upon the beginning and the end of the town gossip) because it seemed to me important to get attention provokingly fixed upon that point, which is something one does not accomplish by ten books which develop the doctrine of the individual, nor in ten lectures which deal with it, but accomplishes in these times only by getting the laughter aimed at one by making people a bit angry so as to make them upbraid one again and again and without ceasing for that very thing which one would wish to have emphatically accentuated and, if possible, brought to the attention of all. This is absolutely the surest sort of tutorial coaching.

But any one who desires to accomplish anything must know the age in which he lives and then have courage to encounter the danger of employing the surest means.

This means I have employed, though the dialectic of 'the individual' was constantly made ambiguous by its duplex movement. In every one of the pseudonymous works this theme of 'the individual' comes to evidence in one way or another; but there the individual is predominantly the pre-eminent individual in the aesthetic sense, the distinguished person, &c. In every one of my edifying works the theme of 'the individual' comes to evidence, and as officially as possible; but there the individual is what every man is or can be. The starting-point of the pseudonyms is the difference between man and man with respect to intellect, culture, &c.; the starting-point of the edifying works is the edifying thought of the universal human. But this double meaning is precisely the dialectic of 'the single individual'. 'The single individual' can mean the one and only, and 'the single individual' can mean every man. So if one would provoke attention dialectically, one should use the category of 'the individual' with a double lash to it. The pride in the one thought incites some, the humility in the second thought deters others, but the confusion involved in the double meaning provokes attention dialectically; and, as I have said, this double meaning is precisely the thought of 'the individual'. But I believe that people have for the most part paid attention only to 'the individual' of the pseudonyms and have confounded me as a matter of course with the pseudonyms — and hence all this talk of my pride and arrogance, a condemnation of me which really amounts only to self-denunciation.

This phrase, 'that individual', has by this time been accentuated almost to the point of becoming a proverb — and I — poor me! — have had to put up with the laughter. If I had begged with tears and adjured everybody by all that is holy and for the sake of God in heaven to pay attention to this

thought of eternal value — surely nobody would have troubled himself about it.

Now that it has been duly accentuated I will make an attempt, with all the powers at my command, to remove the misunderstanding, at least in part. This is a misunderstanding, however, which can exist only for one who has not made himself acquainted in a deeper sense with my works. And the desire to prevent all misunderstanding about an enterprise one is about to undertake is a thing that could occur only to a youth. There is nothing that so easily gets beyond one's control and so easily becomes misunderstood, as a misunderstanding. Even if one were to undertake nothing more than merely to avoid misunderstanding — then in that case one would presumably become the most thoroughly misunderstood of all men.

I know, of course, quite well that I have had from the first much more than one reader. 'Denmark is a little land'; its inhabitants, having their own peculiar language, are not numerous; with respect to literature the conditions are so petty that there does not now exist, nor has there for a long time existed, such a thing as a literary review, but literature was reduced (*ad absurdum)* to such attention as the daily press and more especially Merchant Nathanson (to use his own words) 'bestowed upon it'. As an author I have laboured with unusual diligence and unusual speed, in the service of the truth I have constantly expended a lot of strength and a lot of inventiveness, I do not say to prevent the circulation of my works, but to prevent their circulation under a misapprehension; and when this is taken into account, I have many more readers than might be expected. This I know quite well, and I who know it am not at all ungrateful; and perhaps I have shown my gratitude in a truer and more honest way by never abusing this fact as a means of enticing more purchasers and readers. Therefore the notion that on my side there might be something to prevent me from desiring that my popular works should if possible be read and understood

by all — this notion is one that only foolishness and ill temper could hit upon and only envy could use in order the more to confuse people already confused (which only too easily succeeds, as a matter of course), and in order if possible to embitter against me the well disposed, the better sort, the more competent — which is not quite a matter of course, and which — God be praised! — has failed of success in a measure quite beyond my expectation, so that the fact that just the opposite has occurred is for me a truly edifying joy.

Every serious person who has any eye for the conditions of our time will easily perceive how important it is to make a profound effort and a rigorously consistent one, which does not draw back from the extreme consequences of the truth, to oppose boldly the immoral confusion which, philosophically and socially, tends to demoralize 'the individual' by means of 'mankind' or a fantastical notion of society; a confusion which proposes to teach ungodly contempt for that which is the prime condition of religiousness, namely, to be a single individual man. This confusion can only be opposed by making men if possible single individuals — yet after all every man is a single individual! Every serious person who knows what edification is — every one, whether he be high or low, wise or simple, man or woman, every one who has felt himself edified and God brought near to him — will unconditionally agree with me that it is impossible to edify or be edified *en masse*, even more impossible than to be 'in love *en quatre*' or *en masse.* Edification, even more expressly than love, is related to the individual. The individual — not in the sense of the specially distinguished or the specially gifted individual, but the individual in the sense in which every man, absolutely every man, can be and should be — should take pride in being, but verily will also discover his blessedness in being... an individual. Every individual among the many who have read something in my edifying works and found edification in it, every one upon whom I, as

an edifying author, have had some influence — if in a quiet hour of meditation he will put to himself the question (as he ought to do for his own sake, he being the judge, and also perhaps for my sake who often have had to be judged in a place where it is not exactly wisdom that is judge) whether I deceived him with this talk about ‘the individual’, whether I deceived him by exposing myself for a while to the laughter of the many and to the purposes for which envy could desire to use this laughter; he surely will rather admit, if not to me (which I do not require), yet to himself, that what is lacking to him is that he has not yet rightly become the single individual, which is something I do not pretend to be, although I have striven, without yet apprehending, and continue to strive, yet as one who does not forget that ‘the individual’ in its highest measure is beyond a man’s power.

‘The individual’ is the category through which, in a religious respect, this age, all history, the human race as a whole, must pass. And he who stood at Thermopylae was not so secure in his position as I who have stood in defence of this narrow defile, ‘the individual’, with the intent at least of making people take notice of it. His duty was to prevent the hosts from pressing through the defile. If they pressed through, he was lost. My task is one which at least does not expose me to any such danger of being trampled underfoot, for my task was as a humble servant (yet, as I have said from the beginning and repeated again and again, ‘without authority’) to provoke, if possible, to invite, to stir up the many to press through this defile of ‘the individual’, through which, however, no one can pass except by becoming the individual — the contrary being a categorical impossibility. And yet, if I were to desire an inscription for my tombstone, I should desire none other than ‘That Individual’ — if that is not now understood, it surely will be. The pseudonyms in their time, when here at home all the talk was about system, always system, aimed a blow at the System with the category of ‘the individual’. Now one hardly hears the System any more mentioned I —

not at least as the last word of fashion and as the requirement of the age. I marked the beginning of the literary production over my own name by the category of ‘the individual’, and that remained as a stereotyped formula, showing that this thing of the individual is not a later invention of mine but my first thought. With the category of ‘the individual’ is bound up any ethical importance I may have. If that category was right, if that category was in place, if I saw rightly at this point and understood rightly that it was my task (certainly not a pleasant nor a thankful one) to call attention to it, if that was the task given me to do, albeit with inward sufferings such as certainly are seldom experienced, and with outward sacrifices such as a man is not every day found willing to make — in that case I stand fast and my works with me.

That category, the fact of having used that category, and of having used it so personally and so decisively, is ethically the conclusive thing. Without this category, and without the use that has been made of it, reduplication would be lacking in my whole activity as an author. For from the fact that in the works there was said, presented, developed, and declared all that actually is declared there, and that, too, perhaps with imagination, dialectic, psychological insight and other such qualities — it would not by any means follow from this as a matter of course that the author had understood, and understood how to express by one single word with absolute finality (while by his action he expressed his understanding of his age and of himself in it), that this was an age of dissolution.

For proclaiming this the author does not call himself ‘a witness for the truth’. No, far from it! This name is not to be applied to every one who says something true — no, in this way we should have more than enough witnesses for the truth. No, to discern ‘a witness for the truth’ his personal mode of existence must be ethically examined in relation to what he says, to see if the personal existence is an expression of what he says — though this

is a consideration which the systematizing and lecturing tendency and the general want of character in our generation has set aside. Now it is true that the author's life has expressed with tolerable precision the aim he ethically defined as that of being an individual. He has had acquaintance with countless people, but always has stood alone, and with all his striving he strove among other things for permission to stand alone, whereas in the environment committees were pretty nearly everything — setting them up, setting them down, and setting them aside. He has also made more than one sacrifice for the sake of his category, has exposed himself to one danger after another, and, be it observed, to just the kind of danger which categorically corresponds to 'the individual', i.e. he has exposed himself to 'the crowd' and to 'the public'. But even if there were nothing else in the way (of the claim that he is 'a witness for the truth') there is the fact that he was not compelled to work for his living. That alone is enough, it is a privilege which puts him down in a lower class. But beside that, he has had too much imagination and far too much of the poet about him to dare to be called in a stricter sense a witness for the truth. At the beginning he was very far from having a survey of the whole, so that it was only gradually he learnt to understand himself as having apprehended rightly. Hence he has had to lay to heart the wise saying which Lessing so happily expresses, 'Let us not be wise where we have merely been fortunate', he has had occasion to remember the duty of giving unto God the things that are God's. He has had too much to do with the ethical to be a poet. The issue of his life recalls the first word of the aesthetic writer in *Either/Or*, which was repeated later, about not desiring to be a poet, and it recalls the emphasis with which the ethical writer approves of this, recognizing that a man must get out of the poetical and into the existential, the ethical. And yet he is too much of a poet to be a witness for the truth. He is between the two as a border line,

which, however, is related with categorical precision to history in its future stage.

‘The individual’ is the category of the spirit, of spiritual awakening, a thing as opposite to politics as well could be thought of. Earthly reward, power, honour, &c., have no connexion with the right use of this category. For even if it is used in the interest of the established order, inwardness does not interest the world; and when it is used catastrophically, it still does not interest the world, for to make sacrifices, or to be sacrificed (which may in fact be the consequence of declining to entertain the thought of becoming a power of a material sort), does not interest the world.

‘The individual’ — that is the decisive Christian category, and it will be decisive also for the future of Christianity. The fundamental confusion, the original sin, of Christendom is that year after year, decade after decade, century after century, it has pursued the insidious purpose — just about half unconscious of what it would, and essentially unconscious of what it did — of tricking God out of his rights as the proprietor of Christianity, and has got it into its head that the race, the human race, was itself the inventor, or had come pretty close to inventing Christianity. Just as in civil law a fortune reverts to the state when it has lain unclaimed for a certain period of years and no heir presents himself — so has the race, perverted by observation of the trivial fact that Christianity is a thing that actually exists, thought within itself as follows: ‘It is now so long a time since God has let Himself be heard from as proprietor and master that Christianity has consequently reverted to us, who can either decide to abolish it altogether, or to modify it *ad libitum*, very much as we might deal with our own possession or invention, treating Christianity, not as something which *in obedient subservience to God’s majesty* must be believed, but as something which in order to be acceptable must try by the aid of *reasons* to satisfy “the age”, “the public”, “this distinguished assembly”, &c.’ Every revolt in science...

against moral discipline, every revolt in social life... against obedience, every revolt in political life... against worldly rule, is connected with and derived from this revolt against God with respect to Christianity. This revolt — the abuse of 'the human race' as a category — does not, however, resemble the revolt of the Titans, for it is in the sphere of *reflection*, insidiously carried out from year to year, from generation to generation. Reflection constantly takes only a tiny little bit at a time, and about this little bit one can constantly say, 'Why, in small matters one may well yield' — until in the end reflection will have taken everything without anybody noticing it, because it came about little by little, 'and in small matters one may surely yield'. Hence men must become single individuals in order to get the proper Christian-pathetic impression of Christianity. The individual, every individual, will surely beware of initiating a legal process against God in heaven to determine which of the two, absolutely and unto the least tittle, has the right of proprietorship in Christianity. God must again become effectually the middle term. But to God as the middle term corresponds the individual. If the 'race' is to be the court of last resort or even have subordinate jurisdiction, Christianity is abolished — if in no other way, at least by the *wrong and unchristian form* one gives the *Christian* message. Not even the most trusted spy of the shrewdest detective agency can more confidently vouch for the content of his report than I, a mere private practitioner, a spy *si placet,* will vouch for the correctness of this.

'The individual' — with this category the cause of Christianity stands or falls, since world-development has got so far along in reflection as it has. Without this category pantheism has triumphed absolutely. Men will surely come who will know how to strain this category dialectically to a higher tension — they have not had the labour of bringing it to notice. But the category of 'the individual' is and remains the fixed point which is able to resist the pantheistic confusion, it is and remains the weight which turns the

scale. But those who work and operate with this category must be more and more dialectical in proportion as the confusion is greater and greater. For one can guarantee to make a Christian of every man he can get to come under this category — in so far as one man can do this for another, or we may say rather, that he can vouch for it that such a man will become a Christian. As a single individual he is alone, alone in the whole world, alone before God — and with that there is no question about obedience! All doubt (which, be it observed parenthetically, is just simply disobedience to God — when it is ethically considered and not made a fuss about with an air of scientific superiority) — all doubt has ultimately its stronghold in the illusion of temporal existence that we are a lot of us, pretty much the whole of humanity, which in the end can jolly well overawe God and be itself the Christ. And pantheism is an acoustic illusion which confounds vox populi with vox dei, an optical illusion, a cloud-picture formed out of the mists of temporal existence, a mirage formed by reflection from temporal existence and regarded as the eternal. But this category cannot be delivered in a lecture; it is a specific ability, an art, an ethical task, and it is an art the practice of which might in his time have cost the practitioner his life. For that which in God's eyes is the highest thing, the self-willed race and the hosts of confused minds regard as lèse-majesté against 'the race', 'the crowd', 'the public', &c.

'The individual' — this category was used only once with decisive dialectical force, and for the first time, by Socrates to dissolve paganism. In Christendom on the other hand it will serve a second time to make men (i.e. Christians) into Christians. It is not the category of the missionary who deals with pagans to whom he proclaims Christianity for the first time; but it is the category of the missionary within Christendom itself, aiming to introduce Christianity into Christendom. When he, 'the Missionary', comes, he will use this category. For if this age awaits a hero, it awaits him in vain.

There will sooner come one who in godly weakness will teach men obedience... for the fact that they in ungodly revolt put him to death who was obedient to God, who meanwhile used this category, though on an infinitely greater scale — and ‘with authority’. But no more of this. I remain grateful to Providence — both in the one sense and in the other sense — for what, as is readily seen, is in every respect infinitely subordinate, namely, to call attention to this category.

POSTSCRIPT

What is said here is said about the past, the time gone by, as the reader will have observed, if only because of the tenses used. And the category is, ‘to call attention’, which I here repeat for the sake of doing to the very last all that I can do to prevent misunderstanding.

(1849)

REGARDING THE ‘TWO NOTES’

A POSTSCRIPT

March 1855.

ON re-reading these two articles now I would add what follows.

It is perfectly true that (to mention the highest instance) the Truth itself, Jesus Christ, had disciples; and (to mention a human instance) that Socrates had disciples.

So it seems, in a sense, that I force the ideality of the individual even higher than they did. How do I understand that? In part I understand it as an imperfection in me, and in part as connected with the singularity of my task. I understand it as my imperfection, for my whole activity as a writer, as I have often said, was at the same time my own education, in the course of which I have learnt to reflect more and more deeply upon my idea, my task. But as long as such was the case with me, I was not yet, even if I had wished it, sufficiently ripe to be able to draw individuals nearer to me. I understand this as connected with the singularity of my task. For my task is to oppose a given factor wrongly promulgated — so it is not to promulgate something on my own account, rather, I might say, it is to be a smoke-consumer. But in such a case it is important to be cautiously on one’s guard about forming intimate relationship with individuals, lest the smoke-consumer attain in his turn a false promulgation. It is not my task, and in Christendom it cannot rightly be the task, to create a lot of titular Christians or to assist in confirming the millions in the illusion that they are Christians. No, the task is in precise terms to throw light upon the knavish trick, which for the advantage of church dignitaries, of parsons, of mediocrity (under the

name of Christian ardour and zeal — Oh, how subtle!) has brought these millions into being. The point is to illuminate this knavish trick through and through, and to get it made clear that ‘in Christendom’ Christian ardour and zeal mean just this thankless task (and here we have the note which characterizes Christian activity, just as profit characterizes worldly activity) of liberating Christianity from some of these battalion-Christians.

Only one word more. It is perfectly true that Christ had disciples, and (to take a human instance) that Socrates also had disciples; but not in any sense that would make my thesis false did either Christ or Socrates have disciples — ethically and ethico-religiously the crowd is untruth, the untruth of wishing to work by means of the crowd, the numerical, of wishing to make the numerical the criterion which decides what truth is.

MY ACTIVITY AS A WRITER

By S. KIERKEGAARD *Copenhagen 1851*

Wer glaubt, der ist gross und reich,
Er hat Gott und das Himmelreich.

Wer glaubt, der ist klein und arm,
Er schreiet nur: Herr, Dich erbarm!

[TERSTEGEN: Der Frommen Lotterie]

THE ACCOUNTING

Copenhagen, March, 1849.

WHEN a land is little the proportions are in every respect small in the little land. So in respect to literature: the honorarium and all that goes with it will be insignificant. If one is not a poet, and more particularly a dramatist, and does not write textbooks or is not supported in some other way by one's profession, then the business of being an author is about the most wretchedly rewarded, the least secure, and so to that extent the most thankless occupation. If there live a man possessed of the talents requisite for authorship, who in addition to that is so fortunate as to have some property, he can then become an author more or less at his own expense. However, this is fitting enough and therefore constitutes no ground for complaint. It is becoming for the individual in his particular calling to love his idea, the nation to which he belongs, the cause which he serves, and the language in which as an author he has the honour to write. Such indeed will be the case when there is harmony of understanding between the individual and the people, which in turn (if such be the case) will treat the individual rather handsomely.

Whether my experience has been in any respect the contrary of this, whether I may have been treated unhandsomely by one or many — that is, properly speaking, something which does not concern me, but is very properly their concern. On the other hand, what does concern me, and what I so gladly acknowledge as my concern, is to have the duty and privilege of rendering thanks for what favour, goodwill, friendliness, and appreciation have been shown me in general or by particular individuals.

The movement described by the authorship is this: *from* the poet (from aesthetics), *from* philosophy (from speculation), *to* the indication of the most central definition of what Christianity is — from the *pseudonymous* ‘Either/Or’, through ‘The Concluding Postscript’ *with my name as editor*, to the ‘Discourses at Communion on Fridays’, two of which were delivered in the Church of our Lady. This movement was accomplished or described *uno tenore,* in one breath, if I may use this expression, so that the authorship, *integrally* regarded, is religious from first to last — a thing which every one can see if he is willing to see, and therefore ought to see. And as the natural scientist at once recognizes by the way the strands are crossed in the spider’s web what artful little animal it is who made the web — so the discerning mind will recognize that corresponding to this authorship there is an originator who, as author, ‘has only willed one thing’. The discerning mind will at the same time recognize that this one thing is the religious, but the religious altogether and utterly transposed into reflection, yet in such a way that it is altogether and utterly withdrawn from reflection and restored to simplicity — that is to say, he will see that the road travelled has the aim of *approaching*, *of attaining* simplicity.

And this, moreover, is the Christian movement (a movement in *reflection,* as in fact it originally was). In a Christian sense simplicity is not the point of departure from which one goes on to become interesting, witty, profound, poet, philosopher, &c. No, the very contrary. *Here* is where one begins (with the interesting, &c.) and becomes simpler and simpler, *attaining* simplicity. This, in ‘Christendom’, is the Christian movement: one does not reflect oneself into Christianity; but one reflects oneself out of something else and becomes, more and more simply, a Christian. If the author had been a richly gifted mind, or (supposing him to be that) if he had been doubly as gifted a mind, he would have needed a longer, or doubly as

long a time, to follow out this path in his literary production and to reach this point.

But just as that which has been communicated (the religious thought) has been translated entirely into terms of reflection and again taken back out of reflection, so the *form of communication* also has been decisively marked by reflection; in other words, use has been made of the kind of communication which is appropriate to reflection. 'Direct communication' means to communicate the truth directly. 'Communication in terms of reflection' means to beguile a person into the truth. But since the aim of the movement is to attain simplicity, the communication must, sooner or later, end in direct communication. It began *maieutically,* with aesthetic works and all the pseudonymous works are *maieutic*. That indeed is the reason why these works were pseudonymous — whereas the direct religious communication (which was present from the very first as a glinting suggestion) bore my own name. Direct communication was present from the first, for the 'Two Edifying Discourses' of 1843 were actually simultaneous with 'Either/Or'. And in order to establish this direct religious communication definitely as contemporaneous, each new pseudonym was accompanied almost simultaneously by a little collection of *Edifying Discourses* — until the appearance of the *Concluding Postscript*, which set the problem, which is the Problem *κατ Εξοχήν,* of the whole authorship, namely, 'how to become a Christian'.

From that moment the glinting hints of direct religious communication cease and there begins the purely religious productivity: Edifying Discourses in Divers Spirits; The Works of Love; Christian Discourses. But as a reminder of the beginning (and corresponding to the position occupied by the Two Edifying Discourses at the beginning, when the majority of the writings were aesthetic) there came at the conclusion (when for a long time the productivity had been exclusively and voluminously religious) a little

aesthetic article by Inter et Inter in the daily edition of the Fatherland, for July 1848, Nos. 188-99. Coming at the beginning, the *Two Edifying Discourses* had hinted, like a preliminary flash, that this was really what was to come out of it all, the goal to be attained. The flash of the little aesthetic article, coming as it does at the conclusion, by reflecting as it were the hint given at the beginning of the authorship, draws attention to the fact that from the very beginning the aesthetic was merely the point of departure, a position which had to be left behind. The *Concluding Postscript* is the middle point, and that so precisely (though this is not worthy to be mentioned except as a curiosity) that even the quantity of the matter presented before and after is roughly equal — if, as is only reasonable, the *Eighteen Edifying Discourses* are included in the purely religious work; and even the time occupied by the authorship before the *Concluding Postscript* and after it is about the same.

Finally, in another respect also the movement of the authorship is decisively characterized by reflection, or rather it is the movement of reflection itself. The direct way of beginning is with individuals, some few readers; and then the business is — or rather the direction of the movement — to assemble a crowd, to win for oneself an abstraction, the Public. Here, on the contrary, the beginning was made, *maieutically*, sensationally, and with what naturally accompanies that, namely, the Public — which is always at hand when there is something going on — and the movement was, maieutically, to stir up the 'crowd' in order to get hold of 'the individual' [This again (corresponding to the fact that a religious author *begins* with aesthetic production, and to the fact that, instead of loving himself and his own advantage, and forwarding his effort by creating illusion, he hates himself and removes the illusions) — this again, I say, is the dialectical movement, or is essentially dialectics, namely, in one's *action* to *counteract* oneself at the same time, which is what I call reduplication, and it is an example of the

heterogeneity which distinguishes every true godly effort from worldly effort. To strive or to work *directly* is to work or to strive in immediate continuity with an actually given condition. The dialectical movement is the exact *opposite* of this, namely, by one's action to counteract one's effort at the same time — a duplication which is 'seriousness', like the pressure upon the plough which determines the depth of the furrow, whereas the direct effort is a slurring over, which not only goes more quickly and easily, but is by far a more thankful task, for it is worldliness and homogeneity.] understanding this word in a religious sense. Precisely at the same moment when the sensation awakened by *Either/Or* was at its height, there appeared the *Two Edifying Discourses* of 1843, which employed the formula subsequently repeated as a stereotyped phrase: 'It seeks that single individual whom with joy and gratitude I call my reader.' And precisely at the critical moment when the *Concluding Postscript* (which, as I have said, sets the Problem) was delivered to the printer, with instructions to begin the work as soon as possible, and the publication presumably was bound to follow shortly — just at that moment one of the pseudonyms in a newspaper article, directed at the spot where it would be most effective, made the greatest possible effort to repel the public, and thereupon began the decisive religious production. I attached myself again religiously to 'that individual', to whom the next essential work (after the *Concluding Postscript)* was dedicated. I refer to *Edifying Discourses in Divers Spirits*, or rather the first part of that book which is an exhortation to confession. Perhaps nobody noticed it the first time I employed the category 'that individual', and nobody paid much attention to the fact that it was repeated in stereotyped form in the preface of every number of the Edifying Discourses. When for the second time, or in a second potency, I reiterated the message and stood firmly by my first pronouncement, everything was done that could be done to lay the whole weight of emphasis upon that

category. Here again the movement tends towards simplicity: it is from the public to the individual. *Religiously* speaking, there is no such thing as a public, but only individuals; [And in so far as there is, in a religious sense, such a thing as a 'congregation', this is a concept which does not conflict with 'the individual', and which is by no means to be confounded with what may have *political* importance: the public, the crowd, the numerical, &c.] for religion is seriousness, and seriousness is... the individual — in the sense, however, that every man, absolutely every man, inasmuch as he is a man, can be, indeed must be, an individual. To me, the edifying author, it was and is, therefore, a joy that from this very time there were several who became attentive to this matter of 'the individual'. This was and is a joy to me; for though it is true enough that I have faith in the rightness of my thought against all the world, yet almost the last thing for me to relinquish is my faith in individual men. And this is my faith, that however much there may be that is confused and evil and detestable in men who have become that irresponsible thing without possibility of repentance which we call the 'public', the 'crowd', there is just as much truth and goodness and loveliness in them when one can get hold of the individual. Oh! and in what a high degree would men become — men, and lovable men, if they would become individuals before God!

So it is that I understand everything *now.* From the beginning I could not thus survey what has been in fact my own development. Prolixity of statement would nowhere be more out of place than here. What is here required is to be able to fold together in simplicity that which is unfolded in the many books, or as unfolded constitutes the many books; and this brief communication is more particularly occasioned by the fact that the first-fruit of authorship now comes forward a second time, namely, the second edition of *Either/Or,* which I was unwilling to publish earlier.

Personally — when I bethink me of my inward sufferings, as well as of my personal offences — one thing concerns me absolutely, is more important to me than the whole authorship, and lies closer to my heart, namely, to express, as sincerely and as strongly as possible, what I can never be sufficiently grateful for, and what, when once I have forgotten the whole authorship, I shall unalterably and for ever remember — how infinitely much more Providence has done for me than I ever had expected, could have expected, or might have dared to expect.

Without authority to call attention to religion, to Christianity, is the category for my whole activity as an author, integrally regarded. That I was 'without authority' I have from the first moment asserted clearly and repeated as a stereotyped phrase. I regarded myself preferably as a *reader* of the books, not as the *author*.

'Before God', religiously, when I talk with myself, I call the whole literary activity my own upbringing and development — not, however, implying that I am now perfect or completely finished so as to need no more upbringing and development.

SUPPLEMENT. MY POSITION AS A RELIGIOUS WRITER IN 'CHRISTENDOM' AND MY TACTICS

I

MY POSITION

Copenhagen, November 1850.

I HAVE never fought in such a way as to say: I am the true Christian, others are not Christians. No, my contention has been this: I know what Christianity is, my imperfection as a Christian I myself fully recognize — but I know what Christianity is. And to get this properly recognized must be, I should think, to every man's interest, whether he be a Christian or not, whether his intention is to accept Christianity or to reject it. But I have attacked no one as not being a Christian, I have condemned no one. Indeed, the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, who sets the problem 'about becoming a Christian', does exactly the opposite: he denies that he is a Christian and concedes this claim to the others — the remotest possible remove, surely, from condemning others! And I myself have from the first clearly asserted, and again and again repeated, that I am 'without authority'. And again, finally, in the last book of Anti-Climacus (which especially in Part I, by the help of a poetic treatment which ventures to say everything and of a dialectic which shrinks from no consequences, has endeavoured to unsettle the illusions), no one, absolutely no one is condemned. The only person named, whom it attacks, by saying that in trying to realize the ideals he is but a very imperfect Christian, is myself — the only one condemned (cf. the thrice repeated Preface). This I can well put up with, for I am infinitely

concerned that the requirements of the ideal may at least be heard. But this again is surely at the remotest remove from condemning others.

2

MY TACTICS

The tactics in use for a long time past have been to employ every means to get as many as possible, and if possible all, to enter into Christianity — but without being at all scrupulous to ascertain whether what one got them to go into was really Christianity. My tactics were, by God's aid, to employ every means to make it clear what the requirement of Christianity truly is — even though not one single person should be induced to enter into it, and though I myself might have to give up being a Christian (in which case I should have felt obliged to make open admission of the fact). On the other hand, my tactics were these: instead of giving the impression, in however small a degree, that there are such difficulties about Christianity that an apology for it is needed if men are to be persuaded to enter into it, rather to represent it as a thing so infinitely lofty, as in truth it is, that the apology belongs in another place, is required, that is to say, of us for the fact that we venture to call ourselves Christians, or it transforms itself into a contrite confession that we have God to thank if we merely assume to regard ourselves as Christians.

But neither must this ever be forgotten: Christianity is just as lenient as it is austere, just as lenient, that is to say, infinitely lenient. When the infinite requirement is heard and upheld, heard and upheld in all its infinitude, then *grace* is offered, or rather grace offers itself, and to it the individual, each for himself, as I also do, can flee for refuge. And then it is possible. But surely it is not an exaggeration when (in the interest of grace itself) the requirement of infinity, the 'infinite' requirement, is presented infinitely.

Exaggeration occurs only when, in an entirely different way, the requirement is presented and grace is not even alluded to. On the other hand, it is taking Christianity in vain when (perhaps in consideration of the claim — which presumably will overawe both God in heaven and Christianity and the Apostles and martyrs and witnesses to the truth and the fathers, with all their *praxis* — that 'this won't do at all in practical life') — Christianity is taken in vain, when in view of this consideration the infinite requirement is reduced to finite terms, or maybe entirely ignored, and 'grace' is introduced *as a matter of course*, which simply means that it is taken in vain.

But never, even in the remotest way, have I made as if I wished to develop a pietistic severity, which is a thing alien to my soul and nature. Never have I wanted in the least to over-tax human existences, for that is a thing which would distress the spirit within me. No, I have desired to be instrumental in bringing, if possible, by means of admissions, a little more truth into the imperfect existences which we lead (pointing in the direction of ethical and ethico-religious character, the renunciation of worldly wisdom, readiness to suffer for the truth, &c.), which after all is something, and is at any rate the first condition for learning to live more effectively. What I have desired to prevent is, that one who has limited himself to the easier and lower should thereupon 'go farther' and abolish the higher, go farther and put the lower in its place, go farther and represent the higher as a fantastic and ludicrous exaggeration, the lower as wisdom and true seriousness — to prevent any one in 'Christendom' from taking Luther and the significance of Luther's life in vain. This I have desired to be instrumental, if possible, in preventing.

What was needed among other things was a Godfearing satire. This I have prevented, especially by the aid of the pseudonyms, which have not let me go scot-free by any means. But in order that there might be no

possibility of confusion, that this satire might not be confounded with a thing which is only too prone to give itself out as satire: the profane revolt of the most deeply sunken Power — it was I, I who had presented that godly satire, that flung myself against and exposed myself to that profane satire of slave-revolt. Thus in the first place I have striven in godly fear to be honest. And then, though a sting of the truth is contained in the propositions, everything nevertheless is made as lenient as possible, seeing that there is talk only of admissions and concessions, and indeed only of such concessions and admissions as every one is left free to make for himself before God. Yet this very leniency is perhaps in another sense vexatious to some. It would be much easier to be rid of the whole thing if the author were a scatterbrain who at every point exaggerated both the accusation and the requirement. And although this is not the case, one and another might contrive to spread the report that it was so. But by God's help this effort will fail. If I were in fact a strong ethico-religious character — alas! I am indeed hardly more than a poet! — and if I were consequently entitled and constrained in virtue of the truth to speak more sternly, it is plausible to suppose that instead of finding favour with my *contemporaries* I might encounter opposition. But since I am not so strong, I surely must succeed in finding favour with my *contemporaries* — not consequently because of my perfection, as a sense of truth obliges me to admit.

With regard to the 'established order', then, seeing that my special concern was 'the individual', which was the point of my polemic against the numerical, the crowd, &c., I have always done the very opposite of attacking it; I have never been in or with the 'opposition' which wants to get rid of the 'government', nor have I been allied with it; but I have furnished what may be called a 'corrective', the intent of which was: For God's sake let us continue to be ruled by those who are appointed and called to this task, and that they should stand fast in the fear of God, willing

only one thing, the Good. And thereby I have managed to fall out with the opposition and the public, and have encountered moreover once in a while the disapprobation of one and another (perhaps not well informed) official of the bureaucracy. In so far as the church establishment understands itself, it will in the same degree understand also the last book, *Training in Christianity*, as an attempt to provide an idealistic support for the establishment. In the first instance I did not wish to speak out directly, as I do here (what, as a matter of fact, the Preface expresses directly by expressing how I understand the book) in order, in the interest of truth, not to spare myself in the face of a situation which, probable or improbable, was always a possibility; in order not to evade the difficulties and dangers which might arise if the establishment were to undertake to convert my communication into opposition — which would have prompted serious misgivings about the state of the establishment's health. Thank God, this did not occur, however. Yet it is quite possible that some well-informed office-bearer — to whom the fact that I have no official position was in itself reproach enough — might have perpetrated the ludicrous folly of rushing forward to defend and shield the establishment against what at this moment is surely a possible defence of the establishment, so long as it understands itself.

In '48 the strands of the web of worldly wisdom broke. The shrill rasping note which announces chaos became audible 'This was the year '48, it stood for progress.' Yes... if only a 'government' is consolidated. For that, perhaps, not a single new official is necessary, nor the discharge of any old one, but perhaps an inward transformation which would consolidate the state in the fear of God. The fault from above was clearly this, that throughout the government, taken as a whole, from top to bottom, the strength relied upon was essentially worldly shrewdness, which essentially is nothing more than lack of strength. The fault from below was that they

wanted to get rid of government, that is to say, of punishment. But the punishment fits the crime, and the punishment now is that the want most bitterly felt at this time is simply the want of a government. Never as in our century was the race and the individual within it (the ruler and the ruled, the superior and the inferior, the teacher and the taught, &c.) so emancipated from all restraint (so to call it) due to the idea that there is something which unconditionally stands fast. Never has the race and the individual within it discovered so deeply that the race itself and every individual within it needs and craves to have something which unconditionally stands fast. Never have 'opinions' (the most heterogeneous, in the most various fields) felt themselves, under 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity', so free, so unhampered, so fortunate, with the rule of go as you please which is expressed in the motto, 'up to a certain point'. Never will the race and the individual within it discover so deeply that it and every individual within it needs and craves to have something which stands and shall stand unconditionally fast, craves for that which the loving Godhead in love discovered, namely, the unconditional; in the place of which man, who is shrewd to his own undoing, in admiration for himself, posited this admired maxim, 'up to a certain point'. Require the navigator to sail without ballast — he capsizes. Let the race, let each individual, make the experiment of doing without the unconditional — it is a whirlpool and remains such. In the meanwhile, for a longer or a shorter period, it may seem otherwise, it may seem like stability and security. But at bottom it is and remains a whirlpool. Even the greatest events and the most laborious lives are whirlpools, or they are like sewing without knotting the thread — until the end is once again made fast by the fact that the unconditional is brought to bear, or that the individual, however remotely, comes to relate himself to the unconditional. To live in the unconditional, inhaling only the unconditional, is impossible to man; he perishes, like the fish forced to live in the air. But

on the other hand, without relating himself to the unconditional, man cannot in the deepest sense be said to ‘live’. He gives up the ghost — that is, he may continue perhaps to live, but spiritlessly. To stick to my subject, the religious, I say that the race, or a considerable number of the individuals within the race, have outgrown the childish notion that another person can represent the unconditional for them and in their stead. Very well; but for all that, the unconditional does not cease to be necessary. Rather it is the more necessary the more the individual outgrows childish dependence upon other men. Hence ‘the individual’ himself must relate himself to the unconditional. This is what I, in proportion to the talents granted to me, with the utmost expenditure of effort, and with many sacrifices, have consistently fought for, fighting against every tyranny, including that of the numerical. This effort of mine has been interpreted as hatred, as monstrous pride and arrogance — I believed and still believe that this is Christianity and love for one’s ‘neighbour’.

TWO FRAGMENTS FROM KIERKEGAARD'S JOURNAL

AS HAS BEEN remarked above in the Preface, Kierkegaard never ceased to debate with himself over the validity of his motives and the character of his mission. The two statements below are offered as a small but poignant sample of the extensive entries interpreting his authorship and his relations to his Governance. The order of their appearance here deliberately violates chronology in order to suggest a representative cycle of the swings of Kierkegaard's moods and attitudes.

The first passage was inscribed in his Journal six days after the appearance of My Activity as a Writer (7 August 1851). Kierkegaard's mood seems one of determined self-assurance. Perceiving himself a champion in a battle whose tide was now turning, he cheerfully announces the start of a new phase of his campaign. Yet in the background there are traces of a desire to convince himself that his 'accounting' of his personal and literary career was proof against the mild qualification of Bishop Mynster, and the repeated observation of one of his reviewers that 'the author considers his authorship essentially finished'.

The second passage, which bears the date '1849', presents the author in a less decisive and confident frame of mind. Instead, he seeks with brooding earnestness to correct certain exaggerations in the tone and argument of his *Point of Vietv.* He regrets having allowed others and himself to suppose that he was ending his activity as a writer in expectation of his early death as a martyr. He deems himself fortunate that 'The Individual' had been withheld from publication. Mystery was at the core of his being, whether as Poet or as Penitent or as one who was perhaps 'Extraordinary' in the religious dimension. The greatest error either he or anyone else might make was to perceive him as a resolute person spurred by powerful and consistent ethical

aims. It was for his Governance and not for himself to say who he was and what he was to do. Without humble trust in Divine guidance there was no escaping egocentric distortions in one's perception of one's relation to the Governance.

The rendering of these hitherto untranslated fragments from' the Journal is by Mr. Lee M. Capel. The originals will be found at Vols. X A 383 and X A 250, respectively, in Soren Kierkegaards Papirer, 2nd ed., by P. A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr and E. Torsting, Vols. I-XI (in 20 parts). Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909-48. (B. N.)

I

This little book is not a kind of authorship, a new composition, but a deed; it was therefore important that it be as short as possible, and that it not indicate a new productivity which people could talk about. This little book is a *metabasis eis alio genos* (transition to another sphere), and shows to what extent such a sphere was already present in my whole authorship.

Even if I had known or comprehended beforehand every detail of my authorship, what is here said about it should never have been said at the beginning; for this would have disturbed the perspective, and the literary world would have acquired the kind of interest which belongs to curiosity, namely, whether I really conformed to and fulfilled my predictions.

No, this book should come at the end and do in a single blow, what the sailor says of a battle: turn the tide.

This little book is not a literary production but a deed. It is an intensive deed which will not be understood at first, just as my affair with the *Corsair* was not understood in its day. Perhaps some will feel that I have not made enough of myself, I who might venture to give myself out to be a genius or

a talent — but instead call it 'my own development and education'. But this is precisely the turn in the direction of Christianity and personality....

Without this little book the whole authorship would become transformed into a new doctrine.

2

N.B.

'The Three Notes' shall not be published. There shall not be any direct discussion of myself; and if there should be, then much more should be said — if *The Point of View* should be published. Everything of this nature shall be finished as it is until after my death.

There shall not be anything said about my own person and in a direct way: (1) because I am nevertheless essentially a poet; but in a poet's personality there is always something mysterious, and this is the reason he must not be represented with, and, above all, not confuse himself with, an absolute ethical character in the strictest sense. (2) In so far as I am a little more than a poet, I am essentially a penitent; but of this I cannot speak, and consequently neither shall I speak of the possible extraordinary dimension which is given to me. (3) I can not guarantee either in the case of myself or the communication that the impression falls forcefully enough upon God. (4) This is an inconsistency in the direction of self-denial.

To want to do it, therefore, was on my part: (1) a thoughtlessness, in wanting now to speak of myself as if I should either die tomorrow or as if it were decided that I would cease to be an author, since neither alternative is the case. (2) It was an impatience or arbitrariness (the result of having suffered) myself to want to determine my fate beforehand, or contribute to forcing myself further into the character of a martyr — even though I am

one in all stillness, yet without demanding the satisfaction of being so regarded.

It was a godsend that I did not do it, that I did not publish the ‘Notes’, or that God did not allow it to happen. In every way it would have disturbed my life — whether I shall now continue to be an author, or whether I am occupied in another way. Hence I must regret the time when I was foolishly occupied with the ‘Notes’ — now a word here, now a word there. I have suffered much, but God also helps me to learn.

How much God is the one who guides the whole I see best from the fact that the discourses about the lilies and the birds were written at that time — and that is precisely what I needed. God be praised! Without struggling with men and without speaking about myself I get much said that needs to be said — but inspiring, mild, and edifying.

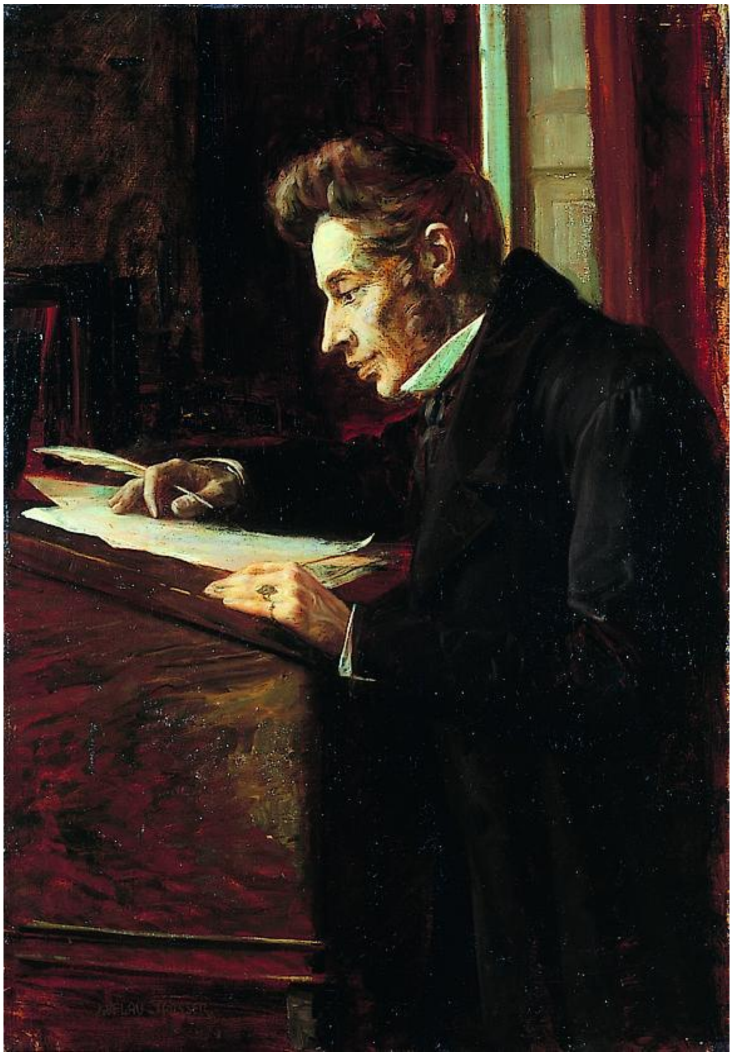
And now to travel. I must get away from this place, both for a moment’s recreation and for a longer period — this is related to the fact that I am essentially a poet.

If I should communicate directly about my person, I must be externally compelled to do it — and even then with difficulty, since the productivity is essentially not my own but that of a higher power.

The Biography

Bredgade 70, Copenhagen — the author's last home.

Frederiks Hospital, 1900 — before the tenth issue of his periodical 'The Moment' could be published, Kierkegaard collapsed on the street one day. He died in Frederiks Hospital a month later, possibly from complications from a fall from a tree in his youth. Some believe he died from Pott disease, a form of tuberculosis.



Kierkegaard by Luplau Janssen, 1902

Introduction to Kierkegaard (1923) by Lee M. Hollander

CREDITABLE AS HAVE BEEN the contributions of Scandinavia to the cultural life of the race in well-nigh all fields of human endeavor, it has produced but one thinker of the first magnitude, the Dane, Sören Å. Kierkegaard[1]. The fact that he is virtually unknown to us is ascribable, on the one hand to the inaccessibility of his works, both as to language and form; on the other, to the regrettable insularity of English thought.

It is the purpose of this book to remedy the defect in a measure, and by a selection from his most representative works to provide a stimulus for a more detailed study of his writings; for the present times, ruled by material considerations, wholly led by socializing, and misled by national, ideals are precisely the most opportune to introduce the bitter but wholesome antidote of individual responsibility, which is his message. In particular, students of Northern literature cannot afford to know no more than the name of one who exerted a potent and energizing influence on an important epoch of Scandinavian thought. To mention only one instance, the greatest ethical poem of our age, "Brand" — notwithstanding Ibsen's curt statement that he "had read little of Kierkegaard and understood less" — undeniably owes its fundamental thought to him, whether directly or indirectly.

Of very few authors can it be said with the same literalness as, of Kierkegaard that their life is their works: as if to furnish living proof of his untiring insistance on inwardness, his life, like that of so many other spiritual educators of the race, is notably poor in incidents; but his life of inward experiences is all the richer — witness the "literature within a

literature" that came to be within a few years and that gave to Danish letters a score of immortal works.

Kierkegaard's physical heredity must be pronounced unfortunate. Being the child of old parents — his father was fifty-seven, his mother forty-five years at his birth (May 5, 1813), he had a weak physique and a feeble constitution. Still worse, he inherited from his father a burden of melancholy which he took a sad pride in masking under a show of sprightliness. His father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, had begun life as a poor cotter's boy in West Jutland, where he was set to tend the sheep on the wild moorlands. One day, we are told, oppressed by loneliness and cold, he ascended a hill and in a passionate rage cursed God who had given him this miserable existence — the memory of which "sin against the Holy Ghost" he was not able to shake off to the end of his long life[2]. When seventeen years old, the gifted lad was sent to his uncle in Copenhagen, who was a well-to-do dealer in woolens and groceries. Kierkegaard quickly established himself in the trade and amassed a considerable fortune. This enabled him to withdraw from active life when only forty, and to devote himself to philosophic studies, the leisure for which life had till then denied him. More especially he seems to have studied the works of the rationalistic philosopher Wolff. After the early death of his first wife who left him no issue, he married a former servant in his household, also of Jutish stock, who bore him seven children. Of these only two survived him, the oldest son — later bishop — Peder Christian, and the youngest son, Sören Åbye.

Nowhere does Kierkegaard speak of his mother, a woman of simple mind and cheerful disposition; but he speaks all the more often of his father, for whom he ever expressed the greatest love and admiration and who, no doubt, devoted himself largely to the education of his sons, particularly to that of his latest born. Him he was to mould in his own image. A pietistic, gloomy spirit of religiosity pervaded the household in which the severe

father was undisputed master, and absolute obedience the watchword. Little Sören, as he himself tells us, heard more of the Crucified and the martyrs than of the Christ-child and good angels. Like John Stuart Mill, whose early education bears a remarkable resemblance to his, he "never had the joy to be a child." Although less systematically held down to his studies, in which religion was the be-all and end-all (instead of being banished, as was the case with Mill), he was granted but a minimum of out-door play and exercise. And, instead of strengthening the feeble body, his father threw the whole weight of his melancholy on the boy.

Nor was his home training, formidably abstract, counterbalanced by a normal, healthy school-life. Naturally introspective and shy, both on account of a slight deformity of his body and on account of the old-fashioned clothes his father made him wear, he had no boy friends; and when cuffed by his more robust contemporaries, he could defend himself only with his biting sarcasm. Notwithstanding his early maturity he does not seem to have impressed either his schoolmates or his teachers by any gifts much above the ordinary. The school he attended was one of those semi-public schools which by strict discipline and consistent methods laid a solid foundation of humanities and mathematics for those who were to enter upon a professional career. The natural sciences played noddle whatever.

Obedient to the wishes of his father, Sören chose the study of theology, as had his eldest brother; but, once relieved from the grind of school at the age of seventeen, he rejoiced in the full liberty of university life, indulging himself to his heart's content in all the refined intellectual and æsthetic enjoyments the gay capital of Copenhagen offered. He declares himself in later years to be "one who is penitent" for having in his youth plunged into all kinds of excesses; but we feel reasonably sure that he committed no excesses worse than "high living." He was frequently seen at the opera and the theatre, spent money freely in restaurants and confectionary shops,

bought many and expensive books, dressed well, and indulged in such extravagances as driving in a carriage and pair, alone, for days through the fields and forests of the lovely island of Zealand. In fact, he contracted considerable debts, so that his disappointed father decided to put him on an allowance of 500 rixdollars yearly — rather a handsome sum, a hundred years ago.

Naturally, little direct progress was made in his studies. But while to all appearances aimlessly dissipating his energies, he showed a pronounced love for philosophy and kindred disciplines. He lost no opportunity then offered at the University of Copenhagen to train his mind along these lines. He heard the sturdily independent Sibbern's lectures on æsthetics and enjoyed a "privatissimum" on the main issues of Schleiermacher's Dogmatics with his later enemy, the theologian Martensen, author of the celebrated "Christian Dogmatics."

But there was no steadiness in him. Periods of indifference to these studies alternated with feverish activity, and doubts of the truth of Christianity, with bursts of devotion. However, the Hebraically stern cast of mind of the externally gay student soon wearied of this rudderless existence. He sighs for an "Archimedean" point of support for his conduct of life. We find the following entry in his diary, which prophetically foreshadows some of the fundamental ideas of his later career: "...what I really need is to arrive at a clear comprehension of what I am to do, not of what I am to grasp with my understanding, except insofar as this understanding is necessary for every action. The point is, to comprehend what I am called to do, to see what the Godhead really means that I shall do, to find a truth which is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and to die..."

This Archimedean point was soon to be furnished him. There came a succession of blows, culminating in the death of his father, whose silent

disapprobation had long been weighing heavily on the conscience of the wayward son. Even more awful, perhaps, was a revelation made by the dying father to his sons, very likely touching that very “sin against the Holy Ghost” which he had committed in his boyhood and the consequence of which he now was to lay on them as a curse, instead of his blessing. Kierkegaard calls it “the great earthquake, the terrible upheaval, which suddenly forced on me a new and infallible interpretation of all phenomena.” He began to suspect that he had been chosen by Providence for an extraordinary purpose; and with his abiding filial piety he interprets his father’s death; as the last of many sacrifices he made for him; “for he died, not away from me, but for me, so that there might yet, perchance, become something of me.” Crushed by this thought, and through the “new interpretation” despairing of happiness in this life, he clings to the thought of his unusual intellectual powers as his only consolation and a means by which his salvation might be accomplished. He quickly absolved his examination for ordination (ten years after matriculation) and determined on his magisterial dissertation[3].

Already some years before he had made a not very successful debut in the world of letters with a pamphlet whose queer title “From the MSS. of One Still Living” reveals Kierkegaard’s inborn love of mystification and innuendo. Like a Puck of philosophy, with somewhat awkward bounds and a callow manner, he had there teased the worthies of his times; and, in particular, taken a good fall out of Hans Christian Andersen, the poet of the Fairy Tales, who had aroused his indignation by describing in somewhat lachrymose fashion the struggles of genius to come into its own. Kierkegaard himself was soon to show the truth of his own dictum that “genius does not whine but like a thunderstorm goes straight counter to the wind.”

While casting about for a subject worthy of a more sustained effort — he marks out for study the legends of Faust, of the Wandering Jew, of Don Juan, as representatives of certain basic views of life; the Conception of Satire among the Ancients, etc., etc., — he at last becomes aware of his affinity with Socrates, in whom he found that rare harmony between theory and the conduct of life which he hoped to attain himself.

Though not by Kierkegaard himself counted among the works bearing on the "Indirect Communication" — presently to be explained — his magisterial dissertation, entitled "The Conception of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates," a book of 300 pages, is of crucial importance. It shows that, helped by the sage who would not directly help any one, he had found the master key: his own interpretation of life. Indeed, all the following literary output may be regarded as the consistent development of the simple directing thoughts of his firstling work. And we must devote what may seem a disproportionate amount of space to the explanation of these thoughts if we would enter into the world of his mind.

Not only did Kierkegaard feel kinship with Socrates. It did not escape him that there was an ominous similarity between Socrates' times and his own — between the period of flourishing Attica, eminent in the arts and in philosophy, when a little familiarity with the shallow phrases of the Sophists enabled one to have an opinion about everything on earth and in heaven, and his own Copenhagen in the thirties of the last century, when Johan Ludvig Heiberg had popularized Hegelian philosophy with such astonishing success that the very cobblers were using the Hegelian terminology, with "Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis," and one could get instructions from one's barber, while being shaved, how to "harmonize the ideal with reality, and our wishes with what we have attained." Every difficulty could be "mediated," according to this recipe. And just as the great questioner of Athens gave pause to his more naïve contemporaries by

his “know thyself,” so Kierkegaard insisted that he must rouse his contemporaries from their philosophic complacency and unwarranted optimism, and move, them to realize that the spiritual life has both mountain and valley, that it is no flat plain easy to travel. He intended to show difficulties where the road had been supposedly smoothed for them.

Central, both in the theory and in the practice of Socrates (according to Kierkegaard), is his irony. The ancient sage would stop old and young and quizz them skilfully on what they regarded as common and universally established propositions, until his interlocutor became confused by some consequence or contradiction arising unexpectedly, and until he who had been sure of his knowledge was made to confess his ignorance, or even to become distrustful of the possibility of knowledge. Destroying supposedly positive values, this method would seem to lead to a negative result only.

Kierkegaard makes less (and rather too little) of the positive side of Socrates’ method, his *maieutic*, or midwifery, by which we are led inductively from trivial instances to a new definition of a conception, a method which will fit all cases. Guided by a lofty personality, this Socratic irony becomes, in Kierkegaard’s definition, merely “the negative liberation of subjectivity”; that is, not the family, nor society, nor the state, nor any rules superimposed from outside, but one’s innermost self (or subjectivity) is to be the determining factor in one’s life. And understood thus, irony as a negative element borders on the ethical conception of life.

Romantic irony, on the other hand, laying main stress on subjective liberty, represents the æsthetic conduct of life. It was, we remember, the great demand of the Romantic period that one live poetically. That is, after having reduced all reality to possibilities, all existence to fragments, we are to choose *ad libitum* one such possible existence, to consider that one’s proper sphere, and for the rest to look ironically on all other reality as philistine. Undeniably, this license, through the infinitude of possibilities

open to him, gives the ironist an enthusiastic sense of irresponsible freedom in which he “disports himself as does Leviathan in the deep.” Again, the “æsthetical individual” is ill at ease in the world into which he is born. His typical ailment is a Byronesque *Weltschmerz.* He would fain mould the elements of existence to suit himself; that, is, “compose” not only himself but also his surroundings. But without fixed task and purpose, life will soon lose all continuity (“except that of boredom”) and fall apart into disconnected moods and impulses. Hence, while supposing himself a superman, free, and his own master, the æsthetic individual is, in reality, a slave to the merest accidents. He is not self-directed, self-propelled; but — drifts.

Over against this attitude Kierkegaard now sets the ethical, Christian life, one with a definite purpose and goal beyond itself. “It is one thing to compose one’s own life, another, to let one’s life be composed. The Christian lets his life be composed; and insofar a simple Christian lives far more poetically than many a genius.” It would hardly be possible to characterize the contents of Kierkegaard’s first great book, *Enten-Eller* “Either-Or,” more inclusively and tersely.

Very well, then, the Christian life, with its clear directive, is superior to the æsthetic existence. But how is this: are we not all Christians in Christendom, children of Christians, baptized and confirmed according to the regulations of the Church? And are we not all to be saved according to the promise of Our Lord who died for us? At a very early time Kierkegaard, himself desperately struggling to maintain his Christian faith against doubts, had his eyes opened to this enormous delusion of modern times and was preparing to battle against it. The great idea and task for which he was to live and to die — here it was: humanity is in apparent possession of the divine truth, but utterly perverts it and, to cap injury with insult, protects and intrenches the deception behind state sanction and institutions. More

appalling evil confronted not even the early protagonists of Christianity against heathendom. How was he, single-handed, magnificently gifted though he was, to cleanse the temple and restore its pristine simplicity?

Clearly, the old mistake must not be repeated, to try to influence and reform the masses by a vulgar and futile "revival," preaching to them directly and gaining disciples innumerable. It would only lead again, to the abomination of a lip service. But a ferment must be introduced which — he hoped — would gradually restore Christianity to its former vigor; at least in individuals. So far as the form of his own works is concerned he was thus bound to use the "indirect method" of Socrates whom he regards as his teacher. In conscious opposition to the Sophists who sold their boasted wisdom for money, Socrates not only made no charges for his instruction but even warned people of his ignorance, insisting that, like a midwife, he only helped people to give birth to their own thoughts. And owing to his irony Socrates' relation to his disciples was not in any positive sense a personal one. Least of all did he wish to found a new "school" or erect a philosophic "system."

Kierkegaard, with Christianity as his goal, adopted the same tactics. By an attractive æsthetic beginning people were to be "lured" into envisaging the difficulties to be unfolded presently, to think for themselves, to form their own conclusions, whether for or against. The individual was to be appealed to, first and last — the individual, no matter how humble, who would take the trouble to follow him and be his reader, "my only reader, the single individual. So the religious author must make it his first business to put himself in touch with men. That is to say, he must begin æsthetically. The more brilliant his performance, the better." And then, when he has got them to follow him "he must produce the religious categories so that these same men with all the impetus of their devotion to æsthetic things are suddenly brought up sharp against the religious aspect." The writer's own

personality was to be entirely eliminated by a system of pseudonyms; for the effect of his teaching was not to be jeopardized by a distracting knowledge of his personality. Accordingly, in conscious imitation of Socrates, Kierkegaard at first kept up a semblance of his previous student life, posing as a frivolous idler on the streets of Copenhagen, a witty dog incapable of prolonged serious activity; thus anxiously guarding the secret of his feverish activity during the lonely hours of the night.

His campaign of the “indirect communication” was thus fully determined upon; but there was still lacking the impetus of an elemental passion to start it and give it driving force and conquering persistence. This also was to be furnished him.

Shortly before his father’s death he had made the acquaintance of Regine Olson, a beautiful young girl of good family. There followed one of the saddest imaginable engagements. The melancholy, and essentially lonely, thinker may not at first have entertained the thought of a lasting attachment; for had he not, on the one hand, given up all hope of worldly happiness, and on the other, begun to think of himself as a chosen tool of heaven not to be bound by the ordinary ties of human affection? But the natural desire to be as happy as others and to live man’s common lot, for a moment hushed all anxious scruples. And the love of the brilliant and promising young man with the deep, sad eyes and the flashing wit was ardently returned by her.

Difficulties arose very soon. It was not so much the extreme youth and immaturity of the girl — she was barely sixteen — as against his tremendous mental development, or even her “total lack of religious presuppositions”; for that might not itself have precluded a happy union. Vastly more ominous was his own unconquerable and overwhelming melancholy. She could not break it. And struggle as he might, he could not banish it. And, he reasoned, even if he were successful in concealing it from her, the very concealment were a deceit. Neither would he burden her with his

melancholy by revealing it to her. Besides, some mysterious ailment which, with Paul, he terms the “thorn in his flesh,” tormented him. The fact that he consulted a physician makes it likely that it was bodily, and perhaps sexual. On the other hand, the manner of Kierkegaard’s multitudinous references to woman removes the suspicion of any abnormality. The impression remains that at the bottom of his trouble there lay his melancholy, aggravated admittedly by an “insane education,” and coupled with an exaggerated sense of a misspent youth. That nothing else prevented the union is clear from his own repeated later remarks that, with more faith, he would have married her.

Though to the end of his life he never ceased to love her, he feels that they must part. But she clings to him with a rather maudlin devotion, which, to be sure, only increased his determination. He finally hit on the desperate device of pretending frivolous indifference to her affections, and acted this sad comedy with all the dialectic subtleness of his genius, until she eventually released him. Then, after braving for a while the philistine indignation of public opinion and the disapproval of his friends, in order to confirm her in her bad opinion of him, he fled to Berlin with shattered nerves and a bleeding heart.

He had deprived himself of what was dearest to him in life. For all that, he knew that the foundations of his character remained unshaken. The voluntary renunciation of a worldly happiness which was his for the taking intensifies his idea of being one of the “few in each generation selected to be a sacrifice.” Thereafter, “his thought is all to him,” and all his gifts are devoted to the service of God.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, more than at any other time, Denmark was an intellectual dependency of Germany. It was but natural that Kierkegaard, in search for the ultimate verities, should resort to Berlin where Schelling was just then beginning his famous course of

lectures. In many respects it may be held deplorable that, at a still formative stage, Kierkegaard should have remained in the prosaic capital of Prussia and have been influenced by bloodless abstractions; instead of journeying to France, or still better, to England whose empiricism would, no doubt, have been an excellent corrective of his excessive tendency to speculation. In fact he was quickly disappointed with Schelling and after four months returned to his beloved Copenhagen (which he was not to leave thereafter except for short periods), with his mind still busy on the problems which were peculiarly his own. The tremendous impulse given by his unfortunate engagement was sufficient to stimulate his sensitive mind to a productivity without equal in Danish literature, to create a "literature within a literature." The fearful inner collision of motives had lit an inner conflagration which did not die down for years. "My becoming an author is due chiefly to her, my melancholy, and my money."

About a year afterwards (1843) there appeared his first great work, "Either-Or," which at once established his fame. As in the case of most of his works it will be impossible to give here more than the barest outline of its plan and contents. In substance, it is a grand debate between the æsthetic and the ethic views of life. In his dissertation Kierkegaard had already characterized the æsthetic point of view. Now, in a brilliant series of articles, he proceeds' to exemplify it with exuberant detail.

The fundamental chord of the first part is struck in the *Diapsalmata* aphorisms which, like so many flashes of a lantern, illuminate the æsthetic life, its pleasures and its despair. The æsthetic individual — this is brought out in the article entitled "The Art of Rotation" — wishes to be the exception in human society, shirking its common, humble duties and claiming special privileges. He has no fixed principle except that he means not to be bound to anything or anybody. He has but one desire which is, to enjoy the sweets of life — whether its purely sensual pleasures or the more

refined Epicureanism of the finer things in life and art, and the ironic enjoyment of one's own superiority over the rest of humanity; and he has no fear except that he may succumb to boredom.

As a comment on this text there follow a number of essays in "experimental psychology," supposed to be the fruit of the æsthete's (A's) leisure. In them the æsthetic life is exhibited in its various manifestations, in "terms of existence," especially as to its "erotic stages," from the indefinite longings of the Page to the fully conscious "sensual genius" of Don Juan — the examples are taken from Mozart's opera of this name, which was Kierkegaard's favorite — until the whole culminates in the famous "Diary of the Seducer," containing elements of the author's own engagement, poetically disguised — a seducer, by the way, of an infinitely reflective kind.

Following this climax of unrestrained æstheticism we hear in the second part the stern demands of the ethical life. Its spokesman, Judge William, rises in defense of the social institutes, and of marriage in particular, against the slurs cast on them by his young friend A. He makes it clear that the only possible outcome of the æsthetic life, with its aimlessness, its superciliousness, its vague possibilities, is a feeling of vanity and vexation of spirit, and a hatred of life itself: despair. One floundering in this inevitable slough of despond, who earnestly wishes to escape from it and to save himself from the ultimate destruction of his personality, must choose and determine to rise into the ethical sphere. That is, he must elect a definite calling, no matter how humdrum, marry, if possible, and thus subject himself to the "general law." In a word, instead of a world of vague possibilities, however attractive, he must choose the definite circumscription of the individual who is a member of society. Only thus will he obtain a balance in his life between the demands of his personality on the one hand, and of the demands of society on him. When thus

reconciled to his environment — his “lot” — all the pleasures of the æsthetic sphere which he resigned will be his again in rich measure, but in a transfigured sense.

Though nobly eloquent in places, and instinct with warm feeling, this panegyric on marriage and the fixed duties of life is somewhat unconvincing, and its style undeniably tame and unctious — at least when contrasted with the Satanic verve of most of A’s papers. The fact is that Kierkegaard, when considering the ethical sphere, in order to carry out his plan of contrasting it with the æsthetic sphere, was already envisaging the higher sphere of religion, to which the ethical sphere is but a transition, and which is the only true alternative to the æsthetic life. At the very end of the book Kierkegaard, flying his true colors, places a sermon as an “ultimatum,” purporting to have been written by a pastor on the Jutish Heath. Its text is that “as against God we are always in the wrong,” and the tenor of it, “only that truth which edifies is truth for you.” It is not that you must choose either the æsthetic or the ethical view of life; but that neither the one nor the other is the full truth — God alone is the truth which must be grasped with all inwardness. But since we recognize our imperfections, or sins, the more keenly, as we are developed more highly, our typical relation to God must be that of repentance; and by repentance as by a step we may rise into the higher sphere of religion — as will be seen, a purely Christian thought.

A work of such powerful originality, imposing by its very size, and published at the anonymous author’s own expense, could not but create a stir among the small Danish reading public. And notwithstanding Kierkegaard’s consistent efforts to conceal his authorship in the interest of his “indirect communication,” it could not long remain a secret. The book was much, and perplexedly, discussed, though no one was able to fathom the author’s real aim, most readers being attracted by piquant subjects such

as the “Diary of the Seducer,” and regarding the latter half as a feeble afterthought. As he said himself: “With my left hand I held out to the world ‘Either-Or,’ with my right, ‘Two Edifying Discourses’; but they all — or practically all — seized with their right hands what I held in my left.”

These “Two Edifying Discourses[4]“ — for thus he preferred to call them, rather than sermons, because he claimed no authority to preach — as well as all the many later ones, were published over his own name, addressed to Den Enkelte “The Single Individual whom with joy and gratitude he calls his reader,” and were dedicated to the memory of his father. They belong among the noblest books of edification, of which the North has not a few.

During the following three years (1843-5) Kierkegaard, once roused to productivity, though undoubtedly kept at his task by the exertion of marvelous will-power, wrote in quick succession some of his most notable works — so original in form, in thought, in content that it is a well-nigh hopeless task to analyze them to any satisfaction. All we can do here is to note the development in them of the one grand theme which is fundamental to all his literary activity: how to become a Christian.

If the second part of “Either-Or” was devoted to an explanation of the nature of the ethical, as against the æsthetic, conduct of life, inevitably the next task was, first, to define the nature of the religious life, as against the merely ethical life; then, to show how the religious sphere may be attained. This is done in the brilliant twin books *Frygt og Baeven* “Fear and Trembling” and *Gjentagelsen* “Repetition.” Both were published over pseudonyms.

“Fear and Trembling” bears as its subtitle “Dialectic Lyrics.” Indeed, nowhere perhaps is Kierkegaard’s strange union of dialectic subtlety and intense lyrical power and passion so strikingly in evidence as in this panegyric on Abraham, the father of faith. To Kierkegaard he is the shining exemplar of the religious life; and his greatest act of faith, his obedience to

God’s command to slay Isaac. Nothing can surpass the eloquence with which he depicts the agony of the father, his struggle between the ethical, or general, law which, saith “thou shalt no kill”! and God’s specific command. In the end, Abraham by a grand resolve transgresses the law; and lo! because he has faith, against certainty, that he will keep Isaac, and does not merely resign him, as many a tragic hero would have done, he receives all again, in a new and higher sphere. In other words, Abraham chooses to be “the exception” and set aside the general law, as well as does the æsthetic individual; but, note well: “in fear and trembling,” and at the express command of God! He is a “knight of faith.” But because this direct relation to the divinity necessarily can be certain only to Abraham’s self, his action is altogether incomprehensible to others. Reason recoils before the absolute paradox of the individual who chooses to rise superior to the general law.

The rise into the religious sphere is always likely to be the outcome of some severe inner conflict engendering infinite passion. In the splendidly written *Gjentagelse* “Repetition” we are shown *ad oculos* an abortive transition into the religious sphere, with a corresponding relapse into the æsthetic sphere. Kierkegaard’s own love-story is again drawn upon: the “Young Person” ardently loves the woman; but discovers to his consternation that she is in reality but a burden to him since, instead of having an actual, living relation to her, he merely “remembers” her when she is present. In the ensuing collision of motives his æsthetically cool friend Constantin Constantius advises him to act as one unworthy of her — as did Kierkegaard — and to forget her. But instead of following this advice, and lacking a deeper religious background, he flees the town and subsequently transmutes his trials into poetry — that is, relapses into the æsthetic sphere: rather than, like Job, whom he apostrophises passionately, “receiving all again” (having all “repeated”) in a higher sphere. This idea of the resumption of a lower stage into a higher one is one of Kierkegaard’s

most original and fertile thoughts. It is illustrated here with an amazing wealth of instances.

So far, it had been a question of religious feeling in general — how it may arise, and what its nature is. In the pivotal work *Philosophiske Smuler* "Philosophic Trifles" — note the irony — Kierkegaard throws the searching rays of his penetrating intellect on the grand problem of revealed religion: can one's eternal salvation be based on an historical event? This is the great stumbling block to the understanding.

Hegel's philosophic optimism maintained that the difficulties of Christianity had been completely "reconciled" or "mediated" in the supposedly higher synthesis of philosophy, by which process religion had been reduced to terms which might be grasped by the intellect. Kierkegaard, fully voicing the claim both of the intellect and of religion, erects the barrier of the paradox, impassable except by the act of faith. As will be seen, this is Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum.*[5]

In the briefest possible outline his argument is as follows: Socrates had taught that in reality every one had the truth in him and needed but to be reminded of it by the teacher who thus is necessary only in helping the disciple to discover it himself. That is the indirect communication of the truth. But now suppose that the truth is not innate in man, suppose he has merely the ability to grasp it when presented to him. And suppose the teacher to be of absolute, infinite importance — the Godhead himself, directly communicating with man, revealing the truth in the shape of man; in fact, as the lowliest of men, yet insisting on implicit belief in Him! This, according to Kierkegaard, constitutes the paradox of faith *par excellence.* But this paradox, he shows, existed for the generation contemporaneous with Christ in the same manner as it does for those living now. To think that faith was an easier matter for those who saw the Lord and walked in His blessed company is but a sentimental, and fatal, delusion. On the other

hand, to found one's faith on the glorious results, now evident, of Christ's appearance in the world is sheer thoughtlessness and blasphemy. With ineluctable cogency it follows that "there can be no disciple at second hand." Now, as well as "1800 years ago," whether in Heathendom or in Christendom, faith is born of the same conditions: the resolute acceptance by the individual of the absolute paradox.

In previous works Kierkegaard had already intimated that what furnished man the impetus to rise into the highest sphere and to assail passionately and incessantly the barrier of the paradox, or else caused him to lapse into "demonic despair," was the consciousness of sin. In the book *Begrebet Angest* "The Concept of Sin," he now attempts with an infinite and laborious subtlety to explain the nature of sin. Its origin is found in the "sympathetic antipathy" of Dread — that force which at one and the same time attracts and repels from the suspected danger of a fall and is present even in the state of innocence, in children. It finally results in a kind of "dizziness" which is fatal. Yet, so Kierkegaard contends, the "fall" of man is, in every single instance, due to a definite act of the will, a "leap" — which seems a patent contradiction.

To the modern reader, this is the least palatable of Kierkegaard's works, conceived as it is with a sovereign and almost medieval disregard of the predisposing undeniable factors of environment and heredity (which, to be sure, poorly fit his notion of the absolute responsibility of the individual). Its somberness is redeemed, to a certain degree, by a series of marvelous observations, drawn from history and literature, on the various phases and manifestations of Dread in human life.

On the same day as the book just discussed there appeared, as a "counter-irritant," the hilariously exuberant *Forord* "Forewords," a collection of some eight playful but vicious attacks, in the form of prefaces, on various foolish manifestations of Hegelianism in Denmark. They are

aimed chiefly at the high-priest of the "system," the poet Johan Ludvig Heiberg who, as the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the times had presumed to review, with a plentiful lack of insight, Kierkegaard's activity. But some of the most telling shots are fired at a number of the individualist Kierkegaard's pet aversions.

His next great work, *Stadier paa Livets Vei* "Stages on Life's Road," forms a sort of resume of the results so far gained. The three "spheres" are more clearly elaborated.

The æsthetic sphere is represented existentially by the incomparable *In Vino Veritas*, generally called "The Banquet," from a purely literary point of view the most perfect of Kierkegaard's works, which, if written in one of the great languages of Europe, would have procured him world fame. Composed in direct emulation of Plato's immortal Symposion, it bears comparison with it as well as any modern composition can.[6] Indeed, it excels Plato's work in subtlety, richness, and refined humor. To be sure, Kierkegaard has charged his creation with such romantic super-abundance of delicate observations and rococo ornament that the whole comes dangerously near being improbable; whereas the older work stands solidly in reality.

It is with definite purpose that the theme of the speeches of the five participants in the banquet is love, i.e., the relation of the two sexes in love; for it is there the main battle between the æsthetic and the ethical view of life must be fought out. Accordingly, Judge William, to whom the last idyllic pages of "The Banquet" again introduce us, in the second part breaks another shaft in defense of marriage, which in the ethical view of life is the typical realization of the "general law." Love exists also for the ethical individual. In fact, love and no other consideration whatsoever can justify marriage. But whereas to the æsthetic individual love is merely eroticism, viz., a passing self-indulgence without any obligation, the ethical individual

attaches to himself the woman of his choice by an act of volition, for better or for worse, and by his marriage vow incurs an obligation to society. Marriage is thus a synthesis of love and duty. A pity only that Kierkegaard's astonishingly low evaluation of woman utterly mars what would otherwise be a classic defense of marriage.

The religious sphere is shown forth in the third part, *Skyldig — Ikke-Skyldig* "Guilty — Not-Guilty," with the apt subtitle "A History of Woe." Working over, for the third time, and in the most intense fashion, his own unsuccessful attempt to "realize the general law," i.e., by marrying, he here presents in the form of a diary the essential facts of his own engagement, but in darker colors than in "Repetition." It is broken because of religious incompatibility and the lover's unconquerable melancholy; and by his voluntary renunciation, coupled with acute suffering through his sense of guilt for his act, he is driven up to an approximation of the religious sphere. Not unjustly, Kierkegaard himself regarded this as the richest of his works.

One may say that "Guilty — Not-Guilty" corresponds to Kierkegaard's own development at this stage. Christianity is still above him. How may it be attained? This is the grand theme of the huge book whimsically named "Final Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Trifles," *Afsluttende Uvidenskabelig Efterskrift* (1846): "How shall I become a Christian, I, Johannes Climacus, born in this city, thirty years of age, and not in any way different from the ordinary run of men"?

Following up the results gained in the "Trifles," the subjectivity of faith is established once for all: it is not to be attained by swearing to any set of dogmas, not even Scripture; for who will vouch for its being an absolutely reliable and inspired account of Christ? Besides, as Lessing had demonstrated conclusively: historic facts never can become the proof of eternal verities. Nor can the existence of the Church through the ages furnish any guarantee for faith — straight counter to the opinion, held by

Kierkegaard's famous contemporary Grundtvig — any more than can mere contemporaneousness establish a guarantee for those living at the beginning. To sum up: "One who has an objective Christianity and nothing else, he is *eo ipso* a heathen." For the same reason, "philosophic speculation" is not the proper approach, since it seeks to understand Christianity objectively, as an historic phenomenon — which rules it out from the start.

It is only by a decisive "leap," from objective thinking into subjective faith, with the consciousness of sin as the driving power, that the individual may realize (we would say, attain) Christianity. Nor is it gained once for all, but must ever be maintained by passionately assailing the paradox of faith, which is, that one's eternal salvation is based on an historic fact. The main thing always is the "how," not the "what." Kierkegaard goes so far as to say that he who with fervency and inwardness prays to some false god is to be preferred to him who worships the true god, but without the passion of devotion.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding about the manner of presentation in this remarkable book, it will be well to add Kierkegaard's own remark after reading a conscientious German review of his "Trifles": "Although the account given is correct, every one who reads it will obtain an altogether incorrect impression of the book; because the account the critic gives is in the *ex cathedra style* (docerende), which will produce on the reader the impression that the book is written in a like manner. But this is in my eyes the worst misconception possible." And as to its peculiar conversational, entertaining manner which in the most leisurely, legère fashion and in an all but dogmatic style treats of the profoundest problems, it is well to recall the similarly popular manner of Pascal in his *Lettres Provinciales.* Like him — and his grand prototype Socrates — Kierkegaard

has the singular faculty of attacking the most abstruse matters with a chattiness bordering on frivolity, yet without ever losing dignity.

For four and a half years Kierkegaard had now, notwithstanding his feeble health, toiled feverishly and, as he himself states, without even a single day's remission. And "the honorarium had been rather Socratic": all of his books had been brought out at his own expense, and their sale had been, of course, small. (Of the "Final Postscript," e.g., which had cost him between 500 and 600 rixdollars, only 60 copies were sold). Hardly any one had understood what the purpose of this "literature" was. He himself had done, with the utmost exertion and to the best of his ability, what he set out to do: to show his times, which had assumed that being a Christian is an easy enough matter, how unspeakably difficult a matter it really is and what terribly severe demands it makes on natural man. He now longed for rest and seriously entertained the plan of bringing his literary career to a close and spending the remainder of his days as a pastor of some quiet country parish, there to convert his philosophy into terms of practical existence. But this was not to be. An incident which would seem ridiculously small to a more robust nature sufficed to inflict on Kierkegaard's sensitive mind the keenest tortures and thus to sting him into a renewed and more passionate literary activity.

As it happened, the comic paper *Korsaren* "The Corsair" was then at the heyday of its career. The first really democratic periodical in Denmark, it stood above party lines and through its malicious, brilliant satire and amusing caricatures of prominent personalities was hated, feared, and enjoyed by everybody. Its editor, the Jewish author Meir Goldschmidt, was a warm and outspoken admirer of the philosopher. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, had long regarded the Press with suspicion. He loathed it because it gave expression to, and thus subtly flattered, the multitude, "the public," "the mob" — as against the individual, and because it worked with

the terrible weapon of anonymity; but held it especially dangerous by reason of its enormous circulation and daily repetition of mischievous falsehoods. So it seemed to him who ever doubted the ability of the “people” to think for themselves. In a word, the Press is to him “the evil principle in the modern world.” Needless to say, the tactics of “The Corsair,” in particular, infuriated him.

In a Christmas annual (1845) there had appeared a blundering review, by one of the collaborators on “The Corsair,” of his “Stages on Life’s Road.” Seizing the opportunity offered, Kierkegaard wrote a caustic rejoinder, adding the challenge: “Would that I now soon appear in ‘The Corsair.’ It is really hard on a poor author to be singled out in Danish literature by remaining the only one who is not abused in it.” We know now that Goldschmidt did his best in a private interview to ward off a feud, but when rebuffed he turned the batteries of his ridicule on the personality of his erstwhile idol. And for the better part of a year the Copenhagen public was kept laughing and grinning about the unequal trouser legs, the spindle shanks, the inseparable umbrella, the dialectic propensities, of “Either-Or,” as Kierkegaard came to be called by the populace; for, owing to his peripatetic habits — acquired in connection with the Indirect Communication — he had long been a familiar figure on the streets of the capital. While trying to maintain an air of indifference, he suffered the tortures of the damned. In his Journal (several hundred of whose pages are given over to reflections on this experience) we find exclamations such as this one: “What is it to be roasted alive at a slow fire, or to be broken on the wheel or, as they do in warm climates, to be smeared with honey and put at the mercy of the insects — what is that in comparison with this torture: to be grinned to death!”

There could be no thought now of retiring to a peaceful charge in the country. That would have been fleeing from persecution. Besides,

unbeknown perhaps to himself, his pugnacity was aroused. While under the influence of the "Corsair Feud" (as it is known in Danish literature) he completes the booklet "A Literary Review." This was originally intended as a purely æsthetic evaluation and appreciation of the (then anonymous) author[7] of the *Hverdagshistorier* "Commonplace Stories" that are praised by him for their thoughtful bodying forth of a consistent view of life which — however different from his own — yet commanded his respect. He now appended a series of bitter reflections on the Present Times, paying his respects to the Press, which he calls incomparably the worst offender in furnishing people with cheap irony, in forcibly levelling out and reducing to mediocrity all those who strive to rise above it intellectually — words applicable, alas! no less to our own times. To him, however, who in a religious sense has become the captain of his soul, the becoming a butt of the Press is but a true test. Looking up, Kierkegaard sees in his own fate the usual reward accorded by mankind to the courageous souls who dare to fight for the truth, for the ideal — for Christianity, against the "masses." In a modern way, through ridicule, he was undergoing the martyrdom which the blood witnesses of old had undergone for the sake of their faith. Their task it had been to preach the Gospel among the heathen. His, he reasoned, was in nowise easier: to make clear to uncomprehending millions of so-called Christians that they were not Christians at all, that they did not even know what Christianity is: suffering and persecution, as he now recognizes, being inseparable from the truly Christian life.

First, then, the road had to be cleared, emphatically, for the truth that Christianity and "the public" are opposite terms. The collection of "Edifying Discourses in Diverse Spirits" is thus a religious parallel to the polemic in his "Review." The first part of these meditations has for its text: "The purity of the heart consists in willing one thing" — and this one thing is necessarily the good, the ideal; but only he who lives his life as the

individual can possibly will the good — else it is lived in duplicity, for the world will share his aspirations, he will bid for the rewards which the bowing before the crowd can give him. In the second part, entitled "What we may learn from the Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air" — one of Kierkegaard's favorite texts — the greatest danger to the ethic-religious life is shown to be the uneasiness about our material welfare which insidiously haunts our thought-life, and, notwithstanding our best endeavors, renders us essentially slaves to "the crowd"; whereas it is given to man, created in the image of God, to be as self-contained, unafraid, hopeful as are (symbolically) the lily and the bird. The startlingly new development attained through his recent experiences is most evident in the third part, "The Gospel of Sufferings," in which absolute stress is laid on the imitation of Christ in the strictest sense. Only the "individual" can compass this: the narrow way to salvation must be traveled alone; and will lead to salvation only if the world is, literally, overcome in persecution and tribulation. And, on the other hand, to be happy in this world is equivalent to forfeiting salvation. Thus briefly outlined, the contents of this book would seem to be sheer monkish asceticism; but no synopsis, however full, can hope to give an idea of its lyrical pathos, its wealth of tender reflections, the great love tempering the stern severity of its teaching.

With wonderful beauty "The Deeds of Love" (*Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*) (1847) are exalted as the Christian's help and salvation against the tribulations of the world — love, not indeed of the human kind, but of man through God. "You are not concerned at all with what others do to you, but only with what you do to others; and also, with how you react to what others do to you — you are concerned, essentially, only with yourself, before God."

In rapid succession there follow "Christian Discourses"; "The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air"; "Sickness Unto Death" (with the sub-title "A

Christian Psychological Exposition"); "Two Religious Treatises"; "The High Priest, the Publican, the Sinner"; "Three Discourses on the Occasion of Communion on Friday."

In the course of these reflections it had become increasingly clear to Kierkegaard that the self-constituted representative of Christ — the Church or, to mention only the organization he was intimately acquainted with, the Danish State Church — had succeeded in becoming a purely worldly organization whose representatives, far from striving to follow Christ, had made life quite comfortable for themselves; retort to which was presently made that by thus stressing "contemporaneousness" with its aspects of suffering and persecution, Kierkegaard had both exceeded the accepted teaching of the Church and staked the attainment of Christianity so high as to drive all existing forms of it *ad absurdum*.

In his *lndövelse i Christendom* "Preparation for a Christian Life" and the somber *Til Selvprövelse* "For a Self-Examination" Kierkegaard returns to the attack with a powerful re-examination of the whole question as to how far modern Christianity corresponds to that of the Founder. Simply, but with grandiose power, he works out in concrete instances the conception of "contemporaneousness" gained in the "Final Postscript"; at the same time demonstrating to all who have eyes to see, the axiomatic connection between the doctrine of Propitiation and Christ's life in debasement; that Christianity consists in absolutely dying to the world; and that the Christianity which does not live up to this is but a travesty on Christianity. We may think what we please about this counsel of perfection, and judge what we may about the rather arbitrary choice of Scripture passages on which Kierkegaard builds: no serious reader, no sincere Christian can escape the searching of heart sure to follow this tremendous arraignment of humanity false to its divine leader. There is nothing more impressive in all modern literature than the gallery of "opinions" voiced by those arrayed

against Christ when on earth — and now — as to what constitutes the "offense."

Kierkegaard had hesitated a long time before publishing the "Preparation for a Christian Life." Authority-loving as he was, he shrank from antagonizing the Church, as it was bound to do; and more especially, from giving offense to its primate, the venerable Bishop Mynster who had been his father's friend and spiritual adviser, to whom he had himself always looked up with admiring reverence, and whose sermons he had been in the habit of reading at all times. Also, to be sure, he was restrained by the thought, that by publishing his book he would render Christianity well-night unattainable to the weak and the simple and the afflicted who certainly were in need of the consolations of Christianity without any additional sufferings interposed — and surely no reader of his devotional works can be in doubt that he was the most tender-hearted of men. In earlier, stronger times, he imagines, he would have been made a martyr for his opinions; but was he entitled to become a blood-witness — he who realized more keenly than any one that he himself was not a Christian in the strictest sense? In his "Two Religious Treatises" he debates the question: "Is it permissible for a man to let himself be killed for the truth?"; which is answered in the negative in "About the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle" — which consists in the Apostle's speaking with authority. However, should not the truth be the most important consideration? His journal during that time offers abundant proof of the absolute earnestness with which he struggled over the question.

When Kierkegaard finally published "The Preparation for a Christian Life," the bishop was, indeed, incensed; but he did nothing. Nor did any one else venture forth. Still worse affront! Kierkegaard had said his last word, had stated his ultimatum — and it was received with indifference, it seemed. Nevertheless he decided to wait and see what effect his books

would have for he hesitated to draw the last conclusions and mortally wound the old man tottering on the brink of his grave by thus attacking the Church. There followed a three years' period of silence on the part of Kierkegaard — again certainly a proof of his utter sincerity. It must be remembered, in this connection, that the very last thing Kierkegaard desired was an external reorganization, a "reform," of the Church — indeed, he firmly refused to be identified with any movement of secession, differing in this respect vitally from his contemporaries Vinet and Grundtvig who otherwise had so much in common with him. His only wish was to infuse life and inwardness into the existing forms. And far from being inferior to them in this he was here at one with the Founder and the Early Church in that he states the aim of the Christian Life to be, not to transform the existing social order, but to transcend it. For the very same reason, coupled to be sure with a pronounced aristocratic individualism, he is utterly and unreasonably indifferent, and even antagonistic, to the great social movements of his time, to the political upheavals of 1848, to the revolutionary advances of science.

As Kierkegaard now considered his career virtually concluded, he wrote (1851) a brief account "About my Activity as an Author" in which he furnishes his readers a key to its unfolding — from an æsthetic view to the religious view — which he considers his own education by Providence; and indicates it to be his special task to call attention, without authority, to the religious, the Christian life. His "Viewpoint for my Activity as an Author," published by his brother only long after his death, likewise defines the purpose of the whole "authorship," besides containing important biographical material.

At length (January, 1854) Mynster died. Even then Kierkegaard, though still on his guard, might not have felt called upon to have recourse to stronger measures if it had not been for an unfortunate sentence in the

funeral sermon preached by the now famous Martensen — generally pointed out as the successor to the primacy — with whom Kierkegaard had already broken a lance or two. Martensen had declared Mynster to have been “one of the holy chain of witnesses for the truth (*sandhedsvidner*) which extends through the centuries down from the time of the Apostles.” This is the provocation for which Kierkegaard had waited. “Bishop Mynster a witness for the truth”! he bursts out, “You who read this, you know well what in a Christian sense is a witness for the truth. Still, let me remind you that to be one, it is absolutely essential to suffer for the teaching of Christianity”; whereas “the truth is that Mynster was wordily-wise to a degree — was weak, pleasure-loving, and great only as a declaimer.” But once more — striking proof of his circumspection and single-mindedness — he kept this harsh letter in his desk for nine months, lest its publication should interfere in the least with Martensen’s appointment, or seem the outcome of personal resentment.

Martensen’s reply, which forcefully enough brings out all that could be said for a milder interpretation of the Christian categories and for his predecessor, was not as respectful to the sensitive author as it ought to have been. In a number of newspaper letters of increasing violence and acerbity Kierkegaard now tried to force his obstinately silent opponent to his knees; but in vain. Filled with holy wrath at what he conceived to be a conspiracy by silence, and evasions to bring to naught the whole infinitely important matter for which he had striven, Kierkegaard finally turned agitator. He addressed himself directly to the people with the celebrated pamphlet series Öieblikket “The Present Moment” in which he opens an absolutely withering fire of invective on anything and everything connected with “the existing order” in Christendom — an agitation the like of which for revolutionary vehemence has rarely, if ever, been seen. All rites of the Church — marriage, baptism, confirmation, communion, burial — and

most of all the clergy, high and low, draw the fiery bolts of his wrath and a perfect hail of fierce, cruel invective. The dominant note, though varied infinitely, is ever the same: “Whoever you may be, and whatever the life you live, my friend: by omitting to attend the public divine service — if indeed it be your habit to attend it — by omitting, to attend public divine service as now constituted (claiming as it does to represent the Christianity of the New Testament) you will escape at least one, and a great, sin in not attempting to fool God by calling that the Christianity of the New Testament which is not the Christianity of the New Testament.” And he does not hesitate to use strong, even coarse, language; he even courts the reproach of blasphemy in order to render ridiculous in “Official Christianity” what to most may seem inherently, though mistakenly, a matter of highest reverence.

The swiftness and mercilessness of his attack seem to have left his contemporaries without a weapon: all they could do was to shrug their shoulders about the “fanatic,” or to duck and wait dumbly until the storm had passed.

Nor did it last long. On the second of October, 1855, Kierkegaard fell unconscious in the street. He was brought to the hospital where he died on the eleventh of November, aged 42. The immense exertions of the last months had shattered his frail body. And strange: the last of his money had been used up. He had said what he thought Providence had to communicate through him. His strength was gone. His death at this moment would put the crown on his work. As he said on his death-bed: “The bomb explodes, and the conflagration will follow.”

In appraising Kierkegaard’s life and works it will be found true, as Hotfding says, that he can mean much even to those who do not subscribe to the beliefs so unquestioningly entertained by him. And however much they may regret that he poured his noble wine into the old bottles, they

cannot fail to recognize the yeoman's service he did, both for sincere Christians in compelling them to rehearse inwardly what ever tends to become a matter of form: what it means to be a Christian; and for others, in deepening their sense of individual responsibility. In fact, every one who has once come under his influence and has wrestled with this mighty spirit will bear away some blessing. In a time when, as in our own, the crowd, society, the millions, the nation, had depressed the individual to an insignificant atom — and what is worse, in the individual's own estimation; when shallow altruistic, socializing effort thought naively that the millenium was at hand, he drove the truth home that, on the contrary, the individual is the measure of all things; that we do not live en masse; that both the terrible responsibility and the great satisfactions of life inhere in the individual. Again, more forcibly than any one else in modern times, certainly more cogently than Pascal, he demonstrated that the possibility of proof in religion is an illusion; that doubt cannot be combatted by reason, that it ever will be *credo quia impossibile.* In religion, he showed the utter incompatibility of the æsthetic and the religious life; and in Christianity, he re-stated and re-pointed the principle of ideal perfection by his unremitting insistence on contemporaneousness with Christ. It is another matter whether by so doing Kierkegaard was about to pull the pillars from underneath the great edifice of Christianity which housed both him and his enemies: seeing that he himself finally doubted whether it had ever existed apart from the Founder and, possibly, the Apostles.

Kierkegaard is not easy reading. One's first impression of crabbedness, whimsicality, abstruseness will, however, soon give way to admiration of the marvelous instrument of precision language has become in his hands. To be sure, he did not write for people who are in a hurry, nor for dullards. His closely reasoned paragraphs and, at times huge, though rhetorically faultless, periods require concentrated attention, his involutions and

repetitions, handled with such incomparable virtuosity, demand an everlasting readiness of comprehension on the part of the reader. On the other hand his philosophic work is delightfully “Socratic,” unconventional, and altogether “un-textbook-like.” Kierkegaard himself wished that his devotional works should be read aloud. And, from a purely æsthetic point of view, it ought to be a delight for any orator to practice on the wonderful periods of e. g., “The Preparation,” or of, say, the parable of the coach-horses in “Acts of the Apostles.” They alone would be sufficient to place Kierkegaard in the front rank of prose writers of the nineteenth century where, both by the power of his utterance and the originality of his thought, he rightfully belongs.

In laying before an English speaking public selections from Kierkegaard’s works, the translator has endeavored to give an adequate idea of the various aspects of his highly disparate works. For this purpose he has chosen a few large pieces, rather than given tidbits. He hopes to be pardoned for not having a slavish regard for Kierkegaard’s very inconsequential paragraphing[8] and for breaking, with no detriment, he believes, to the thought, some excessively long paragraphs into smaller units; which will prove more restful to the eye and more encouraging to the reader. As to occasional omissions — always indicated by dots — the possessor of the complete works will readily identify them. In consonance with Kierkegaard’s views on “contemporaneousness,” no capitals are used in “The Preparation” when referring to Christ by pronouns.

When Kierkegaard died, his influence, like that of Socrates, was just beginning to make itself felt. The complete translation into German of all his works[9] and of many into other languages; the magnificent new edition of his works[10] and of his extraordinarily voluminous diaries,[11] now nearing completion; and the steadily increasing number of books, pamphlets, and articles from the most diverse quarters testify to his reaching a growing

number of *individuals.* Below is given a list of the more important books and articles on Kierkegaard. It does not aim at completeness.

Bärthold, A. S. K., *Eine Verfassetexistenz eigner Art.* Halberstadt, 1873.

Same: *Noten zu S. K.'s Lebensgeschichte.* Halle, 1876.

Same: *Die Bedeutung der aesthetischen Schriften S. K.'s.* Halle, 1879.

Barfod, H. P. (Introduction to the first edition of the Diary.) Copenhagen, 1869.

Bohlin, Th. *S. K.'s Etiska Åskadning.* Uppsala, 1918.

Brandes, G. *S. K., En kritisk Fremstilling i Grundrids.* Copenhagen, 1877.

Same: German ed. Leipzig, 1879.

Deleuran, V. *Esquisse d'une étude sur S. K.* Thèse, University of Paris, 1897.

Höffding, H. *S. K.* Copenhagen, 1892.

Same: German edition (2nd). Stuttgart, 1902.

Hoffmann, R. *K. und die religiöse Gewissheit.* Göttingen, 1910.

Jensen, Ch. *S. K.'s religiöse Udvikling.* Aarhus, 1898.

Monrad, O. P. *S. K. Sein Leben und seine Werke.* Jena, 1909.

Münch, Ph. *Haupt und Grundgedanken der Philosophie S. K.'s.* Leipzig, 1902.

Rosenberg, P. A. *S. K., hans Liv, hans Personlighed og hans Forfatterskab.* Copenhagen, 1898.

Rudin, W. S. *K.'s Person och Författerskap. Förste Afdelningen.* Stockholm, 1880.

Schrempf, Ch. *S. K.'s Stellung zu Bibel und Dogma.* Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1891, p. 179.

Same: *S. K. Ein unfreier Pionier der Freiheit.* (With a foreword by Höffding) Frankfurt, 1909.

Swenson, D. *The Anti-Intellectualism of K.* Philosophic Review, 1916, p. 567.

To my friends and colleagues, Percy M. Dawson and Howard M. Jones, I wish also in this place to express my thanks for help and criticism "in divers spirits."

ENDNOTES

[1]Pronounced *Kerkegor.*

[2]An interesting parallel is the story of Peter Williams, as told by George Borrow, *Lavengro*, chap. 75 ff.

[3]Corresponding, approximately, to our doctoral thesis.

[4]Not "Discourses for Edification," *cf.* the Foreword to *Atten Opbyggelige Taler*, S. V. vol. IV.

[5]*De Carne Christi*, chap. V, as my friend, Professor A. E. Haydon, kindly points out.

[6]*Cf.* Brandes, S. K. p. 157.

[7]Mrs. Thomasine Gyllembourg-Ehrensvärd.

[8]With signal exception of "The Present Moment."

[9]In process of publication. Jena.

[10]Samlede Værker. Copenhagen, 1901-1906 (14 vols). In the notes abbreviated S. V. Still another edition is preparing.

[11]Copenhagen, 1909 ff.

The Søren Kierkegaard Statue in the Royal Library Garden, Copenhagen

Assistens Cemetery, Copenhagen — Kierkegaard's final resting place

Kierkegaard's grave